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**Slovakia from the Downfall of Communism to its Accession into the European Union, 1989-2004:
The Re-Emergence of Political Parties and Democratic Institutions**

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**SLOVAKIA FROM THE DOWNFALL OF COMMUNISM TO ITS
ACCESSION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1989-2004:
THE RE-EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTIONS**

by

JURAJ HOCMAN

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

“Slovakia from the Downfall of Communism to its Accession into the European Union, 1989-2004: the Re-Emergence of Political Parties and Democratic Institutions.”

Juraj Hocman,
August 2009

Professor Marian Mark Stolarik,
Department of History
University of Ottawa

Throughout the 1990s, several observers of the post-communist transformation in East Central Europe viewed the Slovaks as a non-historic nation hastily modernized during the communist era. Since it had been mostly invisible in Austria-Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Slovak history appeared as ruptured and fragmented. Following the fall of the communist regime and the creation of the independent Slovak Republic, the country's image was primarily associated with radical nationalism, intolerance towards its minorities and an unstable domestic political scene. These were seen as major reasons for the detour in Slovakia's transformation to democracy in the mid-1990s. In the 2000s, western scholars re-examined the earlier interpretations of Slovak history that had stressed the compliance of Slovak society with Communism and its missing tradition in the state and institution-building processes. They came to the conclusion that stereotypes in the interpretations of Slovakia's transformation in the 1990s stemmed from unfamiliarity with the facts and preconceived methodological approaches.

This dissertation examines Slovakia's evolution from the downfall of Communism (1989) to the accession of the independent Slovak Republic (1993) into the European Union (2004) from a broader historical perspective. It challenges the assumptions of political inexperience and passivity of Slovak society as major hindrances in the more recent phase of its evolution. It argues that the building of the Slovak political nation had

started in Austria-Hungary and continued in Czechoslovakia under all its regimes. As a result, Slovak political parties and institutions as the main carriers of democratic transformation did not emerge in the early 1990s in a political and institutional vacuum. After the creation of the independent Slovak Republic, the focus of Slovak political elites switched from national emancipation to integration with the EU. In the 1998 parliamentary elections, the political parties in opposition, supported by the non-governmental sector and western democracies, defeated an illiberal regime ruling over Slovakia. In spite of the alleged historical deficits of Slovak society, this change was seen by many as a result of its sudden awakening. This dissertation suggests that Slovakia's transformation from a post-communist state to a democratic one, marked by the country's accession into the EU, can be better understood as a continuation of the processes that had begun in the mid-1960s, rather than as a result of the change of government in 1998.

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Since a major part of my research was done from May to August of 2007 at the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, within the framework of the National Program of the Slovak Republic supervised by the Slovak Academic International Agency (S.A.I.A.), I am grateful to all of them for this excellent opportunity. At the Institute I discussed relevant parts of my project with Dr. Jozef Žatkuliak, an authority on federalism in Czechoslovakia, and with Dr. Stanislav Sikora and Dr. Miroslav Londák, experts on the political and economic history of Slovakia in the 1960s. Discussions with Dr. Dušan Kováč and Dr. Elena Londáková made me even more aware of the importance of key moments in the evolution of Slovak society, distant and recent. In my research I could always rely upon the support of Dr. Slavomír Michálek, the Director of the Historical Institute, and the friendly advice of his colleagues.

Dr. Juraj Marušiak from the Institute of Political Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences helped me to navigate through the bulk of the literature published in the Slovak and Czech Republics over the last couple of years. Professor Slavomír

Ondrejovič, the Director of the Linguistic Institute of Ľudovít Štúr in Bratislava shared his views on the ethno-linguistic evolution of the Slovaks; for the way it is interpreted in this study I am solely to blame. I can still recall inspiring debates with Dr. Viktor Krupa, the retired Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, on interdisciplinary contexts of Slovak history linked to language and identity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic was generous in allowing me to search documents in its Diplomatic Archives. Ambassador Vasil Grivna, the Director General of the Ministry's Section for Slovaks living abroad, and Dr. Otto Koči, the Director of the Diplomatic Archives, provided me with all the help I needed. In the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava, I studied documents related to the period from 1918 to 1948, for the records of Slovak political parties from the 1990s onward have not yet been made accessible for research.

I am very thankful to Margaret and Pauline Ridzon for having received the Adela and John Ridzon Memorial Scholarship over the past four years. The Department of History at the University of Ottawa awarded me the Gaston Héon Research Scholarship, thus contributing to the possibility of my fieldwork in Slovakia. I also wish to thank the interviewees who shared with me their recollections of the events examined. The Aspen Institute in Washington has kindly granted me permission to quote from the internet article by Ruth Hoogland DeHoog and Luba Racanska dedicated to the democratization, civil society and non-profit organizations in the Czech and Slovak Republics. There are not enough words for expressing my gratitude to my wife Dagmar, who spent many sleepless nights transcribing the interviews, and Christine, my lovely daughter. Without their help, patience and sacrifice I would not have been able to complete my work.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANO - Alliance of a New Citizen

DA MZV SR - Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Slovak Republic

DS - Democratic Party

DU - Democratic Union

FZ - Federal Assembly

HSES - Hlinka Slovak People's Party

HZD - Movement for Democracy

HZDS - Movement for Democratic Slovakia

KDH - Christian-Democratic Movement

KSČ - Communist Party of Czechoslovakia

KSS - Communist Party of Slovakia

ĽÚ - People's Union

MKDH - Magyar Christian-Democratic Movement

MEHZP - Magyar Movement for Reconciliation and Prosperity

MNI - Magyar Independent Initiative

NF - National Front

NR SR - National Council of the Slovak Republic

NZ - National Assembly

ODA - Civic-Democratic Alliance

ODS - Civic-Democratic Party

ODÚ - Civic-Democratic Union

OF - Civic Forum

PSNS - Original Slovak National Party

SDK - Slovak Democratic Coalition

SDKÚ - Slovak Democratic and Christian Union

SDE - Party of the Democratic Left

SDSS- Social Democratic Party of Slovakia

SIS - Slovak Information Service

SKDH - Slovak Christian Democratic Movement

SE - Chamber of the People

SĽS - Slovak People's Party

SMK - Party of the Magyar Coalition

SN - Chamber of Nations

SNA - Slovak National Archives

SNJ - Party of National Unity

SNR - Slovak National Council

SNS - Slovak National Party

SOP - Party of Civic Understanding

SZS - Green Party of Slovakia

ÚS - Constitutional Court

VPN - Public Against Violence

ZRS - Association of Workers in Slovakia

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Bál som sa tmy, teraz sa bojím ďalšieho dňa

(I was afraid of the dark, now I fear the coming day)

Graffiti by "Santiago"

Uršulínska Street, Košice

East Slovakia, summer 2007

INTRODUCTION

The painful processes of political and socio-economic transformation in post-communist Czechoslovakia had been underway for three years, when the Slovak Republic emerged as one of its two successor states on January 1, 1993. In contrast to its neighbours with similar experiences – the Czechs, the Magyars and the Poles – the Slovaks appeared for many as a non-historic nation with a missing tradition of statehood.¹ The Czech Republic was the leader among the fragile democracies of East Central Europe engaged in reforms designed to catch up with the West through their desired memberships in the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Economic Development (OECD), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU).² It was followed by Hungary and Poland, which had long histories of nation and state-building underlined by a strong record of resistance to Communism.³ The newly-independent and internationally invisible Slovak Republic,

¹ For a link between the tradition of statehood and the state-building processes in East Central Europe see Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe. Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.29 and 33. On the connection of the tradition of statehood with nationalism in Austria-Hungary see A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), pp.28-29.

² Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation Versus State* (Boulder - Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.188. For economic reforms in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as the regional leaders in the mid-1990s see Mitchell A. Orenstein, *Out of the Red: Building Capitalism and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

³ “Poland and Hungary had outdistanced Czechoslovakia in their quest for freedom.” Piotr Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.266. Although acceptable in regard to the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the activities of the Solidarity Movement and its impact on Poland from the 1980s onward, the statement’s general validity, in light of civic resilience, if not armed resistance, against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, is open to debate. Wandycz seems to be closer to

with its unpredictable capacity to cope with the upcoming difficulties of democratic transformation, was perceived as a neophyte.⁴

Fears of another conflict in East Central Europe similar to that in collapsing Yugoslavia proved to be unsubstantiated due to the peaceful cohabitation of the Slovaks and Czechs and the ability of their political elites to negotiate what has been called the “Velvet Divorce.”⁵ Consequently, the Slovaks were held responsible for the split of the common state they had shared with their counterparts for more than seven decades. The awkward international image of Slovakia was further strengthened by its appearance as nationalist and intolerant towards its minorities.⁶ In the mid-1990s, in addition to its already negative reputation, Slovakia was shattered by disturbances on the domestic political scene under a regime described as “illiberal.”⁷ This was the major reason why it

the truth when referring, though indirectly, to Russia, with which Poland and Hungary had negative historical experiences, whereas the Slovaks and the Czechs, until 1968, had not.

⁴ Karen Henderson, *Slovakia: the Escape from Invisibility* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p.41. This perception corresponds with the opinion of Jozef Klimko, Professor of State Law and Theory of Law at the Faculty of Law of Comenius University in Bratislava, the two-time Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Austria and the former Dean of the Bratislava University of Law, expressed in the winter of 1994. According to Klimko, who lectured at the Institute of International Relations at Comenius University the history of Czechoslovakia, western diplomats accredited in Bratislava considered the ability of the Slovak Republic to survive as an independent state as extremely vulnerable to external factors. This perception resulted in the distrust of foreign investors. On this see Robert A. Young’s *The Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Kingston: Queen’s University, 1994), p.63.

⁵ Sharon L. Wolchik, “The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia,” In *East European Politics and Societies* 8, no.1 (Winter 1991), p.183. Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp.316-317.

⁶ See Miroslav Kusý, “Human and Minority Rights,” In *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšyn and Tom Nicholson (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1999), pp.95-106.

⁷ Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs* 76, no.6 (1997), pp.22 and 41.

began lagging behind the rest of the *Visegrád Group* (V-4) in the integration into the European Union and NATO.⁸

The turning point was the parliamentary elections in September of 1998, which resulted in a change of government. Since then, Slovakia quickly proceeded towards accession into the main organizations of European and trans-Atlantic integration. By the beginning of the 2000s, the country's sustainable economic growth and political stability attracted massive foreign investments, making it one of the fastest growing economies within the EU.⁹ From the mid-2000s, Slovakia was on the right track to adopt the *Euro* as the first among members of the *Visegrád* group under the strict budgetary supervision of the European Central Bank and the European Commission. On January 1, 2009, it accomplished its goal.

However, it was already clear in the mid-1990s that neither the previous lack of statehood, nor international invisibility, nor the deficits of an illiberal regime led the country towards collapse.¹⁰ The overall political and institutional stability and economic progress from 1998 onward gradually resulted in a change of Slovakia's perception in the West. The domestic and foreign media have based the country's "success story" on bold economic reforms introduced in the early 2000s.¹¹ Some political scientists spoke

⁸ Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland created this group of Central European states on February 15, 1991.

⁹ Scott Steele, "A European Powerhouse," *Canadian Business*, September 13, 2004, p.4. The article comments on the rapid changes that took place in Slovakia after the Dzurinda government had introduced new reforms dominated by the very competitive 19% flat tax, which resulted in a massive influx of foreign investments. For the same argument see Mathew Reynolds, "Once a Backwater, Slovakia Surges," *The New York Times*, December 28, 2004.

¹⁰ Henderson, p.129.

¹¹ For an updated variant of this perspective see the article "Success story republiky" [Success Story of the Republic] by Marián Leško, *Sme*, January 2, 2008.

of Slovakia's sudden awakening almost like a miracle.¹² Others admitted that they underestimated the strength and the role of the re-emerging Slovak civil society which was eventually able to overcome the difficulties of its complex transformation.¹³

Contrasting views on the political and societal transition of Slovakia from a former communist state to a democratic one provide the opportunity to examine its causes, course and outcome from a broader historical perspective. Such a society, stagnant at one moment and active at another, created an environment that helped to produce democratic political parties and state institutions supposed to function as the backbone of modern democracies.¹⁴ The accounts in the 1990s seemed to have mostly been preoccupied with the immediate impact of Communism on Slovakia. For a better understanding of what happened in the 1990s and early 2000s, it is crucial to identify those moments in the existence and evolution of Slovak society in Austria-Hungary and Czechoslovakia that can substitute for the missing statehood and connect them with Slovakia's post-communist transformation. Before addressing the problem itself, it will prove useful to discover how the Slovaks have been described in scholarly literature.

¹² Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová, "Slovakia's Democratic Awakening," *Journal of Democracy* 10.1 (1999), pp.80-95. Martin Bútora, Grigorij Mesežnikov, Zora Bútorová, Sharon Fisher, *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia* (Bratislava: IVO, 1999).

¹³ Cas Mudde, "Civil society in post-communist Europe: Lessons from the 'dark side'," In *Uncivil society? Contentious politics in post-communist Europe*, eds. Petr Kopecký and Cass Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p.166.

¹⁴ "Political parties are an indispensable component of modern liberal democracy. They make a critical contribution to the political life of emerging or consolidating democracies in Central East Europe (CEE)." Paul Lewis, "Political Parties," In *Developments in Central and East European Politics 3*, eds. Stephen White, Judy Batt and Paul G. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p.153.

Chapter 1

People Without History

1.1 Here there are lions

One of the most intriguing aspects of the history of East Central Europe is that it still has to be rediscovered. Oscar Halecki made a telling observation almost six decades ago. He pointed out that, whereas Western Europe is frequently identified as a whole continent, interest in the Ottoman Empire and Russia also made them an inseparable part of Europe. What paradoxically remained unknown was “a vast terra incognita of Europe: the eastern part of Central Europe, between Sweden, Germany and Italy, on the one hand, and Turkey and Russia on the other.”¹ According to Halecki, the history of the region was neglected because its people were subjugated by their neighbouring empires. When these newly emerging peoples formed independent, often multiethnic, states after WW I, awareness of them had hardly started in both Western Europe and North America. The Second World War and the Cold War resulted in two totalitarian regimes that prolonged the region’s existence as an ambiguous part of Europe.² Having added a vision to his interpretation of the past, Halecki predicted that “No permanent peace will be established before their [East Central European countries’] traditional place in the

¹ Oscar Halecki, *Borderlands of Western Civilization: A History of East Central Europe* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952), p.3. For the long-term evolution of the geographical and cultural concepts of Europe identified exclusively with the West see J. A. Pocock, “Some Europes in Their History,” In *The Idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the European Union*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.60.

² For the reasons and consequences of the continuing neglect of the region in the West see Piotr Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.1-11. Wandycz observes that “One cannot be satisfied with a fragmentary and superficial knowledge of East Central Europe developed in response to headlines.” *Ibid.*, p.1.

European community, now enlarged as the Atlantic community, is restored.³ Until this vision became, to a certain extent, reality in the early 2000s, the Iron Curtain was blamed for making “the lands between” forgotten, unattractive and thus invisible in the West.⁴

The problem of the invisibility of Eastern Europe is twofold. Communism, as a totalitarian regime, further petrified perceptions of the region’s primordial *otherness* in the West, which resulted in its rejection and lack of interest except for the Soviet studies. Sovietization and ideologization of the educational systems in East Central Europe, however, did not mean that communist countries had removed western culture and history from their curricula. Despite Marxist ideological indoctrination, students in both elementary and high schools in communist Czechoslovakia were taught the history and culture of the West.⁵ Their textbooks referred to the common heritage of western civilization represented by ancient civilizations that had existed in the Middle-East and by the legacies of the Hellenic, Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures. Their textbooks did not erase the Magna Carta, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Molière, Cervantes, Keats, Goethe, Lincoln and T.S. Eliot, and referred to them in a similar way as the textbooks of their peers in the West. The youth in communist countries, under the influence of the

³ Halecki, p.4.

⁴ The metaphor comes up from Alan Palmer’s seminal book *The Lands Between: A History of East Central Europe since the Congress of Vienna* (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

⁵ For the impact of the communist model of higher education in East Central Europe see John Connelly, *Captive Universities: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). The book refers to the process of Sovietization of education while stressing the ideological and political indoctrination and replacement of the old professorate by a new one devoted to Communism during the Stalinist and post-Stalinist era. It does not examine the change in academic curricula at universities in pertinent countries and does not compare them with those at western universities.

idea of proletarian internationalism and the dominance of the Soviet Union, were supposed to know not only the times and lives of Lomonosov, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Chekhov, but also – in addition to those of Gorky, Madách, Vidov, Franko and Mickiewicz⁶ – the names of communist political leaders such as Klement Gottwald, Georgi Dimitrov and Walter Ulbricht. Even those students who did not wish to further pursue an academic career had a solid grasp of the main events and key figures in the history of both East and West. Academic programs in the arts and humanities in communist Czechoslovakia were tailored in such a way as to make young people well-aware of the cultural space beyond the physical frontiers of the state. A closer look at history textbooks for undergraduate students in North America reveals that the references to the history of East Central Europe are scarce and too general, thus prolonging the region's invisibility in the early stages of higher education.⁷

This attitude had practical consequences. If Czechoslovakia as a “darling” of western democracies had not been worth supporting in 1938, and later on, as a

⁶ Jaroslav Charvát, *Svetové dejiny: Učebnica pre I. a II. ročník stredných všeobecnovzdelávacích škôl a I. ročník stredných odborných škôl* [History of the World: A history textbook for the 1st and 2nd year students of high schools and for the 1st year students of specialized high schools] (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1968); Jozef Minárik and Juraj Koutun, *Literatúra pre 1.ročník gymnázií a pre 1.ročník stredných odborných škôl* [Literature textbook for the 1st year students of gymnasia and for the 1st year students of specialized high schools] (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1975); Pavol Petrus and Miloš Tomčík, *Literatúra pre 2. ročník gymnázií a pre 2.ročník stredných odborných škôl* [Literature textbook for the 2nd year students of gymnasia and for the 2nd year students of specialized high schools] (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1978).

⁷ See the following history textbooks: Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: A Brief History. Volume II: Since 1500* (Thomson and Wadsworth, 2005); Brian Levack, Edward Muir, Meredith Veldman and Michael Maas, *The West: Encounters and Transformations. Volume II: Since 1550* (Pearson and Longman, 2007). For an example of a modern history textbook used in undergraduate courses taught at universities in Ontario see William R. Keylor and Jerry Bannister, *The Twentieth Century World: An International History* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

communist state, in 1968, no wonder that general audiences in the West had hardly noticed the existence of the Slovaks. Having been a part of the Kingdom of Hungary for nine centuries, and for more than seven decades a part of Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks allegedly could not claim such a brilliant past full of royal grandeur as their more visible neighbours, the Czechs, the Poles and the Magyars.⁸ With the exception of the latter, the links that led to the Kingdom of Bohemia, as well as to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – *Rzeczpospolita* – had been broken in 1620 and in 1795, respectively. In searching for their origins, the Slovaks had to dig deeper. The link that led from the Great Moravian Empire in the 9th century AD to the years 1848, 1861, 1918 and 1993 as milestones in the modern political emancipation of the Slovaks seemed to some as having been insufficient to support the grievances and claims of their religious and political elites for an autonomous existence within Austria-Hungary, and later on, within the Czechoslovak Republic. This skeptical outlook is reflected by the following observation of respected American historian of Polish origin Piotr Wandycz:

Among the Slovaks the modest beginnings of a slow transition from ethnicity to nationality affected both the Hungarians and the Czechs. The latter viewed the Slovaks in terms of common Slavism or Czechoslovakism, and indeed Kollár and Šafařík appeared as the living proof of the validity of this concept. The Hungarians refused to countenance the very idea of a Slovak nation that had no history of separate statehood. The Slovaks were regarded as the Slavs of Upper Hungary, the Protestants among them using as a literary language the old Czech of the Scriptures and liturgy (*bibličina*). The gentry, mainly of the poorest kind, was more numerous in Slovakia than in Bohemia in the late eighteenth century. It comprised (counting only the males) 4.6 percent of the total male population of Slovakia and 0.1 percent in Bohemia. Their highest claim was to be of “Slav language and Hungarian nation,” in fact very few claimed as much as this.⁹

⁸ Wandycz, p.23.

⁹ Ibid., pp.147-148.

The later periods of Slovak history, the short-lived existence of the wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945) under the tutelage of the Third Reich during WWII, could hardly have contributed to a positive perception of the Slovaks in the West.¹⁰ When Communism became a socio-political reality in East Central Europe, the Slovaks were given the chance to accelerate urbanization and industrialization of their society as prerequisites for modernization.¹¹ During the following four decades of communist rule, the idea of building a new society in East Central Europe based on the gradual dissolution of the classes and establishing, in fact, an artificial social equity, was of primary importance, not that of full national emancipation.¹²

1.2 Far away, sick and invisible

Although having officially been recognized as a distinct ethno-linguistic group in earnest in the late 14th century,¹³ it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that

¹⁰ Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party* (New York-London: Columbia University Press, 1976), vii. For an update of this perspective see Ivan Kamenec, "Slovenská spoločnosť v rokoch 1939-1945" [Slovak Society between 1939 and 1945], In *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka* [The Czech and Slovak Historical Yearbook] (Masarykova univerzita: Brno, 2004), pp. 87-102.

¹¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.33.

¹² Michal Barnovský, "Politické strany na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-1948," In *Vývoj politických stran v českých zemích a Československu, 1861-2004, II. díl, období 1960-2004* [The Evolution of Political Parties in the Czech Lands and Czechoslovakia, Volume II, the period 1960-2004], eds. Jiří Malíř and Pavel Marek (Brno: Nakladatelství Doplněk, 2005), p.1208.

¹³ See the confirmation of privileges given to the Slovak (Slavic) townsmen of the city of Žilina by King Eudovít I (Louis I. of the Anjou - Angevin dynasty) dated May 7, 1381 on their parity in the City Council with the Germans. See Michal Barnovský (ed.), *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti I* [Documents on Slovak National Identity and Statehood, Vol.I] (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998), document no. 44, pp.154-155. The term 'Slovak' appears in the records of the University in Prague in the 15th century and 'Slovakia' (*Slovensko*) and the Slovak language (*slovenská reč*) in a brochure published in Wittenberg in 1541. Milan Krajčovič, "Maďari a problémy národnej identity Slovákov v 19. storočí" [The Magyars and the Problems of Slovak

the Slovaks were discovered in the West. The British historian of Scottish origin, Robert William Seton-Watson, and the Norwegian writer and Nobel Prize Laureate of 1903 Björnstjerne Björnson, noticed the Slovaks during the context of their resistance to forced *Magyarisation*. They sympathized with them as a severely oppressed nationality of the Kingdom of Hungary and made their cause internationally visible.¹⁴ The French historian and admirer of the Bohemian medieval state Ernest Denis joined their voices during the First World War while advocating the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the creation of a common state of the Czechs and the Slovaks which he expected to become a barrier to German influence in Central Europe.¹⁵

Half a century later, Seton-Watson's countryman of similar academic stature, A.J.P. Taylor, reminded his readers of the alleged ingratitude of the Slovaks towards the Czechs while citing Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, the founding father and the first president of Czechoslovakia. According to Taylor, Masaryk had originally hoped that "the Czechs and the Slovaks would come together as the English and the Scots had done; the Slovaks [instead] turned out to be the Irish."¹⁶ The former assumption did not materialize, for even though the Slovak leaders might have been naïve in terms of *Realpolitik* dominated by pursuit of national interests rather than moral principles and

National Identity in the 19th Century], *Historické štúdie* 37 (1996), p.52. Robert A. Kann and Zdenek V. David, *The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 1526-1918* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp.78-83. For a detailed study on the still ethnically dominant Slavic nobility in the Zvolen region in the Kingdom of Hungary emerging after the decline of Great Moravia see Mária Ďurková, "Vznik a vývoj najstaršej zvolenskej šľachty" [The Emergence and Evolution of the Oldest Nobility in Zvolen], *Historický časopis* 56, no.1 (2008), pp.3-28.

¹⁴ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (New York: H. Fertig, 1972) (Reprint of the 1908 original edition).

¹⁵ Ernest Denis, *Georges de Podiébrad. Les Jagellons* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1890). Ernest Denis, *La question d'Autriche* (Paris: Delagrave, 1917).

¹⁶ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p.255.

strict observance of legal obligations,¹⁷ they insisted that the provisions of the Pittsburgh Agreement, signed by Masaryk in May of 1918, had to be implemented, as the agreement stood at the very center of the willingness of Slovaks to join, after some hesitation, the Czechs in a common state.¹⁸ Rather limited scholarly interest in pre-war Czechoslovakia did not exercise any influence upon the pragmatic foreign policy of western democracies. They showed no particular enthusiasm in saving Czechoslovakia from Hitler's revanchism in 1938. It had been for them a "faraway country" of which they still knew little and cared even less.¹⁹

That said it was pivotal that the émigré historians from East Central Europe, who had fled Nazism and Communism, such as Robert Kann from Austria and Oscar Halecki from Poland, established the scholarship on East Central Europe in North America.

¹⁷ "For him [Masaryk] the demands were only proposals and the essential need was to create a united Czechoslovak movement with which to impress the Allies. The Slovaks and Little Russians were later to complain that they had been outwitted: since Masaryk was a philosopher, they had expected him to be also a simpleton - a most unreasonable assumption." Taylor, p.247.

¹⁸ On the legally non-binding character of the Pittsburgh agreement first enunciated by Masaryk see Robert W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1965), p.306. M. Mark Stolarik challenges Masaryk's argumentation by referring to the Constitution of the United States and legal advice given by the Pittsburgh law firm of Alter, Wright and Barron to American Slovaks after the signing of the Agreement. According to the law firm, "all organizations with a Constitution and By-laws could indeed enter into agreements, whether they were chartered or not." M. Mark Stolarik, *The Role of American Slovaks in the Creation of Czechoslovakia, 1914-1918* (Cleveland: Slovak Institute, 1968), pp.52-53. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum views the problem from a political perspective while stressing that "whatever the legal justifications, it was an error on the part of Masaryk to ignore the Pittsburgh Pact's political ramification and importance." Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "The Cleveland and Pittsburgh Documents," *Slovakia*, XXXVI, nos, 66-67 (1998), p.96.

¹⁹ Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation Versus State* (Boulder - Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.2. For a detailed examination of the reasons for and the outcome of the British engagement and subsequent disengagement in the German-Czechoslovak dispute over the Sudetenland as a primary reason for the destruction of the First Czechoslovak Republic see Paul Vyšný, *The Runciman Mission to Czechoslovakia, 1938: Prelude to Munich* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Although the Cold War era made the western elites and public audiences more receptive to an understanding of the region's history, detailed knowledge was not common. Meanwhile, the arrival of Communism to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland prolonged the era of the region's invisibility as, according to Hugh Seton-Watson, cut off from the West and dominated by a totalitarian regime it was gradually becoming the "sick heart of Europe".²⁰ Half a century later, another academic celebrity, István Deák, an American historian of Magyar origin, in his praise of Lonnie Johnson's overview of the history of East Central Europe felt obliged to remind his readers that

Central Europe has finally re-entered the cultural world of Western Europe and the United States...Lonnie Johnson has come along with a book which is extremely useful, not only for courses on Central Europe, but will be indispensable to readers whose knowledge of European ideas is generally limited to the Western half of the continent.²¹

While insightful as an updated review of the region's dramatic history, the book hardly touched upon the inner continuum in the history of Slovaks as one of its parts.

Pioneers of scholarship on Slovak history in North America were those who escaped from Slovakia after WW II. From today's perspective, the works of Joseph A. Mikuš, Jozef Kirschbaum and Jozef Lettrich²² fulfilled their primary task, which was to remind academics in North America of the historical existence of the Slovaks.²³ Their

²⁰ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Sick Heart of Modern Europe: The Problem of the Danubian Lands* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1975), pp.3 and 76.

²¹ Lonnie Johnson. *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends* (New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For an extract of Deák's comment see the back page of the book jacket.

²² Joseph A. Mikuš, *Slovakia: A Political History: 1918-1950* (Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press, 1963). Jozef Kirschbaum, *Slovakia - Nation at the Crossroads of Europe* (New York: Joseph Speller and Sons, 1960). Jozef Lettrich, *History of Modern Slovakia* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955).

²³ See M. Mark Stolarik, "Slovak Historians In Exile In North America, 1945-1992,"

publications supplemented the work done by the American scholar of Slovak descent Victor S. Mamatey.²⁴ Mikuš, an émigré of 1945, was first among Slovak historians to attempt to answer the question why Slovak history was unknown and even distorted. According to him, it was due to “the manipulation of public opinion in the West.”²⁵ Then followed a generation of historians and political scientists of Slovak and Czech origins who were raised and educated in North America during the Cold War, such as Edita Bosák, M. Mark Stolarik, and Stanislav J. Kirschbaum in Canada,²⁶ and Zora Pryor, Carol Skalnik Leff and Peter A. Toma in the United States. Although they have contributed to the scholarship on Slovak history in a more detailed way, they alone could hardly have reversed the overall unawareness of the intricacies in the evolution of Slovak society. Moreover, until 1989, the works of many of those authors had been prohibited in communist Czechoslovakia for they had been considered by state

Human Affairs 6, no.1 (1996), pp.34-44. With the exception of Lettrich, I refer to professional historians and political scientists. There were other public figures and politicians who helped to spread knowledge on Slovakia in North America, particularly Štefan Osuský, Slovak politician and the Minister of Czechoslovakia to France prior to WW II, Karol Sidor, former high-profile politician of the Slovak People’s Party and Slovak ambassador to the Holy See (1939-1945), and Juraj Slávik, former ambassador of Czechoslovakia to Poland (1935-1939) and the United States (1947-1948).

²⁴ Victor S. Mamatey, the son of Albert Mamatey, one of the founding fathers of the Slovak League in America and a signatory of the Pittsburgh Agreement, in his research focused on modern Slovak history, including the history of the Slovak immigration in North America. With the Czech scholar Radomír Luža, Mamatey co-edited and co-authored one of the principal books on the history of Czechoslovakia prior to the communist era - *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

²⁵ Joseph A. Mikuš, *Slovakia: A Misunderstood History* (Hamilton, Ontario: The Battlefield Press, 1979). Mikuš refers to Masaryk’s influence on creating the image of Czechoslovakia in the West as a state of the “Czechoslovaks.” Ibid., p.6.

²⁶ Professor Marian Mark Stolarik is the Chairholder of the Chair in Slovak History and Culture in the Department of History, University of Ottawa. Edita Bosák is Associate Professor in the Department History at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Professor Stanislav J. Kirschbaum teaches political science in the Department of Political Science at Glendon College, York University, in Toronto.

authorities inimical towards the regime, which they undoubtedly were.²⁷ With the fall of the Iron Curtain, the rigid and impenetrable wall between the domestic and exile Slovak historians was expected to cease – an assumption that proved too optimistic. Some historians in Slovakia seem to be in a state of “high alert” when facing the perspectives and interpretations on Slovakia’s modern history by some of their academic peers of Slovak descent dispersed in North America, Australia and Italy, whom they have primarily seen as *neol’udáks* (Neo-Populists) tightly bound to advocacy of the wartime Slovak Republic (1939 to 1945) as an ally and protégé of the national-socialist Germany.²⁸ This ongoing suspicion hampers the “filling of many gaps in Slovak history and historiography that continue to exist to this day,” a desire expressed by Stolarik a decade ago.²⁹

The dismantling of Communism in Czechoslovakia in the fall and winter of 1989-1990 thus became a moment of truth for many Slovak historians at home.³⁰ During the

²⁷ Stolarik, “Slovak Historians in Exile in North America, 1945-1992,” p.41.

²⁸ František Vnuk is from the University of Adelaide and Milan S. Ďurica from the University of Padova. On the diverging attitudes towards the historians in exile see “Záznam panelové diskuse ‘Slovenský, český, československý exil po roku 1945’” [Record of the Panel Discussion “Slovak, Czech, Czechoslovak Exile after 1945]. *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2005* [Czech and Slovak Historical Yearbook 2005] (Brno: Vydavatelství Masarykovy univerzity, 2005), pp.89-90. Jan Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa: Česko-slovenské vztahy 1989-1992* [The Breakup of Czechoslovakia. The Czech and Slovak Relationship, 1989-1992] (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2002), pp.107-111. Rychlík sees the impact of the Slovak exile associations on Slovak politics as minimal, and the impact of the pro-Czechoslovak associations as equal to zero. Ibid., p. 110. For the selective and dogmatist approach to Slovak national history and its isolation from broader contexts see Milan Krajčovič, “Ku zjazdu historikov“ [On the Congress of Historians], *Verejnost*, February 12, 1990, p.6.

²⁹ Stolarik, “Slovak Historians...,” p.41.

³⁰ For an overview of Slovak historiography after the fall of communism and problems with its de-ideologization see Pavol Petruf, “L’historiographie slovaque dans les années 1990-1992,” In *Histoire et pouvoir en Europe médiane* (Paris-Montréal: L’Harmattan, 1996), pp.211-228. For the impact of ideology on Slovak historiography during Communism see Anton Hrnko, “Zatemnené dejiny: Obraz medzivojnovnej slovenskej

following months and years, Slovak historians, in general, underwent a transformation from ideological uniformity and interpretational conformity to a wider spectrum of perspectives and approaches including nationalist and liberal.³¹ They were joined by their colleagues who had not been allowed to publish during the period of ‘normalization’ (1970-1985), such as Ľubomír Lipták and Jozef Jablonický.³² Even with their contributions, modern Slovak historiography before and after 1989 hardly exceeded the perimeter of East Central Europe.³³ At best it reached a few places in Western Europe and North America.³⁴

The fall of communist regimes in East Central Europe in the autumn of 1989 marked a watershed in the mutual East-West estrangement as the interest in the West in the region’s transforming societies erupted. Political scientists were first to study and measure the progress of the region’s post-communist countries towards democracy by their own methodology which stressed the values of liberal democracy and rejected ethnic nationalism. For a decade this approach seems to have prevailed. It widened the

spoločnosti v prácach slovenských historikov” [A Darkened History: The Picture of the Interwar Slovak Society in the Works of Slovak Historians], *Literárny týždenník*, June 28, 1991, p.10.

³¹ M. Mark Stolarik, “Slovak Historiography since the Downfall of Communism (1989).” *Canadian Review of Studies of Nationalism/Revue Canadienne des Etudes sur le Nationalisme*.XXIX, nos. 1-2 (1989), p.69.

³² For an overview of Slovak historiography in the 20th century from a North American perspective see also M. Mark Stolarik, “The Painful Birth of Slovak Historiography in the 20th Century,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* (Marburg) 50, no.2 (2001), pp.161-187.

³³ Stolarik, “Slovak Historiography since The Downfall of Communism,” pp.74-75.

³⁴ Among them was Ján Mlynárik, Slovak historian, who was forced to immigrate to West Germany due to his non-conformist views on the history of post-war Czechoslovakia. He signed *Charter 77*. Stolarik observes that “Slovak historians have lived in a vacuum for so long that they have difficulty seeing beyond Central Europe...Finally, Slovak historians need to learn to be critical of each other’s work and to write true historiographic articles about themselves.” Stolarik, “Slovak Historiography...,” pp.74-75.

gap between the historically well-advanced and progressive societies and those which still suffered from delayed socio-national evolution, economic stagnation, pervasive nationalism and political immaturity. A new generation of Slovaks, enthusiastic about their newly-acquired political and civic freedom and, at the same time, puzzled by varying interpretations of their national history stemming from previous ideological coloration, belonged to the latter group. Previously invisible, they now began to be seen as predominantly rural and backward people, whose national emancipation process was historically far behind the more advanced Czechs.³⁵

Interest in Czechoslovakia peaked during the last phase of its existence and after the dissolution of the state. Established scholars such as James F. Brown, Vladimir Kusin, Carol Skalnik Leff and Sharon L. Wolchik were joined by a new generation of younger colleagues, mostly political scientists – Abby Innes, Shari J. Cohen, and Karen Henderson – to name but a few. The cheerful mood celebrating the fall of Communism present in the works of some³⁶ was interchanged with more skeptical views on current developments and the future prospects of the emerging democracies in East Central Europe in the works of others.³⁷ What remained the same was the invisibility of Slovaks closely bound with the perceptions and interpretations of their history.

³⁵ The origins of this perspective can be traced back to Miroslav Hroch's fundamental article "From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe," *New Left Review*, I/198 (March-April 1993), pp.60-74. Hroch's theory upon which western political science built its methodology has given the Czechs almost a seven decade advantage in the nation-building process over the Slovaks. I will return to the Hroch's classification related to Slovak national emancipation in the 19th century in the final chapter.

³⁶ Padraic Kennedy, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

³⁷ For the role of modern nationalism that has hampered this process see George Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

1.3 A people without history

In the late 1990s, Shari J. Cohen suggested that the Slovaks, due to a lack of statehood, a missing political tradition, weak elites and the mixed legacies of two totalitarian regimes, had no national history.³⁸ The catalysts of Cohen's book are the existence of the Slovak Republic from 1939-1945 and the impact of Communism on Slovakia. Both Cohen's methodology and conclusions were scrutinized by Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, who objected that Cohen's book had suffered from preconceptions and simplifications. According to Kirschbaum, what happened in Slovakia during the communist period was "ideologization rather than eradication of history" and Cohen, like some other western scholars, failed to see Slovak history, at least from the 18th century on, in a historical continuity, and within the context of the states of which the Slovaks had been parts.³⁹ Cohen's arguments on the absence of history in Slovakia have recently been refuted by Paal Sigurd Hilde. While referring to Joseph Rotschild and Carol Skalnik Leff, Hilde pointed out that, contrary to Cohen's claims of the opposite, the "consensus in Slovak, Czech and international historiography is that Slovak national awareness was well developed by 1948. Similarly, her [Cohen's] assumption that in 1989, the average Slovak had no historical consciousness and thus no national awareness, contradicts most studies of Slovak nationalism and post-communist Slovakia"⁴⁰.

³⁸ Shari J. Cohen, *Politics Without A Past: The Absence Of History In Postcommunist Nationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

³⁹ Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "Slovakia: Whose History, What History?," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes* XLV, nos.3-4 (2003), p.465.

⁴⁰ Paal Sigurd Hilde, "Nationalism In Post-Communist Slovakia And The Slovak National Diaspora, 1989-1992," D. Phil. Thesis, Politics (St. Anthony's College University of Oxford, 2003), p.19.

Given the fact that the Slovaks were not denied their pre-national and national history by C.A. Macartney, Robert A. Kann, Oscar Halecki⁴¹ and others more than a half century earlier, conclusions made by Cohen and some others in the 1990s and 2000s may come as a surprise. The reason seems to be the fragmentary character of Slovak history as it is viewed from the outside.⁴² Therefore, some Slovak historians in the 1990s suggested that they should concentrate upon studying “the history of Slovakia, not on national Slovak history,” in order to become the part of a larger picture again, a claim rejected as “cosmopolitan” by the historians grouped around the *Matica slovenská*.⁴³ The former approach is a better alternative in making Slovaks more visible, for it includes, as Kirschbaum stressed, “not only [Slovak] political, social, and cultural history but also the history of the states in which the Slovaks have lived from the tenth to the last decade of the twentieth century.”⁴⁴ This perspective was embraced by some Slovak politicians. Pavol Hrušovský, Chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement, in his 2003 New Year’s Address as the President of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, spoke in favour of Slovak-Magyar friendly cohabitation while claiming a common historical legacy linked to the Kingdom of Hungary.⁴⁵ The derision made by a member of the

⁴¹ I refer to their works in more detail in the following chapter.

⁴² For the selective and evasive approaches of Slovak historians to the politically sensitive and less attractive themes and periods in Slovak history see Ľubomír Lipták, “Aké dejiny potrebujeme?” [“What Kind of History Do We Need?”], In *Slovenská otázka dnes* (The Slovak Question Today), ed. László Szigeti (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2007), pp. 11-16.

⁴³ Stolarik, “The Painful Birth of Slovak Historiography...,” pp.185-186. R. Marsina, V. Čičaj, D. Kováč, Ľ Lipták, *Slovenské dejiny* [Slovak History] (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1992), pp.7-11.

⁴⁴ Kirschbaum, “Slovakia: Whose History, What History?,” p.467.

⁴⁵ See the document “Stenografická správa zo slávnostného zasadnutia Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky, 1. január 2003 [Stenographic Report from the Ceremonial Session of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, January 1, 2003]. Accessible at www.nrsr.sk, (Digital Library, National Council of the Slovak Republic 3 2002-2006,

Parliament of Hungary in January of 2008, by which he tried to deprive the Slovaks of their history while referring to it as “mythical” and “non-existent” can be attributed to the reciprocated emotional exchanges with strong political undertones between radical nationalists in Slovakia and Hungary rather than a rational scholarly dispute.⁴⁶

In light of the significantly differing views on Slovak history it is important to address the question *why* problems about the invisibility of Slovaks persisted throughout the 1990s. A partial explanation is that the new generation of western scholars, in contrast to the older one, had rather a limited empirical and, in particular, absent psychological knowledge of the subject. For example, the American scholar James F. Brown, who worked for Radio Free Europe as a staffer and later as its director, wrote a year before the communist regime in Czechoslovakia collapsed (1989) that “As for Czechoslovakia’s two nations, the Slovak looked healthy and assertive. It had survived ten centuries of Hungarian oppression and was moving with self-confidence.”⁴⁷ This complimentary, yet inaccurate, as far as historical perspective is concerned, statement,

Meeting on January 1, 2003, Stenograph 1). Hrušovský underscored the idea that Slovaks during the history of the Kingdom of Hungary (until the 19th century) were its subjects, not passive objects.

⁴⁶ See the newspaper article “Csapody: Slovenská politika stavia na neexistujúcich dejinách” [Slovak Politics is Built Upon Non-Existent History], *Sme*, January 10, 2008. The author of the statement is the MP of the Parliament of the Republic of Hungary for the Magyar Democratic Forum Miklós Csapody. At a conference held in Budapest, Magyar historian István Kollai from Corvinus University admitted that Magyars themselves do not know their history as they think they do. They know almost nothing about the suppression of others, Kollai said. See “Maďarský historik Kollai: Maďari nevedia koho a ako utláčali [Magyar Historian Kollai: Magyars Do Not Know Who and How They Had Oppressed], *Sme*, December 9, 2008.

⁴⁷ J.F. Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), p.314. The reference to a “one thousand year oppression” of the Slovaks by Hungarians does not correspond with more recent interpretations of the cohabitation of both since the Slovaks were also Hungarians as the Scots and Irish were also British. Tensions had started before 1848 and culminated during forced *Magyarisation* that began after 1867 and lasted until the end of WW I.

was based on Brown's firsthand and long-term experience with communist regimes in Eastern Europe. This seems to have been missing among young scholars in the 1990s. The question regarding the invisibility of Slovak history, however, cannot be responded to solely on the basis of generational aspects and East-West dichotomy, let alone different approaches by history and political science. Karen Henderson, being a political scientist at the University of Leicester, may serve as an example.

As a young scholar, Henderson came to Slovakia prior to the collapse of Communism. Before she wrote a book with a symptomatic title (*Slovakia: The Escape from Invisibility*; 2002), she had studied Slovakia's post-communist transformation for more than a decade. In an earlier study on the explanation of the Slovak transition from Communism to democracy, Henderson argued that there is no conspiracy in sometimes distorted academic pictures of Slovakia. She looked for a rational explanation, stating:

The reason is ignorance, or rather unfamiliarity. Slovakia was invisible in Czechoslovakia, as the proponents of the 'hyphen' rightly pointed out. Few visitors went there. Independence was positive because they started to go. Bratislava gained its diplomatic corps, and foreigners traveled beyond Bratislava, whereas before it had been the one Slovak staging post on a visit from Prague. Yet most visitors had no Slovak; hence they spoke to English-speaking Slovaks, even if they went outside Bratislava. Such Slovaks were usually frantic about the less democratic developments under Mečiar's third government and tended, because of their own total (and quite laudable) preoccupation with this, to talk about these faults incessantly, and thereby painted a rather negative picture of the country. The positive quality of Slovakia – that a critical mass of educated citizens cared enough about democracy to register and articulate every case of its undermining – got somehow overlooked. Slovakia's greatest strength ended up getting registered in negative terms.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Karen Henderson, "Evaluating the Slovak Transition: What Creates the Image of Slovakia?," In *Slovakia after Communism and Mečiarism*, ed. Kieran Williams (London: School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, 2000), p.26.

Viewing Slovak history through the eyes of others was not the only problem that had made Slovaks invisible and their history distorted.⁴⁹ In the 1990s, it was also a methodological problem. Henderson argued that comparativists “often impose pre-conceived notions from elsewhere on Slovakia. Their analyses often work backwards. Slovakia must fit into a category...Slovakia has to cope with dangerous analytical misconceptions which took root during the Mečiar years [1994-1998], and which pervade political science writing.”⁵⁰ The problem with the Procrustean placement of Slovakia into fitting a category of more and less advanced nations based upon “guesswork” became partly obsolete in 2004 with the country’s accession into the European Union and its surprisingly solid economic performance and overall political stability.⁵¹ Its residua, however, have survived also in the works published after that date.

The relationship between nationalism and democracy in post-communist Slovakia deserves specific attention for it was considered one of the major hindrances – along with the country’s allegedly non-existent and seemingly ruptured history – in its democratic transformation. Though the proponents of liberal democracy have unconditionally rejected ethnic nationalism due to its resentment of others,⁵² there was

⁴⁹ According to Czech historian Stanley Z. Pech, “The history of the Slovaks in the West has usually been presented from the point of view of ‘Czechoslovakism’ and has appeared as hardly more than a postscript to Czech history.” As cited by Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1995), p.5.

⁵⁰ Henderson, “Evaluating the Slovak Transition...,” p.26. For a comparison of Slovakia’s evolution with Croatia see Sharon Fisher, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), and Erika Harris, *Nationalism and Democratisation: Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002).

⁵¹ Karen Henderson, *Slovakia: The Escape from Invisibility*, p.129.

⁵² C.G.A. Bryant, “Civic nation, civil society, civil religion,” In *Civil Society: Theory*,

another path followed by those who had suggested that nationalism was an intrinsic, not necessarily violent and confrontational, aspect of the evolution of young post-communist democracies. The Georgian scholar Ghia Nodia has argued that “democracy never exists without nationalism. The two are joined in a sort of complicated marriage, unable to live without each other, but coexisting in a permanent state of tension,”⁵³ on which Erika Harris commented that the “evident link between democracy and nationalism should not be confused with their compatibility.”⁵⁴ A middle-road between the two approaches to the phenomenon which this thesis intends to follow had already been suggested by one of the most prominent authorities on the matter: “A decision on such an issue [whether nationalists should be conciliated or resisted] is necessarily governed by particular circumstances of each individual case, and whether its consequences are fortunate or disastrous will depend on the courage, shrewdness and luck of those who have the power to take it.”⁵⁵

The ambiguous and polyvalent character of nationalism in its capacity to mobilize people, while being at the same time non-violent, can be best illustrated by the case of the (second) Slovak National Movement that emerged and dissipated after reaching its goal in the early 1990s. According to Darina Malová, a political scientist at Comenius University in Bratislava, the SNM helped to re-awake civil society in Slovakia between 1989 and 1992 under different circumstances and with different

History, Comparison, ed. J.A. Hall (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), p.145.

⁵³ Ghia Nodia, “Nationalism and Democracy,” In *Nationalism, Democracy, and Ethnic Conflict*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.4.

⁵⁴ Harris, *Nationalism and Democratisation: Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia*, p. 170. For a general picture of the causes for and consequences of resurrected nationalism in East Central Europe see Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom...*, pp. 270-272.

⁵⁵ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1966). See the Preface to the Second Edition.

goals.⁵⁶ Whereas in 1989, the movement had served the purpose of the removal of communist power, in 1992 it supported the idea of Slovak sovereignty. In reference to the volatility of either positive or negative perceptions of the SNM and its linkage to civil society and nationalism Cas Mudde pointed out that

While the nationalist movement in Slovakia in 1990-1992 is generally described as “bad”, and is excluded from ‘real’ civil society, similar organizations and the same people were included in the ‘good’ civil society in 1989... Thinking in simplistic antagonistic models, nationalists were ‘good’ when they opposed a ‘bad’ regime (communist Czechoslovakia). But they turned ‘bad’ when they started to oppose a ‘good’ regime (post-communist Czechoslovakia). And given that civil society is always ‘good’, this means that nationalism was one time part of civil society, and one time not.⁵⁷

Mudde’s statement, when taken together with the earlier observations by Kirschbaum and Henderson on stereotypes in Slovak history and their connection with the developments of Slovak society in the 1990s implies the need for reconsidering what had previously been dealt with as the facts.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ The first Slovak National Movement dates back to the period 1848-1861. Darina Malová, “The Slovak National Movement: A Case of Successful Contention,” In *Uncivil society? Contentious politics in post-communist Europe*, eds. Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp.55-73.

⁵⁷ Cas Mudde, “Civil society in post-communist Europe: Lessons from the ‘dark side’,” In *Uncivil society? Contentious politics in post-communist Europe*, p.161.

⁵⁸ On stereotypes in the interpretations of Slovakia’s history as of a laggard in terms of the country’s political, cultural, civilizational and democratic evolution and emancipation in comparison with other countries in East Central Europe see Ivan Kamenec, “Stereotypy v slovenských dejinách a slovenskej historiografii” [Stereotypes in Slovak History and Historiography], *Slovenská otázka dnes*, ed. László Szigeti (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2007), p. 125. For a warning on the dichotomic viewing of the history of East Central Europe in general and Czechoslovakia and its two nations in particular as ‘progressive’ versus ‘backward,’ ‘urban’ versus ‘rural,’ ‘liberal’ vs. ‘nationalist,’ ‘European’ vs. ‘Eastern’ as a “well-worn stereotype” see Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), ix-xi.

1.4 The research question

Two books on Slovak history published in the West after the fall of Communism were of particular significance since as they have had the potential to improve the existing state of affairs. The leitmotiv of Stanislav J. Kirschbaum's overview of Slovak history, published in the mid-1990s, was to make western scholars and a public audience familiar with the efforts of the Slovaks for self-emancipation and sovereignty.⁵⁹ A few years later, Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč' co-authored a monograph which covers the pre-Slovak and Slovak history from the creation of a first state among Western Slavs in 7th century AD to the eve of the accession of the Slovak Republic into NATO and the EU.⁶⁰ In addition, from 1995 onward, the authors affiliated with the Institute for Public Affairs (*Inštitút pre verejné otázky; IVO*), a leading non-governmental think-tank on foreign and domestic politics in Slovakia, published a series of in-depth analyses of multiple aspects of the evolution of Slovak society every year.⁶¹ Whereas Kirschbaum and Toma with Kováč' approached Slovak history from an extended perspective, the latter group of political scientists and sociologists was preoccupied with the political conflict between the "bad" – nationalist and quasi-nationalist, and the "good" –

⁵⁹ Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St.Martin'd Press, 1995).

⁶⁰ Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč', *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001).

⁶¹ Similar views were represented by political scientist Luboš Kubín, *Role politických elit pri zmene režimu na Slovensku* [The Role of Political Elites in the Regime Change in Slovakia] (Bratislava: Veda, 2002], and Slovak sociologist Soňa Szomolányi. See Soňa Szomolányi and John A.Gould, "Elite Division and Convergence in Slovakia," In *Elites after State Socialism: Theories and Analyses*, eds. J. Higley and G.Lengyel, pp.115-129 (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

integrationist (Europeanist) political parties and politicians in the mid-1990s mentioned earlier.⁶²

Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde were first among western scholars to re-examine the strength of civil societies in East Central Europe, including Slovakia, prior to the fall of the communist regimes.⁶³ Their book thus became an important impetus for my thesis. Ľubomír Lipták's monograph provided a solid picture of Slovak history from the 1890s to the 1960s based on primary sources.⁶⁴ Had Lipták's book been translated in the West before the fall of Communism, the undercurrents and inner continuity in modern Slovak history would have been much more difficult to overlook by a new generation of western scholars in the 1990s.

To bridge this gap, this dissertation suggests that, with Slovakia's invisible history and political and societal stability, as well as recent socio-economic accomplishments in mind, the old paradigm emerging in the early 1990s – *no statehood, bleak outlook* – fades away and a new question arises: If Slovakia's previous international invisibility and lack of statehood did not prevent the country from collapse and stagnation, then how to explain its socio-economic progress and democratic advancement as an independent state? Trumpeting the momentary "success story" in spite of an omnipresent economic

⁶² This conflict dominates Sharon Fisher's comparative study *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: from Nationalist to Europeanist* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁶³ Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde, *Uncivil Society? Contentious politics in post-communist Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁶⁴ Ľubomír Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí* [Slovakia in the 20th Century] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1968). It was published shortly before the invasion of the five member states of the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia in August of 1968. In the early 1980s, the monograph was almost forgotten by the public and kept off the shelves of libraries due to the expulsion of its author from the Communist Party during the purges that followed Gustáv Husák's accession to power in 1969. Lipták made his comeback as a recognized historian in 1989 and published extensively until his death in 2003.

crisis and continuing transformation of Slovak society, while seeing it as in the 1990s, when the champions were obvious, is not the aim of this study. The cyclical ups and downs in the region's history that extend far beyond a couple of years and decades should be a reminder against such a short-sighted perspective. Since the following chapters provide a more complex answer to the problem, suffice it to say that Slovaks in their transition to democracy did not fare much differently from their historic, and relatively more visible, neighbours.

1.5 Thesis and argument

Kirschbaum and others have suggested that an old-new perspective based upon the viewing of Slovak history within larger spatial and temporal contexts might be a solution for breaking its spell. This thesis focuses on the societal and political changes that occurred in Slovakia after the fall of Communism in November of 1989 until the country's accession into the European Union in May of 2004. To examine this transformation, the thesis follows the fragmentary, ruptured and mostly still invisible link that started with the emergence and the evolution of the Slovaks as a political nation (1900 and 1945) and ran through the pre-communist, communist and post-communist Slovakia (1945-1989) up to the "awakening" of Slovak society in the late 1990s and the accession of the Slovak Republic into the European Union. It is hypothesized that, although the Slovaks have been perceived as a non-historic nation,⁶⁵ the cohesiveness of

⁶⁵ The title of the booklet written by the publicists Milan Ferko and Imrich Kružliak with contributions by Slovak professional historians Richard Marsina and Ladislav Deák, *Slovak Republic: Old Nation – Young State* (Bratislava: Print-Servis, 1998) fittingly encapsulates Slovakia's problem with invisibility and non-historicity. On the same argument see the essay by prominent Slovak historian Matúš Kučera "Plnoprávny národ a štát" [A Full-Fledged Nation and State], *Literárny týždenník*, March 10, 2004. Kučera

their society reached before, and strengthened during and after Communism, can substitute for their missing statehood and can also reasonably explain Slovakia's advancement in its transition from a post-communist state to functioning democracy. This cohesiveness, alongside well-developed national identity, historical self-consciousness, socio-economic progress and gradually increasing political experience, helped Slovak society to withstand the difficulties of its complex transformation in the 1990s and in the first half of the 2000s.

This dissertation pays particular attention to political parties and state institutions as guarantors of Slovakia's democratic transformation. It examines the role played by major political parties and their representatives in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia (1990-1992), 'illiberalism' represented by the third Mečiar government (1994-1998), the change of government in 1998, and the accelerated integration of Slovakia in the EU. It focuses on the interactions of political parties and three major state institutions with decisive political, legislative and executive powers – the National Council of the Slovak Republic (before October of 1992 the Slovak National Council), the president and the government. Since the voices of Slovak politicians, especially of those who had been bound to nationalism and illiberalism, have been rare in western scholarship, it was important to include their authentic testimonies in this dissertation.

In the 1990s and in the early 2000s, Slovakia's evolution was often interpreted to fit conventional stereotypes based on varying familiarity with the facts. Therefore, it is imperative that the introductory part of the dissertation presents a compact, updated and chronologically built factographical basis pertinent to the Slovak – Magyar and the Slovak – Czech relationships, with the aim to examine their substance, nuances and

specializes in medieval Slovak and Central Eastern European history.

impact on Slovak society.⁶⁶ This approach helps to view Slovak history through its three c's: causality, continuity and complexity. As such, it will more effectively point to the main thesis than the sketchy returns to the past when examining more recent problems.

Chapter 2 returns to the origins of Slovak public and political life in Austria-Hungary and pre-communist Czechoslovakia. It will challenge assumptions about the weak ethno-national identity and the missing political tradition of Slovaks, as insinuated by various observers in the 1990s. Chapter 3 focuses on the communist era, which failed to prevent Slovaks and Czechs from discordant attitudes towards the functionality and prospects of Czechoslovakia, originating in their different historical experiences and goals. Chapter 4 examines the beginnings of political and institutional transformation in Slovakia, the re-emergence of Slovak political parties and major institutions, as well as the growing gap between the Slovak and Czech political elites that led to the negotiated dissolution of post-communist Czechoslovakia. While pointing to the suppressed presence and continuity of the bi-national conflict, this chapter concludes that there were two nationalisms to blame for the dismemberment of the common state. Chapters 5-7 discuss the decisive moments in Slovak politics in the independent Slovak Republic and its awakened civil society in light of the efforts of the governments of Vladimír Mečiar (1992-1998) and Mikuláš Dzurinda (1998-2004) to secure the country's integration into the European Union by viewing those efforts as parts of the same evolutionary process. Chapter 8 provides an analytical summary of the Slovak transformation from a post-communist state to democracy during the 1990s and in the early 2000s linked to the legacies of the Slovak-Magyar, the Slovak-Czech and the Slovak (emancipationist) -

⁶⁶ By 'update' I mean the works of Slovak historians based on primary documents, references to which have been scarce or missing in western scholarship.

Slovak (anti-emancipationist) relationships. The first two parts of the chapter comprise a discourse on the causes and outcomes of the limited visibility of Slovak history due to its fracture between *seeming* and *being*. The third part suggests that Slovakia's evolution from 1989 to 2004 can be better understood as a sequel to the socio-political and economic developments that had begun in the late 1960s and the early 1970s rather than as a direct consequence of the change of government in the late 1990s.

1.6 Methodology

It was particularly important to employ a political science microperspective in examining statistical and empirical data, such as surveys of public opinion, electoral polls, election campaigns and the elections' results in 1998 and 2002, and their impact on the interpretation of Slovakia's transformation as a result of the sudden awakening of Slovak society in 1998. Despite the short time that has elapsed from the time-period examined, this dissertation is written from an historical perspective. It concentrates on key moments in recent Slovak history rather than on theories, models and concepts.⁶⁷ The primary focus on political parties is not that of a discourse on epistemological, taxonomic or ontological aspects of their emergence and evolution, but on their actions, behaviour and the stances of their leaders and representatives in particular situations mentioned earlier.⁶⁸ In few particular cases I refer to my personal recollections of the

⁶⁷ H. Gordon Skilling's *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1976) dedicated to the reform process in the communist Czechoslovakia in the second half of the 1960s serves as proof of the viability of such an approach.

⁶⁸ On the former see Oľga Gyárfášová, Grigorij Mesežnikov (eds.), *Vláda strán na Slovensku: Skúsenosti a perspektívy* [The Rule of Parties in Slovakia: Experiences and Perspectives] (Bratislava: IVO, 2004), and Lubomír Kopeček, *Demokracie, diktatury a politické stranictví na Slovensku* [Democracies, Dictatorships, and Political Partisanship in Slovakia] (Brno: CDK, 2006).

events examined and to my experience as the former diplomat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (1994-2001) in order to strengthen the authenticity of my thesis and its argument. Instead of concentrating exclusively on the period from 1990s to the early 2000s marked by the complicated journey of an otherwise invisible country to the very orbit of western democracies, the dissertation strives to organically connect Slovakia's transformation from Communism to democracy with the-not-that-much-distant past.

In doing so, I have opted for the seemingly old-fashioned and outdated, yet as far as historical facts in contested perspectives are concerned, still efficient Rankean approach to history *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* as expressed by the great German historian: "History has had assigned to it [the unity of Latin and Teutonic nations] the office of judging the past and of instructing the present for the benefit of the future ages. To such high offices the present work does not presume: it seeks only to show what actually happened."⁶⁹ A similar method will help establish the facts and build the arguments presented in this study.

⁶⁹ Leopold von Ranke, "Introduction to the History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations," In *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, ed. Roger Wines (New York Fordham University Press, 1981), p.58.

CHAPTER 2

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SLOVAK POLITICAL NATION, 1848-1948

2.1 Slovak identity: from myths to facts

At the beginning of the 1990s, due to the collapse of Communism and its impact on ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, western scholars became suspicious about the tendency of young post-communist states and societies to anchor their “ships at sea” in their distant past and thus to potentially repeat violent ethnic conflicts which were frequent in their pre-national and national histories.¹ In reference to the efforts of the poet Ján Kollár and the linguist Pavol Jozef Šafárik, as the founding fathers of the concept of Slavic mutuality of Slovak origins, Robert Pynsent pointed out that:

To create a mythic structure strong enough to withstand German (and Magyar) criticism, to persuade fellow-Slavs that the Slav cause should be supported, and, most important, strong enough to help give the Slavs self-confidence, an ideal physical model Slav had to be moulded.’²

¹ See Jon Elster, Claus Offe, Ulbricht K. Preuss, *Institutional design in post-communist societies: rebuilding the ship at sea* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.251-254. The authors refer to Slovakia as the most ethno-nationalist polity among post-communist countries in East Central Europe. Ibidem, p.256.

² Robert Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (Budapest-London-New York: Central European University Press, 1994), p.87. This model was “Sláva,” a heroic woman embodying Slavdom as a whole, originally meant to be romantic and metaphysical. After the publication of the epic poem *Slávy dcéra* [The Daughter of Sláva] by Kollár in 1824, it also became a factor of national and political mobilization, particularly among the small Slavic peoples. J.M. Kirschbaum, “Pan-Slavism in Slovak Literature: Ján Kollár – Slovak Poet of Panslavism,” *Slavistica LVL* (Winnipeg-Toronto: The Slovak Institute Cleveland, 1966), pp.20-25. Therese Albertine Louise von Jacob Robinson, *Historical View of the Languages and Literature of the Slavic Nations* (New York: BiblioBazaar, LLC, 2006) (Reprint of the original version published by George P. Putnam in New York in 1851), p. 182.

Whereas Pynsent's viewing of myth and its literary meaning is neutral – not true, not false³ – others seem to look upon myths in Slovak history with more suspicion. An indication of the perception of a myth as a process being too distant and too ambiguous in terms of its authenticity and direct linkage to the state-building process can be found in modern discourses on the efforts of Slovak political elites to center the historical tradition of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993 on the tradition of Great Moravia.⁴

In the 19th century as a time when the fascination with pre-national and national histories began, the line between myths and historical reality was fluid and both often merged. When referring to the categorization of the nationalities in East Central Europe in the 19th century as more, and less, developed, which was suggested by the Czech historian Miloslav Hroch, his Slovak colleague Dušan Kováč stated that the formation of the modern Slovak nation resembled the developments of other European nations. Nation-building among the Slovaks was influenced by the same ideas of the Enlightenment and Herder's concept of a nation and its spiritual character stemming from a nation's collective and general characteristics – *Volksgeist*.⁵ The beginnings of this top-driven process were spurred by intellectual curiosity and scholarly interest in language, culture and history.⁶ Slovaks, in contrast to the Croats and Czechs, could not

³ “A myth is not true or false. It is normally a narrative expression of concern for the society of which the mythopoeist is or deems himself to be a member.” Pynsent, p.43.

⁴ Gil Eyal, *The Origins of Post-Communist Elites: from the Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp.125-131. For the myth vs. ‘myth’ ambiguities in Slovak history see the final chapter.

⁵ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Outlines of a Philosophy of a History of Man] (London: Hansard, 1800). Reference to the concept of the “Spirit of Nations” [*Geist des Volkes, Volksgeist*] which determines the character of any nation (ethnicity) is discussed in various part of the book (e.g. p.508 [Christian nations], p. 593 [Muslim nations]).

⁶ Miroslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-

refer to the tradition of separate statehood, which would have justified their claims for cultural and administrative autonomy in the Austrian Empire (1804) and later on in Austria-Hungary (1867).⁷ Therefore, it was the legacy of Great Moravia as a state which had reached its climax during the last quarter of the 9th century AD, only to be destroyed by Magyar tribes invading the Carpathian basin at the beginning of the 10th century, which was eagerly embraced by apologists of the glory of the ancient Slavs.⁸

Contrary to the widespread belief in the one thousand-year oppression by Magyars, which had emerged at the end of Austria-Hungary and continued ever since, until the mid-19th century Slovaks and their ethnic predecessors had enjoyed equal treatment by the state, which was identified with the Hungarian nobility and the Holy Crown (*Corona Sacra*) of St. Stephen.⁹ In previous centuries, the concept of *Natio*

Building Process in Europe,” *New Left Review* 1/198 (1993), pp.60-74. Dušan Kováč, “The Slovak Political Agenda in the 19th and Early 20th Century: From Ľudovít Štúr to Czech-Slovak Statehood,” In *Nations and Nationalism in East-Central Europe, 1806-1948. A Festschrift for Peter F. Sugar*, eds. Sabrina P. Ramet, James R. Felak, Herbert J. Ellison (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2002), p.93.

⁷ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), pp.13-14, 26-28, 53.

⁸ See the Bencsik – Magin controversy about the character of the Magyar – Slav relationship in the Kingdom of Hungary as between the conquerors and the conquered. Dušan Kováč, “The Slovak Political Agenda in the 19th and Early 20th Century,” p. 94. On the role of the Apologetics (*Apologiae*; Latin) in Slovak historiography see Marianna Oravcová, “Tradition Der Nichttraditionellen (Nationalen) Tradition” [Tradition of the Non-Traditional {National} Tradition], In *Jenseits der Grenzen. Dokumentation einer Begegnung Bratislava - Wien* [On the Other Side of the Boundary: Documentation on the Encounter Bratislava - Vienna], eds. M.Marcelli and E. Waldschütz (Wien: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1992). For a detailed view on the place of Great Moravia in Slovak historical tradition see Mária Vyvíjalová, “Veľká Morava ako slovenská štátna tradícia v Uhorsku” [Great Moravia as a Slovak State Tradition in Hungary] *Historický časopis* 27, no.3 (1979), pp.369-397.

⁹ István (Stephen) Werbőczy was the Hungarian noble and protonotary in charge of the preparation of the Tripartite Code by the Hungarian nobility after the crushing defeat of the massive peasant rebellion led by György Dózsa in Hungary and Transylvania in 1514. The Code failed to receive royal assent, yet it imposed the second serfdom on Hungary, which was abolished only during the Revolution of 1848-49. Robert A. Kann

Hungarica, which made no difference between the peoples of Hungary as a part of the Hereditary Habsburg Lands (since 1527) on the basis of ethnicity worked well for the Slovaks.¹⁰ Those who climbed up the social ladder used Latin and German (since 1780) in the academic sphere and in official communication. While being proficient in Slovak and its linguistic precursors¹¹ and/or Magyar, they also communicated in the various dialects used in Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia). For the most educated among the Slovaks, such as Daniel Timon, Daniel Krman, Matej Bel, Anton Bernolák, Juraj Fándly and Adam František Kollár, to be a Slav or Slovak was no less important than to be Hungarian, Catholic or Protestant at the same time. Having been polyglots, they were also patriots who shared and cherished the historical tradition of the Kingdom of which they felt to be a part. Their lifetime experience and values contrasted with that of developments in the first half of the 19th century, when language gradually became the primary indicator of identity and loyalty to an ethno-linguistic community and thus to the state.¹²

and Zdenek V. David, *The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 1526-1918* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp.58-60. For detail see Ignác Acsády, *Dejiny poddanstva v Uhorsku* [History of Serfdom in Hungary] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied, 1955), pp.150-161.

¹⁰ Milan Krajčovič, "Maďari a problémy národnej identity Slovákov v 19. storočí." [The Magyars and the Problems with National Identity of the Slovaks in the 19th Century]. *Historické štúdie* 37 (1996), p.50.

¹¹ For a most recent hypothesis on the linguistic evolution of the Slovak language and its use on the territory of Upper Hungary since the early 17th century see Konstantin V. Lifanov, "The Origins and Development of the Slovak Literary Language," *Slovakia* XXXVIII, nos. 70-71 (2005), pp.7-32. The author suggests that the Slovak literary language – the Old Slovak – had emerged already in the 16th and 17th centuries and was in frequent use thereafter. *Ibid.*, pp.8-9 and 24-26.

¹² "Language is the external and visible badge of those differences which distinguish one nation from another; it is the most important criterion by which a nation is recognized to exist, and to have the right to form a state on its own." Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1966), p.64. On the role of language as a decisive factor of ethnic delineation in Hungary prior to the Revolution of 1848-1849 see Peter

During the Golden Age of nationalism, Slovak national awakeners, as elsewhere in East Central Europe, appealed to the minds and hearts of the gentry and the mostly illiterate peasantry with epic poetry, romantic novels and literary excursions into the distant past. Regardless of the ongoing scholarly disputes on the center and location of Great Moravia,¹³ nationally oriented teachers, priests and enthusiastic students offered the only viable way designed to build collective memories and national identity in the first half of the 19th century.¹⁴ The triumvirate of the most prominent Slovak national leaders, Ľudovít Štúr, Jozef Miloslav Hurban and Milan Hodža, similarly to their counterparts in Bohemia, the linguist Josef Dobrovský and historian František Palacký, both of whom had switched from the use of German to the advocacy of the Czech language while following the same defensive ethno-linguistic reflexes, were no less polyglot than their ancestors.¹⁵ The major goal of Slovak leaders was to spread the sense of ethno-cultural self-awareness on the basis of the codified Slovak language (1843-

Macho, "O slovenskej identite trochu inak" [On the Slovak Identity from a Different Perspective], In *Slovenská otázka dnes*, ed. László Szigeti (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2007), pp.72-77.

¹³ The most notorious opponent of the existence of Great Moravia on the territory of present-day Slovakia and Moravia (the latter now being a part of the Czech Republic) as the core of the state was the historian of Magyar origin Imre Boba in *Moravia's History Reconsidered* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971). Boba placed Great Moravia on the territory of Serbia.

¹⁴ On the role of Ľudovít Štúr as a central figure of the Slovak national awakening as seen by more recent scholarship see Peter Zajac, "Memory, Forgetting and Remembering as a Problem in the Creation of the Collective Identity of the Slovak Nation," In *Collective Identities in Central Europe in Modern Times*, eds. Moritz Csáky and Elena Mannová, pp.45-51 (Bratislava: Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1999), pp.45-51.

¹⁵ Both Dobrovský and Palacký wrote their works in German. See Therese Albertine Louise von Jacob Robinson, *Historical View of the Languages and Literature of the Slavic Nations*, p. 180. Taylor observes that "even in 1848 respectable people [in Prague] spoke only German in the streets, and to ask the way in Czech would provoke an offensive reply." Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy...*, p.24.

1852)¹⁶ among the masses of Slovak peasantry in response to the ambitions of the part of the Magyar nobility to impose the Magyar language as the official language on both Lutheran and Calvinist Churches in Hungary.¹⁷ Having been a self-aware distinct linguistic community long enough, Slovaks were expected by Štúr to move to the next stage of becoming a nation by increasing their sense of public spirit and social life.¹⁸ During the 19th century, the Slovak Protestant elite, prominent in advancing the issues of ethno-linguistic awareness among the Slovaks remained, with some exceptions, loyal, though bitter, to the state they had shared with the Magyars and other ethnic groups for centuries.¹⁹

To highlight the increasing importance of language as an indicator of ethnic division one has to return to the Revolution of 1848 and 1849. When the Serbs from the Vojvodina, a multi-ethnic region inhabited by Magyars, Serbs and Slovaks, asked Lajos (Louis-Lewis) Kossuth, a temperamental lawyer and “a convert to Magyarism of Slovak origin, with a Slovak mother who could never speak Magyar,”²⁰ to grant them their

¹⁶ In 1787, the Slovak Catholic priest Anton Bernolák codified the Western Slovak dialect as the basis for the literary (*spisovný*) Slovak language. In 1847, Slovak Catholics, led by the priest and writer Ján Holly, reached an agreement with the Slovak Protestants on the codification of the Slovak literary language based upon the Central Slovak dialect. This removed the influence of the Czech language traditionally used by Slovak Protestants (The Bible of Kralice) from the 16th century onward. R. Marsina, V. Čičaj, D. Kováč, Ľ Lipták, *Slovenské dejiny*. (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1992), pp.164-165. In 1852, a Slovak grammar accepted by a majority of Slovak intellectuals was published by Martin Hattala. *Ibid.*, p.171.

¹⁷ Robert A. Kann and Zdenek V. David, *The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands...*, pp.250-253.

¹⁸ Tibor Pichler, “The Idea of Slovak Language-Based Nationalism,” In *Language, Values and Slovak Nation*, eds. Tibor Pichler and Jana Gašparíková (Paideia Press: Washington, 1994), p. 41.

¹⁹ Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p.90.

²⁰ Taylor, p.51. Kossuth’s father was Slovak and his uncle was “a patriotic Slovak author of some ability.” Kossuth learned Magyar only as a teenager. R.W. Seton-Watson,

administrative and language rights, they met with a strong and fierce response from their ‘kin’: “The sword shall decide between us!”²¹ A conciliatory attempt made by Hodža, Hurban and Štúr on the eve of the Revolution of 1848-1849 to co-operate with Magyars on the principle of ethnic equality was met with Kossuth’s strong rejection. “Everything in Hungary – the land, law, history – is exclusively Magyar. The Slovaks, Rumanians, Serbs, Ruthenians are but people. In Hungary, only the Magyars have the right and duty to be a nation.”²² This rejection led the three Slovak leaders to the decision to establish in Vienna on September 16, 1848 the Slovak National Council (*Slovenská národná rada*; SNR) as a central political organ to represent Slovak interests in Hungary.²³ Four decades later his speech was repeated by another Magyar politician: “...the Magyar nationality is the political nation and hence Hungary is not a polyglot but a Magyar state.”²⁴ Nationalism as both a sentiment and a political principle was in full swing in South, East and Central Europe and the multi-ethnic Austria-Hungary served as one of its key playgrounds.²⁵

Racial Problems in Hungary (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972), p.49.

²¹ Taylor, p.83. Music composer Franz Liszt felt to be Hungarian while using both the German and Slovak languages, but not Magyar. The Slovaks, the Magyars and the Austrians claim Liszt to be “theirs.” Slavomír Ondrejovič and Viktor Krupa, “Identita a jazyk” [Identity and Language], 1-31, p.8 (the draft article). In *My a ti druhí v modernej spoločnosti. Konštrukcie a transformácie kolektívnych identít* [We and the Others in Modern Society: Constructions and Transformations of Collective Identities], eds. Gabriela Kiliánová, Eva Kowalská, Eva Krekovičová (Bratislava: Veda, 2009), pp.109-137.

²² Július Mésároš, *Old Hungary and the Coexistence of its Nations* (Bratislava: Kubko Goral, 1997), p.26.

²³ Two hundred people participated on the first meeting of the SNR. Anton Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament v premenách času* [The Slovak Parliament Over Time] (Bratislava: Kancelária Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky, 2008), p.27.

²⁴ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary*, p.217.

²⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.1. See Kedourie’s definition of nationalism as a “doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century [which] pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of

The myth vs. 'myth' ambiguity linked to the disputed degree of Slovak identity is closely tied to the "quantitative factor." Piotr Wandycz rather skeptically referred to the small number of Slovak intellectuals and their almost completely missing ethno-national self-awareness.²⁶ His perception contradicts the reference by C.A. Macartney to "the Slovaks, who in particular, were able to evolve a not inconsiderable intelligentsia which, if found Slovak insufficient for self-expression, resorted happily enough to Magyar."²⁷ Wandycz's doubts about the strength and proclivity of Slovak society toward its own awakening can further be compared with Taylor's reference to the apparently more successful Czech national revival movement: "If the ceiling were to fall on us now," as one of the writers participating at the meeting said to his colleagues, "that would be the end of the national revival."²⁸

While viewing the Slovaks through the prism of the past as well as in recent scholarship, it is legitimate to postulate that, despite the small numbers of their leaders and intelligentsia, they eventually succeeded in promoting ethno-linguistic self-awareness among their people by references to often idealized Slovak history. The following description by Oravcová aptly encapsulates the complexity of this process and its outcome:

Although the apologetic character of this literature reflects reactions to the real situation rather than a new and future-oriented concept, these writings managed to form a bridge from the past to the present and to create and mediate the inner continuity of the national consciousness. Thus, they underline the continuity and identity of national history. To various degrees

the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization of a society of states." Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1966), p.9.

²⁶ See the full citation on page 8.

²⁷ C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969). p.90.

²⁸ Taylor, p.29.

they capitalize upon the tension between the concrete historical facts and events and the subjective projection of desirable horizons – past or future. In some cases this is followed by a mythicization: with an imaginary people, the Slavs, the first and only state, Great Moravia, is shifted to the mythical lever and the national consciousness is preserved in mythical time as well. This sort of subjectivism must not be condemned and does not disqualify them as a sort of voluntarism, for it is widely acknowledged ‘to refer to independently verifiable characteristics or processes.’”²⁹

With their ethno-linguistic identity and delineation as a nationality separate from the Magyars accomplished long before 1848,³⁰ Slovaks were still far from being a political nation. Their leaders and followers resisted quite successfully the early attempts of the Magyar Calvinist nobility to impose the supremacy of the Magyar language on Slovaks in Hungary. More questionable was the capacity of Slovaks to resist the renewed and accelerated attempts of the imposition of the Magyar language on the Slovaks by the assimilationist wing of Magyar political elites under the changed political circumstances in the late 1860s and this was to be tested soon.³¹

2.2 Slovak identity from the *Ausgleich* to the arrival of Communism

After the defeat of Austria by Prussia in the summer of 1866, the imperial court in Vienna began to seek a new settlement with the Magyar elites in order to solidify the shaken grounds of the Empire. With the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) negotiated between Vienna and Budapest in 1867, Hungary, a part of the Habsburg Empire since 1526,

²⁹ Marianna Oravcová, “The Ethnic and Cultural Dimension of National Emancipation: The Evocation of the Slovak Nation,” In *Language, Values and Slovak Nation*, eds. Tibor Pichler and Jana Gašparíková, p.11. In the last sentence of her statement Oravcová refers to the article by P. Horváth, “K niektorým otázkam historických tradícií na Slovensku” [Some questions concerning the historical tradition in Slovakia], *Slovenský národopis* 1-2 (1986), pp.60-65.

³⁰ See Krajčovič, “Maďari a problémy národnej identity Slovákov v 19. storočí,” pp.53-55.

³¹ C.A. Macartney, pp.290-291.

regained many constitutional powers as stipulated in the December Constitution of 1867. Law XLIV on the “Equality of the Rights of Nationalities” of December 9, 1868 signaled a new period in the relationship between the Magyars and other nationalities.³² Originally, the Law was meant to be a tool for minimizing ethnic tensions as it formally ensured each ethnic group of the “unified and indivisible Hungarian political nation” of their language and cultural rights.³³ Despite the efforts of moderate Magyar politicians, such as Ferencz Deák, Count István Széchenyi, József Eötvös and László Mocsáry, to balance the attitudes of the radicals,³⁴ the latter perspective on the creation of a greater “Magyar” nation by multiplying the number of Magyars on the basis of the linguistic and cultural assimilation of non-Magyars eventually prevailed. The reasons were given by Béla Grünwald, Lord Lieutenant of Zvolen County:

If we want to survive, we have to reproduce and get stronger by assimilating foreign elements. We must not allow the Non-Magyar races living in Hungary to develop their feelings of independence and solidarity to related races; we have to...especially [the] Slovaks... tear out from the Slavonic body and keep them confined with us...If we succeed in this, we will disjoin them from the Slavs forever and when we will append the German element to them, which is as big in numbers as Slovaks...then we can look into the future with satisfaction. There will be not six, but ten millions of Magyars in the country, and they will easily counterbalance the remaining three million of Non-Magyars.³⁵

³² See *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti I* [Documents of Slovak National Identity and Statehood, Vol.I], ed. Michal Barnovský (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998). See the document no.114, *Národnostný zákon z roku 1868* [Law on the Nationalities of 1868], pp.361-366.

³³ Július Mésároš, “Some Deformations in the Interpretations of Censuses in Recent Magyar-Slovak Controversies,” In *Slovaks & Magyars. Slovak – Magyar Relations in Central Europe*, ed. Pavol Števček (Bratislava: Ministerstvo kultúry Slovenskej republiky, 1995), pp.79-80. For the full text of the Law of Nationalities in English see Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems...*, pp. 429-433. For a detailed analysis of the Law see pp. 147-154. Seton-Watson concludes that, despite its stipulations on the equality of nationalities in Hungary, the Law remained a dead letter. *Ibid.*, pp.154 and 392.

³⁴ Seton-Watson, p. 171.

³⁵ Mésároš, “Some Deformations...,” pp. 80-81.

Following this concept the number of Slovak elementary schools was significantly reduced.³⁶ Three Slovak gymnasia, established and subsidized by Slovaks themselves, were closed by 1875, as was the *Matica slovenská*, the major keeper of Slovak historical memory, founded in 1863. Slovaks were forbidden from establishing new cultural associations.³⁷ According to one observer, the “Magyar secondary school worked as a machine into which Slovaks were poured at one end as to emerge as Magyars at the other.”³⁸ Many Slovaks, in their effort to move up, allowed themselves to be *Magyarised* “easily and gladly,” for “to be a Magyar was to be a gentleman, to be a Slovak was to be a chaw-bacon.”³⁹

The Slovak nobility and gentry readily sacrificed their nationality in exchange for the benefits promised them and became *Magyarones* – Magyarised Slovaks. Mésáros stressed that “the noble stratum in Slovakia not only failed to back up the Slovak national-liberation efforts of this period, but also became the mainstay of its own class in enforcing the Magyar national hegemony in the country, notably on the territory of Slovakia.”⁴⁰ Forced *Magyarisation* proved effective as the statistical increase of Magyars in the period 1880-1910 reached 63% (10% higher than that of all Magyars in

³⁶ In comparison with more than 2000 primary schools with Slovak as the language of instruction in the 1860s, only 140 schools were left in 1914 with Slovak as a second language. Mésáros, “Some Deformations...,” p 81.

³⁷ Michal Potemra, “K vývinu slovenskej politiky v rokoch 1901-1914” [On the Evolution of Slovak Politics in the Years 1901-1914], *Historický časopis* 27, no.1 (1979), p.66.

³⁸ C.A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors. The Treaty of Trianon and its Consequences 1919-1937* (Oxford University Press, 1965), p.91.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ Mésáros, *Old Hungary...*, p.22. On the discourse on the identity of the Hungarian nobility with a Slovak ethno-linguistic background in the 18th and 19th centuries see Viliam Čičaj, “Šľachta – staronový problém slovenskej historiografie” [The Nobility: An Old – New Problem in Slovak Historiography], *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2005* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2005), pp.11-18.

Hungary), while the Slovak population grew only by 13%.⁴¹ This might have caused a heavy blow to the stagnating and dormant national Slovak identity at home, had it not been compensated for by the growing impact of Slovaks living in the United States.⁴²

At the outbreak of WW I, several Slovak political leaders expressed their loyalty to the House of the Habsburgs and Austria-Hungary. After the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914 Slovaks and Romanians from Hungary laid wreaths with the inscription “To our last hope, in loyal devotion” on the Archduke’s catafalque during a pompous funeral ceremony.⁴³ The editor of *Slovenský týždenník* (Slovak Weekly), Milan Hodža had condemned the assassination of the Archduke on July 3, 1914 as a “bandit murder,” and had warned that the Slovaks needed the monarchy as represented by Franz Ferdinand or someone who would continue in his footsteps, “since with the Habsburg monarchy having collapsed, Romanians will find their homeland in Romania, South-Slavs in Serbia, Germans in Germany. We never can reach a safe national future except within a righteous Habsburg Empire.”⁴⁴

WW I marked the beginning of the Slovak departure from the Hungarian state. In his memoirs published shortly after the war, Count István Burián, twice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria-Hungary, commented on President Wilson’s Fourteen Points that spelled the end of Austria-Hungary:

They [Wilson and the *Entente*] should have been led to approach this question [of self-determination of the nationalities of Austria-Hungary]

⁴¹ Mésároš, “Some Deformations...,” p.71. Statistically, almost 250,000 members of other nationalities in Slovakia were transferred to the Magyar nationality. See the chart that compares the censuses in 1880 and 1910. Ibid.

⁴² Marian Mark Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization: the Slovak Experience, 1870-1918* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), p.159.

⁴³ Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy I* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p.39.

⁴⁴ *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti I*, document no.133, pp.414-415.

cautiously by the well-known fact that the conduct of the Slovak troops during the war was entirely different from that of the Czechs. The former always fought as loyal sons of Hungary with exemplary courage and devotion, and never went over to the enemy. This surely is an indication of the will of a nation.⁴⁵

Slovak historian Marián Hronský partly agrees with this statement while pointing out that “in the first years of the war, the Austro-Hungarian command also praised the obedience and courage of the Slovak soldiers on the fronts. Slovak journals and magazines sought reports, which honoured the bravery, sacrifices and decorations of Slovak soldiers.”⁴⁶ From 1916 onward, Slovaks on the home front, as well as those in the trenches, became war-weary and their will to fight was fading. French historian Ernest Denis accused Magyar political elites of intentionally sending Slovak regiments to the butcheries of WW I “to punish them for their faithfulness to their true motherland.”⁴⁷

In the summer of 1918, a mutiny of Slovak troops broke out in Kragujevac in Serbia. The 71st Infantry Regiment of Trenčín, a Slovak city in Northwest Hungary, revolted, for its soldiers had been expected to be transported to the Italian theatre of operations. The mutiny, which started as a disciplinary measure against a small group of soldiers in the evening of June 2, 1918 in the city of Kragujevac in Serbia, rose to a

⁴⁵ Stephan Burian, *Austria in Dissolution* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1925), p.413

⁴⁶ Marián Hronský, *The Struggle for Slovakia and the Treaty of Trianon, 1918-1920* (Bratislava: Veda, 2001), p.36. Up to 400, 000 Slovaks were mobilized during WWI out of a population of approximately 3,000,000. See *Gabriela Dudeková*, “Sociálne aspekty vojnového hospodárstva” [Social Aspects of War Economy], In *Slovensko na začiatku storočia: Spoločnosť, štát a národ v súradniciach doby* [Slovakia at the Beginning of the Century: Society, State and Nation Within a Temporary Context], eds. Milan Podrimavský and Dušan Kováč (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), p. 419.

⁴⁷ Jän Števček, “Views on the Slovak-Magyar Relationship from Outside,” In *Slovak & Magyars in Central Europe*, p.120.

revolt of 700 men out of 5,000 garrisoned soldiers.⁴⁸ The revolt was suppressed with the use of machine guns fired by loyal Bosniaks. The military command wanted an exemplary punishment: 59 soldiers faced court-martials and 44 were sentenced to death and shot on June 8, 1918.⁴⁹

It was this mutiny, along the growing social unrest on the home-front, which indicated the change of Slovak attitude.⁵⁰ The question, however, must be raised as to what extent those individual and isolated events influenced by military defeats and social misery represented a decisive shift from traditional obedience and loyalty towards the Hungarian state to the definite split with the Magyars? The massive public gatherings of the Slovaks such as in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš on May 24, 1918 were of particular importance, for they were portrayed by the press of the *Entente* as an expression of Slovak national emancipation.⁵¹ On the other hand, opposite opinions, such as that of Count Burián, who objected to the idea of post-war Czechoslovakia on the basis of long-term Slovak loyalty towards Hungary, should not be dismissed single-handedly.⁵² Burián's self-confidence is duplicated by the memoirs of the last Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Hungary, Count Mihály Károlyi, who once said that

⁴⁸ Laco Zrubec, *Kragujevská vzburá* [The Mutiny of Kragujevac] (Nitra: Dom Matice slovenskej, 2003), p.58.

⁴⁹ Zrubec, pp.61-63. The aforementioned numbers are strikingly similar to those of the far better known mutinies of French troops in May-June of 1917. See Leonard Smith's book *Between Mutiny and Obedience. The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp.175-214.

⁵⁰ For a general reference see Mark Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria Hungary: The Battle for Heart and Minds* (London and New York: Macmillan Press Ltd. And St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), p.276. Holger Herwig, *The First World War. Germany and Austria 1914-1918* (London - New York: Arnold, 1997), p.367. Neither Cornwall nor Herwig refer to the nationality of the mutineers. For mutinies in Slovakia in 1918 see *Dejiny Slovenska IV* (od konca 19.storočia do roku 1918) [History of Slovakia, Vol. IV, from the end of the 19th century to 1918] (Bratislava: Veda, 1986), pp.444-449.

⁵¹ Hronský, p.44. Lipták, pp.69-70.

⁵² Burian, p.285

“neither the Slovak people nor its leaders had any idea of complete separation from Hungary.”⁵³

At the beginning of November in 1918, the new provisional Czechoslovak government in Prague sent the Slovak politician Vavro Šrobár as Minister Plenipotentiary for the Administration of Slovakia to incorporate “Slovakia” with its uncertain and vulnerable borders, particularly in the South and Southeast, into the emerging Czechoslovakia. Šrobár, as a firm supporter of T.G. Masaryk, and a representative of the government in Prague, had not the slightest interest to negotiate with Magyar politicians and soon an armed conflict ensued.⁵⁴ The Finnish scholar Ismo Nurmi observed, “the hostilities between the ...nationalities in Slovakia in the autumn of 1918 were strongly laden with national sentiment and motives...It can be claimed that Slovak rioters had a surprisingly high level of national consciousness, even if their obedience to law was momentarily lapsed.”⁵⁵ Having extensively searched police reports in Slovak archives, Nurmi concluded that “it was the Slovak people who took the initiative in the autumn 1918, rather than the national elite or intelligentsia, even though those groups were involved as well.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Michael Károlyi, *Fighting the World: The Struggle for Peace* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), p.336.

⁵⁴ Milan Krajčovič, “Károlyiho vláda v Maďarsku a osudy Slovenska v strednej Európe 1918-1919” [The Károlyi Government and the Fate of Slovakia in Central Europe 1918-1919], *Historické štúdie* 36 (1995), pp.5-47, p.17. Hronský, *The Struggle for Slovakia...*, pp.90-96. For a detailed account of the negotiations of the representative of the Slovak National Council Milan Hodža with Károlyi in Budapest in November and December of 1918 and the demarcation of the border between Slovakia and Hungary see Milan Hodža, *Slovenský rozchod s Maďarmi roku 1918* [The Slovak-Magyar Split in 1918] (Slovenský denník: Bratislava, 1929), pp.21-71.

⁵⁵ Ismo Nurmi, *Slovakia – A Playground for Nationalism and National Identity, 1918-1920: Manifestations of the National Identity of Slovaks* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999), p.45.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.187-188.

By the late fall of 1918, Slovaks and their leaders had not seen any serious alternative to their national existence except outside Hungary, whatever the leaders of the monarchy had wanted to believe. The military conflict with Magyar troops in 1918 and in the spring of 1919 finally marked the end of an era which had begun with the Compromise of 1867. During this period the ruling Magyar elites, afraid of *Panslavism* and the drive for either autonomy or federalism among the nationalities in Hungary, were undermining the grounds upon which the multinational state had been built.⁵⁷ The often cited statement by the Reverend Andrej Hlinka in Turčiansky Svätý Martin on May 24, 1918 can be viewed as a reflection of the Slovak experience with *Magyarisation* during the previous four decades: “Let us not evade the question, let us say openly that we support the Czechoslovak orientation. The thousand-year marriage with the Hungarians [read Magyars] has failed. We must divorce.”⁵⁸ The Pittsburgh Agreement conceived and signed by Slovak and Czech representatives in North America six days later contained the major principles of future cohabitation with the Czechs.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ “I am telling you, a Kingdom of a single language and a single manner is fragile.” Moral admonitions of Stephen I, the King of Hungary (1001-1038), to his son Prince Imrich, on language and national tolerance in the Kingdom he was about to inherit. *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti I*, document no.22, p.108. On the understanding of the history of Hungary as the history of Magyars see Anton Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament v premenách času*, p.20. For a perspective supportive to the continuity of a reformed Hungary after WW I see Stephen D. Kertész, “The Consequences of World War I: The Effects on East Central Europe,” In *War and Society in East Central Europe VI*, eds. B. Király (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp.39-57. The author argues that “The peacemakers of 1919, instead of reforming the antiquated political structure of the Danubian Empire on a democratic and federative basis, created small successor states dominated by jingo-nationalism...” Ibid., p.39.

⁵⁸ Hronský, p.45.

⁵⁹ M. Mark Stolarik, *The Role of American Slovaks in the Creation of Czecho-Slovakia, 1914-1918* (Cleveland: Slovak Institute, 1968), pp.48-49. In fact, the Pittsburgh Agreement was a step back from a federal constitutional settlement as envisaged by the Cleveland Agreement of 1915. It still granted Slovaks autonomy, full language rights, the Slovak Diet and administration. See *Dokumenty slovenskej identity a štátnosti I*,

With the proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic on October 28 in Prague and independently on October 30, 1918 in Martin, in Central Slovakia, by the re-emerging Slovak National Council,⁶⁰ the Slovaks joined the Czechs in a common state.⁶¹ This testified to the breakthrough in the identification of the majority of Slovaks with the Hungarian state. The rest envisaged by the Hungarian noble Count István Széchenyi in 1813 – Austria would go asunder within a century because its parts are unequal and they separate more and more from each other – was fulfilled with astounding accuracy.⁶²

By joining the Czechs, Slovaks had partially fulfilled their efforts for national self-determination. Having survived *Magyarisation*, they became, as Nurmi observed, even more resistant towards the “Czechoslovakizing” tendencies in the First Czechoslovak Republic.⁶³ Struggling with a new national identity in the emerging Czechoslovakia was not only a Slovak problem.⁶⁴ In a lecture delivered in Bratislava on April 5, 1920, Ferdiš

document no.139, pp.445-447 (Cleveland Agreement) and document no. 152, p. 445-447 (Pittsburgh Agreement).

⁶⁰ Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament...*, p.34. The Chairman of the SNR was Matúš Dula, the leader of the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana*; SNS, est. 1871).

⁶¹ On October 28, 1918, the Czechoslovak state was proclaimed in Prague. On October 30, 1918, Slovak leaders declared Slovakia a part of Czechoslovakia in the city of Turčiansky Svätý Martin. Lipták, 77. See the “Declaration of the Slovak Nation,” *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity...II*, document no.161, pp.512-514. On the negotiations between Masaryk and the Slovak representatives in the United States, who agreed to join the Czechs with the implicit promise of Slovak autonomy, see Marian Mark Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization: The Slovak Experience, 1870-1918*, pp.225-228.

⁶² The statement of the fatally wounded Count Széchenyi came after the battle at Leipzig on October 19, 1813. Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, p.10.

⁶³ Nurmi, 193. See Stolarik’s conclusion on the broken promises in the Pittsburgh Agreement: “Thus did American Slovaks help liberate their countrymen from the Magyar yoke, although the new state of Czechoslovakia disappointed many of them.” Stolarik, *Immigration and Urbanization...*, p.228.

⁶⁴ See Report (*Hlásenie*) to the Police Corps in Bratislava dated April 14, 1928 concerning the observation of Gejza Medrický and other editors of autonomist Slovak journals *Autonómia* and *Slovák*. According to the information gathered by a police officer, the Medrický family had been determined Magyars who became Slovaks only

Juriga, a veteran Slovak politician in the Parliament of Hungary, accused the Czechs of taking even insignificant positions which could otherwise have been filled by Slovaks.

Juriga, whose lecture was reported by a Czech police officer to the Regional Office (*Župný úrad*) in Bratislava, addressed a crowd of 3000, and referred to those “who have hurried from Prague as Austrians, who had never been Czechs, now bringing with them the manners of the Austrian bureaucracy.” Juriga’s speech was applauded with frequent shouting by the crowd in the Magyar language: *Éljen Juriga* (Long live Juriga)⁶⁵

The question of identities divided the Slovaks themselves. The communist politician Gustáv Husák (1913), who was born in the *Záhorie* region in Western Slovakia, just steps from the outskirts of traditionally multi-ethnic Bratislava (Posonium, Pressburg, Pozsony in Latin, German and Magyar), in his memoirs written after his resignation as the President of Czechoslovakia in 1989, proudly claimed his Slovak ancestry. Husák rejected the usurpation of *Slovakness* by “Matičiari” (the members of the *Matica slovenská*) identified with the elitist Protestant group “Martinisti” (the Martinists) based in the traditional bastion of Slovak national life in the city of Martin in Central Slovakia, who used to see themselves as the purest among the Slovaks.⁶⁶

after the monarchy was overthrown in 1918 (“až po prevrate zostali Slovákmí, ale v dobe starej monarchie boli ukrutní Maďari”). After the dissolution of the monarchy in 1918, one of the Medrický brothers had opted for Magyar citizenship and became a diplomatic representative of Hungary in Naples, Italy. Fond Policajného zboru v Bratislava [Register of the Police Corps in Bratislava], MAT54/1, box 227. *Slovenský národný archív* [Slovak National Archives; hereafter *SNA*].

⁶⁵ According to Juriga, “všetchno se hrne z Prahy, bývalí Rakušáci, kteří ani Čechy nebyli, přivážejí způsoby rakouské byrokracie.” See “Správa o prednáške Dr. Ferdinanda Jurigu v Redute zo dňa 5.apríla 1920” [Report on the lecture given by Dr. Ferdinand Juriga in Reduta building in Bratislava on April 5, 1920]. Fond Policajného zboru v Bratislave. MAT 54/1-54/6, box 226, pp.3-5 (in Czech), *SNA*.

⁶⁶ Viliam Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády: Gustáv Husák prehovoril* [The Rises and the Falls: Gustáv Husák Has Spoken] (Bratislava: Tatrapress, 1991), p.14. On the rift between Slovak Catholics and Protestants see Konštantín Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi druhá naša*

Despite political battles between autonomists and the supporters of a unitary state, the existence of the Slovaks as a nation was no longer threatened.⁶⁷ With a new generation raised in a functioning Czechoslovak parliamentary democracy, self-awareness among Slovaks increased and there was hardly any aspect of their lives which remained untouched.⁶⁸ In 1933, the *Matica slovenská* rejected the codification of a “Czechoslovak” language proposed by some Czech linguists. In the same year, the celebration of the 1100 anniversary of the consecration of the first Christian Church at Nitra attracted 150.000 people. They ignored the official delegation sent from Prague, led by Prime Minister Jan Malypetr and their fellow Milan Hodža, the Chairman of the Agrarian Party, who tried to address the gathering with a speech accentuating Czechoslovak national unity, until Andrej Hlinka, the Chairman of the Slovak People’s Party, was allowed to speak.⁶⁹ Likewise, the delegates of the Congress of Agrarian Youth in Zvolen in October of 1933 declared their support for “Slovak activism.”⁷⁰ This event, similar to the Congress of the Young Slovak Generation held in June of 1932 at the spa city of Trenčianske Teplice, attended by 500 young Slovak intellectuals and university students, signaled a shift from the preoccupation with identity issues to the

hlava Život Dr. Jozefa Tisu [After Svätopluk our Second Head of the State: The Life of Dr. Jozef Tiso] (Cleveland: The First Slovak Catholic Union, 1947), pp.21-22, 32, 34 and 53. Čulen speaks about “one part of the Slovak nation [Slovak Lutherans] which had forcibly promoted itself as the elite of the Slovak nation.” Ibid., pp.44-45.

⁶⁷ Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1995), pp.174-175. Krajčovič, “Károlyiho vláda v Maďarsku...,” p.10.

⁶⁸ Lipták, p.131.

⁶⁹ Čulen, pp.98-99.

⁷⁰ *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II*, document no.206 “Politický program agrárnej mládeže” [Political Program of the Agrarian Youth], pp.164-165. The Agrarian Youth positioned itself between the Slovak autonomist movement and the centralists. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia...*, p.177.

persisting socio-economic problems.⁷¹

Besides its record as an ally of Germany, the wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945) strengthened Slovak national identity and self-confidence. After the war, Samo Falťan, the Slovak Marxist historian stressed that “there [in the Slovak Republic] were tremendous developments in national life during that period despite economic subordination and dependence.”⁷² The American scholar of Czech descent, Carol Skalnik Leff, described the Slovak wartime experience as follows:

What Beneš did not see; and perhaps could not see in the Slovak state he reviled as a Nazi puppet, were the genuine elements of state building that accompanied Slovakia’s admittedly semi-sovereign status. The Slovak state and society did manage to coordinate and administer a broad range of political, cultural and economic institutions that had formerly been directed under Czech tutelage – and even partially staffed by Czechs...In practical terms, it was evident that the Slovaks were no longer cripplingly reliant on Czechs for personal guidance as had been the case two decades before.”⁷³

Although the communist regime from 1948 persistently tried to sweep the question of Slovak emancipation under the carpet on the basis of the formal equality of the two nations, the residua of *Czechoslovakism* survived in the late 1960s. Antonín Novotný, the deposed First Secretary of the Communist Party, while addressing the Slovak National Council in February of 1968, still as the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, stunned even his staunchest supporters, both Slovak and Czech, with

⁷¹ “The congress was a harbinger of a new awareness on the part of the Slovak intellectuals that Slovakia’s problems were not only political and cultural, as they had been generally assumed in 1918, but social and economic as well.” Victor S. Mamatey, “The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy, 1920-1938,” In *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938*, eds. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.144.

⁷² Eugen Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). See the first page of the introduction. At the same time, Falťan condemned the clerico-fascist regime for its “reactionary and perverted nationalism.” Ibidem, pp. 39-40.

⁷³ Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: the Making and Remaking of a State* (Princeton University Press, 1988), p.89.

his passionate exhortation – “Once we were one nation and we shall be one again” (*Boli sme jeden národ a zasa budeme*; Slovak).⁷⁴ Such a view, though for a long time obsolete and solitary, further accelerated the Slovak push towards the federalization of communist Czechoslovakia.

2.3 Slovak political tradition and the building of a political nation

Slovaks in the Kingdom of Hungary and during the existence of Czechoslovakia have appeared in many western publications as pastoral villagers and illiterate peasants who obediently worked on their fields, went to church and did not care about their identity and social progress.⁷⁵ While true to a certain extent,⁷⁶ those and similar views suggested weak grounds on which the Slovak political tradition, if any, could have possibly been built.⁷⁷ Details that would have made a difference are often missing or

⁷⁴ See the comment by Vojtech Daubner, the Slovak Communist politician and Novotný’s firm supporter: “It seemed like it was Masaryk alone who was speaking.” Stanislav Sikora, “Politický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967” [Political Developments in Slovakia in the Years 1960-1967], In *Predjarie. Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967* [On the Eve of the Spring: Political, Economic and Cultural Developments in Slovakia in the Years 1960-1967]), by Miroslav Londák, Stanislav Sikora and Elena Londáková (Bratislava, Veda: 2002), p.81. By ‘nation’ Novotný meant ‘people,’ not a state.

⁷⁵ For a description of the Slovaks as isolated mountaneers and rural people with no industry see Jean Gottmann, *A Geography of Europe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 653-656, and R.M. Glendynning, *Lands and People of the World* (New York: Ginn and Company, 1975), pp.172-173. For a view of the Slovaks as the “most barbarian than the rest [of the people of the Carpathian basin], harmless and wanting in self-assertion” see Bram Stoker’s classic novel *Dracula* (London: Constable, 1897), p.2.

⁷⁶ For a mix of apathy and backwardness present among the Slovak peasantry and the efforts of the nationally-conscious Slovak gentry and intelligentsia in modernizing Slovak society see Elena Mannová, “Ideové smery, kultúrny a spoločenský život” [Major Ideas, Cultural and Social Life], In *Na začiatku storočia, 1901-1914* [At the Beginning of the Century, 1901-1914], eds. Milan Podrimavský and Dušan Kováč (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), pp.269-271.

⁷⁷ The introductory part of Cohen’s book contains a brief chronology of major events in

incomplete, even in regard to the stage reached by the Slovaks at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. This is why this period deserves particular attention.

The patterns of Slovak political life date back to the 1840s. At that time, Ľudovít Štúr, Milan Hodža and Jozef Hurban founded the *Slovenskie Národné Noviny* (Slovak National Newspaper) thus developing – as Macartney pointed out – “a vigorous activity, which, although primarily literary, contained many political undertones.”⁷⁸ Only six weeks after the March Revolution in Vienna, hundreds of Slovaks gathered on May 11, 1848 in the city of Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš in support of the proclamation *Žiadosti slovenského národa* (A Petition of the Slovak Nation), the first compact political program of the Slovaks conceived by Hodža, Štúr, Hurban and others, in which they claimed the Slovaks had to be recognized as a distinct nation.⁷⁹ In *Žiadosti* the petitioners asked for the establishment of a Slovak Diet, the use of the Slovak language in the courts and in official communications. Remarkable was the claim for reciprocity in creating chairs of the Slovak language in Magyar counties and *vice versa*, designed to “get those nations closer to each other and, particularly, make the Slovaks and Magyars

Slovak national history. Shari J. Cohen, *Politics Without a Past: The Absence of History in Post-Communist Nationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), xi-xiii, pp.48-49. For more detailed, though dispersed, facts and causality regarding Slovak history prior to the communist era see Erika Harriss’s *Nationalism and Democratisation: Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp.79-92.

⁷⁸ Macartney, p.96. The newspaper had 600 subscribers in 1845. Krajčovič, p.50. Kováč, “The Slovak Political Agenda...,” p.96.

⁷⁹ Kováč, p.95. The previous document, *Slovenský prestolný prosbopis* [The Slovak Petition to the Throne] of June 6, 1842 – was presented to the Emperor in Vienna demanding language rights in defense against Count Zay’s Magyarising efforts. See Daniel Rapant, *Slovenský prestolný prosbopis z roku 1842* [The Slovak Petition to the Throne of 1842] (Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1943). Harris refers to the document as “rather ambitious” though incompatible with the Hungarian revolutionary program which sought to create a modern Hungarian [Magyar] nation. Harris, *Nationalism and Democratisation...*, p.77.

able to understand each other when they assemble in the Diet.”⁸⁰ Of special importance was the “Memorandum of the Slovak Nation” (*Memorandum slovenského národa*) proclaimed on June 6, 1861 in the city of Turčiansky Svätý Martin and submitted to the Court in Vienna. Until the signing of the Pittsburgh Agreement in May of 1918, this was the most detailed program regarding Slovak national emancipation. It asked for administrative autonomy for the Slovak counties and the creation of a separate administrative unit (*Hornouhorské slovenské okolie* – A North Hungarian Slovak District).⁸¹

Although the consequences of *Magyarisation* may have been used as an excuse for Slovak political passivity before WW I, primary evidence suggests that in many cases it had a contradictory effect. Despite the Magyarising of hundreds of Slovak elementary schools,⁸² tens of reports of local authorities in Zvolen County in Central Slovakia to the central government in Budapest attest to the multiple activities of nationally conscious Slovaks who organized themselves into cultural associations and spread Slovak periodicals. Their activities were met with persecution by state authorities. This led in some cases to social unrest, even attacks on local Magyar officials.⁸³ Tensions reached a climax on October 27, 1907 in the small village of

⁸⁰ See *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity... I*, document no.104, pp.307-310.

⁸¹ Edita Bosák, “The Slovak National Movement, 1848-1918,” In *Reflections on Slovak History*, eds. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum and Anne C. Roman (Toronto: Slovak World Congress, 1987), p. 60. *Dokumenty I*, document no.110, pp.336-343.

⁸² In 1890, the students were taught in Slovak in 1115 elementary schools; in 1910 there were only 241. Ľubomír Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1968), p.18. For detailed statistical data see Podrimavský, “K vývinu slovenskej politiky...,” pp.70-75.

⁸³ Július Valach, “Prenasledovanie kultúrneho a politického života Slovákov vo Zvolenskej župe koncom 19. a začiatkom 20.storočia (1891-1914)” [Persecution of the Cultural and Political Life of Slovaks in the Zvolen County at the end of the 19th and at the Beginning of the 20th Centuries], *Slovenská archivistika* XXXIII, no.2 (1998), p.84.

Černová in Northern Slovakia. Fifteen villagers were shot by gendarmes and fifty-nine charged by judicial courts, after they had protested against the removal of the young Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka from the local parish and his replacement by a pro-Magyar priest.⁸⁴ The massacre in Černová attracted the attention of international audiences. As the following observation by R.W. Seton-Watson in 1908 shows, repressions could not stop the spread of national sentiments:

When travelling in Hungary, I was continually met by the shallow argument that the nationalist movement among the non-Magyars races is the work of a few agitators, and that it will soon collapse if only these are muzzled and imprisoned. This argument contains a slight grain of truth; for every political movement since the dawn of history has been the work of the few rather than of the many, and the masses of the people are always helpless when deprived of their leaders. But the argument at once falls to the ground when applied to the case in point. The policy of muzzling has now been far from crushing out the movement, each fresh persecution only serves to add fuel to the fire.⁸⁵

At the threshold of the 20th century the Slovak question gained a new dimension. Slovak cultural and political elites no longer thought of themselves solely within the narrow context of Hungary. For them the challenge was to become a modern nation, equal to the Magyars and other European nations in terms of socio-economic development and culture.⁸⁶ In the early 1900s, the nestor of Slovak literature and politics, Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, expressed the feelings of many nationally conscious

Michal Potemra, "K vývinu slovenskej politiky v rokoch 1901-1914" (On the Evolution of Slovak Politics in the Years 1901-1914), *Historický časopis* 27, no.1 (1979) p.57.

⁸⁴ For a detailed account on the event and its immediate aftermath see the study by Roman Holec, *Tragédia v Černovej a slovenská spoločnosť* [Tragedy in Černová and Slovak Society] (Matica slovenská: Martin, 1997), pp. 116-120. Lipták, p.32.

⁸⁵ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary*, p.394. Seton-Watson stresses that 92.5% of the Liptov county inhabitants were Slovaks and 90.6% understood no Magyar. *Ibidem*, p.332.

⁸⁶ For economic and scientific accomplishments of Slovak society at the beginning of the 20th century see R. Marsina *et al.*, *Slovenské dejiny* (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1992), pp.186-187.

Slovaks while saying “We, the Slovaks, are a nation with all the cardinal attributes of a nation.”⁸⁷ Slovak historian Milan Podrimavský came to the same conclusion in the late 1970s, when communist ‘normalization’ peaked. According to him, Slovaks at that time evolved from a mere ethnicity to a nation and, despite their lack of a separate statehood and self-administration, reached “all predispositions to become a national individuality with all its consequences within the existing state [Hungary].”⁸⁸

To become a socio-politically cohesive entity, it was pivotal to exercise collective political rights through the relevant agents – political parties with their leadership, programs, structures and agendas.⁸⁹ The only ethnic “Slovak” political subject was the Slovak National Party – *Slovenská národná strana* (SNS) – established in 1871 as an elitist and conservative party that contained both Catholic and Protestant elements. The Party, which entered the Hungarian Parliament only in 1901, however, was not the sole political organization of the Slovaks. Their electorates were dispersed through other parties – the Socialist, Agrarian, and Christian, all of which pursued various political and socio-economic goals. Most Slovak Catholics initially cast their votes for the all-

⁸⁷ Dušan Kováč *et al.*, *Na začiatku storočia...*, p.43.

⁸⁸ See Podrimavský, p.44. On the international context of Slovak political emancipation before 1914 see Potemra, “K vývinu slovenskej politiky v rokoch 1901-1914”, pp.53-56. Bearing in mind the date when Potemra’s article was published (1979), particularly interesting is his observation that younger Slovak politicians under the influence of the Czech “Realists” led by T.G. Masaryk, became more critical towards the foreign policies of Russia and sought inspiration regarding democratic and political principles, as well as philosophical ideas, from western democracies. *Ibidem*, p.56.

⁸⁹ For a theoretical classification of the political system in the Kingdom of Hungary by Štefan Marko Daxner, an *Old School* (“Stará škola;” Slovak) representative, in 1868, see Ján Škodáček, “Vývinové problémy slovenského politického systému” [Evolutionary Problems of the Slovak Political System], In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky* [The Tenth Anniversary of the Slovak Republic], ed. Natália Rolková (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2004), p.32-33.

Hungarian People's Party (*Néppárt*; Magyar) led by Count Ferdinand Zichy.⁹⁰ Their secession from Magyar Populists in December of 1905 confirmed the fact that, with the exception of the Social Democrats, the pattern of ethnic demarcation among political parties in Hungary prevailed until the demise of the state in 1918.⁹¹

A major obstacle to the political advancement of the Slovaks in the struggle for their political rights was the absence of universal suffrage in Hungary. Only 5% of the population had active and passive electoral rights.⁹² Instead of forty representatives in the Diet, when applying a proportional electoral system, more than two million Slovaks living in Hungary had only four deputies in 1901, one in 1905, seven in 1906 and three in 1913.⁹³ Since 1905 the Catholic wing within the Slovak National Party headed towards the creation of its own political subject – the Slovak People's Party (*Slovenská ľudová strana*; SLS). This was accomplished in 1912 and 1913.⁹⁴ Both the Slovak National Party and the Slovak People's Party were obliged to remain passive during the

⁹⁰ The Slovak electorate supported the party until 1905, when Zichy began to follow a more chauvinistic pro-Magyar course. Seton-Watson, pp.332-333. Holec, *Tragédia v Černovej...*, p.46.

⁹¹ Dušan Kováč, "Nacionalizmus a politická kultúra v Rakúsko-Uhorsku v období dualizmu" [Nationalism and Political Culture in Austria-Hungary during the Period of Dualism], *Historický časopis* 53, no.1 (2005), p.53. The Slovak Social Democratic Party was established in June 1905. Although it merged with the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, it preserved certain autonomy. Toma and Kováč, *Slovakia from Samo to Dzurinda*, pp.42-43. Lipták underscores that the *Slovenské robotnícke noviny* (The Slovak Workers' Newspaper) and monthly *Napred* (Forward) had a bigger circulation (8,000) than *Národné noviny* (National Newspaper) published by Slovak Nationalists (1,000). Lipták, p.30.

⁹² Kováč, p.53.

⁹³ Lipták, p.22.

⁹⁴ In 1905, Slovak MP in the Hungarian Parliament František Skyčák left the club of the Magyar People's Party and joined the Parliamentary Nationalist Party, composed of Romanian and Serb deputies. In December of 1905, he signaled the upcoming foundation of the Slovak People's Party. The party organs, however, were created only in the summer of 1913. Potemra, "K vývinu slovenskej politiky...", pp.89 and 108. Holec, *Tragédia v Černovej...*, p.47.

war under the concept of internal political truce among political parties of Austria-Hungary.

In the early summer of 1917, the passivity of Slovak political parties came to an end. At the opening of the summer session of the Austrian Parliament on May 30, 1917, the Czechs asked for the creation of a Czechoslovak state within Austria-Hungary.⁹⁵ Vavro Šrobár from the Slovak National Party asked the Czech deputies to add Slovaks to their demand. In the summer of the same year, Andrej Hlinka and Ferdiš Juriga from the Slovak People's Party voiced their support for the creation of a common state with the Czechs.⁹⁶ After the end of the war both parties renewed their activities. Whereas the importance of the former was gradually decreasing, the opposite was true for the latter. Having spontaneously added the name of its long term leader Father Andrej Hlinka to its trademark in 1921, the Hlinka Slovak People's Party remained the strongest political subject in Slovakia until April of 1945 when the new Czechoslovak Government of the "National Front," created in Košice, forbade the party's continued existence.

The Cleveland and Pittsburgh agreements of October 1915 and May 1918 had foreseen the future state of the Slovaks and Czechs as either a federation, or alternatively, with Slovak autonomy within the Republic. None of that happened. Despite the close personal ties between the Slovak and Czech political and cultural elites, political tensions soon arose.⁹⁷ Although the cultural proximity and political co-

⁹⁵ Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy I* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p.515.

⁹⁶ Lipták, 69. See the letter from A. Štefánek to V. Šrobár. *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti I*, document no.142, pp.453-454.

⁹⁷ On the results of an inquiry on the Slovak-Czech mutuality made by the liberal and pro-*Hlasist* (*Hlas – Voice*) journal *Prúdy* (Currents) see Dagmar Pelčáková, "Česko-slovenská anketa v časopise *Prúdy* z roku 1914 (1919) a otázka vzájomnosti" [The Czech and Slovak Inquiry in the Journal *Prúdy* in 1914 (1919) and the Question of

operation of the Slovaks and Czechs in late Austria-Hungary had been a positive factor, it had paved the way for the idea of *Czechoslovakism* and the fiction of a unitary Czechoslovak nation.⁹⁸ With few exceptions, this concept was rejected by the overwhelming majority of Slovaks, which made the Czechs feel ingratitude, and later on, during the period of Munich and its aftermath, also betrayal by their “younger” and “less-advanced” brethren.⁹⁹

The proportional political system of pre-war Czechoslovakia, with its universal and compulsory suffrage, enabled the Slovaks to form their own political parties and to enter the arena of parliamentary politics. This ended the age of political innocence, which, according to historian Michal Potemra, until the outbreak of the First World War, was characterized by insufficient organizational structures of the Slovak political parties, the provincial outlook of their leaders, a lack of clarity in parties’ programs, emotional instability and spontaneity of electorates which had not been able to pursue clearly

Mutuality], *Historický časopis* 53, no.3 (2005), pp.505-522. Thirty-seven Czech and thirty-nine Slovak intellectuals participated in the inquiry. Whereas several respondents had agreed on the need for cultural cooperation and exchange of ideas, their views on the political unity of the Slovaks and Czechs in a future common state diverged.

⁹⁸ Michal Potemra, “Rozvoj česko-slovenských vzťahov v rokoch 1901-1914” [Development of the Czech and Slovak Relations in the Years 1901-1914], *Historický časopis* 27, no.3 (1979), p.423. The first signal of Czechoslovakism as an embodiment of the idea of a unitary Czechoslovak nation of which Slovaks allegedly had historically been a part was present in the speech delivered by Dr. Karel Kramář, the first Prime Minister of the emerging Czechoslovakia, in the Revolutionary (Provisional) National Assembly on November 14, 1918. See Karol Sidor, *Slovenská politika v pražskom sneme 1918-1938, prvá časť* [Slovak Politics in the Diet in Prague, 1918-1938, Part One] (Cambridge-Ontario: Dobrá kniha, 1975), p.26. See Juriga’s refusal of the “Czechoslovak” language in the Diet on January 23, 1920. *Ibid.*, p.143.

⁹⁹ Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia. The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987*, p. 164.

Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics. Nations Versus State* (Boulder-Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.26.

defined political goals.¹⁰⁰ The price for becoming politically more experienced was an instant split between the Slovak political parties. According to Ferdinand Peroutka, a renowned Czech historian, “The Czechs taught the Slovaks to create mutually irreconcilable and totally partitioned parties.” Dr. Karel Kramář, a veteran of Czech politics, who had fought for the Czech cause in the Austrian Parliament and became the first Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia in November of 1918, concurred: “We committed a great sin. Let us say it quite candidly; we brought to Slovakia the ugliest thing we have: our partisanship.”¹⁰¹

Yet it would be mistaken and unjust to blame the Czechs for Slovak internal quarrels since they had more profound origins. Twenty years of political fighting for Slovak autonomy in the First Czechoslovak Republic were marked by a phenomenon that accompanied Slovak national emancipation since its earliest phase in the 19th century: the presence of a confessional split and rivalry.¹⁰² In the past, when following a common cause, as in case of the founding of the *Matica slovenská*,¹⁰³ the Slovaks had been able to overcome religious irritations and mistrust that had begun with the re-Catholicization and persecution of Protestants in Upper Hungary and lasted from the second half of the 16th to the beginning of the 18th centuries.¹⁰⁴ In interwar Slovak politics, adherence to a particular confession played an important role. Bearing in mind their use of ancient Czech as their liturgical language, Slovak Protestants always felt

¹⁰⁰ Potemra, “K vývinu slovenskej politiky...,” p.111.

¹⁰¹ Leff, *National Conflict...*, p.68

¹⁰² Kováč *et al.*, *Na začiatku storočia...*, pp.61-63.

¹⁰³ Founded by the Catholic Bishop Štefan Moyzes and the Superintendent of the Protestant (Lutheran) Church Karol Kuzmány in 1863 in Martin, Central Slovakia

¹⁰⁴ A more detailed historical analysis of the Catholic-Protestant relationship can be found in David P. Daniel’s article “The Protestant Reformation and Slovak Ethnic Consciousness,” *Slovakia XXVIII*, nos.51-52 (1978-79), pp.49-65.

closer to the Czechs than Slovak Catholics and they were more likely to accept the idea of a unitary Czechoslovak nation Those who did so appeared to the rest of Slovak society as “Czechoslovaks.”¹⁰⁵

The Hlinka Slovak People’s Party (HSĽS) as the largest political party supported by the Catholic majority, was the firmest supporter of Slovak autonomy. Except for a short period from 1927 to 1929, the Slovak Populists, or *ľudáks* (*ľud* - people) did not join any parliamentary coalition as a protest against the centralist policies of Prague.¹⁰⁶ In the existing political system they had no chance to break the dominance of the five most powerful “Czechoslovak” political parties – the Social Democrats, National Democrats, National Socialists, Czechoslovak Populists and the Agrarians, known under the

¹⁰⁵ Čulen accused Slovak Protestants of sacrificing Slovak autonomy for their individual interests. Konštantín Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi druhá naša hlava...*, p. 181. According to the author, the only Protestant who remained truly loyal to the idea of Slovak autonomy was Martin Rázus, writer and the long-term leader of the Slovak National Party. Ibidem, p.119. On the split between the two confessions and its impact on Slovak politics in the First Czechoslovak Republic see Jan Rychlík, “The Role of the Religion in the National Identity of the Czechs and Slovaks,” In *Dynamics of National Identity and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration*, ed. Elena Marushiakova (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p.300.

¹⁰⁶ Slovak Populists became the strongest party in Slovakia in the election of 1925 with 489,111 votes (34%). Alena Bartlová, “Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana” [The Hlinka Slovak People’s Party], In *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861-2004. II. Díl: Období 1938-2004* [Political Parties: The Evolution of Political Parties and Movements in the Czech Lands and Czechoslovakia 1861-2004. Second volume: The Period 1938 – 2004], eds. Jiří Malíř and Pavel Marek (Brno: Nakladatelství Doplněk, 2005), p.849. In 1927, following a new administrative reform, the HSĽS agreed to participate in the centralist government in Prague and received two ministerial positions. In 1929, it left the government as a consequence of the “Tuka affair”. See Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, “The Slovak People’s Party: The Politics of Opposition, 1918-1938,” In *Slovak Politics. Essays on Slovak History in honour of Joseph M. Kirschbaum*, ed. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (Cleveland-Ohio-Rome: Slovak Institute, 1983), p.178.

collective name *Pětka* (the Five).¹⁰⁷ The results of four parliamentary elections held during the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic illustrate this fact:

(Table 1) Major parties' strength in the First Czechoslovak Republic and Slovakia, excluding the German and the German-Magyar political parties (Percentage of total votes cast).¹⁰⁸

Parliamentary election (ČSR):	1920	1925	1929	1935
Agrarians	9.7	13.7	15.0	14.3
Social Democrats	25.6	8.9	13.0	12.6
National Socialists	8.1	8.6	10.4	9.2
Czechoslovak Populists	11.3	9.7	8.4	7.5
National Democrats	6.2	4.0	3.9	5.6
Small Tradesmen	2.0	4.0	3.9	5.4
Hlinka Slovak Populists	-	6.9	5.8	6.9
Communists	-	13.1	10.2	10.3
Parliamentary election (Slovakia)	1920	1925	1929	1935
Agrarians	18.0	17.4	19.5	17.6
Social Democrats	38.1	4.2	9.5	11.4

¹⁰⁷ History textbooks in Czechoslovakia during 'normalization' did not make any difference between the HSLS and other political parties. Except for the KSČ, all of them allegedly followed the interests of "class exploitation. (*vykorisťovateľské záujmy*). See Peter Ratkoš, Jozef Butvin and Miroslav Kropilák. *Dejiny Československa*. Učebné texty pre 2. a 3. ročník strednej všeobecno-vzdelávacej školy, pre 3.a 4. ročník gymnázia a pre 2. ročník strednej odbornej školy [History of Czechoslovakia: a history textbook for the 2nd and 3rd year students of high schools, for the 3rd and 4th year students of gymnasia and for the 2nd year students of specialized high schools] (Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1971), p.322.

¹⁰⁸ The data were excerpted from Czechoslovak statistics as cited by Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987*, pp. 51.

<u>Parliamentary election (Slovakia)</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1925</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1935</u>
National Socialists	2.2	2.6	3.0	3.2
Czechoslovak Populists	17.5	1.3	2.6	2.3
Hlinka Slovak Populists	-	34.3	28.3	30.1
Communists	-	13.9	10.7	13.0

Since the Slovak Populists were in opposition to the government over Slovak autonomy as foreseen by the Pittsburgh Agreement, in the Czech Lands they were perceived as enemies of a common state, even traitors. An article which appeared in April in 1934 in the Czech daily *České večerní slovo* (Czech Evening Word), accused the Slovak politicians, and particularly one of them without naming him, as being bribed by the Poles. In a letter dated April 12, 1934 Andrej Hlinka strongly refused the insinuation and similar accusations as “fables and fairy tales.” He once again stressed the leitmotiv of the Slovak autonomist movement for Slovakia being equal to the Czech lands (*rovný s rovným*) while saying: “We are not jealous of the Czechs. But let it be clear that you [the Czechs] are masters in your own home and I am at home in Slovakia.”¹⁰⁹

For the Slovaks a far bigger threat than the centralist government in Prague was the revisionist foreign policy of Hungary supported by Mussolini’s Italy and Beckite Poland. The latter also claimed some territory in Slovakia, as well as in the Czech

¹⁰⁹ Fond “Policajný zbor v Bratislave” [Register of the Police Corps in Bratislava], box 226, document 226/213, p.4. *SNA*. The Slovak politician accused of close cooperation with the Poles was Karol Sidor, a Polonophile and one of Hlinka’s closest collaborators. He was considered one of Hlinka’s successors, but he lost the election as party chairman to Jozef Tiso, the future President of the wartime Slovak Republic. Ľubica Kázmerová and Milan Katuninec, *Dilemy Karola Sidora* [The Dilemmas of Karol Sidor] (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2006), pp. 80-82.

Lands.¹¹⁰ In the presidential election of 1935, with the promise of autonomy, Slovak Populists cast their votes for Dr. Edvard Beneš, the archrival of Slovak autonomy.¹¹¹ At a Party meeting held in the city of Košice in Eastern Slovakia on April 17, 1934, Msgr. Jozef Tiso, the Vice-Chairman of the party and a moderate autonomist, completed what Hlinka had said a few days earlier: “We stand for the strengthening of the Czechoslovak Republic; we will not allow the revision of the borders and we shall defend the territorial integrity [of Czechoslovakia] with our last drop of blood.”¹¹²

During the Munich crisis in September of 1938, the Slovaks had to face the territorial aspirations of Hungary and Poland.¹¹³ The Chairmanship of the Slovak People’s Party called a meeting of the Party and its supporters in Žilina in Northern Slovakia to find a way out. On October 6, 1938 the Žilina Declaration was adopted,

¹¹⁰ For a survey of the territorial dispute between Czechoslovakia, including Slovakia, and Poland from 1920 to 1945, see Marta Melníková and Eva Vrabcová, “Utváranie severných hraníc Slovenska v 20.storočí.” [The Formation of Slovakia’s Northern Boundary in the 20th Century], *Slovenská archivistika* XXXI, no.2 (1996), pp.16-26.

¹¹¹ The other candidate was Professor Bohumil Němec of the Agrarian Party. See . Kirschbaum, “The Slovak People’s Party...,” p.178. Victor S. Mamatey, “The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy, 1920-1938. In *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, eds. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, pp. p.155-156. For Tiso’s decisive impact on the HSLŠ members to cast their votes for Beneš’s candidacy see Čulen, p. 173.

¹¹² See the document marked as strictly confidential, addressed to the Police Headquarters in Košice, on May 17, 1934. Fond “Policajný zbor v Bratislave,” box 226, pp.4-5, *SNA*. It was not by accident that Tiso made this statement in Košice, the second largest city in Slovakia, which still had a significant Magyar population. Under the provisions of the First Vienna Award (Arbitration) of November 1 and 2, 1938, this city and other territories in South and East Slovakia were ceded to Hungary.

¹¹³ For a detailed account on the standpoint of Slovak politicians during the Munich crisis see Valerián Bystrický, “Riešenie slovenskej otázky v kontexte rozhovorov slovenských politikov 29. a 30. septembra v Prahe” [Solution of the Slovak Question Within the Context of Discussions of Slovak Politicians in Prague on September 29. and 30, 1939 in Prague]. *Miles Semper Honestus*, Zborník štúdií vydaný pri príležitosti životného jubilea Vojtecha Dangla [MSH: Collection of Studies in Honor of Vojtech Dangl], eds. Vladimír Segeš and Božena Šed'ová (Bratislava: Vojenský historický ústav, 2007), pp.175-190.

which started a series of the most important points of divergent interpretations of modern Slovak history.¹¹⁴ Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, an Israeli historian born in Slovakia, states that “the HSPP [HSEŠ], while still under the effect of the Munich verdict, had met with the representatives of the Slovak centralist parties at Žilina and *forced* [my Italics] them to accept its program of Slovak autonomy.”¹¹⁵ František Vnuk, by contrast, underlined that all major Slovak political parties, including the Slovak National Party, the Agrarian Party and even the Slovak Communists, were very keen on embracing the idea of autonomy for Slovakia.¹¹⁶ The next day the government in Prague, happy that the Slovaks did not opt for complete secession from a rump state, agreed to the demands of the Slovak politicians, voiced by the Populists.¹¹⁷ The autonomous Slovak government, led by Msgr. Jozef Tiso, who had succeeded Father Andrej Hlinka after his death on August 16, 1938 as the Chairman of the HSEŠ, was composed of two other Populists

¹¹⁴ See *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity...II.*, document no.212, pp.179-183.

¹¹⁵ Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists 1918-1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 33. Interestingly enough, Jelinek also refers to the Communists, who “hurried to join the victors” after the decision on Slovak autonomy had been adopted. On the problems see also Jörg K. Hoensch, *Slovensko a Hitlerova východná politika. Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana medzi autonómiou a separatizmom 1938-1939* [Slovakia and Hitler’s Ostpolitik. Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party Between Autonomy and Separatism 1938-1939] (Bratislava: Veda, 2001). Overall, Hoensch agrees with Jelinek. He sees the events in Žilina as a “dictate”. Ibidem, p.71.

¹¹⁶ According to Vnuk, “the representatives of the political parties came to Žilina not to make a protest, but to make a plea to be accepted by ľudáks in the autonomist camp as well.” František Vnuk, *Mať svoj štát znamená mať svoj život. Politická biografija Alexandra Macha* [Having a State Means to Be Alive. Political Biography of Alexander Mach] (Cleveland: Slovenský ústav, 1987), p.169-170. For an evasive reference to the “desertions’ from other political parties to the ľudáks during the meeting in Žilina, with no reference to the Slovak Communists, see Lipták, p.159.

¹¹⁷ Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi...*, p. 213. Paradoxically, the events in Žilina and after were felt and interpreted in the Czech Lands as a “betrayal.” Leff, *National Conflict...*, p.164.

and two Agrarian ministers. Autonomy for Slovakia was formally approved by the Parliament in Prague on November 21.¹¹⁸

The birth of the wartime Slovak Republic on March 14, 1939, which preceded by one day the final destruction of the Second Czechoslovak Republic by the invading German army, is another strong example of diametrically opposed interpretations of crucial events in Slovak history. Ivan Kamenec, an expert on Slovakia during WW II, refers to the wartime Slovak Republic as a “by-product,” emerging after the destruction of Czechoslovakia by Hitler.¹¹⁹ During the existence of the wartime Slovak Republic the deportations of its Jews and Roma citizens truly represents a dark chapter in modern Slovak history.¹²⁰ In formal terms, the Slovak Republic had accomplished all the attributes of formal statehood.¹²¹ According to Róbert Letz, the existence of the state

¹¹⁸ František Vnuk, “Slovakia’s Six Eventful Months,” *Slovak Studies* 4 (1964), pp.28-31.

¹¹⁹ Ivan Kamenec, *Slovenský štát* [The Slovak State] (Praha: Anomal, 1992), p. 5. For a change in author’s perspective see his article “Slovenská spoločnosť v rokoch 1939-1945” [Slovak Society between 1939-1945], *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2004*, pp. 87-102. The author points out that the Slovak State was a political reality and his labeling as the ‘so-called’ Slovak State is counterproductive and propagandistic as it does not reflect historic reality. Ibidem, p. 91.

¹²⁰ See the discriminatory Ordinance no. 198 on the Legal Status of Jews in Slovakia issued by the Tuka Government on September 9, 1941 (*Codex Iudaicus*). *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity...II*, document no.234, pp.274-281. For details Pavol Mešťan *et. al.* “Kam viedla Slovensko politika Slovenského štátu v rokoch 1939-1945? Naše stanovisko” [Where was Slovakia led by the Politics of the Slovak State in 1939-1945? Our Standpoint]. Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum - Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 1997).

¹²¹ Milan S. Ďurica, “Vznik a trvanie prvého Slovenského štátu” [The Emergence and Existence of the First Slovak State]. *Slovenská Republika, 1939-1945* [The Slovak Republic, 1939-1945], ed. Ján Bobák (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2000), pp. 19-36. Slovakia was diplomatically recognized by 31 states. Slovakia established its diplomatic missions in 18 states. Ibidem, p. 25.

“that could have not been erased even after four decades of intentional propaganda and discreditation,” meant a lot for preserving Slovak national consciousness.¹²²

The third major occurrence that has divided historians and the public in Slovakia was the military revolt against the pro-German Slovak government. For Vnuk, the rebellion of part of the Slovak Army and population was an act of betrayal against a constitutional regime which still had the support of a majority of the people.¹²³ On the opposite side stood the Civic Bloc and Slovak Communists, who allied themselves in December of 1943 and created the illegal Slovak National Council.¹²⁴ The cooperation of the two resulted in the Slovak National Uprising (*Slovenské národné povstanie*; SNP) praised by many as the most important demonstration of the will of the nation in modern Slovak history.¹²⁵ After WW II, the former allies disagreed as to who had played the decisive role in the uprising. The most prominent advocates of the two contrasting perspectives were Gustáv Husák, the Chairman of the Slovak Communist Party (KSS) and the ex-communist professional historian Jozef Jablonický.¹²⁶

¹²² Róbert Letz. “Pokus o nastolenie moci ľudovej demokracie na Slovensku v roku 1944 a otázka právnej kontinuity prvej Slovenskej republiky” [An Attempt to Establish the Rule of People’s Democracy in Slovakia in 1944 and the Question of the Legal Continuity of the Wartime Slovak Republic], *Slovenská republika (1939-1945)*, p. 211.

¹²³ František Vnuk. *Rebelanti a suplikanti* [The Rebels and the Supplicants] (The Slovak Research Institute of America, Lakewood 1989), pp. 50-51.

¹²⁴ Anton Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament v premenách času* (Bratislava: Kancelária NR SR, 2008), p. 50.

¹²⁵ Anna Josko, “The Slovak Resistance Movement,” *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1919-1978*, pp. 362-384.

¹²⁶ Gustáv Husák. *Svedectvo o Slovenskom národnom povstaní* [Testimony on the Slovak National Uprising] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1964). Jozef Jablonický. *Povstanie bez legiend* [The Uprising Without Legends] (Bratislava: Obzor, 1990). The latter was persecuted by the communist regime in the late 1970s and 1980s because of challenging the official interpretation which had portrayed the Communist Party of Slovakia and the Partisan movement as having played the leading role in the uprising.

Outside perceptions of the wartime Slovak Republic were negative and this was one of the reasons why the bid of Slovak Communists for autonomy in the re-born Czechoslovakia was met with a strong rejection by the returning President Edvard Beneš. He and his followers alleged that the Slovaks were too immature to govern themselves.¹²⁷ Within a year, in the Three Prague Agreements, Slovak politicians, both democratic and Communist, watched with a mix of desperation and compliance the gradual abandonment of the new “Grand Design” for Czechoslovakia which had originally included an autonomous Slovakia as envisaged by the Košice Government Program adopted in April of 1945.¹²⁸

In the first post-war parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia held in May of 1946, the Democratic Party soundly defeated the Communists in Slovakia. Out of an electorate of 1,612,216, 999,622 cast their votes for the new Democratic Party (62%) whereas 489,596 votes were cast for the Slovak Communists (30.37%). These results in Slovakia did not prevent the Communists from winning the election on an all-state level due to their decisive victory in the Czech Lands.¹²⁹ Bearing in mind the fact that the electorate of the Democratic Party comprised the supporters of civic resistance in 1944-

¹²⁷ See Beneš's opinion that “the Slovaks were still quite immature and not really fitted to govern themselves. They wanted to do so but they were too lighthearted and would get into great difficulties.” František Vnuk, “Slovak-Czech Relations in Post-War Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948,” *Slovak Politics*, pp.314-352, p.328.

¹²⁸ Once labeled by the communist leader Klement Gottwald as the *Magna Carta* of the Slovak nation, the idea of Slovak autonomy was completely abandoned a year later. Vnuk, p.322 and pp.337-338.

¹²⁹ Štefan Šutaj, *Občianske politické strany na Slovensku v rokoch 1944-1948* [Civic Political Parties in Slovakia in the Years 1944-1948] (Bratislava: Veda, 1999), p.148. Communists in the Czech Lands received 40.1%, overall 37.9% on the all-state level. Radomír Luža, “Czechoslovakia between Democracy and Communism,” In *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 404. With the votes cast for the Social Democratic Party, the support for the left in the Czech Lands reached 55.7%.

1945, the support of Slovak Catholics for the success of the Democratic Party was instrumental.¹³⁰

Though the election results bought some time for the opponents of Communism in Slovakia, they were also detrimental to the autonomist position of Slovak Communists vis-à-vis the centralist policies of the Czechoslovak government. In November of 1947, with the support of Prague, Slovak Communists succeeded in changing the composition of the Board of Commissioners as the executive body of the Slovak National Council. Once real, after the Third Prague Agreement, the Board was only formally the highest political authority in Slovakia.¹³¹ The lack of determination on the side of the Democrats to resist the threats orchestrated by Slovak Communists in November of 1947 resulted in what became a “dress rehearsal” for the February 1948 coup d’ état in Prague. Shortly afterwards, the leader of the Democratic Party Dr. Jozef Lettrich and other party officials, afraid of the consequences of their anti-communist stances, went into exile before the cage was locked.¹³² They followed the first wave of political émigrés who had

¹³⁰ The Hlinka Slovak People’s Party was banned in April of 1945.

¹³¹ In March of 1946, Slovak Protestants and Catholics agreed on the ratio 2:1 on the list of political candidates for the upcoming elections, 7:3 in the party organs and the same ratio in all other economic and civic associations and institutions. See “Záznam o dohode členov predsedníctva Demokratickej strany (DS) o niektorých organizačných a osobných opatreniach” [Record of the Agreement of the Members of the Chairmanship of the Democratic Party on Some Political, Organizational and Personal Measures]. Fond “Demokratická strana” (Register “Democratic Party”), box 5, *SNA*. During the negotiations prior to the conclusion of the Third Prague Agreement in June of 1946, the Slovak delegation was told by their Czech counterparts that the “Slovak Board of Commissioners was nothing but the continuation of Tiso’s regime and that the Slovak national organs were something the Slovaks had inherited from Tiso and Hitler.” Vnuk, “Slovak-Czech relations...,” p.331.

¹³² “The Democratic Party sees a big danger for democracy when one party gains a bigger share of power than belongs to it on the basis of free and democratic parliamentary elections.” See the document “Petition of the Democratic Party” [Požiadavky Demokratickej strany] dated January 25, 1948. Register “Democratic Party”, box 5, p.2, *SNA*. Lettrich resigned his position as the Chairman of the

escaped Soviet Armies entering Slovakia in the period 1944 and 1945. Despite their loyalty to Prague, Slovak Communists were subordinated to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.¹³³ On the one hand, they were next to pay the price for a self-perpetuating “Slovak question” under the new authoritarian regime they helped to build. On the other hand, they may have consoled themselves with the fact that their people during the decade 1938-1948 had become a political nation.¹³⁴

Democratic Party on February 26, 1948, one day after the coup took place in Prague. On the same day, he was investigated by State Security for his previous critique of the police. See Šutaj, *Občianske politické strany na Slovensku...*, p.271.

¹³³ It did not mean that the Communist Party of Slovakia (*Komunistická strana Slovenska*; KSS) ceased to exist, although after February of 1948 many of the party officials came to Slovakia from the Czech Lands. See Stanislav Sikora, “Politický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967” [Political Developments in Slovakia in the Years 1960-1967], In *Predjarie. Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967* [On the Eve of the Spring: Political, Economic and Cultural Developments in Slovakia in the Years 1960-1967], Miroslav Londák, Stanislav Sikora, and Elena Londáková (Bratislava, Veda: 2002), p.22.

¹³⁴ A report by Slovak Communists refers to the year 1918 as the completion of Slovak revival (*obrodienie*) and to the year of 1938 and the period after, as its completion. See “Správa 5. ilegálneho ústredného vedenia KSS o vývine na Slovensku po 6.októbri 1938” (Report of the 5th Illegal Central Committee of the KSS on Developments in Slovakia after October 6, 1938). *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity...II*, document no.248, pp.328-336, p.333.

CHAPTER 3
SLOVAK SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN COMMUNIST
CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1948-1989

3.1 From a people's democracy to the socialist federation. 1948-1968

The new Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, adopted on May 9, 1948 established a centralist model of governance which provided the Slovak National Council and the Board of Commissioners with very limited legislative and executive powers.¹ The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ hereafter) empowered itself with the leading role in the political system, which was centered towards the National Front, created by the Košice Government Program in April of 1945.² After February of 1948, two minor political parties in Slovakia were allowed to exist in order to preserve the semblance of democracy: they were the Freedom Party (*Strana slobody*) and the Labor Party (*Strana práce*).³ In September of 1948 the KSČ subordinated to itself the

¹ Eduard Táborský, "Slovakia under Communist Rule. 'Democratic Centralism' versus National Autonomy," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 14 (October 1954), pp.258-259.

² Jiří Kocian, "Komunistické Československo po roce 1948" [Communist Czechoslovakia after 1948], *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2005* (Masarykova univerzita v Brně, 2005), p.144. The National Front was a continuation of the Popular Fronts which emerged in both East and West Europe before WW II as a barrier against fascist and national-socialist movements. In post-war Czechoslovakia, only the political parties (from the 1950s also civic organizations and associations) incorporated into the National Front established in March of 1945 in Moscow, were allowed to exist and participate in political and social life. H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1976), pp.22-23.

³ Michal Barnovský, "Politické strany na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-1948" [Political Parties in Slovakia in the Years 1945-1948], In *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861-2004. II. Díl: Období 1938-2004* [Political Parties: The Evolution of Political Parties and Movements in the Czech Lands and Czechoslovakia 1861-2004. Second volume: The Period 1938-2004], eds. Jiří Malíř and Pavel Marek *et al.* (Brno: Nakladatelství Doplněk, 2005), pp.1214-1215 (Freedom Party) and pp. 1220-1221 (Labor Party). The former was founded in April 1946 as a

Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS hereafter), which had existed as a separate political party since May of 1939.⁴ Although Gustáv Husák and other Slovak Communists remained loyal and assured Prague that they were ready to work for the benefits of a common cause, the methods of governing applied in the Czech Lands were not easily accepted in Slovakia.⁵

The Košice Government Program stipulated the confiscation of the properties of traitors and Nazi collaborators in 1945. The Czechoslovak state nationalized the banks, the credit system, insurance companies, and natural resources. Mining, energy, metallurgy, armament and other branches of state's economic system were completely nationalized and excluded from their privatization in the future.⁶ Collectivization of confiscated and expropriated agricultural land began in 1945. In the same year, private ownership of lands was limited to 50 hectares, and after February 1948 a forcible collectivization began.⁷ The two-year economic plan for the years 1947-1948 was designed to rebuild Czechoslovak industry and to raise the peoples' standard of living. After February of 1948, it was re-directed eastward to reflect the increasing role of the

Christian-Republican Party, the latter, created in January 1946, was a leftist party with strong links to the Social Democratic Party.

⁴ After the Žilina Agreement of October 6, 1938, the Slovak autonomous government banned the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Slovak Communists created their own party which was recognized by the Comintern in Moscow as a separate political subject. Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists 1918-1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). pp.35-36.

⁵ Stanislav Sikora, "Politický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967," In *Predjarie. Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967*," Miroslav Londák, Stanislav Sikora, Elena Londáková (Bratislava, Veda: 2002), p.21.

⁶ See the Decree of the President of the Republic No. 100/1945. Jan M. Michal, "Postwar Economic Development," *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, eds. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.439.

⁷ Ordinance (*Nariadenie*) of the Slovak National Council No. 4/1945. Samuel Cambel, "The Movement for the General Agrarian Reform in Slovakia in the Year 1945," *Studia historica slovacca* XV (1986), p.138.

Soviet Union in rebuilding Czechoslovakia's industries damaged by the war.⁸ Following the rigid Soviet model based upon central political and administrative planning, state ownership and collectivization of agricultural lands was to be executed in the cycles of five-year plans (*pätročnica*), with the first cycle starting in 1949. This model, with some minor changes, survived until the late 1980s. The workers' trade-unions (*Revolučné odborové hnutie*; ROH) were under communist control well before February and appeared in the front line of the battle for political power in November of 1947 in Slovakia, as well as in February 1948 in the Czech Lands.⁹ The workers' (the people's) militias were organized by Communists and kept on alert for the next confrontation with the West and its alleged domestic sympathizers and collaborators accused of Titoism, bourgeois nationalism and Zionism.

Communists correctly assumed that the traditionally deeply-religious Slovak society would become obedient only if the Church complied with the new regime. After February of 1948, the Communists abandoned the last appearance of religious forbearance and switched to harsh policies, particularly towards the Catholics.¹⁰ In April of 1949, the government Bureau for Church Affairs was established, monks of the Greek Catholic Church were imprisoned, and their monasteries as well as convents in other Slovak cities, were sequestered. The Gottwald government broke diplomatic relations

⁸ Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavol Machonin, *Czechoslovakia 1918-1992: A Laboratory of Social Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp.82-83. On the unrealistic expectations of the plan's impact on Slovakia see Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč, *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001), p.172.

⁹ Robert K. Evanson, "Regime and Working Class in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1968," *Soviet Studies* 37, no.2 (1985), pp.256-259. Radomír Luža, "Between Democracy and Communism," In *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, eds. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, pp.410-412.

¹⁰ On July 2, 1947, a pilgrimage of 120,000 people in Levoča in Eastern Slovakia was disrupted by the Communists. Stephen Náhalka, "The Persecution of the Catholic Church in Slovakia," *Slovak Studies* 1 (1961), p.128.

with the Vatican between the fall of 1949 and the spring of 1950 and consequently the clergy was asked to swear allegiance to the state. New legislation even required the remaining theological faculties to insert Marxist ideology into their academic curricula.¹¹

On the night of April 13 - April 14, 1950, the communist police invaded all the monasteries and convents owned and administered by the Catholic Church and transported the priests, as well as laymen, to more than seventy concentration convents in Czechoslovakia. Teaching nuns met the same fate a couple of months later. At the same time, the Greek Catholic Church, with its 200, 000 followers and 300 priests, was ordered to merge with the Orthodox Church under the pictures of the Moscow Patriarch and Stalin.¹² This ruthless manifestation of power and religious intolerance resulted in the imprisonment of five out of nine bishops, 350 priests, 350 superiors and 500 members of religious orders, along with another 2,000 friars in concentration camps and exposed to working in the mining industry and other onerous jobs. At the same time, 4,219 sisters of religious orders were expelled from their convents, 331 convents and monasteries were sequestered and four seminaries abolished.¹³ The Catholic Church did not give up its resistance. In response, two new Catholic bishops were secretly ordained in 1951.¹⁴ The most stubborn and courageous Slovaks and Czechs fought their way to

¹¹ The Czech historian Ludvík Němec pointed out that “Nearly the same thing happened during the reign of Emperor Joseph II, but the Communists surpassed his Caesaro-Papism by dictating the education of theology in the Marxist-Leninist spirit.” Ludvík Němec, *Church and State in Czechoslovakia* (New York: Vantage Press, 1955), p.386.

¹² Náhalka, p. 139. The reason of this softer approach to the Orthodox and the Czechoslovak National Churches was that these two Churches had been seen more receptive towards communist interference in religious affairs. *Ibid.*, p.129.

¹³ Náhalka, p.142.

¹⁴ Theodor J. Zubek, “Preludes to Charter 77,” *Slovakia XXVII*, no.50 (1977), pp.104-105. They were Pavol Hnilica, who escaped to the West and Ján Korec, who was jailed in 1960. In 1990, Korec was appointed as one of two Slovak Cardinals by Pope John Paul II in recognition of his work as a member and later on as the long-time leader of the

the West. To prevent that, the western and southwestern frontiers of Czechoslovakia with Western Germany and Austria were mined, lined with barb-wire and guarded by military police and army units until late in 1989.

In 1948, an abrupt split occurred between the Soviet and the Yugoslav political leaders over the paths by which Communism was to be reached. In Czechoslovakia, a feverish search for internal enemies reached a precarious dimension. Whereas in the Czech Lands the alleged deviation from mainstream politics dictated by Moscow was identified as ideological heresy, in Slovakia it was seen as a nationalist deviation.¹⁵ The show trials with the so-called Trotskyite-Titoist-Zionist centre and its leader, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Rudolf Slánský and twelve other top party and state officials, began in November of 1952 and ended with their executions.¹⁶

Among those who were tried was Vladimír Clementis, a prominent Slovak Communist who became Minister of Foreign Affairs after the death of Jan Masaryk in 1948. The accusation against Clementis was felt in Slovakia like a lightning bolt, since he was a devoted Communist intellectual active in fighting for his ideals before and

underground Catholic Church in Slovakia. The other was Jozef Tomko, who as the Prefect for the Evangelization of Nations in the pontificate of John Paul II.

¹⁵ In fact, 'national' was much more of the same as 'ideological' deviation. I use the terms to refer to the primary difference between the two associated with the national sentiment in Slovakia and its alleged absence in the Czech Lands. See Jan Rychlík, "Normalizační podoba československé federace," In *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, eds. Norbert Kmet' and Juraj Marušiak (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2002), p.12.

¹⁶ Overall, 233 citizens of Czechoslovakia were sentenced to death and 178 executed. Thousands of others were sentenced to long term imprisonment and forced to work in labour camps across Czechoslovakia and uranium mines at Jáchymov. Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč, *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001), p.194.

during WW II.¹⁷ Apart from formal allegations brought against him, Clementis's first error had been his criticism of the Ribbentrop – Molotov Pact in August of 1939. Likewise, Clementis's guilt was that he spent his years in exile in London instead of Moscow.¹⁸ He was sentenced to death and hanged in December of 1952. The case of Clementis, along with those of Husák and Novomeský, who were jailed two years later, as well as of the President of the wartime Slovak Republic Jozef Tiso, who had been tried and hanged in April of 1947, were instrumental in creating a continuing sense of reprisals coming from Prague on the side of Slovaks, regardless of their social, religious or political affiliations.

On March 3, 1953 Jozef Stalin died and his loyal disciple Klement Gottwald, who had attended the funeral of the Generalissimo in Moscow, died a week later.¹⁹ Antonín Zápotocký, a popular boss of the Czechoslovak trade unions became the President and

¹⁷ The essence of Slovak 'bourgeois nationalism,' which varied according to its political context (see Lipták, p.301; Jelinek, p.104; Sikora, p.42), was mainly reflected as a nationalist - separatist deviation and thus as a threat to Czech and Slovak unity. See the speech by Václav Kopecký, a Stalinist hard-liner and the Minister of Culture and Information of Czechoslovakia, during the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in February 1951. Kopecký attacked Clementis as a long-standing spy and saboteur in the French service who, "together with his nationalistic accomplices L. Novomeský and Dr. Gustáv Husák, and others, had planned a new Slovak separatist program, plotting the secession of Slovakia from the Czechoslovak Republic. Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: the Making and Remaking of a State* (Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 168.

¹⁸ Michal Štefanský, "Tragédia Dr. Vladimíra Clementisa" [The Tragedy of Dr. Vladimír Clementis], In *Vladimír Clementis, politik a diplomat [V.C. – politician and diplomat]*, eds. Peter Holásek and Mira Baňacká. Conference Proceedings. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 2002, p.21.

¹⁹ The official explanation was that Gottwald died of pneumonia. Jiri Hochman, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubček* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993), p.63. Rumours circulated that Gottwald was poisoned.

Antonín Novotný, also a Czech, was elected the First Secretary of the KSČ.²⁰ Since any nationalist tendency that did not fit the frame of the Marxist solution of the nationalities' question was seen as a deviation, the time was ripe to restore party discipline in Slovakia. The political leadership in Prague had already looked at Husák and the "insurgents" (*Povstalci*), all of whom were supportive to the idea of Slovak autonomy, with mistrust since the period of 1945-1946 when the three Prague Agreements had been reached, and then again, after February 1948.²¹ In 1951, the *Povstalci* lost their functions in the party apparatus. In April of 1954 they were sentenced to long term imprisonment in show trials which took place in Bratislava. During the investigation and imprisonment, Husák and his fellows experienced what thousands of people in Slovakia did: they were tortured, beaten, forced to work with little or no salary, and denied contacts with their families. Despite this harsh treatment, Husák never admitted to having been guilty and proved to be a tough opponent to his inquisitors.²²

The impact of the changes after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the beginning of de-Stalinization in the politics of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia toward Slovakia were marginal.²³ Some of the cosmetic

²⁰ On their experience, personal characteristics and leadership, which in the case of Novotný did not include popular support, see Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 29-30.

²¹ Široký seemed to have been instrumental in instigating the fears of Slovak "separatists" in the Central Committee of the KSČ in Prague. Leff, *National Conflict...*, p.100.

²² Sikora, "Politický vývoj na Slovensku..." p. 43. Viliam Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády; Gustáv Husák prehovoril* (Bratislava: Tatra-Press, 1991), pp.73-79. Husák was interrogated by State Security (*Ústredie štátnej bezpečnosti*; ÚŠB) also during the wartime Slovak Republic. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-31.

²³ Unrest in Czechoslovakia culminated in June of 1953, when workers in the city of Plzeň revolted as a consequence of the financial reform in Czechoslovakia which had devalued the currency. In the second half of the 1950s, the economic situation and the conditions of living improved. That may explain why Czechoslovakia remained calm

competences of the Slovak National Council were enlarged but overall the same centralist-administrative model was applied. The new Soviet leadership under Nikita Khrushchev was preoccupied with the fragile and potentially explosive international situation marked by the acceptance of West Germany into NATO (1955), the Suez Crisis, and, most importantly, with the uprising against Soviet rule in Hungary in October and November of 1956. In mostly pacified Czechoslovak society there were small demonstrations of students in Bratislava and Prague.²⁴ They followed a stormy discussion which had taken place during the Second Congress of Czechoslovak Writers in Prague (April 22-29, 1956), when the Czech and Slovak writers, without success, asked for the abolition of censorship, for artistic freedom and the fulfillment of their role in society as “the conscience of the nation.”²⁵

The centralist policies of the KSČ continued with Novotný’s ascendancy to power in 1957, when he replaced Zápotocký as the President. On July 11, 1960 a new Constitution was adopted and Czechoslovakia proclaimed itself a socialist state.²⁶ In Slovakia, the Board of Commissioners ceased to exist and its executive powers were

during the uprising against Soviet rule in Hungary. Michal Barnovský, “Mocenská elita a prejavy odporu v českej a slovenskej spoločnosti, 1953-1956” [The Power Elite and the Features of Resistance in Czech and Slovak Societies, 1953-1956], In *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka 2005*, p.179.

²⁴ Juraj Marušiak, “Slovenskí študenti a inteligencia v roku 1956” [Slovak Students and Intelligentsia in 1956], In *Pyžamová revolúcia* [The Pyjama Revolution], ed. Anton Blaha *et al.* (Nebojsa: Bratislava, 2006), pp.7-64. The term refers to an event in January 1956 in Bratislava, when approximately 300 male students from Comenius University protested against the order of the Minister of National Defense Alexej Čepička to increase their military service from two months to regular military service after the completion of their studies. *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

²⁵ Elena Londáková, “Slovenský kultúrny pohyb v 60. rokoch. Jeho miesto v dozrievaní česko-slovenskej spoločnosti” [Slovak Cultural Advancement in the 1960s and its Place in the Maturing of the Czech and Slovak Society], In *Predjarie*. p.265.

²⁶ Stanislav Sikora, “K politickej diferenciacii v KSS v rokoch 1963-1968” [On Political Differentiation within the Communist Party of Slovakia in the Years 1963-1968], *Historické štúdie* 44 (2006), p.163.

transferred to the Slovak National Council.²⁷ This move reflected the self-confidence of Novotný and the centralists in their “final push toward a definitive ‘drawing together’ of the Czech and Slovak nations.”²⁸ The 12th Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist party, held in December of 1962, witnessed the criticism of the political trials in the 1950s. The findings of the Kolder Commission, created to investigate the circumstances and judicial errors committed in the early 1950s, led to the rehabilitation of the Slánský group. The case of Slovak ‘bourgeois nationalists’ was to be re-examined in full by the Barnabite Commission.²⁹ Consequently, Novomeský and Husák, who were released from jail in 1956 and 1960, had their party membership renewed in 1963. The return of Husák, who was still not allowed to hold any significant political and public function, was seen by certain groups in Slovak society with satisfaction. Novotný could no longer disregard the findings of the Barnabite Commission and popular distaste for Viliam Široký and Karel Bacílek in Slovakia and decided to sacrifice them, thus dissasociating himself from Gottwald’s Old Guard and its role in the political processes of the 1950s.³⁰ In 1963 and 1964, the two were replaced by the more moderate Slovak Jozef Lenárt,

²⁷ John A. Scherpereel, *Governing the Czech Republic and Slovakia: Between State Socialism and the European Union* (Boulder & London: FirstForumPress, 2009), p.43.

²⁸ Leff, *National Conflict...*, p.101. For detail see Jaroslav Chovanec and Peter Mozolík, *Historické a štátoprávne korene samostatnosti Slovenskej republiky* [Historical and Legal Roots of Independence of the Slovak Republic] (Bratislava: Procom, 1994), pp.41-47.

²⁹ The Kolder Commission, which was created between August and September of 1962, was led by the Czech Communist Drahomír Kolder. The name of the Barnabite Commission appointed in June of 1963 derives from the Barnabite Monastery in Prague, where the Commission held its meetings. Sikora, “Politický vývoj...,”p.38 (the Kolder Commission) and p.47 (the Barnabite Commission).

³⁰ Skilling interprets this move by Novotný as his “capacity for political maneuver and intrigue.” Skilling, *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution*, p. 46. Sikora gives Novotný some credit for his support for Široký. Novotný finally gave up in September of 1963 before the findings of the Barnabite Commission were released. Sikora, “Politický vývoj...,”pp.46-47.

who became the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia and a new man in high politics, Alexander Dubček, who was elected the Slovak Communist Party's First Secretary in April of 1963. The Kolder and Barnabite Commissions, in which both Slovak and Czech legal experts and scholars were working together in "a unity unseen for a long time," were, according to Sikora, the necessary conditions for a new phase of the democratization of the regime in Czechoslovakia.³¹

By 1963, non-orthodox articles on various aspects of Slovak history, and namely on the Slovak National Uprising in the weekly *Kultúrny život* (Cultural Life) became frequent. Previously, the role of the Uprising in the modern history of Czechoslovakia had systematically been downplayed and the event had been interpreted as an internationalist venture organized and dominated by Czechoslovak Communists under the decisive leadership of the Soviet Union.³² All of a sudden, a new perspective on the Uprising, that included more Slovak national motives, emerged. The young and middle generations of Slovaks, who had already been raised in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism and who felt gratitude to the Soviet Union for its role in the liberation of Czechoslovakia, identified themselves with the legacy of the Uprising and saw the cause of Husák and Novomeský as their own.³³ Khrushchev, who had supervised partisan operations in the fall of 1944 from his headquarters in Kiev, gave the Uprising the highest possible blessing by his personal participation at the celebrations of the event's 20th anniversary on August 29, 1964. Novotný grudgingly followed the Soviet leader to

³¹ Sikora, "Politický vývoj...", p.57.

³² Skilling, p.26. On the artificial implants in Slovak national history from Czech national history facilitated by the Communist regime see Jan Rychlík, "Normalizační podoba československé federace," In *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, pp.12-13. The "implants" were the Hussite Movement in the 15th and the rebellion of Bohemian Estates in the 17th centuries.

³³ Sikora, "Politický vývoj...", p.42. Rychlík, pp.12-13.

Banská Bystrica, the centre of the Uprising. Slovak Communists, however, did not limit themselves to recollections of the most recent chapter in their national history. A year later, on the occasion of another anniversary – 150 years from the birth of the most prominent Slovak national awakener – Ľudovít Štúr, Dubček suggested that the place of Štúr in Slovak history should be reconsidered in more favourable terms. The founding father of Slovak national emancipation in the 19th century had been viewed by Marxist historians as a reactionary politician due to the fact that in 1848 he had concentrated on national, not social issues.³⁴

The return to national history that erupted in Slovakia in the first half of the 1960s was only part of the change in the social climate. No less important was the drive for economic reform designed to improve the performance of a sputtering Czechoslovak economy. Economic disparities in the First Czechoslovak Republic had always been an object of passionate disputes among Slovak and Czech politicians, economists and academics. They were echoed in the early 1990s when Czechoslovakia was about to split. Western authors writing on Czechoslovakia have always reminded their readers that the Czech Lands in 1918 were more developed than Slovakia. Before WW I, Slovakia, except for Budapest and its adjacent areas, had economically been the most developed part of Hungary and this is what has less frequently been taken into account.³⁵

³⁴ Jiri Hochman, *Hope Dies Last*, pp.106-107. Štúr's legacy was interpreted according to the momentary needs of both sides, centrist and nationalist. In order to publish Štúr's speeches, given a century earlier, Slovak publishers had to praise the present era (Communism) which was the only one allowed to correctly evaluate the place of great personalities in Slovak history and link it to the emergence of the workers' movement in Hungary. Ľudovít Štúr, *Reči a state* [Speeches and Addresses] (Bratislava, 1953), p.9. Dubček (1921) was born in the same village and house as Štúr (1815).

³⁵ Ľubomír Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1968), p.11, Leff, *National Conflict...*, p.12. Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-1992: A Laboratory for Social Change* (New York:

In spite of its persisting economic underdevelopment, a question that should logically arise is how far Slovakia advanced after the two decades of the existence of pre-war Czechoslovakia?³⁶ In 1931, an economic inquiry presented by Jan Malypetr, the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, suggested that Slovakia has been receiving more than it was contributing to the common budget of the Republic. In turn, the Chairman of the Slovak National Party, Martin Rázus, countered with his statistics and asked the central authorities to provide more specific evidence on how and where the difference was invested. Jozef Tiso from the Slovak People's Party voiced the opinion that Slovakia should have its own budget from which it would be clear how much it produces and how much in subsidies it receives.³⁷ In this regard, the wartime Slovak Republic, with all its faults and failures, made a significant step forward. In five years, 4,855,000,000 Slovak

St.Martin's Press, 1996), p. 57. The Slovak regions in Hungary prior to WW I produced 53,7% of the total output in the pulp and paper industry, 33,7% in the textile industry, over 20% in the iron, wood and leather processing industries. In 1910, there were 432 enterprises in Slovakia with at least 20 employees. M. Podrimavský and D. Kováč, *Na začiatku storočia, 1901-1914* (Bratislava: Veda: 2004). pp.94-96.

³⁶ American historian of Slovak descent Victor S. Mamatey stated that "The Prague banks did not close factories in Slovakia because they were Slovak, but because they were often unprofitable." With the strictly centralist administrative and economic system in Czechoslovakia in mind, the more disputable is Mamatey's subsequent statement that "Slovakia's welfare was not primarily their [Czech] responsibility, however, but that of Slovak politicians." Victor S. Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," In *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic...*, pp.114 and 118. Mamatey's and others' articles neither raised nor responded to the question on the economic progress made by Slovaks during the two decades of the existence of the First Republic. Zora P. Pryor generalizes that "the years between 1919 and 1937 represented for Czechoslovakia a solid achievement in economic consolidation and political stabilization..." The statistics used in her article illustrate the economic growth in various industries of the "Czechoslovak" economy as a whole, but not in the 'provinces.' Zora P. Pryor, "Czechoslovak Economic Development in the Interwar Period." *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic...*, p.214. Harris states that "For Slovakia the early years of the First Republic meant a monumental growth, mainly in the field of education and culture." Erika Harris, *Nationalism and Democratisation: Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), p. 80.

³⁷ Konštantín Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi druhá naša hlava: Život Dr. Jozefa Tisu* (Cleveland: The First Slovak Catholic Union, 1947), pp.100-102.

crowns were invested, 250 new enterprises created, 1,100 km of roads repaired and 280 km of new roads laid, and 291 communities added to the existing telecommunication network. At the same time, 470 villages had electricity installed. Whereas the output of the hydroelectric power in Slovakia from 1918 to 1939 was 12,000 kilowatts, during the period 1939-1945 it reached 90,000 kilowatts.³⁸ The index of industrial output of wartime Slovakia during its first three years of nominal independence (1939-1942) rose by 28%.³⁹

From the early 1950s onward, the economic planners in Communist Czechoslovakia decided upon the industrialization of Slovakia based upon the heavy, armament and chemical industries.⁴⁰ At the beginning of the 1960s, the Czechoslovak economy was falling into recession and the standard of living was lagging behind western countries, namely the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria, against whom Czechoslovakia measured itself.⁴¹ Slovak and Czech economists began to look for a way

³⁸ Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p.203. Innes criticizes Kirschbaum for his overall positive interpretations of the social and economic accomplishments in the wartime Slovak Republic and "the goodness of the Slovak national idea *per se*" as "single-minded." Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p.17. For a detailed study on the economy of the wartime Slovak economy and the exports of its surpluses to 33 countries, including Germany, Italy, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Hungary, Switzerland, Romania and Croatia, see the study by Antónia Štefániková, "O niektorých aspektoch zahraničného obchodu Slovenskej republiky v období rokov 1939-1945 [On Some Aspects of Foreign Trade of the Slovak Republic in the Years 1939-1945], *Historický časopis* 48, no.2 (2000), pp.462-477. The article is written from an economic, not political, perspective.

³⁹ Roman Holec, "Ekonomika a modernizácia na príklade Slovenska" [The Slovak Example of Economics and Modernization], *Historický časopis* 45, no.1 (1997), p.91.

⁴⁰ The industrialization of Slovakia was completed by 1963-1964. See Miroslav Londák, "Pohľady slovenských ekonómov na hospodárske postavenie Slovenska na prelome rokov 1967/1968" [The Views of Slovak Economists on the Economic Position of Slovakia in the Years 1967-1968], *Historický časopis* 54, no.1 (2006), p.94.

⁴¹ On the contrast between the decreasing GDP and the increase in the savings of citizens and its causes see Miroslav Londák, "Príprava ekonomickej reformy v centre a

to escape the economic recession which might have precluded social unrest. In 1964, the Czech economist Ota Šik published his influential work in which he touched upon the major antagonisms between political and administrative planning on the one side, and a socialist market economy on the other, and suggested that more powers be given to socialist enterprises and factories.⁴² Meanwhile, Slovak economists Viktor Pavlenda, Hvezdoň Kočtúch and some others warned about the widening economic gap between Slovakia and the Czech Lands.⁴³

From the early 1950s onward, economic statistics were presented in Czechoslovakia on an irregular basis and they were modeled in such a way as to meet and surpass the planned objectives.⁴⁴ Improvements would require more investments in

niektoré dobové analýzy stavu národného hospodárstva v polovici 60. rokov”

[Preparation of the Economic Reform in the Centre and Some Analysis of the State of the National Economy in the 1960s], *Ekonomický časopis* 50, no.3 (2002), pp.540-541.

⁴² Ota Šik, *K problematice socialistických zbožních vztahů* [On the Problems of Socialist Market Relations] (Praha: ČSAV, 1964). Londák finds it rather interesting that Šik saw the economy of Czechoslovakia as a homogenous unit while paying no attention to regional specifics and economic imbalance. In Šik’s book, there is hardly a reference to Slovakia. See Miroslav Londák, “Ekonomický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967” (Economic Development of Slovakia in the Years 1960-1967), In *Predjarie*, p.180. The same goes for Karel Kaplan’s book “Kořeny československé reformy 1968 [Roots of the Czechoslovak Economic Reform] (Brno: Doplněk, 2000). The father of the idea of decentralization of the communist economy was the Polish professor of economics Włodzimierz Brus in his book “Modely socialistického hospodářství” [Models of Socialist Economy] (NPL: Praha, 1964; originally published in Poland in 1961). Londák, “Ekonomický vývoj na Slovensku...,” p.179.

⁴³ Miroslav Londák, “K niektorým problémom ekonomického vývoja na Slovensku na prahu roka 1968 (On Some Problems of Economic Evolution in Slovakia on the Threshold of the Year 1968), *Historické štúdie* 44, 2006, pp.183-197. According to Slovak economist Viktor Pavlenda, if the pace of economic developments in Slovakia and the Czech Lands was to be preserved, equalization between the two would not be reached by 2000. *Ibidem*, p.188.

⁴⁴ Londák, “Pohľady slovenských ekonómov...,” p.101. Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p.34. “...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 another.”

technologies in the existing, or new, factories. In the 1960s, 70% of the population of Slovakia, which increased by almost 500,000 since WW II, lived in cities and urban areas. Yet it was economically still lagging behind the western part of the state, where the industries were modernized much faster and larger investments were poured into them.⁴⁵ Between 1948 and 1966 the Slovak workforce rose by 370,058 and in the Czech Lands by 108,506. However, out of 1,031,000 employment opportunities, more than 800,000 were created in the latter. Rather than building new factories in Slovakia, 500,000 Slovak workers were expected to move to the western part of the Republic by 1980. In the mid-1960s, 71% of investments in industry were still made in the Czech Lands.⁴⁶ Slovak Communist politicians and economists favoured the idea of equalization (*vyrovnávanie*) of the two parts of the state.⁴⁷ They discussed their proposals with their Czech academic peers and presented them as solutions for the existing situation designed to strengthen Communism in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁸

Another reason for the gap between the two nations was the persisting disproportionality in their representation in central institutions in Prague. They were

⁴⁵ In the 1950s, 76.8% of investments in industry were made in the Czech Lands. During the fourth five-year plan (1965-1970), it was expected that approximately 31% of investments of industry would be made in Slovakia. Londák, "Ekonomický vývoj na Slovensku...", In *Predjarie*, pp.163-164 (in the 1950s) and 231 (in the period from 1965 to 1970).

⁴⁶ Londák, "Pohľady slovenských ekonómov...", pp.96-97.

⁴⁷ They accentuated the primary need for a balanced development of the regions, including the Czech Lands, not of nationalities. Londák, "K niektorým problémom ekonomického vývoja...", p.190. Londák, "Príprava ekonomickej reformy v centre...", p.542.

⁴⁸ One of the best examples of such an exchange of views in which political and economic aspects of the reform movement in Czechoslovakia merged was a conference in Smolenice in West Slovakia in March of 1968. Teams of Slovak and Czech experts met to discuss changes in the political system, including the possibility of a federal model of constitutional settlement. The conference showed that "several Czech participants were not ready to tackle this idea." Londák, "Pohľady slovenských ekonómov...", p.98.

strikingly similar to those which had existed in the pre-war Czechoslovak Republic. In 1966, only 4% of the civil servants in Prague were Slovaks. Among under-secretaries of central institutions, 12.3% were Slovaks.⁴⁹ The under-representation of Slovaks in various ministries and government branches is demonstrated by the following percentages: State Planning Commission 1.5%, Ministry of Education 1.2%, Ministry of Finance 3.4%, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 14%, Ministry of National Defense 20%, and Ministry of Justice 0%.⁵⁰

In 1963, the Slovak Marxist historian Miloš Gosiorovský, who had helped to fabricate accusations of ‘bourgeois nationalism’ against Husák and his peers in the early 1950s, made his “trip to Canossa” of revived Slovak nationalism by writing a critical study of the relationship between the Slovaks and Czechs in which he proposed a federal constitutional model for Czechoslovakia.⁵¹ Novotný held Dubček responsible for Gosiorovský’s heresy, for which its author was moderately punished. In the summer of

⁴⁹ Sikora, “Politický vývoj na Slovensku...,” pp.91-92. In 1938, out of 7,470 civil servants in 17 ministries 131 were Slovaks. Among 1246 officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 33 were Slovaks. Out of 139 generals in the Czechoslovak Army 1 was Slovak. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival*, p. 175. In the early 1930s, the argument “each for himself” (*každý za svoje*, Slovak – *každý za své*, Czech) used in references to the Republic’s budget and to the under-representation of Slovaks in central organs claimed by Slovak autonomists became significant. See Čulen, pp 111-112. In the early 1990s, the slogan was revived and stood in the forefront of discussions between the Slovak and Czech political elites about the future of their common state.

⁵⁰ Viktor Pavlenda, *Ekonomické základy socialistického štátu riešenia národnostnej otázky v ČSSR* [Economic Basis of the Socialist State within the Solution of the Nationality Question in the ČSSR] (Bratislava: Veda, 1968), p.27.

⁵¹ The study was sent to the Communist Party organs and representatives. It was published only in 1968. Miloš Gosiorovský, “K niektorým otázkam vzťahu Čechov a Slovákov v politike Komunistickej strany Československa” [On Some Questions in the Relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks in the politics of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], *Historický časopis* XVI, no.2 (1968), pp.354-406. On the case of Gosiorovský see Elena Londáková, “Slovenský kultúrny pohyb v 60. rokoch. Jeho miesto v dozrievaní česko-slovenskej spoločnosti,” In *Predjarie*, pp.297-304.

1967, Novotný was invited to participate in the celebration of the centennial anniversary of the founding of the first Slovak “Gymnasium” (High School) in Martin. During his visit, Novotný offended both Slovak politicians and the public by having refused gifts and avoided meetings with Slovak representatives who, whatever their private feelings, had invited and awaited him with respect as the head of state. In return, Novotný during his abrupt visit labeled the *Matica slovenská* a “nationalist” organization.⁵²

In the fall of 1967, Novotný felt ready for the final clash with Dubček, whom he viewed as a “bourgeois nationalist.” The planned expulsion of Dubček from the Central Committee of the KSČ, which would result in his resignation as the First Secretary of the KSS, did not happen. Contrary to Novotný’s calculation, the majority of the Communists in the Czech Lands were also fed up with him. Abandoned by the new Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in December, Novotný was forced to resign as the First Secretary during the conference of the Central Committee of the KSČ held from January 3 to January 5, 1968. As during the rehabilitation processes in the early 1960s, the dividing line between the two camps in the Central Committee did not follow nationality.⁵³ In March, Novotný resigned as the President of the Republic and the highly respected Ludvík Svoboda, the former commander of the First Czechoslovak Army Corps in the Soviet Union from 1943 to 1945, who had also been persecuted in

⁵² See Hochman, *Hope Dies Last*, pp.114-115. Leff, *National Conflict...*, p.161, Toma and Kováč, *Slovakia...*, p.202.

⁵³ On December 14, 1967, support for Novotný in the Central Committee was declared by the Slovaks J. Lenárt and M.Chudík, and the Czechs B. Laštovička, and O. Šimůnek. Dubček could rely upon the votes of his Czechs colleagues – J. Hendrych, D. Kolder, O. Černík and J. Dolanský (ratio 5:5). Over Christmas, support for Novotný shrank and on January 5, 1968, Dubček was elected as the party chairman with 100% of the votes. Sikora, “Politický vývoj na Slovensku....,” pp.148 and 152.

the 1950s, was elected the new President.⁵⁴ On April 5, 1968, the new Central Committee of the KSČ adopted its *Action Program*, designed to re-pluralize political life in Czechoslovakia, make its economy more efficient, and, above all, to return the credibility of Communism to the new political leadership by closing the gap between it and the masses on the basis of dialogue and consensual governance.⁵⁵ The social thaw, which had begun with the political rehabilitations of 1963, resulted in the “Prague Spring” as it has since been known – as the attempt to create “socialism with a human face.”

For Slovaks, the debate between Slovak and Czech experts on the federation, which started in March of 1968, was a part of the discourse on the improvement of political and economic system in Czechoslovakia. Slovak constitutional lawyers and theorists, led by the scholar Karol Laco, devised a symmetrical model of a socialist federation based upon sovereignty delegated to the federal state from the Slovak and Czech Republics, represented by their own National Councils. Symmetry was to be reached on both legislative and executive levels.⁵⁶ Czech experts on constitutional law Zdeněk Jičínský and Jiří Grospič responded favourably to the suggestions, though they preferred the

⁵⁴ In February of 1968, Novotný’s protégé general Jan Šejna, with whom he masterminded a plan for a military takeover in December of 1967, defected to the West. This was the last straw which finally led to the resignation of Novotný from his last remaining public function. For details see Sikora, “Politický vývoj na Slovensku...,” pp. 149-151.

⁵⁵ Skilling, p.219.

⁵⁶ See Ladislav Novomeský, “Zmysel federácie: Vyšší stupeň syntézy, nie separatistická izolácia” [The Meaning of the Federation: A Higher Level of Synthesis, Not a Tendency for Separatist Isolation], In *Federalizácia československého štátu 1968-1970. Vznik česko-slovenskej federácie roku 1968* (Federalization of the Czechoslovak State 1968-1970. Creation of the Czech and Slovak Federation], ed. Jozef Žatkuliak (Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd: Praha - Brno, 1996), pp.40-43. The Constitutional Law on the Czech and Slovak Federation, effective as of January 1, 1970, gave both republics the formal right to separate.

concept of a strong federation.⁵⁷ The integrity of the common state was to be guaranteed by the federal government and the bicameral Federal Assembly (*Federálne zhromaždenie*) comprising the newly created Chamber of Nations (*Snemovňa národov* – 150 deputies) and the Chamber of the People (*Snemovňa ľudu* – 200 deputies) into which the former unicameral National Assembly had been transformed. For a law to be passed, both Chambers had to approve it. To eliminate the risk of passing a law by outvoting the Slovaks, a formula was adopted which banned the majority's domination by vote (*zákaz majorizácie*).⁵⁸ The first step on the road to the removal of asymmetry in the Slovak and Czech relationship that had begun with the three Prague Agreements (1945-1946) and continued with the constitutions of 1948 and 1960, was the creation of the Czech National Council as a direct counterpart of the Slovak National Council on June 24, 1968.

The Constitutional Law No.143 on Czechoslovak Federation was adopted on October 27, 1968, and announced on the next day, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Czechoslovakia in Bratislava by President Svoboda.⁵⁹ Although the

⁵⁷ Czech lawyer Jiří Boguszak proposed confederation. Jozef Žatkuliak, “Spory o novú ústavu česko-slovenskej federácie v druhej polovici 80. rokov XX. storočia” [Disputes about a New Constitution of the Czech and Slovak Federation in the Second Half of the 1980s], *Historický časopis* 56, no.4 (2008), p.162. On the debate see also Jozef Žatkuliak, “Štátoprávne usporiadanie česko-slovenského štátu v rokoch 1989-1992 v kontexte jeho predchádzajúceho vývoja” [The Constitutional Settlement of the Czech and Slovak State in the Years 1989-1992 in the Light of its Previous Evolution], In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Nataša Rolková (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2004), p.15.

⁵⁸ The Slovak and Czech deputies of the Chamber of the People voted separately in the taxatively specified cases. For passing a law, a 3/5 majority of all deputies of both nationalities had to cast their votes. Jan Rychlík, “Normalizační podoba česko-slovenské federace,”p.20.

⁵⁹ See *Ústavný zákon č. 143 o československej federácii* [Constitutional Law no. 143 on Czechoslovak Federation] *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II*, document no.302, pp.534-555. Jozef Žatkuliak from the Historical Institute of the

Czechoslovak Socialist Republic became a federal state on January 1, 1969, the content of the federation was an empty shell as the euphoria of the Prague Spring turned into fear and apathy.⁶⁰ The new strong man in Czechoslovak politics, Gustáv Husák, who replaced Alexander Dubček as the leader of the KSČ in April of 1969, had a formidable task ahead: to purge the party, prepare it for its next general assembly and install a regime the Soviets would trust. He also had to win the minds, if not hearts, of the people of Czechoslovakia. It was not an easy task as the drive of the Czechs and Slovaks for a complex societal reform had been crushed by force on the night of August 20 – 21, 1968. By providing their “fraternal help” to a country allegedly threaten by counter-revolution, the armies of the Warsaw Pact, led by the Soviet Union, killed the confidence of many Slovaks and Czechs in their former liberator.

3.2 From ‘normalization’ to *perestroika*, 1969-1989

To Czechs, Husák represented Slovak political dominance and, since the Slovaks after the period of 1968-1970 were seen as inferior in terms of their culture and socia

Slovak Academy of Sciences strictly opposes the opinion of the Czech political scientist Lubomír Kopeček who claims that for the Czechs the democratization of the society was the priority, whereas for the Slovaks it was the federation that followed nationalist sentiments regardless of the severity of the regime. See Jozef Žatkuliak, “Spory o novú ústavu česko-slovenskej federácie...,” pp.164-165, *n.11*.

⁶⁰ Žatkuliak opines that, due to the monopoly of political power by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the principle of democratic centralism, “the normalized federation,” despite some accomplishments in the spheres of culture, education and, to a certain extent, economy, was rather a formality. It eventually led to the alienation of the Slovaks and Czechs. Jozef Žatkuliak, *SNR a Slovensko v rokoch 1969-1989* [The Slovak National Council and Slovakia in the Years 1969-1989], *Národná rada v kontexte slovenských dejín. 150. výročie vzniku prvej Slovenskej národnej rady* [The National Council in the Context of Slovak history. 150th Anniversary of the Formation of the First Slovak National Council], Conference proceedings from the Conference in Častá-Papiernička, April 22-24, 1998, ed. Jozef Žatkuliak, p.189.

and political maturity, many Czechs felt humiliated.⁶¹ Paradoxically, Husák who resided in Prague and spoke on public occasions alternatively either in Czech or in Slovak,⁶² was seen in Slovakia as a “federal Czechoslovak,” a term as pejorative as *Magyarone* (*Maďarón*) in late Austria-Hungary, *Czechoslovak* (*Čechoslovák*) in prewar Czechoslovakia, and *Prague Slovak* (*pražský Slovák*) in communist Czechoslovakia⁶³ rather than as an advocate of the Slovak cause, if there still was one. The period of normalization was thus perceived in the Czech Lands as single-handed favoritism of the Slovaks who received “their” federation, the material benefits of Husák’s variant of “goulash Communism” and, above all, “their President in the Castle of the Czech kings.”⁶⁴

Husák’s position among the normalizers was influenced by the internal fragmentation of the Communist Party. Despite its appearance and formal reassurances by its top representatives made on public occasions, it was never a monolithic organism. The political factions within it had emerged in the 1920s and survived in the 1950s and 1960s and continued to exist until the end of the communist regime in the late 1980s.

The ability of the party to accept and apply, to a certain and limited extent, pluralist and

⁶¹ Leff, *National Conflict...*, pp.269-270.

⁶² Husák spoke Czech with some difficulty. This effort did not help to lift his popularity in the Czech Lands. On the contrary, it was the cause of many political anecdotes, of which both the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders were the objects. On one occasion Husák helped his critics by translating a *Apríl* (Slovak) to a *Apríl*. The consonant *ř*, which is typical for the Czech language, does not exist in modern Slovak. In Czech, the correct equivalent to *Apríl* (April) is “duben.”

⁶³ Rychlík, “Normalizační podoba československé federace,” p.29.

⁶⁴ This is how Zdeněk Jičínský, an expert on constitutional law, who helped to open the door for federalism in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and who functioned as the newly-elected Vice-Chairman of the post-communist Federal Assembly, referred to Husák’s presence at Hradčany Castle during the debate, which I had watched live on TV in March (hyphen-debate) or November (Law of competences) of 1990. For this widespread perception in the Czech Lands see also Rychlík, “Normalizační podoba československé federace,” pp.25-29, and Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p.35.

consensual aspects in daily politics, a quality which had been inherited from pre-war Czechoslovakia and Austria, were hidden from the rest of the society except for a short period in 1968.⁶⁵ With the appearance of democracy built upon the principle of ‘democratic centralism,’ all real legislative and executive powers were restricted to party members and to its top political leadership – the Central Committee.⁶⁶ If its factions disagreed, their members in time of political crisis sought the support of their protectors in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. That is what Gottwald did during and after the Second World War, Novotný on the eve of his removal in December of 1967, and what the leaders of Czechoslovakia were doing before the invasion of 1968 and after.

Husák, who had been appointed the Deputy Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia in April of 1968 and elected the First Secretary of the Communist Party in Slovakia in August of that year, replaced Dubček as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in April of the following year. Between October of 1968, when the

⁶⁵ Paul states that “Pluralism is observable recurrently in Czechoslovak political history.” David W. Paul, “The Repluralization of Czechoslovak Politics in the 1960s,” *Slavic Review* 33, (December 1974), p.724. He argues, while referring to the works of the Czech sociologists Pavel Machonin and Jaroslav Krejčí and Slovak lawyer Michal Lakatoš, that despite the vertical political domination of society by the Communist Party, the existing and further evolving social groupings characterized by complexity and variety of sociocultural factors (e.g. profession, lifestyle, identity, spiritual life) exercised, particularly during the second half of the 1960s, a certain influence on politics. After the invasion, it was only coercion which constrained the “intrinsic pluralism” in Czech and Slovak society. *Ibidem*, p.740.

⁶⁶ “Democratic centralism,” which had gradually been accepted by the KSČ in the 1950s following the Soviet example, emerged as the key principle of party military-like discipline and its dominance over both state and society in Czechoslovakia. Its essence was encapsulated in the theorem that the party is to be built from the bottom, whereas the decisions made at the top are strictly binding for all its subordinated components. Jan Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa: Česko-slovenské vztahy 1989-1992* [The Breakup of Czechoslovakia: The Czech and Slovak Relationship 1989-1992] (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2002), p.27.

Moscow Protocols were signed on the deployment of the Soviet Army and its presence in Czechoslovakia for an unspecified period of time (*dočasný pobyt* – the temporary stay), and May of 1971, when the 14th legitimate Congress of the KSĈ was held, Husák visited Moscow and other capitals of the communist countries to gain the trust of their leaders. He had previously been seen either as a non-entity or with a stigma of once having been a Slovak nationalist.⁶⁷ What eventually made him reliable in the eyes of the Kremlin and other communist leaders was the way he spoke and, more importantly, that he kept his promises. This sharply contrasted with Dubček's inconsistency, which resulted in the loss of Soviet confidence in his ability to preserve the leading role of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia.⁶⁸

After April of 1969 and with the manifestation of Soviet determination to suppress any resistance,⁶⁹ the “healthy core of the Party” (*zdravé jadro strany*) crystallized. Its

⁶⁷ Vladimír V. Kusin, *From Dubček to Charter: A Study of 'Normalisation' in Czechoslovakia 1968-1978* (Edinburgh: Q Press Ltd., 1978), p.140. Mlynář suggests that it was already in late August that the Soviet leaders gained confidence in Husák as “their man.” Zdeněk Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague: the End of Humane Socialism* (New York: Karz Publishers, 1980), p.218. Husák resolutely denied that. He argued that he opposed the deployment and stationing of the Warsaw Pact armies in Czechoslovakia and after being forced to accept the idea he insisted on the departure of all other but Soviet troops from the country. Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády*, pp.106-107.

⁶⁸ “Dubček a été d'abord exploité par ceux qui voulaient aller plus loin, certains même beaucoup plus loin. Son indéniable mérite historique réside dans le fait qu'il s'est laissé faire, peut-être parce qu'il était au fond un brave homme ou, dans le pire des cas, un personnage influençable.” Petr Pithart, “La Dualité du Printemps Tchécoslovaque: Société Civile et Communistes Réformateurs,” In *Le Printemps tchécoslovaque 1968*, eds. François Fejtö and Jacques Rupnik (Paris: Édition Complexe, 1999), p.81. Vladimír Mečiar also described Dubček as a politician with good intentions, but influençable, whose activities were contradictory to his own decisions. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

⁶⁹ On March 28th, 1969, the Czechoslovak national ice-hockey team defeated the U.S.S.R. at the world championship in Stockholm. Following their victory, thousands Czechs and Slovaks went into the streets celebrating the symbolical defeat of their invader. The Defense Minister of the U.S.S. R., Marshal Andrey Grechko, immediately flew to Czechoslovakia and insisted that the riots be stopped, otherwise the

major protagonists were members of the Central Committee of the KSČ whose signatures appeared on the infamous “letter of invitation” (*pozývající list*): the Czech Alois Indra and the Slovak of Ruthenian descent Vasil’ Biľak, and the Czechs – Drahomír Kolder, Oldřich Švestka and Antonín Kapek.⁷⁰ The role of Husák, who eventually personified the ‘normalization,’ was somehow different. Since the other normalizers were already highly unpopular, Husák with his record of having been an active fighter against fascism, the victim of Stalinist purges, and yet a communist dogmatist and *Realpolitiker*, was an ideal candidate for the role of becoming Czechoslovakia’s Gomulka or Kádár.⁷¹ Despite differing motives and backgrounds, what pragmatists such as Husák and the hard-liners had in common was their readiness to put things in Czechoslovakia in order. As the first prerequisite for the so-called ‘normalization,’ the party’s cadres had to be purged and built anew.⁷² Only then was victory to be celebrated.

“demonstrators will be run over by tanks.” The events had a direct impact on the resignation of Dubček and his replacement by Husák. Tad Szulc, *Czechoslovakia Since World War II* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), pp.473-477. Kusin, *From Dubček to Charter 77*, pp.63-65.

⁷⁰ František Janáček and Marie Michálková, “Příběh zvacího dopisu” [The Story of the Inviting Letter], *Soudobé dějiny* 1/93 (Praha, ÚSD AV ČR, 1993), p.92. Debates about the authenticity of the inviting letter continue in the present.

⁷¹ Jiří Pelikán, *Ici Prague: L’Opposition Intérieure Parle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973), p.15. The most penetrating assessment of Husák political personality and its limits was brought up by Kusin: “What might have been a moderate Husák policy has disappeared in the process and he must know, weary after all the battles with political friend and foe, and with his own conscience, that others have imprinted their stamp on the history of the past decade through his good offices and over his signature. If a policy associated with his name is to go into history books, it will be one of constant retreat before left-wing extremism. Pity.” Kusin, p.326.

⁷² Kusin defines ‘normalization’ as “...restoration of authoritarianism in conditions of a post-interventionist lack of indigenous legitimacy, carried out under the close supervision of a dominant foreign power which retains the prerogative of supreme arbitration and interpretation but which prefers to work through its domestic agents. It had two principal aims: to remove reformism as a political force, and to legitimate a new

The 14th Congress of the KSČ was supposed to have taken place in September of 1968. The task of this regular assembly was to evaluate the accomplishments of the previous five-year plan and to set priorities for the upcoming cycle. During the invasion, the representatives of regional committees and workers who had gathered in Prague condemned the invasion and expressed their support for Dubček, declaring their meeting held in Vysočany in Prague to be 14th Congress of the party. This is what the normalizers could not accept. During the the period from April 1969 to May 1971, when the delayed “legal” 14th General Assembly of the KSČ, or, as Kusin called it – the Congress of Victors – finally took place, over 1,500, 000 party members were interrogated with 326,817 (21.67%) of them expelled. Some members left the party on their own: thus it was said to have lost 473,731 members (28%) by January 1, 1970.⁷³ The purges (*previerky*) spread from the top to the all of the state and academic institutions, universities, schools and factories to the tiniest village. Despite his portrayal as the chief architect of ‘normalization,’ Husák tried to keep the purges relatively moderate.⁷⁴ Yet many Slovaks and Czechs decided to emigrate or to not return to Czechoslovakia, if they were already abroad. The country thus lost significant numbers of intelligentsia and professionals – doctors, architects, researchers, university professors and students. They mostly moved to the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, Canada, the United States, Austria, Italy and Australia. Between 1968 and 1971,

regime resting on old pre-reformist principles.” Kusin, *From Dubček to Charter...*, p.145.

⁷³ Kusin, pp.85-87. The author refers to various and differing sources (Husák, Biřak, Jakeš) from which the data came. I chose to refer to the numbers made public by Husák in December of 1970, when the process of the *previerky* was over.

⁷⁴ Kusin, p.80.

171,376 people emigrated, 123,121 from the Czech Lands and 48,235 from Slovakia.⁷⁵

Almost instantly, the party began to recruit new members in an attempt to counterbalance the losses it had suffered during the purges. Between May of 1971 and September of 1977, 402,294 candidates became the new members of the KSC.⁷⁶

With Husák becoming the President in 1975, and with more Slovaks filling quotas in federal institutions, many Czechs felt that their sudden presence in Prague was disproportionate.⁷⁷ Similarly, it has often been claimed that Slovakia and the Slovaks were hit less hard by ‘normalization’ less hard than the Czech Lands because of the solidarity of the Slovaks and their greater compliance with the communist regime and inclination towards material benefits offered to them by the federation.⁷⁸ Despite the flaws of the central planned economy, Slovakia’s contribution to national income rose from 24.8% in 1966 to 27% in 1970 and the output of industrial production increased from 20.8 % in 1965 to 26.6% a decade later. According to official accounts, Slovakia had become a country with a developed economy in 1974 from which an optimistic

⁷⁵ Ibidem, p.85.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, p.186 (see Table 8).

⁷⁷ Rychlík admits that, despite the quotas at the federal ministries (1,500 planned employment opportunities for Slovaks out of 4,000 positions) which were “hard to fill” specifically at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and National Defense, the disproportion persisted. Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, p.36. The presence of the Slovaks in federal institutions in Prague was more than 1/3 but less than 1/2 of all employees. Leff, p.253, Rychlík, p.26.

⁷⁸ Kusin, p. 310. Marušiak opines that given the numbers of the party expelled in the Czech Lands (23%) and Slovakia (17%), the regime discontent and the resistance against it was stronger in the former. Juraj Marušiak, “The Normalisation Regime and its Impact on Slovak Domestic Policy after 1970,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no.10 (2008), pp.1807-1808. Eyal suggests that this perception may have stemmed from the fact that ratio between the expelled Slovak and Czech party members in the period 1968-1971 was 5:1 (based upon 24% Czechs and 12.5% Slovaks expelled). The KSC was larger than the KSS in regard to both total membership and the percentage of the Czech and Slovak population. Gil Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: From Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 48.

conclusion was derived that the country was on the right track to become economically equal to the Czech Socialist Republic (since 1969).⁷⁹

Undoubtedly, Slovakia during the Husák era advanced economically and the standard of living was higher than it had been a decade earlier. Husák's variant of "goulash communism," a method which had been used with some success in Hungary by János Kádár after the uprising in 1956, worked in Czechoslovakia, too. New homes and weekend houses spread across Czechoslovakia (225,000 in the Czech Republic in 1981) and demands for new cars, color TVs, electronics and other consumer goods was on the daily menu. In the period 1971-1975, personal consumption increased by 27%, though real wages rose only by 5%. In 1971, one in seventeen people had a car. In 1975 it was one in ten and in 1979, one in eight.⁸⁰ The regime offered a lot of entertainment, beginning with TV classics by Euripides, Shakespeare, Molière, Hugo, Ibsen, Thomas Mann, and continuing with social dramas, which focused on segregationist and corrupt political and judicial systems in the West, such as *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *In the Heat of the Night*. Very popular were political thrillers and comedies, mostly of Italian and French production. They were supplemented by domestic soap operas that offered role models for professional and private lives.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia...*, pp. 245-246.

⁸⁰ J.F. Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (Durham and London: Durham University Press, 1988), pp.296-297.

⁸¹ The most popular were "Nejmladší z rodu Hamrů" [The Youngest of the Hamr Family; 1980] that showed the advantages of socialist collectivized agriculture on the fate of a family of the farmer, "Žena za pultem" [Woman at the Counter; 1977] which combined the gender role with communist morality and exceptional interpersonal skills, and "Muž na radnici" (The Man in City Hall; 1976), a portrait of a devoted Communist and an ideal Chairman of the City National Committee in a small Czech town. A model policeman was major Zeman, a real character whose experience from fighting with the enemies of the working class and criminals was captured by the series *Třicet případů majora Zemana* [Thirty Cases of Major Zeman]. Scenarios of several of those series

In the mid-1970s, a new agent of civic resistance – Charter 77 – emerged. The Helsinki Final Act created the legal basis for the activities of the underground intellectual opposition in Czechoslovakia and the Charter 77 as its embodiment. Originally signed by 243 men and women, it grew to 800 members with the overwhelming majority of them being Czechs. The regime could not afford to simply dismiss it, so it harrassed the Charter’s signatories by the State Secret Police (Štátna tajná bezpečnosť - ŠtB) engaged in the fight with the “enemy within” (*boj s vnútorným nepriateľom*). Since the majority of the Charter’s signatories were Czechs, with only a few Slovak supporters, it might be concluded that the opposition against the normalizing regime and the persecution of dissidents in Slovakia was weaker than in the Czech Lands.⁸²

This perception has, to certain extent, been corrected by more recent accounts that have stressed the different path of opposition against the regime in Slovakia. As in the 1950s, the Church in Czechoslovakia became once again a target of communist pressure in the early and mid-1970s. The Catholic Church, both in Slovakia and in the Czech Lands, was the most exposed to the efforts of the government to stop the revival of religious life which experienced sudden outbursts of activity during the short period of the reform movement in the 1960s. The regime used a variety of coercive methods, from delays in filling of vacant positions in parishes, limiting the numbers of students at theological faculties, to reducing the age of children allowed to be instructed in religion

were written by the Czech playwright Jaroslav Dietl. See www.spisovatele.cz/jaroslav-dietl.

⁸² Ladislav Pešek, “Normalizácia a Štátna bezpečnosť” (Normalization and State Security). In *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, pp. 47-59, p.54. Among the signatories of the Charter in Slovakia were the former Marxist philosopher Miroslav Kusý, the historian Ján Mlynárik, the mathematician Vladimír Čech and the writer Hana Ponická, who appeared the most visible. Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, p.44.

at elementary schools to twelve years.⁸³ The regime apparently relied upon the pragmatism of parents in the process of the acceptance of their children by a high school at the age of 15 and subsequently at university at 18-19. The statement signed by the applicant and approved by the school that student accepts the “scientific [Marxist] world view” became a mandatory and unavoidable part of each applicant’s personal file.⁸⁴

It became a part of the daily schizophrenia in Czechoslovakia that people officially proclaimed what they did not believe, such as the economic ability of the communist regime to surpass the West. However, what frustrated them most was the state’s incursion into the spheres of their private lives. This was amplified by the fact that even high-ranking Slovak Communists were secretly being married by priests in far-away villages in order not to be spotted and denounced by their peers. An epigram in the Slovak satirical journal *Roháč* (The Stag Beetle), which characterized this abnormal situation, could not be published:

Proti cirkvi stále brojím, vlastný názor o nej mám, jak marxista pevne stojím, pomáhaj mi Pán Boh sám.	Having learned of the Church so grimly I will fight her till she is gone. To stand as a Marxist firmly May help me the Lord alone. ⁸⁵
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⁸³ Kusin, pp.106 and 218.

⁸⁴ See the letter by the Slovak Catholic dissident Ján Čarnogurský to the Minister of Education and major ideologist in Slovakia, Ľudovít Pezlár, in which the claimant expressed his concerns regarding the disruption of religious tolerance as stipulated by the Constitution and as applied in reality. Čarnogurský’s son was warned by the commission of teachers at the school he attended about the consequences of taking classes in religion. The letter ends with a defiant sentence “Until I receive a satisfactory response to this letter, I cannot consider myself to be your comrade.” Few would dare to write such a letter at that time. Pavol Petruf, *Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998* [Slovakia in the Years 1989-1998 (Metodické centrum Mesta Bratislavy, 1999), document no.1 in the appendices, pp.3-4 (undated document, refers to the academic year 1978-79).

⁸⁵ The epigram was retrieved in the Slovak National Archives and cited by Elena Londáková in “Slovenský kultúrny pohyb v 60. rokoch. Jeho miesto v dozrievaní československej spoločnosti,” In *Predjarie*, p.261, n.23. During our informal discussion in May of 2007 in Bratislava, the former Slovak communist politician and writer Ladislav Ťažký told me about his personal experience in the 1960s when he and his fiancée went

In the second half of the 1970s, the official relationship between the communist government and the Vatican softened. In December of 1977, the Holy See recognized Slovakia as a separate ecclesiastical province, with its centre in Trnava as the seat of the Archbishop. This meant also the confirmation of the Vatican's recognition of the Slovak border with Hungary.⁸⁶ Pilgrimages to the Basilicas of the Virgin Mary (the Patron Saint of Slovakia) in Šaštín and in Levoča were annually made by tens of thousands of believers. Slovak Catholic dissenters in this regard felt traditionally closer to their Polish fellows than to the secular-liberal dissenters in the Czech Lands.⁸⁷ The British scholar Abby Innes made quite a rare, in western scholarship, observation that “the Czech assessments of Slovak protest routinely ignore the real and unprotected locus of Slovak dissent – their persistent religious affiliation...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.”⁸⁸

to see a Catholic priest in a small village near Bratislava to get married. On the presence of this unique religious-nationalist syncretism in communist Slovak politics see also Novomeský's (himself a Protestant) spontaneous praise of Husák (a Catholic) on the occasion of the latter's election as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Slovakia – “May the Lord bless his steps!” (*Boh žehnaj jeho kroky*). Viliam Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády...*, p. 121.

⁸⁶ This was done by the Papal bullae “Praescriptionum Sacrosancti” and “Qui Divine” issued by the Pope Paul VI in Rome on December 30, 1977. Jaroslav Chovanec and Peter Mozolík (eds.), *Historické a štátoprávne korene samostatnej Slovenskej republiky* (Bratislava: Procom, 1994), pp.163-165.

⁸⁷ Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, p.44.

⁸⁸ See František Kriegel's interview given to *Die Welt* in 1977. Innes, pp.36-37. This coincides with Kirschbaum's analysis of the difference between the Charter 77 and Slovak religious dissent. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia...*, p.148. It adds to the complexity of the discourse that František Mikloško and Ján Čarnogurský responded differently to the question regarding the comparative strength of the dissident movement in communist Czechoslovakia. Whereas the former agreed on the “traditional” perspective that sees the Czech intellectual dissent as dominant, the latter

In the mid-1970s, Kusin opined that “prophesying about Eastern Europe is an unrewarding preoccupation.”⁸⁹ He hypothesized that, in the future, when new antagonisms between a new generation of reformers and the hardliners in Czechoslovakia arise, Moscow might send troops into the country again. There was hardly anyone who expected substantial change, which was about to spell the collapse of the communist bloc, to happen in the Soviet Union itself. By contrast, Czechoslovakia, once a pioneer of pluralist reforms, remained a stronghold of Communism in Eastern Europe. Until the mid-1980s, the regime was able to buy some time by implementing short-term economic policies designed to saturate momentary needs, such as the construction of new apartments for young families of rather mediocre quality, sports centres for young people and improvements of the existing infrastructures. Meanwhile, the backbone of the Czechoslovak economy – heavy, armament and chemical industries – with their major markets in the U.S.S.R. and other member states of COMECON (The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) were in desperate need of investments in advanced technologies and overall modernization. Since the system of financial rewards

stressed the quantitative factor of the widespread “popular religious resistance” in Slovakia in contrast to a few dozens of intellectuals in the Czech Lands. Author interviews with František Mikloško and Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 21 and 24, 2007. The opinion by Čarnogurský has been shared by Ján Budaj, the leader of “Verejnost’ proti násiliu” (Public Against Violence; VPN), who saw the religious dissent as the first real popular socio-political movement in communist and early post-communist Slovakia. Author interview with Ján Budaj, Bratislava, August 26, 2007. In contrast, Slovak political scientist Juraj Marušiak points out that the Slovak resistance in religious matters was less significant than that of the Charter due to the Church’s inability to engage itself in a more pronounced and organized defiance of the regime. Juraj Marušiak, “The Normalisation Regime and its Impact on Slovak Domestic Policy after 1970,” p.1810. For an opposite view that reflects the pilgrimages in Slovakia as “events of political significance,” see David Doellinger, “The 1985 Pilgrimage at Velehrad: Slovak Catholics and the Creation of a Public Space,” *Slovakia XXXIX*, nos.72-3 (2007), p.116.

⁸⁹ Kusin, p.328.

did not reflect any initiative, neither workers nor intellectuals were motivated to work more productively.⁹⁰ There was no problem with the food supply and the standard of living was higher than in other countries of the communist bloc except East Germany.⁹¹ Yet the distrust of the people toward the regime was reaching a new stage and was becoming distasteful, particularly among the youth and the middle generation strongly influenced by Western culture and lifestyles.⁹²

In April of 1987, the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Mikhail Gorbachev came to visit Prague and Bratislava. This time, the people of Czechoslovakia awaited him with the hope that the popular and admired policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (rebuilding) implemented in the U.S.S.R. would not only be parroted by their political leaders and censored media at home, but that they would eventually find their way into daily life.⁹³ At meetings with the leaders of Czechoslovakia and during Husák's visit to Moscow in November of the same year, Gorbachev carefully avoided

⁹⁰ Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavol Machonin, *Czechoslovakia 1918-1992: A Laboratory of Social Change*, pp.198-199 and 210-211. Formally, there was full employment in Czechoslovakia. Police had the right to look for an employer's stamp in IDs. Failure to be employed could have resulted in criminal prosecution. Problems with low productivity and missing motivation as a common problem in post-communist East Central Europe as well as the anticipation of a painful socio-economic reform were reflected by Craig R. Whitney's article "East Europe Joins the Market And Gets a Preview of the Pain," *New York Times*, January 7, 1990.

⁹¹ Barry Newman, "Social Contract: Life is Good in Czechoslovakia, But the Ration of Salami Implies Submission to [the] State," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 1987. On the division of the post-communist states in East Central Europe which comprised the Northern (the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Czechoslovakia) and the Southern Tiers (Hungary and the Balkan states) see J.F. Brown, *Eastern Europe under Communist rule* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), pp.33-36. The former was the most important in Soviet strategic thinking because of its higher level of industrialization, economic strength, wealth, and population. *Ibid.*, p.34.

⁹² Brown, *Eastern Europe ...*, pp.311-313.

⁹³ Vladimír Mečiar viewed the impact of Gorbachev's policies on Czechoslovakia as minimal. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

interfering in Czechoslovak domestic affairs.⁹⁴ This situation bore external resemblance to the decline of Novotný in the fall of 1967. In contrast to Novotný, who was pleading for Brezhnev's support in the fight against his opponents, Husák did not come to Moscow to save himself. He indicated that a change in the party leadership was imminent and suggested the Czech Lubomír Štrougal, the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, as his successor. In December of 1987, Husák resigned his position as the General Secretary of the KSČ and was replaced by the old-fashioned Czech Communist Milouš Jakeš.⁹⁵ The split within the Central Committee continued to exist to the last days of the regime.⁹⁶

Until the 1970s, the communist economists, in their push for rapid industrial advancement, did not care too much about the protection and preservation of the environment. The most damaged regions were the most industrialized ones: northern and western regions of the Czech Republic and northern and eastern Slovakia, with socialist agriculture having done its portion of the damage. Air pollution was high, water sources contaminated and there was a significant rise in diseases directly linked to industrial

⁹⁴ Jozef Žatkuliak, "Ľudské práva v druhej polovici 80. rokov 20.storočia a slovenská a česká spoločnosť" [Human Rights in the Second Half of the 1980s and Slovak and Czech Societies], *Historický časopis* 55, no. 3 (2007), p.535.

⁹⁵ Husák still held the position of President of the Republic to which he had been elected in 1975. Rychlík points out that the holding of two key positions in the state by Husák was opposed by Indra and Kapek. Husák had the support of Biľak and Štrougal. Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, p. 32.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.538-539. On the Czech side, the supporters of old-fashioned pro-Soviet policies were Alois Indra and Milouš Jakeš. On the Slovak side were Vasil' Biľak, Viliam Šalgovič, the Chairman of the Slovak National Council and an operative of the KGB, and Bohuš Chňoupek, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, among others. The "reformers" seemed to be the Czechs Ladislav Adamec and, quite controversially, a pragmatic regimist Lubomír Štrougal. On the other hand, it is very hard to find an equivalent to the Czech reformist wing in the Central Committee of the KSČ in the late 1980s among the Slovaks. The moderates of the older generation, such as Jozef Lenárt and Peter Colotka, were trying to avoid participating in the ensuing clash for power.

development. The destructive ecological aspects of the weak environmental protection in Slovakia had an even larger dimension. They were also felt in the weak protection of historical buildings which were in decay throughout Slovakia. Newly-built suburbs that consisted of functionalist buildings made from concrete slabs had to compensate for insufficient housing.⁹⁷ Young Slovaks and Czechs formed voluntary organizations, whose purpose was to preserve nature. In Slovakia, the most known and important ones were “Strom života” (The Tree of Life) and “Slovenský zväz ochrancov prírody a krajiny” (The Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors; SZOPK). The latter called for “change in values, full information and independent control of the condition and development of the environment” already in April of 1989, seven months before the general strike which paralyzed the communist government.⁹⁸

The picture of civic refusal of the communist regime before its collapse would not be complete without reference to the Church. On July 6 and 7, 1985, 250,000 Slovaks, Moravians, Czechs and Poles gathered in Velehrad in Moravia to commemorate the 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Methodius.⁹⁹ In the pilgrimages to Levoča and other traditional religious places, hundreds of thousands of Slovaks took part.¹⁰⁰ In 1988,

⁹⁷ Edward Snajdr, *Nature Protests: The End of Ecology in Slovakia* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008), pp.22-26.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, p.3. On the environmentalist movement in Slovakia see also the article by John Tagliabue “Much Ado About Brown Coal on the Blue Danube,” *The New York Times*, March 3, 1988.

⁹⁹ Doellinger, “The 1985 Pilgrimage at Velehrad...,” p.107.

¹⁰⁰ See the report from the pilgrimage to the Basilica Minor of Mary in Visitation in Levoča by tens of thousands of Slovak youth in July of 1987 by Jason Diehl, “Slovak Pilgrimage Defies Authority,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 7, 1987. There were an estimated 150,000 pilgrims in Levoča in 1986, 200-300,000 in 1987, and 280-300,000 in 1988. Doellinger, “The 1985 Pilgrimage at Velehrad...,” p.109. For instance, in June of 2009, the pilgrimage was made by 600,000 Slovaks, Roma, Magyars, Poles, and Bulgarians. See “Maria hura privítala šesťstotisíc veriach” [Mount Mária Welcomed Six Hundred Thousands Believers], *Sme*, July 5, 2009.

300,000 out of approximately 500,000 signatories of the petition for freedom of religion were Slovaks. On March 25, 1988, during the “Candle Demonstration,” the biggest manifestation for religious freedom and human rights not only in communist Czechoslovakia, but also in all of East Central Europe, hundreds of people gathered in Hviezdoslav Square in the centre of Bratislava and adjacent streets. This time the special police units and ŠtB acted with a brutality unseen in public since the 1950s.¹⁰¹ It was not until mid-November of 1989 that the censors allowed the broadcast of the beatification of St. Anne of the Czech Přemyslid dynasty, which ruled Bohemia from the mid-10th to the beginning of the 14th centuries, by the Archbishop of Prague, Cardinal František Tomášek, in St. Vitus Cathedral.¹⁰²

On November 16 and 17, 1989 on International Student Day, which was established to commemorate the death of Jan Opletal, the student at Charles University in Prague, who was shot by Germans half a century earlier, student demonstrations took place in Bratislava and Prague.¹⁰³ Gradually, more people joined in the massive public protests. A few went farther than the demand for the abolition of Article 4 of the Constitution that guaranteed the supremacy of KSČ and its exclusive monopoly over

¹⁰¹ The major organizer of the event was František Mikloško. At the demonstration 2000 protesters participated. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia...*, p.248. The event was reported by *The New York Times* on March 27, 1988 in the article “Czechoslovak Police Disperse Catholics at a Rally.”

¹⁰² Author interview with František Mikloško, May 24, 2007. Toma and Kováč, p.231.

¹⁰³ The manifestation of 150 Slovak students in the centre of Bratislava on November 16 was spontaneous. Its protagonists demanded the release of dissidents, freedom, democracy and nuclear-free energy. See the article by Jerguš Ferko “Slovenská predohra k 17. novembru” [The Slovak Overture to the November 17], *Práca*, November 15, 1990. The demands were echoed in a pamphlet issued by the Coordination Committee of Slovak university students on November 23, 1989. See “Vyhlásenie slovenských vysokoškolských študentov” [Declaration of Slovak University Students], copy of a one-page type-written document. *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik*.

political power.¹⁰⁴ On November 27, hundreds of thousands of people took the streets in support of a general strike, which was broadcast by television, in all major cities. The principal agents of the drive for a complete change were *Verejnost' proti násiliu* (Public Against Violence – VPN) in Slovakia and *Občanské fórum* (Civic Forum – OF) in the Czech Lands. The branches of the two spontaneously emerged everywhere.¹⁰⁵ The Central Committee of the KSC, disoriented and disorganised, offered the post of its General Secretary to the unknown Karel Urbánek, a Czech in his early forties, who replaced Milouš Jakeš on December 7.¹⁰⁶ Previously, Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec, the last stalwart of the KSC, succeeded in negotiating the composition of a new government on quite favourable terms for the Communists (format 15:5). This was hard for the public to accept. After Adamec's resignation and replacement by the more amenable Slovak Deputy Prime Minister Marián Čalfa, a second round of negotiations resulted in the format 9:7:2:2 on December 10.¹⁰⁷ On the same day, the new Čalfa government was sworn in by Husák, who, after the ceremony, resigned as the President of Czechoslovakia. His successor, the Czech dissident playwright Václav Havel,

¹⁰⁴ Articles 4, 6 and 16 of the Constitution pertaining to the leading role of the KSC and Marxism as the state ideology were repealed by the Federal Assembly on November 29, 1989. Toma and Kováč, pp.234-235.

¹⁰⁵ On the emergence, goals, main characteristics and representatives of OF and VPN see Sharon L. Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition: Politics, economics and society* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1991), pp.79-83. There were some other groups with limited goals and support such as *Obroda* (The Revival) whose members were the Slovak sixty-eighters Alexander Dubček, Ivan Láluha and Hvezdoň Kočtúch. See Marušiak, "The Normalisation Regime...", p.1809.

¹⁰⁶ Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, p.78.

¹⁰⁷ The Adamec government consisted of 15 Communists and 5 non-Communists. The Čalfa government had 9 Communists, 7 members without party affiliation and 4 members (2+2) of two minor parties that were formally allowed to exist after 1948 as a part of the National Front. See *Proměny politického systému v Československu na přelomu let 1989/1990* [Transformation of the Political System in Czechoslovakia between 1989-1990] Seminar organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Prague, December 10-11, 1994, pp. 118-126. Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, p.77.

released from prison in May of 1989, was elected by the Federal Assembly as President of the Republic on December 29. After two decades of obscurity, Dubček once again spoke to the people on Wenceslaus Square, this time shoulder-to-shoulder with Havel. He was elected Chairman of the Federal Assembly the day before Havel's election.¹⁰⁸

In December, communist regimes throughout East Central Europe were collapsing. The fighting took its toll in Romania. The Central Command of the Czechoslovak People's Army and People's Militia refrained from protecting Communism by force.¹⁰⁹ A year earlier, Gordon Skilling, the distinguished Canadian scholar, sent a prophetic letter to Ladislav Adamec. In reference to the efforts of Czechoslovak authorities to prevent a seminar on the 70th anniversary of the creation of Czechoslovakia and to harrass its participants, Skilling warned Adamec of the possible consequences of suppression of civic freedoms. The last paragraph reads:

...great changes [are] now taking place in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in Eastern Europe under the slogan of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The Baltic people...have openly manifested their desire for a more independent life within the USSR and have been permitted to press their demands on ruling authorities. We are convinced that the same will occur in Czechoslovakia within the near future and that your effort to stem the rising tide of independent activity is condemned to failure.¹¹⁰

Within six weeks of November and December of 1989, Communism in Czechoslovakia as a system of governance was over. The same could not be said about the dormant bi-national conflict which instantly emerged with new strength.

¹⁰⁸ See "Party Time in Prague, But Under Dark Sides" by John Tagliabue, *The New York Times*, May 23, 1989. The newspaper shows a photo of Havel and Dubček shaking hands while being watched by Havel's wife Olga. The idyl did not last long.

¹⁰⁹ Rychlík, pp.74-75. *Proměny politického systému...*, p.106.

¹¹⁰ H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia 1918-1998: Seventy Years from Independence* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp.218-219 (Appendix IV: Letter to L. Adamec, Czechoslovak Prime Minister).

CHAPTER 4
INSTITUTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND BI-NATIONAL CONFLICT IN
POST-COMMUNIST SLOVAKIA, 1989-1992

4.1 The rise of political parties and free parliamentary elections

The gradual alienation of Slovaks from the Czechs, which went hand-in-hand with the transition from Communism to democracy and the subsequent split of their common state, has fascinated scholars of all generations. Post-communist Czechoslovakia, with its image of the prodigal son returning to the democratic traditions of the First Czechoslovak Republic seemed to perfectly fit into the framework of a reconfigured East Central Europe, now gravitating to the West.¹ The country could pride itself on a reform movement in the second half of the 1960s, its relatively high standard of living, its solid educational system and culture, but first and foremost, with its most recent record of a society which was able to overcome an oppressive political regime by non-violent means.² National conflict, which was tamed during four decades of Communism, resurfaced in March of 1990 as part of the drive for a new constitutional arrangement. The “hyphen war” was difficult to understand since the few in the West

¹ Karl Peter Schwarz, *Česi a Slováci: Dlhá cesta k mierovému rozchodu* [Czechs and Slovaks: The Long Journey to a Peaceful Separation] (Bratislava: Odkaz, 1994), p.225. The positive image was attributed to Václav Havel and to the Czechs.

² In contrast to the interpretation of the regime change in Czechoslovakia as a result of the “Velvet Revolution” stands an analysis by the former political prisoner Miroslav Dolejší who claimed that the events in November of 1989 were set up and designed to pretend that political power was transferred from the Communists to civic structures; in fact, the Communists maintained their influence. According to Dolejší, Charter 77 had previously been created by Czechoslovak Intelligence, with the aim to let it play the role of a controlled opposition for future crisis scenarios. See Miroslav Dolejší, “Senzační odhalení pozadí událostí loňského 17.listopadu” [Sensational Uncovering of the Background of the Last Year’s November 17th], *Středočeský express*, nos. 17-19, October 24 – 26, 1990.

knew that communist Czechoslovakia was a federation of two nations.³ Having witnessed mutual allegations of Czechs and Slovaks of betrayal in the past and renewed mistrust in the present, western scholars began, with varying success, examining the origins and nuances of the cohabitation of the two. In addition to the question of either inevitability or probability of the dissolution of the common state on December 31, 1992, a new question arose to which the answer seemed obvious: whose fault was it?⁴

Bringing down the communist regime was the easier part of the change. Members of the Public Against Violence (VPN) and the Civic Forum (OF) were people of various professions, generations and backgrounds. Due to the monopoly of political power usurped by the Communist Party in February of 1948, two generations of ordinary citizens were kept out of daily politics and its subtle mechanisms.⁵ In the forefront of a rather tiny group of new holders of political power in Slovakia stood veteran dissenters such as lawyer Ján Čarnogurský, the editor and the publisher of the samizdat *Katolícke listy* (Catholic Letters), and the mathematician and religious activist František Mikloško. A different group was composed of Ján Budaj,⁶ author of the samizdat *Bratislava*

³ See the article “V ČR nechápu, že ide o dva národy” [In the Czech Republic They Do Not Understand That There Are Two Nations], *Národná obroda*, August 31, 1991. The Slovak and Czech PMs Ján Čarnogurský and Petr Pithart agreed in their identification of the persisting problem as encapsulated in the article’s title.

⁴ Michael Kraus and Allison Stanger (eds.), *Irreconcilable Differences? Explaining Czechoslovakia’s Dissolution* (London-Boulder-New York-Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2000).

⁵ On the transformation of the VPN from a civic movement into a political force see Fedor Gál, *Vízie a ilúzie* [Visions and Ilusions] (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2000), pp.18-22. For the image of civic leaders as “hippies” due to their informal appearance in contrast to the members of the communist executives wearing business suits on all public occasions see Mark Stolarik, “S nežnou revolúciou v plachtách” [Sailing on the Wind of the Velvet Revolution], *Literárny týždenník*, August 3, 1990, p.12. See also the observation by Schwarz, *Česi a Slováci...*, p.216. “Fantasy and improvisation had to replace the lack of political experience.”

⁶ Budaj’s interpretation of the “Velvet Revolution” is that the ŠtB, in close collaboration

nahlas (Bratislava Aloud) founded in the mid-1980s, and the popular actor Milan Kňažko, who had returned the State Award for his artistic accomplishments in defiance of the regime's suppression of human rights in October of 1989.⁷ Both of them brought the spirit of mutual cooperation and a warm atmosphere to the massive and spontaneous gatherings of tens of thousands of Slovaks in November of 1989 to the Square of the Slovak National Uprising in Bratislava. Relatively less visible, but at least as influential, was a group of liberal intellectuals – the prognosticator Fedor Gál, the literary scientist Peter Zajac, the sociologists Martin Bútora and Soňa Szomolányi, the philosopher Miroslav Kusý, the poet Ľubomír Feldek, the ecologist Juraj Flamík, and others.⁸ In November and December of 1989 all these groups spontaneously merged into the major agent of transition of power from the old structures to new. Information from local

with the KGB, wanted to overthrow the old Communists, who, by their dogmatism, threatened Soviet influence in Central Europe. They were expected to have been replaced by new ones. This did not happen as the massive strikes went in the other direction and caused the definite fall of the regime. See “Ján Budaj: Havel robil tajné dohody s komunistami” [Ján Budaj: Havel Made Secret Pacts with Communists (Interview with J.B)], *Sme*, November 17, 2008.

⁷ Miroslav Mojžita, *Kňažko, Demeš, Kňažko. Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993* [Kňažko, Demeš, Kňažko: Forming Slovak Diplomacy in the Years 1990-1993] (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), p.14. A graduate of the Faculty of Arts (Vysoká škola múzických umení) in Bratislava in 1964-1968, Kňažko studied arts in Nancy, France (1968-1970). He spoke French fluently. In June of 1989, he signed the document *Několik vět* [A Few Sentences] which objected to the hypocrisy of the communist regime regarding the implementation of human rights. In August, he signed the petition for the release of political prisoners.

⁸ *Proměny politického systému v Československu na přelomu let 1989/1990* [Changes in the Political System in Czechoslovakia, 1989-1990]. Seminar for the participants in the events in November of 1989 (Prague: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 1995), p.108. Jozef Žatkuliak, “Politické strany a hnutia na Slovensku po novembri 1989 až do rozpadu česko-slovenského štátu 1992” [Political Parties and Movements in Slovakia after November 1989 until the Breakup of the Czecho-Slovak State in 1992], In *Vývoj politických stran v českých zemích a Československu, 1861-2004, II. díl, období 1960-2004* (The Evolution of Political Parties in the Czech Lands and Czechoslovakia, Volume II, the period 1960-2004), eds. Jiří Malíř and Pavel Marek (Brno: Nakladatelství Doplněk, 2005), p.1384.

branches of the VPN across Slovakia poured in its Coordinating Centre on Jiráskova Street in Bratislava's Old Town in exchange for advice and recommendations emanating from the centre.⁹

The VPN coordinated its activities with the OF and established contact with the Communists, who still held formal power in Slovakia. On December 4, 1989, a delegation of the VPN met for the first time with representatives of the highest legislative authority in Slovakia – the Slovak National Council (*Slovenská národná rada* – SNR). They were received by Rudolf Schuster, newly-appointed Chairman of the SNR, known as a moderate communist politician.¹⁰ Both sides agreed upon the reconstruction of the Chairmanship of the SNR which was expected to precede the appointment of a new Slovak government. The new Chairmanship, still led by Schuster, consisted of eight Communists and MPs without party affiliation, six members of the

⁹ See the recommendations by the Coordinating Committee of the VPN in Bratislava in the leaflets “Návrh pre prácu akčných skupín VPN” [Proposal Concerning the Functioning of Action Groups of the VPN], a one-page typed document dated November 29, 1989, and “K účasti komunistov v akčných skupinách VPN a Občianskych fórach” [On the Participation of Communists in Action Groups of VPN and Civic Forum], a one-page printed document, dated November 30, 1989. *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik* (file “1990”). Though the members of the Communist Party were not banned from becoming members of VPN, activists and supporters without party affiliation were warned about any pressure and tactics which would threaten the work of its local branches.

¹⁰ Rudolf Schuster, *Ultimátum* [Ultimatum] (Košice: PrintPress, 1996), pp.7-12. This political autobiography provides a firsthand account of the events that transpired in Slovakia from November of 1989 to April of 1992. Due to his previous quarrels with some members of the Central Committee of the KSS, Schuster considered his election as the Chairman of the SNR on November 30, 1989 as mischievous. As a descendant of the minuscule German minority living in Eastern Slovakia, Schuster spoke German (as well as Magyar and English) fluently. The contacts he had with German politicians (via the partnership of Košice with the city of Wuppertal) well-prepared him for his tasks as the Chairman of the SNR. From March of 1990 to the spring of 1992, Schuster was Czechoslovakia's Ambassador to Canada.

Freedom Party and the Party of Slovak Revival, and six were the members of VPN.¹¹ Given the outcome of the negotiations, the Communist Party lost direct control over the highest legislative body in Slovakia. The next step was the creation of the Government of National Understanding (*Vláda národného porozumenia*) led by Milan Čič, who had resigned from his function as the Minister of Justice in the communist Slovak government in November and was acceptable to the VPN. The new government of the Slovak Socialist Republic installed on December 12, 1989 comprised six Communists and nine members with no party affiliation.¹²

Following the adoption of the Law on Political Parties in February of 1990,¹³ the VPN began to fragment as Ján Čarnogurský signalled his intention to form a Christian Democratic Party. Slovaks sympathetic to the idea were asked to create clubs across the country already in December of 1989. On this platform, the Christian Democratic Movement (*Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie* – KDH) was founded on February 17,

¹¹ Schuster, *Ultimátum*, p.21.

¹² Pavol Petruf, *Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998* [Slovakia in the Years 1989-1998] (Metodické centrum Mesta Bratislavy, 1999), p.11. On how the new Slovak Government was formed see Rudolf Schuster, *Rozhovory s Milanom Čičom* [Discussions with Milan Čič] (Košice: Pressprint, 2001), pp. 16-19.

¹³ *Zákon č.15/1990 Zb. o politických stranách* [Law No.15/1990 on Political Parties], adopted on January 23, 1990, did not make any difference between political parties and movements. The law recognized five political parties that had been allowed to exist within the National Front established in April of 1945. They were *Československá strana socialistická* [the Czechoslovak Socialist Party], *Československá strana ľudová* [the Czechoslovak People's Party], *Demokratická strana* [the Democratic Party (formerly *Strana národnej obrody* – the Party of the National Revival)], *Komunistická strana Československa* [the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], and *Strana slobody* [the Freedom Party]. The new political movements were *Občanské fórum* [Civic Forum] and *Verejnosť proti násiliu* (Public Against Violence). See §9 of the Law. For a party to be established, it had to get at least a thousand signatures in support. See §2, paragraph 2, letter *a* of the Law. Retrieved from www.zbierka.sk, (Electronic Register of Laws of the Slovak Republic).

1990 in Nitra.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the KSCĽ was rapidly shrinking in size as many renounced their membership.¹⁵ Yet there were still many who remained loyal to the left-wing orientation and sought new leaders to catch up with new trends and currents. The Slovak Communist Party eventually survived its defeat. Its place on the political scene was secure for two reasons: the old and the most visible and compromised *apparatchiks* were either expelled or resigned on their own initiative and the majority of Slovak Communists passed the party's banner to Peter Weiss and Pavol Kanis, the former *dauphins* of the KSS. Had November of 1989 not happened, the two might have taken over the leading functions in the party apparatus. Both Kanis and Weiss had regularly participated in TV debates with the anti-communist opposition in November and December of 1989. Their loyalty to Marxism was supplemented by their eloquency and ability to adapt themselves to a pluralist and consensual model of politics.¹⁶ In January

¹⁴ See the article "Výzva Občianskej iniciatívy na Slovensku 'Zakladajte kresťansko-demokratické kluby!'" [Petition of the Civic Initiative in Slovakia – Form Christian-Democratic Clubs!], *Jednota* [The Unity], December 13, 1989, p.9. *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik. Petruf, Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998*, p.13.

¹⁵ In May of 1988, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had 1,717,000 members; in November of 1990 it had only 750,000. Sharon L. Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition: Politics, economics and society* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1991), p.89 (see Table 2.4). In Slovakia, there were still 300,000 members of the KSS in May of 1990, out of which 9/10 gradually renounced their party membership. Jozef Žatkuliak, "Politické strany a hnutia na Slovensku po novembri 1989...", p.1387.

¹⁶ They were employed by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Bratislava. Pavol Kanis published in *Literárny týždenník* (Literary Weekly) founded in 1988 already before the fall of the communist regime. The *LT*'s role during the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in Slovakia can be compared to that of *Kultúrny život* (Cultural Life) in the early 1960s. Kanis advocated the idea of a new constitution suggested by Husák at the 17th Congress in March of 1986. Jozef Žatkuliak, "Spory o novú ústavu česko-slovenskej federácie v druhej polovici 80-tych rokov XX. storočia" [Disputes on a New Constitution of the Czech and Slovak Federation in the Second Half of the 20th Century], *Historický časopis* 56, no.1 (2008), p.179. Slovak historian Pavol Petruf sardonically commented on the sudden change of Communists to democratic politicians after November 1989 as the "transubstantiation of galactic dimensions which happens in times of regime change among a certain kind of people." Pavol Petruf, *Slovensko v*

of 1991, they left the KSS and formed a new political subject - the Party of the Democratic Left (*Strana demokratickej ľavice – SĎĽ*).¹⁷

The winter of 1989 and 1990 was also a time of political emigrés flocking to Slovakia from the West. Martin Kvetko, a close collaborator of Dr. Jozef Lettrich, who had fled Communism in February of 1948, returned to Slovakia at the age of 82. He helped to re-create the Democratic Party (*Demokratická strana – DS*) which had defeated the Communists in the parliamentary elections to the National Assembly in May of 1946.¹⁸ Likewise, the emigrés from the first wave of political emigration linked to the existence of the wartime Slovak Republic and their descendants came to Slovakia only to find that Slovaks were not the same as they had been a half century before.¹⁹ The Party of Slovak National Unity (*Strana slovenskej národnej jednoty – SNJ*), led by an otherwise obscure Stanislav Pánis, never gained widespread support in Slovakia.²⁰

rokoch 1989-1998, p. 14. Three other important leaders of the SĎĽ were the mathematician Milan Ftáčnik, the lawyer Ľubomír Fogaš and Jozef Stank, a former MP in the Federal Assembly in communist Czechoslovakia.

¹⁷ Žatkuliak, “Politické strany a hnutia...,” p.1401.

¹⁸ Stanislav Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St.Martin.s Press, 1995), p.254. The appearance of Martin Kvetko on TV in the winter of 1989-1990 is from my personal recollections. The Democratic Party emerged from the ashes of the Party of Slovak Revival. It supported the idea of Czechoslovakia’s continuing existence. Jan Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa. Česko-slovenské vzťahy 1989-1992* (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2002), p.95.

¹⁹ “In effect, the CDM (KDH) leadership discovered how much Communism destroyed the association of Catholicism with politics and how small the social basis for politicized Catholicism had become. Not only did the Slovak voters prove forward-looking and interested in practical rather than nostalgic politics, they were also particularly wary of anything that smacked of a return to ‘black’, i.e., fascist, clericalism.” Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p.50.

²⁰ In the spring of 1995, I attended a meeting of the SNJ in Bratislava out of curiosity. There were hardly more than seventy people in the room, located near the Church of St. Ladislav on Špitálska Street in the center of the city, the majority of them in their sixties and older. Participants restricted themselves to an expression of grievances linked to socio-economic injustice and disparity in the First Czechoslovak Republic and the persecution of Slovak Catholics by the state in communist Czechoslovakia. The meeting

This Party and other marginal political subjects bore responsibility for the poor international image of Slovakia linked to nostalgia for the wartime Slovak Republic and Slovak ingratitude towards the Czechs, who – in their own perception – had saved the Slovaks from extinction as a nation in 1918 only to be stabbed in the back by Slovak autonomists in Žilina in October of 1938.²¹

The strongest champion of Slovak independence became the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana* – SNS), which re-emerged on March 7, 1990. The first chairman of the renewed party was Vít'azoslav Moric, elected at the party's Congress held in Žilina on May 19, 1990.²² Slovak Magyars, who had previously been a part of the Magyar Independent Initiative (*Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva* - MNI) created on November 19, 1989 and existing as a distinct branch of the VPN, formed the Coexistence (*Spolužitie - Együttélés*) Party on February 27, 1990. Its original goal was to become the party representing all minorities in Slovakia. Following the creation of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the members of the Magyar minority created their own Magyar Christian Democratic Movement (*Maďarské*

testified to the overall ineptness of the party to formulate practical steps and goals which would have validated its further existence.

²¹ Other Slovak parties with separatist programs were *Národná rada za oslobodenie Slovenska* [Slovak National Council for the Liberation of Slovakia], *Hnutie za oslobodenie Slovenska* [Movement for the Liberation of Slovakia], *Slovenské národnodemokratické hnutie* [Slovak National and Democratic Movement], *Hnutie za nezávislé Slovensko* [Movement for an Independent Slovakia] and *Slovenska ľudová strana* [the Slovak People's Party]. The last proclaimed itself as the direct successor of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party that had existed in the First Czechoslovak Republic and during the wartime Slovak Republic (1918-1945). See Jan Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, pp.136-137. Except for the Slovak National and Democratic Movement (one MP), other parties were not able to pass the 3% electoral threshold required for their election to the Slovak National Council.

²² See the website of the Slovak National Party www.sns.sk (História SNS). Other party founders and representatives were Marián Anđel, Vladimír Miškovský, Jozef Prokeš, and Anton Hrnko.

kresťanskodemokratické hnutie – MKDH) on March 15, 1990.²³ New arrivals were the Party of the Democratic Union of Roma (*Strana Demokratickej Únie Rómov*), the Green Party in Slovakia (*Strana zelených na Slovensku*), the Social Democrats, and Liberals. Except for the Greens and the Social Democrats, no other small party made it into the new Slovak Parliament in June of 1990. There were also some other minor parties with bizarre slogans and goals, all of them politically marginal.²⁴ The creation of the major political parties, the VPN, KDH, SNS, MKDH, and the Coexistence, along with the continuing existence of the Communist Party and the emergence of the SDE as a separate political subject, testified to the presence of four main directions in early post-communist Slovak politics: the conservative (KDH), the liberal (VPN), the socialist (KSS, from January of 1991 also SDE) and the ethnocentric (SNS, MKDH, the Coexistence).²⁵

Before the democratic parliamentary elections could take place, the interim Federal Assembly and National Councils had to replace the old communist ones. Between December of 1989 and February of 1990, 161 out of 350 MPs in the Federal Parliament had to give up their seats and were replaced by new deputies appointed by local branches of the VPN and the OF. By March of 1990, out of 150 deputies in the Slovak National Council, 53 resigned voluntarily and 29 were recalled.²⁶ The first phase

²³ Jozef Žatkuliak, “Politické strany a hnutia na Slovensku po novembri 1989...,” pp.1391-1393.

²⁴ The Party of Beer Lovers (*Strana milovníkov piva*) and the Independent Erotic Initiative (*Nezávislá erotická iniciatíva*).

²⁵ Anton Hrnko, “Politické zápasy na Slovensku v lete a na jeseň 1990” (Political Struggles in Slovakia in the Summer and Fall of 1990), *Historický zborník*.1 (2000), p.69. Hrnko is professional historian and was one of the founders of the Slovak National Party and its leaders.

²⁶ Jozef Žatkuliak, “La société slovaque en novembre 1989,” In *L’Europe centrale: du bloc soviétique à l’Union européenne (1989-1999)*. *Střední Evropa od pádu sovětského*

of the repluralization of post-communist Czechoslovakia was completed by June 8 and 9, 1990, when the first free and democratic elections since May of 1946 took place.²⁷ In the 1990 elections a proportional electoral system was applied in contrast to the previous majoritarian one. In Slovakia, voter turnout was 95.39% and 16 political parties (22 on the federal level) made their bid for electoral support with the following results:

(Table 2) The 1990 parliamentary elections (Slovak Republic: % and seats):

Federal Assembly	Chamber of the People	Chamber of Nations	SNR
VPN	32.5/19	37.3/33	29.3/48
KDH	19.0/11	16.7/14	19.2/31
KSS	13.8/8	13.4/12	13.3/22
SNS	11.0/6	11.4/9	13.9/22
Coexistence	8.6/5	8.5/7	8.7/14
DS	4.4/-	3.7/-	4.4/7
SZ	3.2/-	6.4/ -	3.5/6

bloku k evropské unii (1989-1999). Conference organized by Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Czech Academy of Science, Slovak Academy of Science and Centre d'études et de recherche internationales. Conference paper, Emaus Monastery Prague, November 25-27, 1999, p.10.

²⁷ Hrnko did not consider the parliamentary elections in May of 1946 as free in the full sense of the word due to the pressure exercised by Communists on the rest of society. He considers the parliamentary elections in Czechoslovak Republic in 1935 to be the last free ones. Hrnko, *Politické zápasy...*, p. 69. Hykisch opines that the elections in 1935 were not completely free either, as there was no Slovak Parliament, only the National Assembly in the unitary state. To Hykisch, the first real free elections in Slovakia were those in June of 1990. Anton Hykisch, *Ako chuť politika. Spomienky a záznamy z rokov 1990-1992* [The Taste of Politics: Reminiscences and Recollections from the Years 1990-1992] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Pozsony-Pressburg-Bratislava, 2004), pp.75-76.

(Table 2) The 1990 parliamentary elections (Czech Republic: % and seats):

Federal Assembly	House of the People	House of the Nations	ČNR
OF	53.1/68	50.0/50	49.5/127
KSČ	13.5/15	13.8/22	13.3/32
KDU	8.7/9	8.7/6	8.4/19
HSD/SMS ²⁸	7.9/9	9.1/7	10.0/22 ²⁹

The elections confirmed the undisputed leadership of the VPN and the OF in the National Councils, as well as in the Federal Parliament. The Slovak Christian Democrats were the most disappointed as they had hoped attract twice as many votes as they eventually received. Second to the VPN, the major winner was the Slovak National Party, whose support rose from 3% in March to almost 14% in June. According to Anton Hykisch, a Deputy for the KDH, this happened because the Christian Democrats had underestimated the strength of reawakened national sentiments among the Slovaks.³⁰

4.2 The war of the intellectuals and a resurrection of the past

Symptoms of discordance between some of the representatives of the VPN and the OF became evident already in December of 1989. They were linked to the

²⁸ Movement for Self-Governing Democracy (*Hnutí pro samosprávnou demokracii*) and Society for Moravia and Silesia (*Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko*).

²⁹ Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.273 and 274 (Appendix). The quorum was 5% in the Federal Assembly and 3% in the National Councils. Žatkuliak, "Politické strany...", p. 1382.

³⁰ After the creation of the KDH in February of 1990, the expectations were as high as 50%. Prior to the election, polls had showed 25% of electoral support for the Party. Hykisch, *Ako chutí politika...*, pp.70-72.

candidacy of Alexander Dubček for President.³¹ The Civic Forum preferred Václav Havel, who was almost unknown in Slovakia except for a few intellectuals and literary persons.³² In contrast to Slovak perceptions and experiences, the newly-formed Czech political elite, many of whom had witnessed the reform movement of 1968 (*osmašedesátníci*; Czech – the 68ers), had rather a negative opinion of Dubček. They doubted his popular support in the Czech Lands in 1968. So did Petr Pithart, a Czech intellectual and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic after the fall of Communism, who seemed to have been otherwise more perceptive towards the Slovak perspective on the Slovak – Czech cohabitation than the majority of his countrymen. Pithart had retrospectively referred to the negotiations with the VPN in the winter of 1990 on the status of Slovakia in post-communist Czechoslovakia as a constant trauma for the Czechs.³³

³¹ After his resignation as the First Secretary of the KSČ in April of 1969, Dubček was appointed Ambassador of Czechoslovakia to Turkey, apparently with the hope that he might defect to the West, thus discrediting himself. After he had been recalled from Ankara and expelled from the party in the summer of 1970, Dubček became an employee of the local Forest Administration in Krasňany, a Bratislava suburb. Jiri Hochman, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubček* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993), pp.251-256.

³² Since the mid-1980s, Magyar television aired a program called “Panorama,” which monitored the situation of Magyar minorities abroad, namely in Slovakia and Romania, and of Magyar dissidents, such as Miklós Duray in Slovakia and László Tökés, the evangelical bishop of the Magyar minority in Transylvania (Romania). A short interview with Havel in a prison hospital appeared on Magyar TV as well. Source: my recollections. Before the fall of 1989, as the Czech leader Petr Pithart admitted, Havel was not widely known in the Czech Lands either. See *Proměny politického systému v Československu na přelomu let 1989/1990*, p. 74.

³³ *Proměny politického systému v Československu na přelomu let 1989/1990*, p.83-84. Petruf states that Dubček, at the referred time, was “immeasurably more known than Havel, not only in Slovakia, but also in the Czech Republic.” Petruf, *Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998*, p.17.

The major divergence did not stem from personal animosities and ambitions of the new leaders, though they were not insignificant either,³⁴ but from the different views on a new constitution which was on the program of the day since the second half of the 1980s, when it had become an object of fierce disputes among the Communists themselves. The supporters of the idea of a strong federation, such as Prime Minister Adamec and General Secretary of the KSČ Jakeš, had argued that an efficient conduct of economic policies required centralist methods of planning and execution. Debates about the Czechs subsidizing Slovakia's economic growth (*kdo na koho dopláci*; Czech) that replicated similar disputes in the 1930s and 1960s, and resulted in the final breakup of the state in 1992, testified to the pattern of the split across nationality lines. The perception on the Czech side was that the future of the state was at stake due to the impossibility of reaching an agreement with the Slovaks on federal and national competences.³⁵ The draft of a new constitution in 1989, which conserved the legal status of 1970, had been submitted for discussion to the Slovak National Council on October 31, 1989 and was approved only after warnings were made by its Chairman, Viliam Šalgovič, and the Chairman of the Committee for the Preparation of the New

³⁴ Ján Budaj said to me that the leadership of Havel in November and early December of 1989 was not unchallenged within the Civic Forum itself. At that time, Václav Klaus was not part of its inner circle. Due to Klaus's command of English, he was making statements and giving interviews to foreign media. Author interview with Ján Budaj. Bratislava August 26, 2007.

³⁵ Jozef Žatkuliak, "Spory o novú ústavu československej federácie v druhej polovici 80. rokov XX. Storočia," *Historický časopis* 56, no 1 (2008), p.173. Hrnko, "Politické zápasy...", p. 75. Hrnko says that the key obstacle in the negotiations on the federation was the push on the side of the Czechs for the abolition of the veto of majorization (*zákaz majorizácie*). Anton Hrnko, "Politické zápasy na Slovensku v lete a na jeseň 1990", p.74. While referring to the first meeting of the delegation of the VPN with Václav Havel and the representatives of the OF in Prague, Ján Budaj said to me that Václav Havel was against the veto of majorization already in December of 1989. Author interview with Ján Budaj. Bratislava, August 26, 2007.

Constitution, the Slovak federal Minister without portfolio Marián Čalfa, that disciplinary measures would apply against those who would not cast a vote for the proposal. Karol Laco, one of the founding fathers of the project of a socialist federation in 1968 and the Chair of the Legislative Council of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, while serving as the *rapporteur* of a new draft, clairvoyantly admitted that “if one republic had more competences than the other, it would represent something different from a federation, even a free association of states on the basis of international law.”³⁶

In the spring of 1990, the constitutional debate in post-communist Czechoslovakia began. As a start, the adjective “socialist” was removed from the official name of the federation, as well as from both republics.³⁷ A more difficult task was to rename the state. The so-called “hyphen war” opened Pandora’s box of grievances on both sides. A plethora of historic excursions and passionate exhortations added fuel to the discussions in both chambers of the Federal Assembly.³⁸ One problem was the replacement of the emblem of the former communist state with which neither

³⁶ Žatkuliak, pp.188-189.

³⁷ See “Uznesenie Slovenskej národnej rady z 1. marca 1990 k návrhu prezidenta ČSSR o ústavnom zákone o zmene názvu Československej socialistickej republiky, Českej socialistickej republiky a Slovenskej socialistickej republiky” [Order of the Slovak National Council of March 1, 1990, Concerning the Proposal by the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on the Change of the Name of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic]. See “Uznesenie 168/1990” (Order No. 168/1990), In *Spoločná česko-slovenská digitálna parlamentná knižnica* [The Joint Czech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library], 22 Plenary Session of the Slovak National Council, March 21, 1990. Accessible at www.nrsr.sk See Digital Library of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (Plenary sessions).

³⁸ Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), p.58.

Czechs nor Slovaks were happy.³⁹ Though both sides reached a consensus on the state's new official name – the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (ČSFR), as well as on the emblem of the federation in April of 1990⁴⁰ – the damage to the artificial unity imposed by the communist drive for social ideals was broken, as was the common past that seemed not only irreconcilable, but also irreparable.

In the 1960s, Czech and Slovak intellectuals stood at the forefront of the debates on socio-cultural, ideological and economic problems. In 1990, they began to summarize the troubled coexistence of their nations. In an article published in the Czech newspaper *Reportér*, which had originally been established in the second half of the

³⁹ Leon Sokolovský, “Znak československej federácie: Áno alebo nie?” [The Emblem of the Czechoslovak Federation: Yes or No?], *Pravda*, January 9, 1990. The proposal consisted of two parts that represented the historical Czech Lands - a lion wearing a crown on his head, and a double-barred silver cross standing on one of the three hills representing Slovakia (Upper Hungary) in the Hungarian Kingdom. The final version of the state emblem eventually comprised four parts as the emblems of Silesia and Moravia were added onto it.

⁴⁰ See “Ústavný zákon číslo 101 z 20.apríla 1990 o zmene názvu Česko-slovenskej federatívnej republiky” [Constitutional Law No.101 of April 20, 1990 on the name change of the Czecho-Slovak Federative Republic]. See *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II* (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998), ed. Michal Barnovský, document no.307, p.563. According to Hykisch and the majority of Slovaks, the shortened forms of the official name – Czechoslovakia in the Czech Lands and Czecho-Slovakia in Slovakia – helped to preserve the international image of Czechoslovakia as a unitary Czechoslovak (Czech) state. Anton Hykisch, *Ako chutí politika...*, pp. 45-47. For the proposal of the SNR for the state's official name as Federácia Česko-Slovensko (The Federation of Czechia and Slovakia see “Vyhlásenie Slovenskej národnej rady a vlády Slovenskej republiky z 30.marca 1990 [Declaration of the Slovak National Council and the Government of the Slovak Republic on March 30, 1990], a two-page typed document, *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik*. The problem was linked to the adequate translation of Česko – Czechia as an equivalent to Slovensko. During the German occupation and the existence of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in WWII, the term (*Tschechei*; German) had rather a derogatory meaning. Rychlík, p.116. See the interview with Otto Urban, “We Were before Czechoslovakia, We Shall Be after It!,” *Lidové noviny*, July 24, 1992, English transcript. *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik*. Urban suggested the name Česko. The title of the article is a paraphrase to the statement by the Czech historian František Palacký in the late 1840s: “We were before Austria and we shall be after it.”

1960s and was banned at the beginning of the ‘normalization,’ its author called for understanding of the Slovak drive for emancipation on the basis of their immaturity and jealousy of the Czechs. She warned the Slovaks that her fellow-citizens in the Czech Lands were worn out with the debates about foggy and ambiguous “Slovak specificities” that led to nowhere.⁴¹ The major blow to the artificial unity came from the renowned Czech writer and author of *Dvětisíc slov* (*The Two Thousands Word Manifesto*) in June of 1968. Ludvík Vaculík suggested that, instead of the reparation of a troubled relationship, both nations should part.⁴² The Slovak communist-nationalist writer Vladimír Mináč felt obliged to reciprocate on the pages of the Slovak literary weekly *Nové Slovo*.⁴³ He put Vaculík’s self-congratulatory tone for being a “Czechoslovak” in historical perspective while saying that there has always been a Czech hiding behind the façade.⁴⁴ The picture of an uneasy relationship was picked up by western media. The *New York Times* noticed an “unexpected cry for independence in Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak five-million ethnic group in Czechoslovakia.” The article promptly offered an explanation. Boris Lazar, a professor of philosophy and a member of the VPN, said for the *Times* that “The Slovaks are a peasant people who spent most of their

⁴¹ Irena Petřinová, “Plaidoyer za slovenskou samostatnosť” [A Call for Slovak Independence], *Reportér* 19, May of 1990.

⁴² Ludvík Vaculík, “Naše slovenská otázka” [Our Slovak Question], *Lidové noviny*, May 3, 1990.

⁴³ In the early 1960s, Mináč had been looked at with suspicion by the communist authorities due to the fervor by which he fought for freedom of artistic expression and a more independent position of writers in society. Elena Londáková, “Slovenský kultúrny pohyb v 60. rokoch. Jeho miesto v dozrievaní česko-slovenskej spoločnosti,” In *Predjarie. Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967*. Miroslav Londák, Stanislav Sikora, Elena Londáková (Bratislava, Veda: 2002), pp.272-273. Cohen fittingly characterizes Mináč as a “nationalist intellectual.” Shari J. Cohen, *Politics Without a Past: The Absence of History in Post-Communist Nationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), p.135.

⁴⁴ Vladimír Mináč, “Naša česko-slovenská otázka,” [Our Czecho-Slovak Question], *Nové slovo*, May 24, 1990.

history under someone else, mostly Hungarians. They have a deep inferiority complex. The thinking is if we don't make a pitch for independence now, nobody in the world will know we exist."⁴⁵ Even with parts of this statement sounding legitimate, the problem had more profound roots and as such required a more balanced approach for the emotions and stereotypes had existed for a long time on both sides.⁴⁶

This literary war spread to daily politics. In November of 1990, when the negotiations on the redistribution of competences between the Federal Assembly and National Councils were in full swing, an earlier vision by Ján Čarnogurský, the chairman of the KDH and a Deputy Prime Minister of the ČSFR, on Slovakia having its chair and its own star in the enlarged European Community in the future, appeared in the media.⁴⁷ Though this statement did not mean the drive for an immediate secession from the federal state, the idea surely made the Czechs aware of the ultimate Slovak goals. Čarnogurský and his party may have seemed to the Czechs as the champions of Slovak independence, but this was not the role they wanted to play for the time being. The explanation from their own ranks was that, with the record of the wartime Slovak

⁴⁵ Serge Schmemmann, "For Eastern Europe Now, a New Disillusion," *New York Times*, November 9, 1990.

⁴⁶ Sharon L. Wolchik, "The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia," *East European Politics and Societies* (Winter 1994), p.175. In a survey conducted in October 1990 by the Centre for Social Analysis in Bratislava, the Slovak perception of the Czech was that of a "self-interested and sly egotist who prefers useless sofistry to an honest piece of work and who feels...superior to the Slovak." On the opposite side, Slovaks appeared to the Czechs as "nationally excitable...suffering from a inferiority complex, combined with a rather skeptical interpretation of the behaviour of the Slovak nation in history."

⁴⁷ Čarnogurský distanced himself from the interpretation of his statement as leading to Slovak independence by the Austrian journal *Der Standard*. In March 1991, Čarnogurský, once again repeated his idea of Slovak society achieving its status as a legal subject in Europe "not by breaking-up Czecho-Slovakia, but by entering a broader European society as equal in rights and equivalent in status." See Ján Čarnogurský, "Rovnoprávni sme, rovnocenní nie" [We have the same rights, but we are not equal]. *Literárny týždenník*, March 12, 1990.

Republic, Slovak Christian Democrats, as the Party of Slovak Catholics, were viewed with suspicion as the potential heirs to the Hlinka Slovak People's Party.⁴⁸ Moreover, there was a legal-semantic problem with the term *zvrchovanosť* linked to Slovak national emancipation which dated back to 1848 and 1861. By referring to it, Slovaks meant home rule, which was to be reflected by more competences given to Slovak national authorities, notably in the spheres of the economy and international relations, which were still in the exclusive domain of the federation.⁴⁹ Czechs, on the other hand, showed no understanding for what they saw as Slovak antics. They understood the idea of *zvrchovanosť* as a drive for full Slovak sovereignty, which would result in the existence of both republics as independent states.

In the summer and fall of 1990, the national conflict accelerated with the debate on the law of competences (*kompetenčný zákon*), which was supposed to precede the adoption of a new constitution. In 1969, Slovaks and Czechs had reached an agreement on constitutional symmetry. After three decades, both sides were about to discuss what Slovak representatives used to call an “authentic federation,” a term which on the Czech side was balanced by their vision of a “functional federation.”⁵⁰ Slovak historian Anton

⁴⁸ Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský. Bratislava, May 24, 2007. Hrnko confirms this explanation, but rejects it as an “alibi.” Hrnko, pp.97-98.

⁴⁹ See “Volebný program Kresťanskodemokratického hnutia” [The Election Program of the Christian Democratic Movement], *Slovenský denník*, May 2, 1990. The document is an apt illustration of the problem. It refers to national sovereignty of both the Slovak and Czech Republics which delegate, “freely and rationally,” competences to the federal state. Ibidem, *Article I*.

⁵⁰ Petruf, *Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998*, p.21. The competences were supposed to have been delegated from the National Councils to the Federal Assembly, not vice versa. See the interview with Michal Kováč, “Nepripravovali sme sa na vznik samostatného štátu” [We Were Not Preparing Ourselves for the Creation of an Independent State], *História* 5, May 2006, p.16. The author is the former President of the Slovak Republic (1993-1998). During his first visit to Slovakia, Václav Havel expressed a willingness to work towards the transformation of Czechoslovakia from an administrative-bureaucratic

Hrnko observed that during the negotiations on the future of the common state, the Czech elites were, in contrast to the situation after Munich and WW II, in a better position. There was no problem similar to that of the Sudeten Germans in the prewar Czechoslovak Republic, for there was no German minority in the Czech Lands following its forced expulsion in 1945.⁵¹ The idea of autonomy for Moravia and Silesia, which would have placed the Czechs in a similar bargaining position as the Slovaks with respect to their Magyar minority, was imminent, but insignificant.⁵² Whereas Czech politics from 1848 to 1938, as well as during the communist era, had to take into account German cultural, economic and political influence, in the late 1980s the tradition of Czech medieval statehood, based on the mixed legacies of the Přemyslids, Saint Wenceslaus, the Hussites and the Reformation eventually prevailed.⁵³ In this

federation to a real one. See the article “Vytvoríme skutočnú federáciu” [Let Us Build an Authentic Federation], *Pravda*, January 13, 1990.

⁵¹ Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). See the Stalin-Churchill conversation on the planned expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia and Poland and the atrocities committed during it. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110 and 118-119. Overall, 2,251,000 Germans were expelled from the Czech Lands in 1945 and 1946. Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč, *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001), p.167.

⁵² In the early 1990s, Moravians and Silesians raised their claims for becoming a third subject in negotiations on the future of the federation. See the article “Čomu verí Morava” [What Moravia Believes In], *Národná obroda*, November 11, 1991. Čarnogurský made himself clear on the problem in the winter of 1991, saying that the efforts of Moravians and Silesians would have been acceptable to Slovaks only if the federation was about to change into a confederation. See the article “Predstavy KDĽ o štátoprávnom usporiadaní” [The Ideas of KDĽ on the Form of the State], *Národná obroda*, February 15, 1991. According to the Czech historian Otto Urban, the Head of the Department of Czech and Slovak History at Charles University in Prague, the Czech Republic should have existed as a federal state similar to Austria and Germany, with Moravia preserving its individuality. See “We Were before Czechoslovakia, We Shall Be after It!,” *Lidové noviny*, July 24, 1992.

⁵³ This reflects the capacity of nationalism in both the 19th and 21st centuries for blending the internally opposite and contradictory aspects of distant pre-national and national history into its mainstream interpretation, supportive of the idea of statehood

regard, the idea of the continuing existence of Czechoslovakia, as, in fact, a centralist, whether a unitary or a federative, state dominated by Czechs, represented an expendable risk. With this background, the risk of leaving the intrusive Slovaks to their fate was balanced by the prospects of economic growth and prosperity of the future Czech Republic, anchored firmly in the West.⁵⁴

Hrnko suggested that, for Prague the question from the very beginning of the constitutional debate was either the Slovaks accept the federation as it is, or they can go (*at' si jdou* – let them go; Czech).⁵⁵ This possibility was also admitted in Hrnko's private conversation with Dubček, who was reported to have said in October of 1990 that "I know that the federation will probably not last. But we, Slovaks, must not give to it even the smallest cause. We have to withstand it and to be rational so that the guilt for it will not be thrown at us." After the debate in the Slovak National Council on November 20, Vladimír Mečiar, at that time already the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, grudgingly said to Hrnko, who served as the Vice-Chairman of the Slovak National Party and the Party's MP in the SNR: "And there will be an independent Slovak state. Do not be afraid. Czechs will kick us into it."⁵⁶ With this premonition in mind, it is not the surprise over the fate of dismembered Czechoslovakia that deserves primary attention, but the delay in the split, which took another two years to happen.

linked to both the past and the present.

⁵⁴ Frédéric Wehrlé, *Le Divorce Tchéco-Slovaque: Vie et mort de la Tchécoslovaquie 1918-1992* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1994), p.271. "La Slovaquie fut perçue comme un fardeau sur la route de l'adhésion à la Communauté Européenne."

⁵⁵ Coincident opinions of Dubček and Černogurský on the future of the joint state can be found in Hrnko, p.71.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.86 (Dubček's statement) and p.80 (reference to V. Mečiar).

4.3 The minority question in post-communist Slovakia and the Law on Competences

In communist Czechoslovakia the status of national minorities was regulated by Constitutional Law No. 144/1968. It officially recognized four minorities – the Magyars, the Germans, the Poles and the Ukrainians (Ruthenians). The stipulations of the law were short and general. In four articles out of seven, it guaranteed minorities the right to education in their respective languages, the right for their cultural development, the right to use their language on the territories inhabited by them, the right to assemble in their cultural organizations, as well as the right to a press and information in their own languages. The law also stipulated the equality of all citizens and forbade any form of discrimination on the basis of nationality.⁵⁷ During the two decades of normalization, the nationality question was discreetly evaded by the communist regime, which pretended that there was no such a thing as potential disharmony among the two constituent nations and nationalities. Although there were no problems on an official level, the Magyars who lived in the regions of Southern Slovakia, in particular, still felt the trauma of the forced deportation of 60,000 of their kin to the territories abandoned by the Sudeten Germans in 1945 in the Czech Lands.⁵⁸ The conference held in Tatranská Lomnica in February of 1947 envisaged that Czechoslovakia could “expatriate as many Hungarians as there were Slovaks in Hungary naturally desirous of

⁵⁷ *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II*, document no.303 “Ústavný zákon číslo 144 o postavení národnosti v Československej socialistickej republike” [The Constitutional Law no.144 on the Status of the Minorities in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic], pp.556-557.

⁵⁸ According to the stipulations of the Košice Government Program and the decrees of the President of the Republic nos 33, 71 and 88/1945 (the so-called Beneš decrees), all Magyars, except antifascists, were deprived of their citizenship and became subject to forced labour. Toma and Kováč, *Slovakia: From Samo to Dzurinda*, pp. 167-168.

returning to establish themselves in Czechoslovakia.”⁵⁹ From the summer of 1945 to February of 1948, when the expatriation finally ended, between 73,000 to 95,421 Slovaks out of the 477,000-strong Slovak minority in Hungary resettled in their mother country, whereas 60,000 ethnic Magyars left Slovakia for Hungary.⁶⁰

The Magyar minority in Slovakia preserved its collective identity and the memory of the trauma experienced in 1945-1948. Among its most vocal members was Miklós Duray (1945), author of the book *Psí obojok* (Slovak; translated as *In the Doghouse*) published in the 1980s in New York, in which he described the pitiful fate of Magyars in Slovakia during Communism.⁶¹ In December of 1989, Duray was considered a nominee for the position of Minister for Minorities in the Čalfa federal government. The Ministry was not created and the minorities living in Czechoslovakia were to be represented by their deputies in the National Councils, as well as in the Federal Assembly as they had been in communist Czechoslovakia. On January 6, 1990 the VPN and the Magyar Independent Initiative (MNI) issued a joint declaration in which they rejected nationalist prejudices and pronounced their respect for the rights of minorities

⁵⁹ Ludvík Němec, “Solution of the Minority problem,” In *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, eds. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.423.

⁶⁰ The data differs according to the author. For the numbers of Slovaks returning to Slovakia see Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: the Struggle for Survival* (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1995), pp.225-226. In the case of the expatriated Magyars I refer to Němec’s study.

⁶¹ Duray’s books *Kutyaszorító I* (Magyar) (In the Doghouse) (New York: Püski - Corvin, 1983) and *Kutyaszorító II* (New York: Püski - Corvin, 1989) reflected the author’s frustration with the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and with Slovak intolerance and persecution. Duray’s political motives and his Magyar ethnocentrism were questioned by Milan Marko, “Čo sleduje Mikuláš Duray? [What’s on Mikuláš Duray’s Mind?], *Národná obroda*, (spring or summer of 1990). *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik*.

and, at the same time, for state sovereignty and the immutability of the states' borders in Europe, which was the major Slovak concern.⁶²

In 1991, there were already eleven minorities officially recognized in Slovakia – the Czech, the Magyar, the German, the Bulgarian, the Ukrainian, the Ruthenian, the Croat, the Jewish, the Roma, the Moravian, and the Polish. The most numerous and the most vocal in expressing its claims was the Magyar minority with its 567,296 members out of the Slovakia's population of 5,274,335.⁶³ They had their representatives in the highest bodies of the Slovak Republic as they had had in the Federal Assembly and the Slovak National Council in communist Czechoslovakia. As for the Slovak Magyars, the archivist and historian Alexander Varga held the position of the second Deputy Prime Minister in Milan Čič's Government of National Understanding, while Gábor Zászlós was Deputy Chairman of the Slovak National Council and, after the parliamentary elections in June of 1990, a Deputy Prime Minister in the first Mečiar Government.⁶⁴ As soon as March of 1990, Miklós Duray, dissatisfied with the politics of MNI, hastened to create the Coexistence Party in order to accentuate the protection of the rights of minorities living in Slovakia, notably the Magyars.⁶⁵

⁶² See "Vyhlásenie VPN a MNI o spoluzítí národov, národných menšín a etnických skupín na Slovensku" [Declaration of the VPN and MNI on the Coexistence of Nations, National Minorities and Ethnic Groups in Slovakia], *Verejnost'*, January 23, 1990.

⁶³ Robert Antl, "Etnická štruktúra Slovenska." [Ethnic Composition of Slovakia], In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Natália Rolková (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2004), p.656 (Table 1). In 2001, there were 520,528 ethnic Magyars out of population of 5,379,455.

⁶⁴ See "Životopisy nových členov vlády SSR" [Curricula Vitae of the New Members of the Government of the Slovak Socialist Republic], *Smena*, December 13, 1989. (Alexander Varga), and "Životopisy novej vlády SR" [Curricula Vitae of the New Members of the Government of the SR], *Pravda*, June 28, 1990 (Gábor Zászlós).

⁶⁵ In the period 1990-1992, no other minority in Slovakia except the Magyars claimed its rights. The Slovak National Council made its apologies to the Jewish minority, whose members had been transported from Slovakia to concentration camps in 1942, as

In the spring of 1990, nationalist sentiments erupted. On March 3, 1990 Slovaks who lived in the southern part of Slovakia gathered in the small city of Šurany and issued a Memorandum in which they warned about signals of the coming of Magyar call for autonomy.⁶⁶ On March 5, Slovak Government held its session in the city of Komárno on the Slovak-Magyar border with a mixed population as an apparent gesture of the accentuation of Slovak sovereignty. A week later, the President of Hungary, Mátyás Szűrös, sent a letter to President Havel, in which he expressed his concerns regarding the state of the protection of minority rights, and specifically those of the Magyar minority, in Czechoslovakia.⁶⁷ With such communications about them going over their heads, the Slovaks felt uncomfortable. The feeling of being ignored by federal authorities was strengthened during the visit of the French President François Mitterand

well as to the German minority which became the subject of reprisals after the Second World War. See “Vyhlásenie Slovenskej národnej rady a vlády Slovenskej republiky k deportáciám Židov zo Slovenska” [Declaration of the Slovak National Council and the Government of the Slovak Republic on the Transportation of the Jews from Slovakia] and “Vyhlásenie Slovenskej národnej rady a vlády Slovenskej republiky k odsunu slovenských Nemcov” [Declaration of the Slovak National Council and the Government of the Slovak Republic on the Expulsion of the Slovak Germans]. See *Vyhlásenia Slovenskej národnej rady a Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 1990-1998* [Declarations of the Slovak National Council and the National Council of the Slovak Republic 1990-1998] (Bratislava: Kancelária Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky, 1998), pp. 3-4 and 5-7. In April of 1991, the Slovak Ruthenians attacked Duray for speaking at his press conference in Vienna in the name of all minorities in Slovakia regarding Beneš’s decrees. See the article by Vasil Turok, the Chairman of the *Rusínska obroda* [the Ruthenian Revival], “Pán Duray, vyprosujeme si,” [Mr. Duray, That Does It], *Národná obroda*, April 11, 1991.

⁶⁶ Hrnko, “Politické zápasy...,” p.98. A fragment of the Memorandum of Šurany I retrieved was from the journal article with the title “Memorandum Slovákov južného Slovenska SNR a vláde Slovenskej republiky” [Memorandum of the Slovaks in South Slovakia to the Slovak National Council and the Government of the Slovak Republic] published in an unspecified Slovak newspaper (*Práca* or *Nový Čas*, March 4, 1990). *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik.*

⁶⁷ See “Budapešť sa sťažuje Prahe” [Budapest Addresses Its Grievances to Prague], *Smena*, March 14, 1990, and “Nepriaznivý ohlas v slovenskej verejnosti” [Unfavourable Resonance in the Slovak Public], *Práca*, March 15, 1990.

to Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1990. Mitterand was supposed to visit also the Slovak Republic as he did during Communism in the fall of 1988, when he met with Husák in Bratislava. Likewise, the tactless and purposeful exclusion of Dubček as the Speaker of the Federal Assembly from meetings with the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was another slap in the face of the Slovaks.⁶⁸ The solution was to create the Ministry of International Relations of the Slovak Republic, which had been expected to come into existence after the parliamentary elections in June of 1990. The activities of its top representative, Milan Kňažko, who returned from Prague where he had held a rather formal function of the advisor to President Havel, to hire Slovak employees at the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were not seen favourably in Prague.⁶⁹

Until October of 1990, the Slovak National Party was rather vague about how to achieve Slovak sovereignty.⁷⁰ The breakthrough was the commemoration of the 52nd anniversary of the death of Father Andrej Hlinka, the leader of the autonomist Hlinka Slovak People's Party, on August 16 and 17, 1990. The event sparked even more controversy about the role of Hlinka in the First Czechoslovak Republic. In the Czech Lands, the popular wisdom was that Hlinka was a traitor and a destroyer (*rozbiječ*; Czech) of Czechoslovakia, an image he held from 1919, when he travelled, on his own initiative, to Paris to establish contacts with the victorious Allies independently from the

⁶⁸ Hrnko, pp. 78 and 86.

⁶⁹ Miroslav Mojžita, *Kňažko, Demeš, Kňažko. Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993* (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), pp. 16-17. Petruf, *Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998*, pp.18-19. Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Break-Up* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p.81.

⁷⁰ In the document "Šesťdesiatjeden krokov k slovenskej identite – Memorandum iniciatívy Zvrchované Slovensko" [Sixty-one Steps Toward Slovak Identity – Memorandum of the Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia], its signatories, among whom was Hrnko and other representatives of SNS, claimed the need for the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic *within* the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity...II*, document no.308, pp.564-568.

official representatives of the emerging Czechoslovakia led by Karel Kramář and Edvard Beneš. The visit failed, yet it earned Hlinka a term in prison, from which he was released after he was elected to the National Assembly in 1920.⁷¹ Ružomberok, once a bastion of Slovak political Catholicism, became in August of 1990 a milestone in the resurrected “triangular” politics in post-communist Czechoslovakia.⁷² Not only were the Czechs puzzled about Slovak goals, but Slovak political parties were divided in their rather foggy visions for the future. Whereas the civic-liberal core of the VPN distanced itself very clearly from the demands for Slovak independence that were heard during the event, the KDH faced a more complicated task. As the Party of Slovak Catholics and one of the major organizers of the event, they had to cope with the dilemma of how to eliminate the most radical wing in the SNS led by the Party chairman Vítázoslav Moric from gaining the upper hand before it could have caused even more political damage.⁷³ Ján Čarnogurský, a long-term religious dissenter persecuted and jailed by the normalizers, and the Chairman of KDH in post-communist Slovakia and Deputy Prime Minister of the federal government (until June 27, 1990), was not allowed to address his fellow citizens. Barely nine months after the collapse of Communism in Slovakia, *hosanna* was replaced by *crucify*. The paradox grew stronger following the fact that the most vocal protagonists of Slovak sovereignty were those who had vehemently fought

⁷¹ Kirschbaum, p.164-165. For a detailed account of Hlinka’s endeavour see the study by Martin Holák, “Cesta Andreja Hlinku do Paríža a jej vlyv na slovenskú politiku v rokoch 1919-1920” [The Journey of Andrej Hlinka to Paris and its Influence on Slovak Politics in 1919-1920], *Historický zborník* 17, no.1 (2007), pp. 52-70.

⁷² Slovak-“Czechoslovak,” Slovak-Czech, political relationships. Innes, p.15.

⁷³ Hrnko, “Politické zápasy na Slovensku...,” pp.83-84.

the separatism of Slovak *ľudáks* (populists) and their role as the alleged destroyers of the pre-war Czechoslovak Republics (October 1938–March 1939) two years earlier.⁷⁴

In meetings of official Slovak and Czech representatives held in the spa cities of Luhačovice in Moravia and Trenčianske Teplice in northwestern Slovakia in July and August of 1990, both sides expressed their desire to find a solution for the continuing existence of the common state. In light of this gentleman's agreement, the impact of the event in Ružomberok was felt in Prague as an embarrassment. If the Czechs from the creation of the First Czechoslovak Republic onward thought of Czechoslovakia as a state where "Czech" almost always meant "Czechoslovak," the summer of 1990 was the time when they began to think of themselves only as Czechs.⁷⁵ This delayed and sudden awakening of the Czechs did not change anything in their pragmatic approaches to the federation. The meeting in Trenčianske Teplice had an ambiguous outcome, as each side had interpreted it in a different way. Petr Pithart, the Czech Prime Minister, was attacked at home for his alleged retreat in spite of Slovak claims, Vladimír Mečiar, who seemed to succeed better in portraying the meeting as a victory for the Slovak cause, was still seen as pro-federalist by those who desired Slovak sovereignty.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Anton Hrnko, *Politický vývin a protifašistický odboj na Slovensku, 1939-1941* [Political Evolution and Anti-Fascist Resistance, 1939-1941] (Bratislava: Veda, 1988). In this study, the author accentuates the role of the Communist Party as the only force that had stood against the separatist clerico-fascist regime in the emerging wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945). Hrnko avoided any reference to Hlinka.

⁷⁵ Rychlík, pp.127-128.

⁷⁶ Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict...*, p.63. Rychlík, p.150. Hrnko (on Mečiar), p. 77. See the article by Petr Pithart on Slovak attitudes towards the federation, "Právomoci republík posilnia federáciu" [Competences of the Republics Will Strengthen the Federation], *Národná obroda*, September 5, 1990. Pithart admitted that the federation reached in 1968 represented only formal, not real equalization of both nations. If Bratislava was the capital and the seat of the federal government, the initiative regarding the re-building of the federation would have been on our [Czech] side, said Pithart. He supported the idea of three constitutions drafted at the same time

Following signs of ethnic tensions in southern Slovakia, caused by rumours about claims for autonomy among Slovak Magyars in the spring of 1990, a group of Slovak nationalists proposed the draft of language law which would have forced the exclusive use of Slovak as the only language of official communication on the territory of the Slovak Republic. The proposal was backed by the nascent *Matica slovenská* which was rapidly becoming, alongside the SNS, a significant force for Slovak national mobilization. Its draft of the language law (“*matičný zákon*”) caused a lot of nervousness, not only within the Magyar minority, but also in the ruling coalition of the VPN and the KDH, who were aware of the potentially harmful international consequences of this case.⁷⁷

Previously, the communist regime had tolerated the status quo and the use of minority languages in local communication. It also subsidized their cultural associations and schools.⁷⁸ The Magyar minority did not show any particular enthusiasm for learning the Slovak language, which hampered its younger generation from studying at Slovak and Czech universities.⁷⁹ Apart from its international consequences, the draft of the

which would help to eliminate the risk of future conflict over competences.

⁷⁷ The draft envisaged that all official communication take place exclusively in the Slovak language. If translation was required, it had to be done at the citizen's expense, except specific [social] circumstances. See the draft published in the *Slovenské národné noviny* (the Slovak National Newspaper), July 3, 1990, §5, letter 4. Similarly, the teaching at all schools on all levels on the territory of the Slovak Republic was to be done in the Slovak language. *Ibid.*, §6. *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik.*

⁷⁸ On the numbers and agenda of the Magyar cultural associations since 1949 (there were dozens of them) see Michal Kaľavský, “Maďarská menšina” [The Magyar Minority]. In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, pp.694-699.

⁷⁹ Lýdia Benčová, “Národnostné školstvo v Slovenskej republike” [The Nationalities' Schooling System in the Slovak Republic]. *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, p.681. For the persistence of the problem see the recent article “Gašparovič kritizoval Maďarov, že údajne nevedia po slovensky” [Gašparovič criticized the Magyars that they allegedly do

language law made by the SNS and the *Matica slovenská* demonstrated growing feelings among Slovaks that the “Magyar card” was being used against them by Prague as a tool for giving up their claims for an authentic federation built on the basis of the competences delegated to it from both its parts.⁸⁰

On October 17, 1990 the Slovak National Council deliberated on two drafts of the language law, the one proposal by *the Matica* and the second being a moderate version submitted by the coalition of the VPN and the Christian Democrats (*koaličný návrh*). Meanwhile, hundreds of people gathered in front of the Slovak Parliament, in support of the draft submitted by *Matica*. During a live TV broadcast, Mečiar pressured Štefan Markuš, the Chairman of *Matica* and accused him of tearing the federation apart through the draft of the language law. He invoked the possibility of sending police to suppress the demonstration of the supporters of the proposal made by *Matica*. During the night of October 25, the draft submitted by the coalition, which allowed the use of

not know Slovak], *Sme*, March 10, 2009. Ivan Gašparovič is the President of the Slovak Republic. From March of 2009, he is serving his second term. *Sme*, March 10, 2009.

⁸⁰ Carol Skalník Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp.163-164. Leff stressed the weakness of Slovak politics vis-à-vis its large Magyar minority backed up by Hungary. Slovakia was invaded by the Magyar Red Army under Lenin’s diligent protégé Béla Kún in 1919 and by troops of the pro-fascist regime led by Admiral Miklós Horthy in March of 1939. For the rapidly deteriorating conditions of political, cultural and material life of the Slovaks on the territories ceded to Hungary after the Vienna Arbitration in November of 1938 see Loránt Tilkovszky, *Južné Slovensko v rokoch 1938-1945* [Southern Slovakia in the Years 1938-1945] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1972). In the period from 1920 to 1930, there were 450-500,000 ethnic Slovaks in Hungary. Ladislav Deák, “Postavenie slovenskej menšiny v Maďarsku medzi dvoma svetovými vojnami” [The Status of the Slovak Minority in Hungary between the Two World Wars], In *Slováci v Maďarsku* [Slovaks in Hungary]. International Conference Proceedings, Bratislava, eds. Eva Balážová and Genovéva Grácová September 30, 1990, p.11. According to the census of 1990, only 5,636 citizens of Hungary claimed Slovak nationality, 6,691 considered the Slovak language to be their mother tongue and 18,463 claimed a command of the Slovak language. See Ľudovít Haraksim, “Programové odnárodňovanie Slovákov v Maďarsku” [Programmed Denationalization of Slovaks in Hungary] In *Slováci v Maďarsku*, p.57.

minority languages also in official communication, was approved by the Slovak National Council.⁸¹ Radicals among the Slovak nationalists did not give up so easily. Their leader, Vít'azoslav Moric, declared that the SNR was no longer an authority to protect Slovak interests, a step rejected by the moderates within the party. A few days later Moric apologized to the SNR.⁸² The event showed that the question of the Magyar minority had and was about to have a large impact on domestic Slovak politics and subsequently on the image of the Slovak Republic abroad. The traditional triangular politics which testified to the internal split among Slovak political parties during the First Czechoslovak Republic (autonomists versus *Czechoslovaks*) and post-communist Czechoslovakia (sovereignists versus federalists) turned, in fact, quadrangular. This extension lasted until the summer and fall of 1992, when it shrank to triangular again with the politics linked to the status of the Magyar minority replacing the Czechs as a third leg of the triangle.

In the process of the crystallization of the attitudes of Slovak politicians towards the common state with the Czechs, it was Vladimír Mečiar (1942) who gradually became the most visible Slovak politician. In contrast to his later image, Mečiar could have hardly been blamed for the breakup up the common state, which was allegedly

⁸¹ Hykisch, *Ako chutí politika*, pp.107-108. The Law envisaged the use of the language of minorities on territory with 20% and more of the population. This was the same as in the First Czechoslovak Republic. See *Zákon Slovenskej národnej rady č.428/1990 Zb. o úradnom jazyku Slovenskej republiky* [The Law of the Slovak National Council no. 428/1990 on the Official Language of the Slovak Republic]. Accessible at www.zbierka.sk. The use of the Czech language in official communication in Slovakia has been unrestricted.

⁸² Hrnko, "Politické zápasy...", p.92. There was a Democratic Platform within the Slovak National Party, which distanced itself from the legacy of the wartime Slovak Republic and Hrnko was its member. Moric resigned on December 8, 1990 and the party elected Jozef Prokeš as its new chairman on March 23, 1991, in Nové Zámky, a city in southern Slovakia. Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, 145.

made in order to preserve the influence of the Communists and nationalists in Slovakia in contrast to the liberal Czechs, who, in the meantime, were moving towards democracy and a free market economy.⁸³ Mečiar became a member of VPN in December of 1989. After his appointment as the Minister of the Interior in January of 1989, he was widely popular in Slovakia for he promised to punish the Communists who had abused their power. Mečiar's personal record comprised the elements of individual resistance and forced conformity, which was more than some of his future critics could say. As an enthusiastic top representative of the Central Committee of the Slovak Communist Youth (*Slovenský zväz mládeže*) and a passionate supporter of Alexander Dubček in 1968, he was expelled from the KSS during the party purges.⁸⁴ In the mid -1970s, after having worked as a general labourer, he was allowed to study law in Bratislava and, after his graduation, to become a lawyer for a small socialist enterprise in northwestern Slovakia.⁸⁵ During their interview with Mečiar, members of VPN were astonished to listen to a candidate for the position of the Ministry of the Interior, who had a remarkable knowledge of the working methods of such a specific executive branch.⁸⁶

⁸³ Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p.45.

⁸⁴ Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

⁸⁵ See "Životopisy novej vlády SR" [Curricula Vitae of the (members) of the New Government of the Slovak Republic], *Pravda*, June 28, 1990 (Vladimír Mečiar). On Mečiar's characterization as a leader see Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.12-14.

⁸⁶ On Mečiar being interviewed by the members of the Coordination Committee of VPN see Hykisch, pp. 83-86. Mečiar explains his preparedness for the position on the basis of his unpublished analyses on the various aspects in the evolution of the "normalized" Slovak society he had made for himself. He did not aspire for an unspecified position in the government, which was offered to him by Dubček in December of 1989. He received the invitation to the interview by the then Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Milan Čič. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

Mečiar's robust physical appearance and his capacity for swift improvisation made him tower over a group of intellectuals who were not accustomed to speaking to the masses. In this regard, Mečiar represented a sharp antidote not only to the intellectuals in the VPN and the KDH, but also to Slovak nationalists, who were straightforward in style but archaic in rhetoric. This was not, however, what might have worked with the pragmatic and rational Czechs. The opposite was true as they felt that "his [Mečiar's] tactics made him lose credibility, it fostered an anti-Slovak reaction, and it weakened the position of moderates prone to reach consensus with the Slovaks."⁸⁷ Following the parliamentary elections in June of 1990, during the rise of the debate on the distribution of competences between the federation and both republics, Mečiar replaced the diplomatic and conciliatory Milan Čič as Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic. It was his first term in this function and two others that eventually earned him the reputation of an *enfant terrible* of Slovak politics domestically and internationally were to follow. In the early 1990s, however, Mečiar was anything but a hard-core nationalist and it is doubtful that he ever was.

Discordance and mutual suspicion between the Slovak and Czech political representations intensified in November of 1990. Shoulder-to-shoulder with President Havel stood the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia Marián Čalfa, a reform Communist and a "Prague Slovak," in the very best tradition of the prewar Czechoslovak Republic and the unitary communist state during the Novotný era. Čalfa's role in the smooth transition of power from communist to post-communist elites on the federal level in

⁸⁷ Stein, pp.85 and 187 (in reference to Pithart: "And it's precisely Mr. Mečiar's style that is foreign to us" [Czechs]). Karol Wolf, *Podruhé a a naposled aneb Mírové rozdělení Československa* [For the Second and the Last Time or Peaceful Split of Czechoslovakia] (Praha: GG, 1998), p.94.

November and December of 1989 was crucial.⁸⁸ He was far less successful in persuading the Slovaks at home to follow the course towards a real (centralist) federation without reservation.⁸⁹ Čalfa's metaphor on Czechoslovakia as being one body was vehemently opposed by Milan Kňažko, who compared the relationship between the two nations to that of two friends who live in the same house they own. This house has an administrator, whom they chose and pay for taking care of it. He serves them both, but he cannot order them about and, if he tries, he will be fired.⁹⁰ The Law on Competences, which was eventually approved by both chambers of the Federal Assembly on December 12, 1990, gave the Slovaks the right to establish economic, cultural and scientific relations with the parts of other federative states without mediation by federal authorities.⁹¹ The law provided only temporary relief to the

⁸⁸ For a characterization of Čalfa who “played his passing role with skill and professionalism” see Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia...*, p.84. Čalfa was not particularly popular in Slovakia, but he had opponents also in the Czech Republic. He enjoyed the confidence and support of President Havel. His position, as far as the Slovak and Czech relationship was concerned, bears some resemblance to that of Milan Hodža, the last and only Slovak Prime Minister in the prewar Czechoslovak Republic.

⁸⁹ Schwarz, *Česi a Slováci...*, p.222.

⁹⁰ Milan Kňažko, “Nemáte pravdu, pán Čalfa” [You Are Wrong, Mr. Čalfa], *Verejnost'*, November 15, 1990. This metaphor was evidently inspired by the earlier comparisons of Europe to a “common house” by A. Gromyko and M. Gorbachev. See Ingmar Karlsson, *Európa a národy. Európsky národ alebo Európa národov?* [Europe and Nations: European Nation or Europe of Nations?] (Bratislava: Slovenský inštitút medzinárodných štúdií, 1998), pp.27-28. The author is former Ambassador of Sweden to Slovakia. In its modified version – the duplex (*dvojdomok*; Czech) – this concept was rather vaguely used as a model of coexistence of Slovaks and Czechs by Petr Pithart. See the article “Dvojdomček neživotaschopný” [The Duplex Won't Be Able to Survive], *Národná obroda*, November 12, 1991.

⁹¹ See *Ústavný zákon č.556/1990 Zb., ktorým sa mení a dopĺňa ústavný zákon o česko-slovenskej federácii č.143/1968 Zb.* [Constitutional Law no. 556/1990 by which the Changes and Supplements are Being Made in the Law on the Czech and Slovak Federation]. See Article 4, 7/2. letters *a,b,c*. In www.zbierka.sk (Electronic Register of Laws of the Slovak Republic). The state property of the federation was divided between the two republics. A State Bank (SBČS-ŠBČS) established its centre also in Bratislava. See Rychlík, pp.166-167.

ravaged Slovak and Czech relationship and was the result of the highest level of consensus reached by the two.

4.4 “Let’s govern ourselves” versus “Let them go:” the story of two nationalisms

The American legal scholar Eric Stein examined in detail the negotiations over a new federal constitution, which never came into the existence, by the newly constituted Czech and Slovak political elites.⁹² In reference to Stein’s work, the Czech historian Jan Rychlík pointed out that “constitutional problems, though being interesting and important, were not the main cause of the dissolution of the state.”⁹³ After the adoption of the law on competences, the negotiations between Slovak and Czech politicians continued for another year and a half. However, the tone was already set by the end of 1990 and the meetings of the Slovak and Czech representatives that were to follow until the fall of 1992 were inconclusive. Given these facts, more than hypothesizing on the possible solutions for a constitutional impasse,⁹⁴ it is legitimate to concentrate on the decisive phase of the accelerated Slovak drive for full emancipation, for it was seen as the most articulate proof of nationalism⁹⁵ of an immature nation which, once again, put

⁹² Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Break-Up* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

⁹³ Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, p.11.

⁹⁴ Jan Rychlík, “The Possibilities for Czech-Slovak Compromise, 1989-1992,” In *Irreconcilable Differences? Explaining Czechoslovakia’s Dissolution*, eds. Michael Kraus and Allison Stanger (London-Boulder-New York-Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2000). Rychlík concludes that, until the parliamentary elections in June of 1992, the Czechs clung excessively to legalistic formulas. After the parliamentary elections in 1992, when Slovaks politicians began speaking of a confederation, there were no incentives for the Czechs to face the emerging risks to foreign policy in regard to the situation of the Magyar minority in Slovakia and to discussions about the fate of the Gabčíkovo water dam (discussed in the following chapter). *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁹⁵ Petr Pithart, “Před a za zrcadlem.” [In Front of and Behind the Mirror], *Střední Evropa* XI, no.62 (1996), p.79. Pithart states: “Today, there is a paradox in both our, yet

its struggle for national identity above the challenges of democratic transformation and pending social and economic problems.⁹⁶

The situation in 1991-1992 was hardly new. In the 1930s, the Slovak autonomists, represented mainly by the Catholics, clashed with the Slovak-Protestant supporters of the unitary state, and, again, in the second half of the 1960s, when the Slovaks allegedly cared more about the federation than about the political and socio-economic reform of the communist system.⁹⁷ In comparison with the resurrected Slovak drive for sovereignty in the early 1990s, there were two important differences. First, the confessional split did not play a significant role as the majority of Slovaks, with the exception of the KDH electorate, kept their religious affinities distinct from political preferences. Second, in contrast to the 1930s and to the period 1945-1946, Slovak ambitions did not stop with autonomy, but were extended to sovereignty and potentially to independence. Since the majority of Czech political parties and representatives,

not the same nationalisms, and it is that Slovakia still has a chance to eventually become a political nation. Czechs can only remain Czechs in their house: there is no upper level of civicness in their nationally homogeneous population. This chance has sailed away and this is why there is still something to wish for Slovakia.”

⁹⁶ This perspective can also be extrapolated from Gil Eyal's *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: from Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp.190-196. See the reference to Vaculík and the idea of Czechoslovakia without Slovakia that “a speedy split was encouraged because the democratic and liberal Czechs have nothing to do with the nationalist Slovaks. Maybe, when the Slovaks had their new state, they would be able to overcome their historical complexes and attain the same level as Czechs.” Ibid, p.196.

⁹⁷ Lubomír Kopeček, *Demokracie, diktatury a politické stranictví na Slovensku* [Democracies, Dictatorships and Political Partisanship in Slovakia] (Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury: Praha, 2006), p.135. For an example of the previous transfer of this contested perspective from Czech political science to western scholarship see the citation from the book by Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulbricht K. Preuss, *Institutional design in post-communist societies: rebuilding the ship at sea* (Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998): “The 1968 vision of socialism with a human face was entirely a Czech, not Slovak phenomenon.” Ibidem, p.264.

whether past or present, never gave up on the idea of the preservation of Czech dominance over the state and under all circumstances appeared as a united bloc *vis-à-vis* the divided Slovaks,⁹⁸ pivotal to the fate of the federation in the 1990s were the attitudes and stances of Slovak political parties. The mainstream of the VPN followed its pro-federalist sympathies and supported the preservation of the common state. In retrospect, they bore some resemblance to the unitarists in the Czechoslovak Republic in the 1920s and 1930s and the centralists in communist Czechoslovakia in the 1950s, 1960s and the late 1980s. On the other side stood the sovereignists, represented until the spring of 1992 by the SNS and the politically insignificant yet visible radicals. Christian Democrats, who had frightened themselves by the resonance of the statement made by their chairman in the fall of 1990 regarding Slovakia's ultimate goals, after some maneuvering which cost them to split, decided to follow a pro-federalist course until the end of the common state.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the press created the appearance of Slovaks as frantic nationalists and anti-Semites who were fond of the wartime Slovak Republic. One of its consequences was the association of Slovaks with endemic anti-Semitism by Ríta Klímová, the Ambassador of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in Washington, in an article

⁹⁸ It is quite unique to find the term "blackmail" linked to the Czech political elites for it had been more frequently attributed to their Slovak counterparts. Oskar Krejčí, the Czech political scientist, referred to the presence of both cultural-psychical and ideological *Czechoslovakisms* that resulted in a stylized nationalism "which is not rooted in ideological persuasion but looks for arguments in a power game related to the future design of the federation: it is more a business of blackmailing than a doctrine." See Oskar Krejčí, "Český nacionalismus a separatizmus" [Czech Nationalism and Separatism], *Bratislavské listy* (Bratislava Letters) IV (1991), p.45.

⁹⁹ Due to the pro-federalist stances of the KDH, the VPN and the DS, a proposal by a pro-national wing within the KDH on forming a Grand Coalition with the newly-emerged HZDS, was rejected in the Council of KDH in August of 1991. From then on, the initiative in national emancipation passed on to HZDS. Hykisch, *Ako chutí politika...*, p.192.

for *Working Woman*, which was eventually published in *Svět obrazů* (The World of Pictures; the Czech journal).¹⁰⁰ Slovak politicians and public audiences were outraged and claimed that Klímová be recalled from her posting for she could not represent the Slovaks with such an attitude. In addition to it, the different national memories were illustrated by the battle of the two historic anniversaries. During his visit in Bratislava on March 14 of 1991, President Havel was insulted by some participants at a meeting of the Party of Slovak National Unity (*Strana Slovenskej národnej jednoty* - SNJ) he allegedly visited out of curiosity.¹⁰¹ The event commemorated the birth of the wartime Slovak Republic. On October 28, on the occasion of the 73rd anniversary of the creation of Czechoslovakia, another commemorative event was organized by the pro-federal VPN, the Democratic Party and the Magyar Independent Initiative, which did not have wide popular support. Havel was pelted with eggs and left the meeting. This,

¹⁰⁰ See the response of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jiří Dienstbier to the interpellation by the MP of the KDH Imrich Volek. While admitting the use of “some idioms and expressions of multiple meanings” in reference to Klímová, Dienstbier replied that the presence of anti-Semitism in both republics should not be underestimated. See “Odpověď místopředsedy vlády ČSFR a ministra zahraničních věcí ČSFR Jiřího Dienstbiera na interpelaci podanou poslancem Sněmovny národů I[mrichem]. Volkem [Reply by the Deputy Prime Minister of the ČSFR and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ČSFR Jiří Dienstbier to the interpellation raised by the Deputy of the House of the Nations I[mrich] Volek]. *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna* [The Common Czech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library], FS ČSFR 1990-1992, tlač 1136, www.psp.cz [Federální Shromáždění České a Slovenské Federativní Republiky 1990-1992 [Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, 1990-1992] [Print 1136].

¹⁰¹ Rychlík, p.171. On the condemnation of this act of rudeness and its negative effects on Slovak aspirations towards the rebuilding of the federation strictly by legal means see the article by Jerguš Ferko, “Medvedia služba od Hejslovákov” [The Quasi-Patriots’ Disservice], *Práca*, March 18, 1991. Hykisch admits the possibility that Havel’s visit to Bratislava on the eve of the anniversary was deliberate. Hykisch, p.151. The situation was already tense for on March 1, 1991 a proposal for the “Declaration of Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic” [Deklarácia o štátnej suverenite Slovenskej republiky] was published in *Literárny týždenník* and signed by several Slovak public figures. Ibid., pp.146-147.

understandably, offended the Czechs. A formal apology by Slovak politicians could hardly have reversed the feeling of humiliation on the Czech side that led to their conviction that further cohabitation with Slovaks was almost impossible.¹⁰²

Traditionally, the Czechs and international audiences showed a continuing tendency for viewing Slovak claims as “parochially fixated on symbolic grievances and national self-assertion.”¹⁰³ Yet, besides international invisibility, it was socio-economic aspects that had overshadowed the nationalist undertones.¹⁰⁴ Contrary to their coloration as nationalits, the majority of Slovaks was more concerned with socio-economic problems. In 1990, the economy, which in the late 1980s had modestly increased,¹⁰⁵ began to stagnate and decrease. With the collapse of the trading system among former communist countries within the framework of the COMECON (RVHP), Czechoslovakia lost the most important part of its eastern markets. Slovakia’s armaments industry, in particular, was affected by a massive reduction of its exports.¹⁰⁶ Following the liberalization of prices and the introduction of a market economy by the

¹⁰² See the article by Čestmír Kubík, “Luza a demokracie” [Mob and Democracy], *Svobodné slovo*, October 29, 1991. The author suggested that, after experiencing the shameful and humiliating behaviour of the Slovak mob, in the next year the Czechs should celebrate this anniversary alone. For the incident and its consequences see Rychlík, pp. 171 and 209.

¹⁰³ Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics...*, p.100.

¹⁰⁴ See the commentary by Igor Cibula “Klíč v pražském centre” [The Key is in Prague], *Národní obroda*, November, 11, 1990. Industrial parts made in Slovakia were still being assembled in the Czech Republic, which made the Slovak economy less profitable.

¹⁰⁵ In 1987, investments per capita were 11,350 Czechoslovak crowns in Slovakia and 11,415 in the Czech Republic. Spending was 18,185 and 19,805 crowns. Jozef Žatkuliak, “La société slovaque en novembre 1989,” *L’Europe central : du bloc soviétique à l’Union européenne (1989-1999)*, p.15.

¹⁰⁶ See the article “Dôsledky konverzie” [The Consequences of the Conversion], *Národní obroda*, April 16, 1991. Between 80-90% of export trading companies were based in the Czech Republic. Žatkuliak, “La société slovaque en novembre 1989...,” p.15.

federal Minister of Finance Václav Klaus, the price of energy, oil and food increased.¹⁰⁷

A unilateral decision made by federal authorities that Czechoslovakia would no longer export arms, a backbone of Slovak trade exports, represented a major blow to the Slovak armaments industry concentrated in and around the cities of Martin, Dubnica nad Váhom and Považská Bystrica in North-West and Central Slovakia.¹⁰⁸

Bad news for those who believed in the preservation of social order and promised job opportunities¹⁰⁹ was the non-confidence vote in the government led by Vladimír Mečiar on April 23, 1991. The Slovak National Council then appointed his rival, rational and unpopular Ján Čarnogurský, as the Prime Minister of Slovakia. Mečiar and Milan Kňažko decided to secede from the VPN and created a new political subject – *Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko* (The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia – HZDS) on April 27. The HZDS remained the strongest political party in Slovakia even after its

¹⁰⁷ Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition...*, pp.227-229. Unemployment in Slovakia rose from 119,500 in 1991 to 307,400 (12%) in the first quarter of 1992 in comparison with 4% in the Czech Republic. Toma and Kováč, *Slovakia from Samo to Dzurinda*, pp.262-263.

¹⁰⁸ In the period 1976-1988, production of the Slovak armament industry reached 144 billion crowns (approximately 7.2 billion USD), of which 83 billions (4.15 billion USD) was exported. The loss after 1988-1989 was 70 billion crowns (3.5 billion USD). See Jozef Zatkuliak, "Slovakia in the Period of Normalization and Expectation of Changes (1969-1989)," *Slovak Sociological Review* 30, no.3 (1998), pp.251-268. Stein recognizes the impact of this decision on social consequences in Slovakia but he sees it as a necessity. Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia...*, pp.99-100 and 305. Innes, however, juxtaposes the ethics of Václav Havel and Jiří Dienstbier on the inexcusability of the export of arms as a relic of antiquated Soviet militarism with the wealth the Slovak armament industry had produced in the 1970s and 1980s as an oft-heard Czech resentment. Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁹ Following the collapse of the communist market and the dramatic rise in unemployment in Slovakia, Mečiar visited Russia in March of 1991, hoping to make trade agreements and possibly to build a Russian-Slovak Commercial Bank based in Bratislava. He promised to create 100,000 jobs in Slovakia. Later on, he was blamed for making promises he could not have kept. In the spring of 1991, the Czech Prime Minister Petr Pithart also visited Moscow with a similar economic agenda. See the article "Obchoduje sa bez predsudkov" [Trading Is Supposed To Be Done Without Prejudice], *Národná obroda*, April 17, 1991.

failure to create a coalition government in the fall of 1998.¹¹⁰ This still did not mean that Mečiar suddenly became a defiant anti-federalist. His shift from being a firm supporter of the Slovak and Czech *Compromise* on equal terms, to his newly-acquired image of an indefatigable defender of Slovak national interests, could not have been overlooked either.¹¹¹

In the fall of 1991, President Havel decided to take the initiative in an attempt to keep the Czechs and Slovaks together by the adoption of a Law on Referendum, which was supposed to be organized if the political parties failed to reach a consensus on the further existence of the federation.¹¹² At that moment, however, it was not Havel and the Federal Assembly, both having already been at odds, who were in control of the negotiations. The initiative passed to the National Councils of the Slovak and Czech Republics. Following their previous meetings, the delegations of the Councils met in Mílovy, Moravia, on February 3–8, 1992. The Chairpersons of the ČNR and SNR, Dagmar Burešová and František Mikloško, agreed to sign an agreement which formulated the principles upon which the federal constitution was expected to be

¹¹⁰ The split within the VPN began on March 5, 1991, when a platform VPN – ZDS (*Za demokratické Slovensko* – For a Democratic Slovakia) led by Mečiar and Kňažko emerged. See the collection of newspaper extracts and documents with comments *Dejiny píšu ľudia: 15 rokov HZDS* [History is Written by the People: 15 Years of the HZDS] (Bratislava: ES-HZDS, 2006), p.3. The major reason for the split was the argument that the VPN abandoned its original program *Šanca pre Slovensko* [A Chance for Slovakia] adopted in April 1990 and became willing to accept the centralist model of federation suggested by Prague.

¹¹¹ See Innes's characterization that "Mečiar's political skill lays in his ability to position himself as the champion of all Slovaks." Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p.56.

¹¹² *Zákon číslo 490/1991 Zb. o spôsobe vykonávania referenda* [Law on the Execution of the Referendum no.490/1991], www.zbierka.sk (Electronic Register of Laws). According to polls held in the fall of 1991, 78% of the Czechs and 66% of the Slovaks supported the call for a referendum if such a situation arose. Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict...*, p.127.

based.¹¹³ On February 12, the proposal failed to pass in the Chairmanship of the Slovak National Council by one vote on the basis that it still preserved the supremacy of federal competences over those given to the republics.¹¹⁴

The defeat of the Mílovy agreement in the Chairmanship of the SNR was a clear signal to both sides. On March 11, Burešová and Mikloško decided to leave further negotiations to the winners of the parliamentary elections to be held in June.¹¹⁵ On the Slovak side, the split within the SNR over the acceptance of the agreement from Mílovy was the last straw for the national wing which had been emerging within the KDĽ since August of 1991.¹¹⁶ Disappointed with the reluctant attitude of Čarnogurský and his inner circle towards Slovak sovereignty, Ján Klepáč and Viliam Oberhauser formed the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement (*Slovenské kresťansko-demokratické hnutie – SKDH*). At its constitutive congress held in the city of Zvolen in Central Slovakia, Klepáč was explicit about not retreating from taking the decisive step towards Slovak independence.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ See *Návrh zmluvy o zásadách štátoprávneho usporiadania spoločného štátu* [Treaty Proposal on the Principles of the Organization of the Common State]. Jozef Beňa, “Súčasno historicko-právne poznámky k zániku ČSFR a ku konštituovaniu Slovenskej republiky a Českej republiky” [Current Historical and Legal Remarks to the Creation of the Slovak and Czech Republics]. *Acta Facultatis Iuridicae Universitatis Comenianae* XV (1993), p.32.

¹¹⁴ For a firsthand account on the reasons for the rejection of the treaty by the Chairmanship of the Slovak National Council see Anton Hykisch, *Ako chutí politika...*, pp.254-259. The opponents of the treaty argued that, following the Orders/Ordinances (*Nariadenia*) of the SNR nos. 190 and 197/1991, the treaty was expected to be concluded between the Slovak and Czech Republics, not between the peoples (*ľud*) of the two.

¹¹⁵ Wolf sarcastically pointed out that Burešová with Mikloško “agreed on disagreement” (“domluvili se, že se nedomluvili”; Czech). Wolf, *Po druhé a naposled...*, p.55.

¹¹⁶ Hykisch, pp.190-193.

¹¹⁷ Klepáč proclaimed that “The time is ripe” and that “It is our duty to work in such a way as to, in case of a referendum, the majority of the population of Slovakia will

As of March 1992, Slovak and Czech politicians were waiting for the results of the parliamentary elections that were to take place on June 6 and 7. In Slovakia alone, forty political subjects participated in the elections with the following results (percentage and seats):

(Table 3: The June 1992 parliamentary elections in ČSFR)

Party	SNR	Chamber of the People	Chamber of Nations (FZ)
HZDS	37.26 - 74	33.53 - 24	33.80 - 33
SDE	14.7 - 29	14.44 - 10	14.04 - 13
KDH	8.88 - 18	8.96 - 6	8.81 - 8
SNS	7.93 - 15	9.39 - 6	9.35 - 9
MKDH	7.42 - 14	7.37 - 5	7.39 - 7 ¹¹⁸

Party	ČNR	Chamber of the People	Chamber of Nations (FZ)
ODS-KDS	29.8 - 76	33.9 - 48	33.4 - 37 ¹¹⁹

support a sovereign, independent and democratic Slovak Republic.” See the article “Ján Klepáč: Cesta prosbopisov musí skončiť” [Ján Klepáč: The Making of Petitions Must Stop!], *Koridor*, March 31, 1992.

¹¹⁸ Data excerpted from the *Koridor*, June 8, 1992. The number of seats comes from Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, pp.274-275. For the list of the political parties, their numbers and short extracts from their political program see *Práca*, May 28, 1992.

¹¹⁹ Three political parties with electorates in both parts of the state were *Združenie pre republiku - Republikánska strana Československa* (The Assembly for the Republic- the Republican Party of Czechoslovakia – SPR-RSČ[S]), *Občanská demokratická unie* (Civic Democratic Union – ODÚ) and *Hnutí za samosprávnou demokraci - Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko* (Movement for a Self-Governing Democracy/Society for Moravia and Silesia – HSD-SMS). Complete election results can be accessed on www.statistics.sk (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Election statistics, Election to the Parliaments, Election to the Slovak Parliament in 1992).

In Slovakia, the HZDS, which won 74 seats, was in a position to control, together with the Nationalists (15 seats) and, depending on case, also with the Party of the Democratic Left (29 seats), the Slovak National Council, where a 3/5 majority (90 votes) in a 150-member assembly was required for passing a law. In the Czech Republic the election was decisively won by Václav Klaus and his Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana – ODS*), which coalesced with the Christian Democratic Union (*Křesťansko-demokratická unie – KDU*), the Christian Democratic Party (*Křesťansko-demokratická strana – KDS*) and the Civic Democratic Alliance (*Občanská demokratická aliance – ODA*). The winners dominated the National Councils and, with the HZDS, also both chambers of the Federal Assembly. The heroes of the 1989 revolution, the VPN and OH, lost the power they had gained in 1989 and 1990. From then on, it was the *Realpolitik* of the “new state builders,”¹²⁰ not the ‘anti-politics’ of former dissidents, which was important.¹²¹ Leaders of the HZDS and ODS, Vladimír Mečiar and Václav Klaus, had the fate of Czechoslovakia in their hands.¹²² On July 17, the Declaration of the Slovak National Council on the Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic¹²³ was adopted by a majority in the Slovak National Council.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ The metaphor comes from Innes’s book, p. 220.

¹²¹ Schwarz, pp.207-209 and 215-217. For the discourse on the concept of ‘anti-politics’ in Czechoslovakia by Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: From the Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia*, pp.59-92. To simplify the idea, the author seems to suggest that there were two directions in Czech politics represented by the dissidents and monetarists (technocrats). What made them allies was their distrust of the Communists.

¹²² *The Globe and Mail*’s headline article “Slovaks’ vote for separation imperils Havel’s re-election” published on June 8, 1992, recognized the risk of the eventual separation before the negotiations on the shape of the federation, which was still an option, could have taken place.

¹²³ Earlier versions of the Declaration submitted in March and November of 1991 were unsuccessful. The latter draft prepared and delivered during the Plenary Session of the SNR on November 8, 1991 by Anton Hykisch (KDH), envisaged Slovak sovereignty as

Consequently, Václav Havel resigned as President of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in order to be able to run for President of the Czech Republic. Meanwhile, the meetings of Mečiar and Klaus in Brno, Praha, Bratislava, and particularly in Jihlava on October 6, helped to cut the Gordian knot of the long-lasting and painful negotiations.¹²⁵ For the HZDS, the idea of a federation in the summer of 1992 was over, though they still admitted a chance for a confederation or some form of a looser union.¹²⁶ This was unacceptable to Klaus and the ODS, supported by the ODA and the Christian Democrats. The end of the federation became a fact by the adoption of the Constitutional Law No. 542 on the Dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic on November 25, 1992.¹²⁷

the milestone and pillar for Slovak political maturity. Hykisch, pp.150 and 218.

¹²⁴ See “Deklarácia Slovenskej národnej rady o zvrchovanosti Slovenskej republiky,” *Slovenská národná rada. X volebné obdobie* (The Slovak National Council: the 10th Election Term] (Bratislava: Kancelária Slovenskej národnej rady, 1992), p.19. The KDH voted against the adoption and its image was and remained as the party which stood against the independent Slovak Republic. The initiative for completing Slovak national emancipation thus passed on Vladimír Mečiar and the HZDS. Hykisch, p.312.

¹²⁵ Mečiar refuted the idea of immediate Slovak separation following the outcome of the elections. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007. See Augustín Marián Húska, *Svedectvo o štátotvornom príbehu: Spomínanie a rozjímanie nad slovenským a českým štátotvorným údelom* [Testimonial on the Story on the Formation of the State: Remembering and Contemplating the Fate of the Slovak and Czech State-Forming Mission] (Bratislava: SCM, 2008), p.139. In this autobiographical summary of the years 1990-1992, the economist and prognosticator Húska, who as the Deputy Chairman of the HZDS was also a member of the Slovak team of negotiators, praises Klaus’s professionalism. *Ibid.*, pp.136-138.

¹²⁶ Rychlík, pp.280-281. The Slovak position was still the same. National republics were to adopt their constitutions, which would enable them to establish and maintain their legal personality in regard to international law. Húska, p.17. Only then would they delegate some of their competences to the common institutions. This was unacceptable to the Czech representatives.

¹²⁷ See *Ústavný zákon č.542/1992 Zb. o zániku Českej a Slovenskej Federatívnej Republiky*. Accessible at www.zbierka.sk. The law is very short and concise. In nine articles it stipulates the passing of the state executive and legislative powers to the republics as of January 1, 1993.

Whereas the politicians were already looking ahead, nostalgia spread among ordinary people in both republics, notably those from mixed families and there were plenty of them. The sunset of the common state was accompanied by the automobile accident of Alexander Dubček, once a symbol of the “Czechoslovak Spring.” He was severely injured while travelling from Bratislava to the opening of the winter session of the Federal Assembly on September 1, 1992. Paradoxically, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic was adopted by the Slovak National Council on the same date.¹²⁸ Dubček died in a Prague hospital on November 7, on the 75th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the former major holiday across the communist bloc. Dubček’s death symbolized the end of an era. Had he not died, he might have become a central figure in Slovakia, similar to Havel in the Czech Lands, to represent the unknown Slovakia internationally.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ The official date of its adoption is September 1, 1992, which is a national holiday in Slovakia (*Deň Ústavy Slovenskej republiky*). See *Ústava Slovenskej republiky, č.460/1992 Zb.* Accessible at www.zbierka.sk. The Constitution’s Preamble became its most criticized part for it starts with “We, the Slovak nation”, which, allegedly, accentuates the national principle over the civic one. See Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites...*, p. 131. The author picked up the first three sentences in the Preamble that refer to the historical legacy of Great Moravia and Sts. Cyril and Methodius. The preamble, however, continues with three other references to the equality of all citizens, regardless of their nationality, democratic cooperation with other democratic states and to the democratic form of the government, spiritual and cultural development, as well as economic prosperity for all citizens. Milan Čič, a constitutional lawyer and legislator himself, refused the insinuations on the missing civic principle in the Constitution in his presentation to the Council of Europe. His explanation was accepted. Rudolf Schuster, *Rozhovory s Milanom Čičom* (Košice: Pressprint, 2001), p.103.

¹²⁹ Michal Kováč, who became President of the Slovak Republic in February of 1993, opined that though Dubček had not been offered the function, he would have probably accepted it. See the interview with Michal Kováč “Nepripravovali sme sa na vznik samostatného štátu II,” [We Did Not Prepare Ourselves for the Creation of An Independent State; Part Two], *História* 6 (2006), p.38.

4.5 Famous last words that never were

In his March report of 1949, the British Ambassador to Czechoslovakia stated “that the incompatibilities between the two people...have never been resolved, were revived by the events of war, and are unlikely to be smoothed out by the policy of the present Communist leaders in Prague.”¹³⁰ In June of 1992, Ladislav Mňačko, the Slovak writer in exile, who hardly can be accused of being a nationalist, observed:

A Czech with an average education knows nothing about Slovakia... A Czech has the feeling of civilizational superiority and is not aware of the basic things that burden our life. The Slovak nation has an entirely different mentality...a different historical experience; it finds itself in an entirely different economic, political and cultural situation... As long as the Czech citizen fails to take those matters into account, he will live with an unknown nation without understanding its complexes. The Slovaks are a minority nation in the Republic and are hypersensitive to Czech ignorance and nationalism. This is not only one, but one of the principal reasons of the contemporary crisis.¹³¹

The two statements revealed the fact that the mental outlook of the Slovaks and Czechs remained, in essence, the same from 1918 up to the collapse of the joint state. These differences peaked in the period 1990-1992, which was too a short time for both nations to finally get to know each other. During the seventy-four years of its existence as a “laboratory for social change”¹³² Czechoslovakia made significant accomplishments in the spheres of industrialization, social welfare, healthcare, and culture; it even reached a certain degree of rather superficial mutuality engineered and nurtured by the communist

¹³⁰ František Vnuk, “Slovak-Czech Relations in Post-War Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948,” *Slovak Politics: Essays on Slovak History in Honour of Joseph M. Kirschbaum*, ed. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum. (Cleveland and Rome: Slovak Institute, 1983), pp.351-352.

¹³¹ Ladislav Mňačko in *Literární noviny* on June 27, 1992. Mňačko criticized the cult of personality and dictatorial methods of governing in the 1960s. In 1967 he emigrated to Israel, returned to Czechoslovakia, and emigrated again in 1969. He lived in Austria and, after the fall of Communism, in Prague until his death in February of 1994.

¹³² Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-1992: A Laboratory for Social Change* (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1996).

regime. Yet the shadows of the each nation's centrality never vanished from the minds of its citizens.¹³³ Three years of feverishly conducted negotiations under pressure falling on major actors from all sides, could barely have repaired what had been spoiled or neglected for seven decades. In the 1990s, it was almost exclusively the Slovaks who had been branded as nationalists sabotaging the continuation of the joint state and its future in pursuit of their archetypal goals. Looking to the common past and more distant periods, the presence of nationalism across the Morava River should not have been dismissed either. Whereas on the side of the Czechs, who had built pre-communist Czechoslovakia as a continuation of their medieval statehood broken in 1618-1620, and with Czech political and economic dominance preserved also during Communism, nationalism appeared, as "conservative and centripetal" [vis-à-vis the Slovak claims for autonomy, authentic federation and sovereignty]. On the Slovak side it took the shape of being "resistant and centrifugal" [towards any form of unitarism and political and cultural Czechoslovakism].¹³⁴ The slogans "Let's Govern Ourselves" and "Let Them Go," which had been used in public meetings and in the media from 1990 to 1992 so

¹³³ On the impact of Communism on the modernisation of Slovakia and Slovaks see Paal Sigurd Hilde, "Slovák som a Slovák budem" [I am Slovak and Slovak I Shall Be], *Slovakia XXXVII*, nos.68-69 (2003), pp.28-56. Hilde stresses the continuity and resilience of nationalism in Slovakia evolving 'despite', 'through' and 'due' to Communism. *Ibid.*, pp.40-48.

¹³⁴ Frédéric Wehrlé, *Le Divorce Tchéco-Slovaque: Vie et mort de la Tchécoslovaquie 1918-1992*, p.268. The Slovak writer and journalist Mieroslav Hysko at the 1st Congress of Slovak Writers (May 27-28, 1963) in Bratislava reminded its participants about the abuse of the idea of Slovak bourgeois nationalism in the 1950s and its re-emergence in the 1960s. Hysko equated Slovak "bourgeois nationalism" with "bourgeois Czechoslovakism." On one occasion Hysko sarcastically said: "Do not be afraid, comrades, the Czech comrades will take care of Czech nationalism themselves." Elena Londáková, "Slovenský kultúrny pohyb v 60. rokoch. Jeho miesto v dozrievaní česko-slovenskej spoločnosti". In *Predjarie*, p.287.

frequently until they became *vox populi*, fittingly encapsulated the substance of the two incompatible nationalisms.¹³⁵

The inability (from March 1990 to February 1992), the reluctance (from February to March 1992) and the hesitance (from June to October 1992) to reach a consensus by the two sides, thus has to be carefully reconsidered.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, many Czech and Slovak citizens and several politicians on both sides wished for the continuation of the joint state. In the summer of 1992, when the split was imminent, 49% of Czechs and 63% of Slovaks wanted Czechoslovakia to continue due to its relatively high standard of living and social stability in a changing and unpredictable international environment.¹³⁷ The decisive nationalist card was played by intellectuals on both sides from the spring of 1990 onward. In contrast with 1918, the outcome was the disintegration of the state.

Intellectuals, who had amplified the dormant and reawakened national sentiments and resentments in the early 1990s, were not enough to tear Czechoslovakia apart. There had been keen public audiences, too. If both societies had eventually failed to understand each other's concerns, it is no wonder that reaching a consensus on three major levels – the president¹³⁸ and the Federal Assembly, both National Councils and,

¹³⁵ Rychlík, p.171 (*Vládníme si sami* [Slovak] vs. *Ať jsi jdou* [Czech]).

¹³⁶ For the rejection of Slovak claims for a looser federation in the spring of 1991 by the Chairperson of the Czech National Council Dagmar Burešová see Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa...*, pp.175-176. For Slovak reactions see the article “Nemůže a nechce” [It Cannot and Does Not Want To], *Slovenský denník*, October 30, 1991. For the Czech counter-argument by Miroslav Macek from the ODS on the “Slovak state insured with the Czech Insurance Company” see Rychlík, p.282. On a similar argument used by Václav Klaus during his negotiations with Mečiar after the 1990 parliamentary elections see Wolf, *Po druhé a naposled*, p.71.

¹³⁷ Beňa, “Súčasno historicko-právne poznámky...,” p.37. Wolf, p.91.

¹³⁸ On the one hand, Havel showed verbal empathy towards the Slovaks and their national sensitivities and condemned the approach “Ať si jdou” (Let them go) prevalent

eventually, between the leaders of decisive political parties – failed as well. The latter lifted the banners of national interests in both republics. The rapid split negotiated by politicians against the will of the majority, which still followed the ‘path dependency,’¹³⁹ was the best thing that could have happened.¹⁴⁰ If the state was to continue with all the persisting problems and feuds between its two constituent nations, its split would have potentially been less “velvety.”¹⁴¹

The breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1992 was compared by some to the *Compromise* reached by Austria and Hungary in 1867. To the sovereigntists represented by the HZDS, the SNS and the SKDH on one hand and the ODS and ODA on the other,¹⁴² the negotiated division of the state, indeed, might have appeared as a Slovak-Czech *Compromise*.¹⁴³ This positively oriented, yet minimalist, approach, fails to take

on the Czech side. Stein, p.140. On the other hand, the politics of the *Hrad* (The Castle) led to his isolation in Slovak and Czech practical politics. Rychlík, pp.179-180.

Schwarz, pp.216-217. “The role of President Havel in the constitution-making process was complex, and possibly counterproductive.” Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulbricht K. Preuss, *Institutional design in post-communist societies: rebuilding the ship at sea*, p.73.

¹³⁹ See Margaret Levi’s description of the term as “that once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice.” Cited by Tim Haughton in *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.7.

¹⁴⁰ For the opinion that the split of Czechoslovakia following the decision made by the leaders of HZDS and ODS, Vladimír Mečiar and Václav Klaus, without a referendum was illegitimate, see Vladimír Srb and Tomáš Veselý, “Ako to bolo s rozdelením štátu: Posledné tri roky česko-slovenskej federácie” [How the Split of the State Happened: The Last Three Years of the Czecho-Slovak Federation], *Nové Slovo*, October 23-30, 2001. The article is a summary of the study by the two authors *Rozdělení Československa* [The Split of Czechoslovakia] (Bratislava: Karpaty-Infopress, 2004).

¹⁴¹ Schwarz, *Česi a Slováci...*, p. 233.

¹⁴² Mečiar referred to the ODA led by Jan Kalvoda and Pavel Bratinka as the party based “on the principle of few personalities, unitaristic, and from the beginning openly hostile to [his] government.” Stein, p.91. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

¹⁴³ Beňa, p.31. Igor Cibula, “Rakúsko-Uhorsko ako vzor?” [Austria-Hungary As An Example?], *Slobodný piatok*, September 27, 1992.

into account the primary purpose of any compromise, which is to reach a consensus while concessions are to be made by each party in order to *preserve* the state. This was hardly the case of a state splitting into two separate parts. Closer to reality were those who viewed the negotiations on the authentic↔functional federation negatively as a missed chance to reach the Slovak – ‘Czechoslovak’ Compromise. This did not happen, for the ‘Czechoslovaks’ in the Czech Lands, at the moment of truth, turned their backs on the obnoxious Slovaks. Those among the Czechs, who never accepted the idea of a dismembered Czechoslovakia and emotionally remained ‘Czechoslovaks’ in their minds, may have felt its legacy as a phantom pain in the amputated ‘infected leg.’¹⁴⁴ As for the remaining minority of ‘Czechoslovaks’ in Slovakia, they also had difficulty embracing the split and this caused a rift within Slovak society, not that much different from what had existed in the periods 1918-1938 and 1939-1945.¹⁴⁵

Moreover, geopolitical ramifications of the processes that happened in the early 1990s were opposite to that in the second half of the 19th century. While in 1867 Austria, under the pressure of its defeat by Prussia, wanted to keep Hungary in its orbit, and she, afraid of the impact of Panslavism among her Slavic nationalities and Russia as their patron, gladly accepted the offer, the Czechs in 1992, did not need the Slovak “troublemakers” anymore. Confident of their social maturity and economic superiority, though hurt by the alleged Slovak ingratitude for their civilizational mission, the Czechs headed towards the West that had emerged victorious in the Cold War.¹⁴⁶ Slovaks, with

¹⁴⁴ “Theirs [Czechs’] would be a ‘Czechoslovakia without Slovakia,’ namely the civil society that intellectuals craved so much, and in which the Slovak side was too immature to participate.” Eyal, *The Origins of Post-Communist Elites...*, p.196.

¹⁴⁵ Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, “Slovensko-československé vyrovnanie” [The Slovak-Czechoslovak Compromise], *Kultúra* no 2 (2001), pp.5-6.

¹⁴⁶ Eyal, p.196.

their ongoing internal divisions and stigma of being nationalists, were left to their fate as outsiders.¹⁴⁷ After all, they got what they wanted and on top of that their share of the credit for a peaceful partition. The breakup of Czechoslovakia demonstrated that *Realpolitik* once again had won over political ideas and legal concepts in their purest and transcendent forms, which were not worth further efforts of political elites and sacrifice by ordinary citizens, whereas the risks linked to an uncertain future were.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Húska viewed the process of the internal split among the Slovaks as the continuing struggle between the two main streams in Slovak politics - emancipation and anti-emancipation. *Svedectvo o štátotvornom príbehu...*, p.8.

¹⁴⁸ Petr Pithart, *Po devětaosmdesátém: Kdo jsme? Mezi vzpomínkami and reflexí. Texty z let 1992-1996* [After 1989: Who Are We? Between Recollections and Reflection. Writings From the Years 1992-1998] (Bratislava-Brno: Kalligram-Doplněk, 1998), p.181. See Mináč's bitter statement in 1990 which countered Masaryk's classic idea (States live on the same principles upon which they had emerged): "Neither state nor political movements live by those ideas upon which they had emerged. This is only a moralization and, perhaps, a moral presumption. In life and historical reality will last the one who can adapt himself to his ideas or despite them." See Viliam Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády. Gustáv Husák prehovoril* (Bratislava: Tatrapress, 1991), p.113.

CHAPTER 5
POLITICAL PARTIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE INDEPENDENT
SLOVAK REPUBLIC: THE RIFT, 1994-1997

5.1 Starting over: in the desert, but at the oasis

The birth of the independent Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993, was celebrated across the country. By contrast, Czechoslovakia's dismemberment was mourned by many western democracies.¹ Becoming a fully sovereign nation meant that the Slovaks now had to demonstrate their capacity for societal and economic advancement.² If it was to fail, there was no room for excuses anymore. Though the legislative, political and executive powers of the new state already existed, Slovakia needed a head of state.³ The outcome of this election opened a new chapter in Slovak politics.

The fundamental question that concerned external observers, as well as the Slovaks themselves, was whether they were about to start from point zero or whether there was anything that the new state inherited from its past, that it could possibly

¹ For two different views on the split see the articles "Czechoslovakia breaks up amid cheers and bonfires," by David Rocks, *The Globe and Mail*, January 1, 1993; and "Czechoslovakia Breaks in Two, To Wide Regret," by Stephen Engelberg, *The New York Times*, January 1, 1993.

² Zbigniew Brzeziński said to Vladimír Mečiar that the independent Slovakia would hardly last more than three years. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

³ The Slovak Republic was officially recognized in the first hours of its existence. The first countries with which it established diplomatic relations were Germany and Hungary. Miroslav Mojžita, *Kňazko, Demeš, Kňazko: Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993* (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), pp.106-107. For a summary of the reasons for the split and Slovak priorities in foreign and domestic politics see "Z novoročného príhovoru predsedu vlády SR Vladimíra Mečiara" [From the New Year's Address of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic V.M.], *Národná obroda*, January 4, 1993.

benefit from.⁴ According to Stanislav Kirschbaum, Communism as a product of European philosophy turned out to be a “model of political rule and politics that few analysts would consider European” and, as such, it “must...be treated differently from other historical periods in Slovakia.”⁵ Katherine Verdery warned against simplified perceptions of Communism, particularly in regard to Eastern Europe, as a model for totalitarianism, where “an autocratic, all-powerful state inexorably imposed its harsh will on its subjects” – an idea that dates back to the era of Ronald Regan and his view of the U.S.S.R. as an “evil empire.”⁶ In searching for the reasons for the collapse of Communism, Verdery and others focused primarily on its economic disadvantages and failures that led to the disruption of trust in communist societies except for small networks of families and friends.⁷ Still, it would be erroneous to deny that, besides its

⁴ See Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.4-5. The author points out that “blank canvasses, on which a new political reality can be painted without any of trace of what went before, do not exist”. He repeats the general perception in western scholarship in the 1990s that besides Communism, the Slovaks could have relied only on the legacies of Great Moravia and the wartime Slovak Republic. In the article “Slovensko v roku nula: Aby nevyšli predpovede zlých prorokov” [Slovakia in the Year Zero: May the Prophecies of False Prophets Remain Unfulfilled] by Igor Cibula, *Národná Obroda*, January 1, 1994, the author stresses the importance of internal reconciliation of Slovak society and good relations with the Czech Republic and Hungary.

⁵ Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, “European Roots: The Case of Slovakia.” In *Central European History and the European Union*, ed. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.20. The author does not specify what he means by a “different treatment.” In its general appearance, the idea seems to contradict Kirschbaum’s earlier arguments on viewing Slovak history in continuity, including all periods of Slovak history. See Chapter 1, p.17.

⁶ The three major commonalities inherited from Communism by post-communist societies in Eastern Europe were the mistrust of communist organizations, persistence of personal networks, and the overall post-communist disappointment. Marc Morjé Howard, “The Weakness of Post-Communist Civil Society,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no.1 (2002), pp.161-163.

⁷ Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 20. The perception is even older as it goes back to the MacCarthy era.

negative qualities, Communism partly succeeded in increasing the quality of material life which, in turn, resulted in the susceptibility of society to make compromises with the regime. Hence, a question that deserves particular attention is *what sort* of Communism had existed in Czechoslovakia from the late 1940s to the late 1980s?⁸

Communism did not completely destroy the presence of formal democracy in Czechoslovakia, even though it depended heavily on the principle of “democratic centralism” and the dominance of the KSČ in all aspects of life.⁹ Similarly, communist ideology failed to completely transform historical memory among the new generations of Slovak intellectuals and ordinary citizens. After the most brutal phase of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist era in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s,¹⁰ Czech and Slovak Communists tended to use the methods of convincing (*presvedčanie*) and engagement (*angažovanosť*) that went hand-in-hand with a degree of ideological indoctrination

⁸ On the hierarchical level, the communist regime relied on the National Front and the local National Committees that implemented the decisions taken by the central organs of the KSČ. On the other hand, only candidates compatible with the National Front’s and Committees’ criteria could appear on ballots. See John A. Scherpereel, *Governing the Czech Republic and Slovakia: Between State Socialism and the European Union* (Boulder-London: FirstForumPress, 2009), pp.43-44. The key to the problem lies on horizontal level, in which official politics and propaganda were to meet the daily needs of citizens, such as the public meetings of citizens presided over by the Communists (*verejné stranické schôdze*), the meetings of the employees of selected organizations without party affiliation, notably cultural and educational (*stranícke vzdelávanie*), and among civic associations. The information gathered by the subordinate party organs and passed on to the central organs in a reversed flow were the best indicators of the degree of compliance of citizens with party politics (they were called *zvodka* – a survey of crucial events that happened within the perimeter of regional party Committee). For an example of *zvodka* see n. 14.

⁹ The party cadres were to be built from below to the top, and the decisions of the party organs were liable from the top to below. See Chapter 3.

¹⁰ In terms of persecution and incursions into the lives of citizens, Communism in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s was not the same as it had been in the 1950s. Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 24, 2007.

which varied according to the segment of society and the period of time.¹¹ While it is true that Communism only pretended to be truly democratic, its effort to engage citizens into the building of a new society through the activities of the party organizations deserves a comprehensive examination as it helped to keep alive the memory of a pluralist political culture.¹² The reform movement in the second half of the 1960s accelerated the push for a *real* political pluralism. This promising advancement toward a pluralist society was stopped by ‘normalization,’ which, while politically oppressive and vindictive, still did not lead to the complete hibernation of societal life, including its political aspects.¹³ The signs of the revitalization of civic life and resistance against the regime became evident in the late 1970s through the activities of Charter 77 in the Czech Lands, and in the 1980s in Slovakia, with massive religious gatherings and activities of the environmentally-oriented groupings of Slovak youth.

¹¹ The strongest indoctrination had taken place from 1948 to 1963 and during the ‘normalization,’ the weakest in the periods 1963-1969 and from the mid-1980s to the fall of the communist regime in 1989. See Chapter 3 for details. For the institutional aspects of this process including the accentuation of the “progressive traditions of local governments and people’s self-administration” see Scherpereel, p.51.

¹² For the liberalization of political life in Slovakia in the mid-1960s during which discussions of the problems of society spread, often uncontrollably, from the party organs to workers, youth and civic associations see Stanislav Sikora, “Politický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967,” In *Predjarie. Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967*. Miroslav Londák, Stanislav Sikora, Elena Londáková (Bratislava, Veda: 2002), pp.122-129. For an “unstoppable” liberalization of culture in Slovakia during the same period see Elena Londáková, “Nástup slovenskej kultúry v 60-tych rokoch.” *Ibidem*, pp.278-291.

¹³ A positive minimum of normalization in Slovakia was that it became an industrialized country with political and educational (*vzdelanostné*) elites while the level of material life of a significant part of the population increased. Juraj Marušiak, “Slovenská spoločnosť a normalizácia” [Slovak Society and Normalization]. *Slovenská otázka dnes*, ed. László Szigeti (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2007), p.327.

This inner continuity, as well as the fact that citizens of Czechoslovakia were led, by the way of ideological and political indoctrination, to become *homines politici*,¹⁴ resulted into the rapid re-emergence of Slovak political parties in 1990. The Slovak National Party, established in March of 1990, could pride itself by its almost 120-year formal tradition. The Christian Democrats and their faction, the SKDH, were often associated within Slovak society and abroad as the heirs of the Slovak People's Party established in 1913.¹⁵ The Slovak Social Democratic Party also belonged to parties with a historical tradition.¹⁶ The Democratic Party, as the strongest among civic political parties in Slovakia, after it was joined by the Catholic electorate in the spring of 1946, was founded in September of 1944 during the Slovak National Uprising.¹⁷ Thus, major

¹⁴ To engage non-party members into the building of communist society solely on the basis of Marxist-Leninist perspective had an opposite effect as some of those who refused the invitation decided to remain non-engaged, such as the "Club of the Engaged Non-Party Members" (*Klub angažovaných nestraníků* – KAN; Czech). See the Document "Denní svodka čís.87, 22.4.1968 - Informace o ustavení Klubu angažovaných nestraníků" [Daily Summary No.87, April 22th, 1968 - Information on the Creation of the Club of the Engaged Non-Party Members].. Accessed on www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/svodky/ds-hos087-1968.pdf (Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů - Institute for Studies of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague).

¹⁵ Vladimír Krivý, "Gén HSLŠ. Regióny Slovenska a dedičstvo ich politickej mentality" [The Gene of the HSLŠ: Regions in Slovakia and the Legacy of Their Political Mentality], *Domino*, December 12, 1998. To the objection that the young representatives of the KDĽ still used the term 'national,' Hrušovský responded that "if we succeed in transforming the term 'national' into the terms 'patriotism' and 'fellowship,' then this shift may be a positive one." Interview with Pavol Hrušovský, the Chairman of the KDĽ "KDĽ nemôže byť kontinuitou HSLŠ" [The KDĽ Cannot Be the Continuation of the HSLŠ]. *Sme*, December 15, 1998.

¹⁶ Lubomír Kopeček, "Slovensko: Politický systém a jeho vývoj" [Slovakia: Political System and Its Evolution] In *Politické strany moderní Evropy* [Political Parties in Modern Europe], eds. Maxmilián Strmiska *et al.*, (Praha: Portál, 2005), p.456. The party was founded in 1905. Although it merged with the All-Hungarian Social Democratic Party, it preserved some autonomy on nationality issues. Peter A. Toma and Dušan Kováč, *Slovakia from Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001), pp.42-43.

¹⁷ Michal Barnovský, "Politické strany a hnutia na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-1948," In *Vývoj politických stran v českých zemích a Československu, 1861-2004, II. díl, období*

Slovak political parties in 1990 were to evolve from the point reached during the period 1944–1948 rather as completely new entities.¹⁸ The rapid fragmentation of the VPN between December of 1989 and February of 1990 and the return to the “trademarks” of the previously existing political organizations seem to support this assumption. But was the same true for political institutions?

Institutional design and institutional engineering are the terms frequently used in reference to post-communist states in a rather inconclusive manner as to whether they have been domestic, though mutated, originals, or foreign transplants.¹⁹ The Slovak sociologist Soňa Szomolányi claimed that the Slovaks had to build institutions from scratch, to which the British scholar Tim Haughton pointed out that, while at a disadvantage compared to the Czech Republic, “it would be wrong to suggest that Slovakia started from an institutional *tabula rasa*.”²⁰ Most recently, John A. Scherpereel suggested that what happened during the transitory period 1990-1992 was the reshaping of old institutions by the newly-emerging elites (former informal counter-elites).²¹ The opinions of Haughton and Scherpereel correspond with what can be deduced from a

1960-2004, eds. Jiří Malíř and Pavel Marek (Brno: Nakladatelství Doplněk, 2005), p.1190. I refer only to the political parties that were present at the end of the wartime Slovak Republic and postwar Czechoslovakia (1944-1948).

¹⁸ Kopeček recognizes six phases in the evolution of the Slovak political parties and of the political system in Slovakia that corresponded with the chronology of major events in the history of Czechoslovakia: 1) before 1918, 2) 1918 to 1938, 3) 1938-1945, 4) 1945-1948, 5) 1948-1989, 6) from 1990 onward. He symptomatically refers to the “renewal” (*obnova*) of the pluralist party system in Czechoslovakia after 1989. Lubomír Kopeček, “Slovensko: Politický systém a jeho vývoj”, pp.454 and 459.

¹⁹ Klaus von Beyme, “Institutional Engineering and Transition to Democracy,” In *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*.I, ed. Jan Zielonka (Oxford University Press, 2001), p.5.

²⁰ Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities...*, p.3. For the “point zero” opinion in institution-building in the Slovak Republic see also Petr Kopecký, *Parliaments in the Czech and Slovak Republics: Party Competition and Parliamentary Institutionalization* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p.237.

²¹ John A. Scherpereel, *Governing the Czech Republic and Slovakia...*, p.101.

broader historical perspective that goes back to the periods in Slovak history before Communism.

The formal tradition of the most important Slovak political institution,²² the Slovak National Council (SNR), was even longer than of the oldest Slovak political party, as it goes back to 1848 and 1849, when it had helped to mobilize the nationally-conscious Slovaks into an armed rebellion on the side of the Imperial Court in Vienna against the Kossuthists.²³ The SNR re-emerged for a short time in 1918, and then again during Christmas in 1943, when the Civic Bloc led by Slovak Protestant politicians Vavro Šrobár, Jozef Lettrich, Matej Josko and Ján Ursíny and the Communists under the leadership of Karol Šmidke, Gustáv Husák and Ladislav Novomeský, hatched their plans for the Slovak National Uprising. The SNR also played an important role in the Košice Government Program in April of 1945, but gradually lost its competences and influence as the main representative of the Slovak nation in 1945 and 1946 which was the period when the three Prague Agreements were signed.²⁴ During the 1950s and 1960s, the SNR served as an extended arm of the National Assembly in a unitary and

²² This account does not include Slovak organizations abroad, such as the Slovak League of America and the World Slovak Congress, nor the organizations of which Slovaks were parts, such as the Czecho-Slovak National Council established in Paris in 1916. As for the *Matica slovenská* (est. 1863), even though its activities prior to 1875 and than again in 1990 had political undertones, its primary goal was to serve as the keeper of historical memory and national culture.

²³ For details on the revolt and activities of the SNR see the seminal work by Slovak historian Daniel Rapant, *Slovenské povstanie roku 1848-1849* [The Slovak Uprising 1848-1849] (Turčiansky Sv. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1937). A historical tradition of medieval parliamentarism on the territory of present-day Slovakia is even longer, as the Hungarian Estates' Assembly was moved from Budapest (Buda) to Bratislava (Posonium, Pressburg, Pozsony) in 1536 after the invasion of the armies of the Ottoman Empire. It remained there until 1848. For details see Anton Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament v premenách času* (Kancelária Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky: Bratislava, 2008) (Introduction). See also www.nrsr.sk (National Council of the Slovak Republic, history).

²⁴ See Chapter 2, p.67.

Socialist (Communist) Czechoslovakia. The Constitutional Law No.143/1968 established the formal equality between the two nations, creating the bi-cameral Federal Assembly and the Czech National Council, yet the additional laws that were supposed to detail its general stipulations were not adopted. The Federal Government and the Federal Assembly, controlled by and responsible to the KSČ and its Central Committee, dominated the whole legislative process, as well as any other subsidiary activity on the executive level. It was not until March of 1990, when the reconstructed SNR took part in the renaming of the state and redistributing the competences between the federation and the republics. After the democratic parliamentary elections in June of 1992, the newly-elected SNR eventually became the decisive holder of legislative and political power in Slovakia. On the one hand, since there had been no Slovak political institution to represent the Slovak nation in the First Czechoslovak Republic, and the Slovak Parliament in the wartime Slovak Republic as well as the SNR in Communist Czechoslovakia were subjects to one-party discipline, to refer to the “re-emergence” of the SNR in post-communist Slovakia as a democratic entity seems to be peculiar. On the other hand, because of its long historical tradition and undisputed presence of democratic rules and procedures, both formal and informal, during its existence, such a perspective seems legitimate. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that in the spring of 1990 (March-June) the communist MPs were replaced by the deputies from the old-new and new political parties.²⁵

Politicians of various generations and backgrounds breathed life into the new state institutions and political parties and navigated Slovakia in the troubled waters of the

²⁵ The SNR was renamed the National Council of the Slovak Republic (*Národná rada Slovenskej republiky* – NR SR) as of October 1, 1992.

post-communist era. Therefore, the degree of their preparedness to take on these challenges was crucial. Among first scholars who turned her attention to the patterns of future changes in the behaviour of communist political elites in the late 1980s was Carol Skalnik Leff. She came to the conclusion that, whereas the number of Slovaks educated in Slovakia was growing, the number of the Czechs studying in Slovakia was stagnating. Thus, contrary to the expectation on the building of a “closely integrated binational society,” the educational “segregationist” (and potentially secessionist) tendency led to the emergence of a separate society built by Slovaks.²⁶ In the mid-1990s, Pavel Machonin and Zdeněk Krejčí suggested an optimistic tendency for the closing of the gap between the two republics on the basis of increasing number of intelligentsia and qualified workers, economic growth, and constantly increasing consumption and common culture.²⁷

In the early 2000s, Gil Eyal lifted to a new level the statistical evidence and conclusions of his predecessors in explaining the breakup of Czechoslovakia. He attributed the roots of – according to him – the manageable bi-national conflict to the existence of a “new class” of Czech and Slovak politicians, administrators, planners, and factory managers. All of them were instrumental in various aspects of political life in

²⁶ Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: the Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton University Press, 1988), p.290. The schools attended by Czech students in Slovakia were Vysoká škola dopravná [University of Transportation] in Žilina and Vysoká škola poľnohospodárska [University of Agriculture] in Nitra, the only two of their kind in the communist Czechoslovakia.

²⁷ “...in the mid-1980s, although there still remained some lag, the cultural and social characteristics of the Slovak population were already close to the Czech standards. At any rate, the Czech Lands constituted the stagnating part of the federation, whilst the Slovaks the progressing one.” See Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin, *Czechoslovakia 1918-1992: A Laboratory for Social Change* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), p.208. Compare with Pavlenda’s prediction made in the 1960s that if the economic development in the Czech Lands and Slovakia had continued along the same pace, the equalization would be reached by the 2000s. See Chapter 3, p.83, n.43.

Czechoslovakia during the ‘normalization’ as well as the negotiations on the future of the state in the early 1990s. He observed that the “two putative nations did not mobilize to overthrow their ‘artificial’ bond. They seemed fairly committed to the idea that some such bond should be preserved.”²⁸ If the split eventually happened, it was due to the new class’ bifurcation, as in the Czech Republic it was the pragmatic right which eventually won over anti-politics and “Czechoslovak” sentiments, while in Slovakia the winner was the left in the very traditions of the country’s communist past and legacy.²⁹ Eyal’s analysis, which attributed the presence of a “new class” also to Slovakia, represents, in general, a significant step forward in western scholarship in comparison with references to the predominantly rural character and economically backward Slovak society that saw the split of Czechoslovakia as a consequence of the ‘progressive’ versus ‘backward’ dichotomy. Whether a “class,” or simply a new generation of the Slovak intelligentsia raised under the communist regime, it comprised not only politicians and writers, but, more importantly, also technocrats, economists and managers of factories experienced enough to cope with the practical problems of a sputtering communist economy.³⁰

²⁸ Gil Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: from Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xv.

²⁹ Ibidem, xxviii-xxix. Eyal suggests that, whereas the Czech political elites were relatively richer in cultural capital, their Slovak counterparts were richer in political capital (the support of workers).

³⁰ “One of the most striking aspects of Czech commentary on economic issues at the time is that, rather than considering the measurable impact of reform, analysts frequently and openly operated under a form of cultural determinism. By presupposing that the Slovak reaction to reform reflected a more ‘interventionist’ political culture *per se*, Czech analysts routinely discounted or trivialised Slovakia’s experience of federal policy, misinterpreting their political adaptation to it.” Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 156. Innes opines that Slovak economic team, with the exception of Jozef Kučerák, Minister of Trade and Economy, was weaker in terms of the knowledge of theory of liberal economy and Slovak economists tended to slip towards economic nationalism. Innes, p.148. In the 1960s, it was the Slovak economists whose invitations to visit Slovakia and

A closer look at the Slovak elites, which had played an instrumental role in the period 1989-1993, reveals that the majority of the political heavyweights – Rudolf Schuster, Milan Čič, Ján Čarnogurský, František Mikloško, Fedor Gál, Milan Kňažko, Vladimír Mečiar, Michal Kováč, and Jozef Markuš – were between forty and sixty years old, thus in their most productive age. Except for Schuster and Čič, the variety of the generational composition of this group, which was out of the center of political power during the periods of ‘normalization’ and *perestroika*, shows the presence at least of two generations of individuals who entered, or re-entered, politics in the 1990s. Similarly, Slovak economists consisted of at least two generations of those who had played an important role in the 1960s (Hvezdoň Kočtúch), and their disciples who became active in the 1990s (Rudolf Filkus, Augustín Marián Húska).³¹ The middle and the younger generations of Slovak economists, Jozef Kučerák and Ivan Mikloš,³² like their older colleagues, found refuge as researchers at various “Institutes,” or taught at the Economic

share their expertise had been accepted by western experts such as G. Palomba, I Cutolo, N. de Luca from Italy and M. H. Dobbs from Great Britain (Cambridge University). See Miroslav Londák, “Ekonomický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967.” *Predjarie, Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960-1967*. Miroslav Londák, Stanislav Sikora, Elena Londáková (Bratislava, Veda: 2002), pp.183-187. For parochial grievances, in the Czech view, of Slovak economists on “Slovak specificity” which eventually led to the split of the “new class” in Czechoslovakia across national lines during the period 1989-1992. See Eyal, *The Origins of Political Elites...*, p. 118-120.

³¹ Rudolf Filkus (1927) was the First Deputy Prime Minister of the government of the ČSFR (1992) and the Minister of Finance of the Slovak Republic (1994). From 1953 to 1990 he worked at the Economic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

www.osobnosti.sk.

³² Jozef Kučerák (1939) was the Deputy Prime Minister of the government of the Slovak Republic (1990-1991) www.government.gov.sk. Ivan Mikloš (1960), Minister of Privatization of the Slovak Republic (1991-1992). Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy in the Dzurinda government (1998-2002), Minister of Finance (2002-2006) was considered the father of economic reform in Slovakia. From 1983 to 1989 he was an Assistant Professor at the Economic University in Bratislava. www.osobnosti.sk

University in Bratislava.³³ The Slovak “new class” would be incomplete with an important, perhaps decisive category of managers of large factories and enterprises including agricultural, who were implementing the quotas of the five-year plans on a daily basis.³⁴ On the eve of the creation of the independent Slovak Republic, Slovak economic elites were relatively well developed and ready to face the challenges of socio-economic transition.³⁵

Meanwhile, Shari J. Cohen questioned the presence of historical consciousness across various generations of Slovak politicians in the same period.³⁶ Her thesis – the absence of historical memory and its ruptured and fragmented continuity among Slovak elites as well as ordinary citizens – stems from the generally correct assumption that each generation was educated under a different regime, with frequently changed

³³ Eyal, p.103.

³⁴ Notably the directors and the management of the industrial giants such as SLOVNAFT in Bratislava, (Slavomír Hatina, 1947), Hlinikáreň (Alluminium Processing Factory) in Žiar nad Hronom (Ľudovít Černák, 1951), and the managers of the biggest in East Central Europe steel-processing factory VSŽ (The East Slovak Iron and Steel Factory) in Košice. The placement of Rudolf Schuster in this category is legitimate as it corresponds with his experience as the former Secretary of the Regional Committee of the KSS responsible for industrial development of the region.

³⁵ See the article “Slovnaft: (Takmer) osamelá špička slovenského priemyslu” [Slovnaft: (Almost) A Lonely Apex of Slovak Industry]. In *Republika*, April 20, 1994 (author unknown). *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik*. In a sober tone, the article focuses on factory objectives, stating that the professional preparedness and expertise of its human resources (50% of all university graduates in Slovakia in the early 1990s were engineers), were not lagging behind the foreign experts, notably in the petrochemical industries, civil engineering and construction engineering. The ČSSR in the 1960s, when the majority of the top managers and the directors of industries was educated, had the third highest index of growth of university students (after Bulgaria and the U.S.S.R.) within the communist bloc – 93 (the United States 226, the U.S.S.R. 188, Great Britain 78). See Elena Londáková, “Nástup slovenskej kultúry v 60-tych rokoch,” In *Predjarie...*, p.370.

³⁶ Shari J. Cohen, *Politics Without a Past: the Absence Of History In Postcommunist Nationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), p.87.

ideological and socio-political accents.³⁷ On the one hand, there were Slovak politicians and economists, such as Michal Kováč, Vladimír Mečiar (active in 1968), Jozef Kučerák (active in the second half of the 1980s) and later on Ivan Mikloš (from 1990s onward) who were pragmatists. They seemed not particularly enthusiastic about reasoning on the basis of national history while establishing political and economic arguments, except during electoral campaigns and national holidays. Apart from specific issues of reasons for the often fluid loyalties of various generations of Slovak politicians to state(s) and regime(s),³⁸ Cohen's suggestion does not prove that the sample of Slovak politicians she refers to were not aware of the basics in Slovak national history and did not care about it. On the other hand, for Dubček, Husák,³⁹ and Novomeský, as well as for three generations of politicians, economists, writers and historians from the 1960s onward, the presence of the idea of continual Slovak national emancipation *within* the communist system and after its fall as a sovereignist alternative was imperative under all circumstances.⁴⁰ The same was true of Slovak economists – Pavlenda, Kočtúch, Húska

³⁷ Cohen builds her argument on the basis of reference to textbooks in use in communist Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1980s and on how they referred to the 'bourgeois' Czechoslovak Republic and the wartime *clerico-fascist* Slovak Republic.

³⁸ A classic definition by Haas on the shift of loyalties of national political elites to the newly-built European institutions in the late 1950s as a process "whereby political actors in several, distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities to a new centre..." may be applied to communist and post-communist politicians as well. Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Economic and Social Forces, 1950-1957* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), p.16.

³⁹ Cohen, in reference to Leff (*National Conflict in Czechoslovakia*, p.268), sees Husák as a suppressor of Slovak historical memory. Cohen, p.73, n.17. This seems to be an explanation for Husák's political loyalty towards the centralized federal communist regime rather than for his real attitudes towards Slovak national emancipation. On Husák's personal identity and attitudes to Slovak national history see Viliam Plevza, *Vzostupy a pády. Gustáv Husák prehovoril* (Bratislava: Tatrapress, 1991), p.14.

⁴⁰ See Dubček's push for historical revivalism in the 1960s, which stressed national aspects in the communist historical tradition [SNP] along with national [Štúr], in

and Tkáč – not to mention the group of nationally oriented communist and ex-communist intellectuals with an extremely well-developed historical memory, such as Vladimír Mináč, Roman Kaliský, and Ladislav Ťažký.⁴¹ They were followed by the next wave of Slovak *literati* – the signatories of the Memorandum *Sixty-One Steps towards Slovak Sovereignty* in October of 1990 (Viliam Hornáček, Milan Ferko, Anton Hrnko and others), all of whom had begun to publish in the late 1980s during *perestroika* in *Literárny týždenník*. They supported the idea of Slovak political and economic autonomy while invoking Slovak historical, political and economic traditions, all of them converging into “national interests” at the beginning of the 1990s.⁴² Thus, contrary to Cohen’s assumption, Slovak post-communist elites have preserved a remarkable

Chapter 3, p.80. At the same time, Dubček called for more legislative competences of the SNR and more investments in Slovakia.

⁴¹ Marián Tkáč (1949) was an employee of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Socialist Republic (1974-1992), Vice-Governor of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia for Slovakia (1992), and Vice-Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia (1993-1994). Roman Kaliský (1922), fought in the Slovak National Uprising in 1944. From 1956 to 1967 he was the editor of *Kultúrny život*. From 1967 to 1969 he worked for Slovak Television and was persecuted during ‘normalization’ for his condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact. Accessible on www.osobnosti.sk Ladislav Ťažký (1924) was a former communist politician and writer. Like Kaliský, Ťažký condemned the invasion in 1968 and was removed from political functions in the KSS. In 1993, some had tried to persuade him to run for President of the Slovak Republic. He declined. See www.books.sk.

⁴² See “Stanovisko Nezávislého združenia ekonómov Slovenska [NEZES] - Radikálna ekonomická reforma a zvrchovanosť SR” [The Standpoint of the Independent Association of the Economists of Slovakia: A Radical Economic Reform and the Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic], *Práca*, March 5, 1991. The document makes five major points: 1) an appeal to the SNR to declare, besides political, also the economic sovereignty of Slovakia, 2) an appeal to the public in the Czech Republic to support Slovak economic sovereignty as a tool of the “democratic, efficient and socially just common reform,” 3) an appeal to Czech politicians for their understanding of the importance of the “Slovak economy for the whole Czecho-Slovak economy,” 4) an appeal to the trade unions to defend citizens from the impact of the federal concept of transition to a market economy, 5) an expression of preparedness for providing “a systemic concept of a radical economic reform of the transition from administrative to a socially and environmentally oriented market economy.”

degree of well-developed historical self-consciousness *despite* the official, Marxist, interpretations of national history. Once the constraints of the communist regime were over, the accentuation of national history, together with its frequent simplifications, became a part of daily life.⁴³

Communism lasted only four decades and did not succeed in breaking ties with the past. The reform movement of the 1960s and its aftermath showed that Slovaks cared about political and constitutional designs no less than about economic reform. At the same time, there was an inner continuity between the generation of the 1960s (Dubček, Laco, Pavlenda, Kočtúch) and that of their followers during ‘normalization’ (Húska, Filkus, Kučerák, Mikloš), supplemented by the group of managers and executives in the large Slovak factories (Černák, Hatina) and those Communists in the regions who executed their tasks regarding social and economic development of Slovakia (Schuster). Despite the shortcomings of communist ideology and the deficits of a centrally planned economy, the period from the late 1960s and early 1970s to 1989 thus did not represent a vacuum in history of Slovak society shaped by Communism. In light of a qualitatively new challenge in the early 1990s, it was not the presence of historical consciousness among the Slovak politicians and intelligentsia that mattered, but their expertise and ability to learn quickly which represented the greatest challenge. The difference between the past and the near future was like being either in the desert or finding a temporary

⁴³ For an example of a fused perception of the present situation in Slovakia with historical tradition see Hvezdoň Kočtúch’s article “Občan – staň sa vôľa tvoja! (III)” [Citizen: May Your Will Happen – Part III], *Republika*, February 16, 1994. The author refers to Mečiar as the continuation of a line which had begun with Jánošík and Štúr and continued with Štefánik, Tiso, Clementis and Dubček. While testifying to the presence of historical consciousness, such generalizations and simplifications of Slovak history contributed to the skeptical attitudes of western scholars towards the subject and its simplified interpretations.

refuge at an oasis as the community of advanced democratic states, which Slovakia wished to join was still over the horizon.

5.2 The founding fathers break away

In March of 1993, Milan Kňažko, who as Foreign Minister had submitted Slovakia's application for the country's membership in the United Nations, broke with the HZDS, taking seven MPs with him.⁴⁴ Mečiar's personal relationships with the leaders of the two other coalition parties, Ľudovít Černák of the SNS and Peter Weiss of the SDE were also not good. His coalition with Slovak nationalists, who struggled with their identity and goals once independence became a reality, helped, as Hykisch observed, to associate the Slovak struggle for national emancipation with nationalism.⁴⁵ The role of the SDE was different. To its electorate, social and economic concerns were primary and this is what determined the attitudes of the party leadership on the silent alliance with the HZDS.⁴⁶ Mečiar's relationship with another stalwart of the HZDS, the calm and firm Michal Kováč, deteriorated quickly. The common denominator was the

⁴⁴ Kňažko and his followers created the Alliance of Democrats of the Slovak Republic [*Aliancia demokratov Slovenskej republiky – ADSR*]. Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p.242.

⁴⁵ According to Hykisch, the second Mečiar government (June of 1992-March 1994) failed to solve the domestic problems. Instead it turned its attention to privatization robbery and partitioning the booty. In foreign policy, this government led Slovakia into international isolation, quarrels with all its neighbours and finally found itself out of the mainstream of the Euro-Atlantic integration. Anton Hykisch, *Ako chutí moc. Spomienky a záznamy z rokov 1990-1992* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Pozsony-Pressburg-Bratislava, 2004), p.309.

⁴⁶ The SDE might have played the role of the "Honest Left" ("statočná ľavica"; Slovak), the defender of social interests against the conservative KDH, the post-federalist VPN and wild privatization. According to Hykisch, the SDE wasted this opportunity. Hykisch, pp.307-308.

same as in case of Kňažko – Mečiar’s authoritarian methods of governing.⁴⁷ On February 15, 1993, Michal Kováč was elected President of the Slovak Republic by the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NR SR) to the distaste of Mečiar, who had preferred Roman Kováč, the leader of the Slovak Trade Unions. Mečiar and his minority government, which was crippled by personal animosities between the leaders of a loose coalition of three political parties, had to face a worsening social situation and the negative image of Slovakia – that “ugly sister of the former Czechoslovakia” – abroad.⁴⁸

For some, the authoritarian methods of governance were unbearable, for others the reason for the rejection of Mečiar’s style of politics was more pragmatic. The transformation of a former communist centrally planned economy to a market economy had started as early as in the winter of 1991. It began with the liberalization of prices and continued with the process of privatization which was supposed to reverse the share of the state ownership in favour of privatizers. The first steps in privatization were the

⁴⁷ Pavol Petruf, *Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998* (Metodické centrum Mesta Bratislavy, 1999), p.33.

⁴⁸ See the following articles: “Slov-A-K-I-A - oh, never mind,” by Ellen Deschesne, *The Globe and Mail*, March 9, 1996 and “Slovaks Come Out Loser in Break With Czechs,” by Jane Perlez, *The New York Times*, February 7, 1994. In the Canadian press Slovakia was mostly portrayed as a bad example to Québec’s separatists. See “Parizeau pays attention as Czech-Slovak split marks an anniversary,” by Ken MacQueen, *Ottawa Citizen*, January 9, and “Lessons from split of Czechoslovakia: Study by Canadian political scientist finds eerie similarities with the turmoil in Canada,” by Edison Stewart, *The Toronto Star*, June 22, 1994. The last article insinuates an old but unsubstantiated formula that “Slovakia can have its independence but without a Czech insurance policy.” Slovak Ambassador to Canada Anton Hykisch explained the split of Czechoslovakia in the article “What was left for Slovaks but independence?” published in *Toronto Star*, January 8, 1994. For a comparison of Slovakia with Québec see also Peter Petro, “Cinderella Story,” *The Literary Review of Canada*, February 1996, p.17. Providing economic data, the author suggests that the example at that time of an already economically growing Slovakia “is not a good example to wave in front of our separatists.” For a positive view on Slovakia see “How the Slovaks Have Taken Flight” by Diana Milbank, *The Globe and Mail*, December 5, 1994. To that date, inflation in Slovakia was under 10%, trade with western countries rose by 8.5% and the GDP was expected to exceed 4%.

restitutions of property (*reštitúcie*), which was followed by two major methods of privatization – direct selling of small enterprises at public auctions (minor privatization – *malá privatizácia*) and a voucher privatisation (major privatization – *veľká privatizácia*) based upon the acquisition of shares in large enterprises by citizens. The often uncontrolled or benevolently overlooked methods of “wild privatization” (*divoká privatizácia*) resulted in dividing socially egalitarian and traditionally small-entrepreneurial Slovak society across socio-economic and political lines.⁴⁹

Though the “Velvet Divorce” happened smoothly at the highest political level, several economic issues inherited from the federal state remained unresolved. The monetary union ceased to exist in February of 1993. The Czech Republic, in violation of previous agreements, kept flag of the ČSFR, while only slightly reducing its blue triangle.⁵⁰ Slovaks felt that federal property, despite the principle adopted (2:1),⁵¹ was in fact divided in favour of the Czech Republic which became the sole owner of

⁴⁹ On the methods and the differences between privatization in the Czech Lands and Slovakia see Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation Versus State*, (Boulder-Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), pp.189-196, and Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, pp.159-161. The major difference was a higher number of privatized enterprises in the Czech Republic and a greater reluctance on the Slovak side to take advantage of the process.

⁵⁰ Miroslav Mojžita, *Kňazko, Demeš, Kňazko: Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993* (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), pp.110-113. Mojžita, an experienced federal diplomat, opines that the major success in this diplomatically-managed dispute was that it did not leak into the media, for the reputation of both sides would have suffered.

⁵¹ See *Ústavný zákon č.541/1992 Zb. o delení majetku Českej a Slovenskej Federatívnej Republiky medzi Českú republiku a Slovenskú republiku a jeho prechode na Českú republiku a Slovenskú republiku* [Constitutional Law no.541/1992 on the Division of the Property of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic between the Czech and Slovak Republics and its Transfer to the Czech and Slovak Republics], www.zbierka.sk (Electronic Register of Laws). The division of the property of the federal state was determined on the basis of the territorial principle (property on the territory of the respective republic) and on the principle of the ratio of the population of the ČSFR (10 million and 5 million, approx.). See Article 3.1, letters *a* and *b* of the Law.

Czechoslovak Airlines (*Československé aerolinie*) and the Czechoslovak Sea Transportation (*Československá námorná plavba*).⁵² To compensate for that, the Mečiar government asked for \$ 12,500,000,000 (US) from the former federal assets – a claim rejected by the Czechs as “absurd.”⁵³ Despite these and a minor territorial nuisance,⁵⁴ the Slovak - Czech relationship remained stable, if the frequently used term “over-standard” (*nadštandardný*), which was to become a cliché in the following years, seemed at the moment, when the wounds were still fresh, as a projection of the future rather than reality itself.⁵⁵

In the first year of Slovak independence, Vladimír Mečiar and the HZDS were able to rule only due to the support of the Slovak National Party and the Party of the Democratic Left. The split within the HZDS weakened its position in the National Council. The newly-formed Alliance of Democrats of the Slovak Republic (*Aliancia demokratov Slovenskej republiky – ADSR*), led by Milan Kňažko merged with the new extra-parliamentary political subject, the Alternative of Political Realism (*Alternatíva politického realizmu; APR*), under the leadership of the last federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia, an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Law at Comenius

⁵² Húska states that these and similar cases were taken into account by Slovak negotiators as the “inclusive price for the peaceful separation”. A.M. Húska, *Svedectvo o štátotvornom príbehu: Spomínanie a rozjímanie nad slovenským a českým štátotvorným údelom* (Bratislava: SCM, 2008), p.123. In retrospect, Húska has admitted that the Czech politicians were not in an easy position to face the Czech public audience and media. This soft Slovak approach eventually paid-off as the Czechs later on agreed to returning the Slovak golden bullion and the altar of Bojnice. Ibid.

⁵³ See the article “Slovensko chce 12.5 miliardy - v dolarech” (Slovakia wants 12.5 billion in USD), *Rudé Právo*, May 10, 1993.

⁵⁴ The only minor territorial correction was made in the tiny village U Sabotů (Czech) - U Sabotov (Slovak) on the Slovak-Moravian border which was resolved by a local referendum. The majority of the inhabitants confirmed their will to belong to the Slovak Republic.

⁵⁵ Petruf, *Slovensko v rokoch 1989-1998*, p.49. The word used here is a “privileged” relationship.

University, Jozef Moravčík, and the unsuccessful presidential candidate Roman Kováč. They founded a new political party, the Democratic Union (*Demokratická únia*).⁵⁶ To balance his loss, Mečiar succeeded in convincing Ľudovít Černák from the Slovak National Party to sign a Coalition Treaty in October of 1993, which enabled the HZDS to preserve a fragile majority in the National Council.⁵⁷ This equilibrium lasted until March of 1994, when tensions between Mečiar and his ally on the one hand, and the opposition, notably the Christian Democrats, the Democratic Union and Magyar political parties supported by the SDE and the Greens (the SZS), or by their segments, culminated. The conflict between Mečiar and his opponents can alternatively be seen also as a struggle over control of privatization. Whereas Mečiar favoured state ownership of the largest factories and the selling of assets to his friends and allies in order to create domestic economic-financial elites, the opposition wanted to sell Slovak enterprises to partners abroad.⁵⁸ The cancellation of the voucher privatization by the Mečiar government, and the sale of state factories to a small group of privatizers selected in advance, pointed to the “formation of a clientelist system based on hidden or open corruption.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Luboš Kubín, *Rola politických elít pri zmene režimu na Slovensku* [The Role of Political Elites in the Regime Change in Slovakia] (Bratislava: Veda, 2002), p.93. Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p. 242.

⁵⁷ It was the last attempt to avoid a pre-term election. See Július Gembický, “Koalícia na 32 mesiacov?” [A Coalition That Will Last 32 Months?], *Národná obroda*, October 13, 1993.

⁵⁸ “Slovak[ia] Is Balking At Privatization,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1994.

⁵⁹ Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Domestic Political Developments and the Political Scene in the Slovak Republic,” In *Global Report on Slovakia: Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends from 1996*, ed. Martin Bútora and Péter Hunčík (Bratislava: Sándor Márai Foundation, 1997), p.21. Vladimír Mečiar admitted that his attempt at creating a domestic financial-economic elite failed. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

On March 9, 1994, President Michal Kováč delivered a highly critical speech on the state of the Slovak Republic to the National Council. He warned of the consequences of Mečiar's confrontational style of politics which caused tensions between the Slovaks and the Magyar minority and resulted in a worsened economic situation and deteriorating international image of the country.⁶⁰ Although Kováč did not call on Mečiar to resign, the stormy discussion in the plenary session that lasted for two days eventually led to a non-confidence vote and the ousting of Mečiar from office on March 11, 1994. Consequently, President Kováč appointed a new government led by Jozef Moravčík on the next day. Pointing to the vote against Mečiar made possible by MPs defecting from the coalition (who were allegedly bribed), along with the rapidity with which the new "provisional" government was created, Mečiar and the press supportive to him referred to the event as a "putsch."⁶¹ For the second time in three years Mečiar was ousted from office by a non-confidence vote despite his decreasing, yet still significant, public support. Although he was stubbornly preparing his party for a comeback in the

⁶⁰ See Kováč's speech on www.nrsr.sk (Digital Library of the NR SR). "Stenografická správa o konaní 27. schôdze Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky konanej dňa 9,10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24 a 25 marca 1994" [Stenographic Report of the 27th Plenary Session of the National Council of the Slovak Republic held on March 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24 and 25 of 1994].

⁶¹ The non-confidence vote was branded a "Communist putsch engineered by Communists, Magyarones, pharisees, and traitors from Slovak parties." See the article "Slovensko je ohrozené" [Slovakia Is Under Threat], *Zmena*, March 16-21, 1994. Slovaks were particularly concerned that Hungary had already signed a treaty on the nonviolability of the borders with Ukraine, but not with Slovakia. There were concerns that if the autonomy was to be given to the Slovak Magyars, they could have cast their votes in a referendum for their incorporation into Hungary. See Štefan Guláš, "Čo sa skrýva za autonómiou" [What's Behind Autonomy?], *Slovenský národ*, February 8, 1994.

parliamentary elections announced for the fall of 1994, the departures of his former henchmen, together with the memory of the second “putsch,” left him very bitter.⁶²

The new Slovak government, led by Moravčík was warmly welcomed and supported by western democracies, but it had only a slight chance of improving the country’s economic performance and its image.⁶³ In the parliamentary elections held on September 30 and October 1, 1994, Vladimír Mečiar and the HZDS, which was joined by the small Peasant Party of Slovakia (*Roľnícka strana Slovenska*) led by Pavel Delinga, were back with 61 out of 150 seats. In conjunction with the 13 mandates of the Association of Slovak Workers (*Združenie robotníkov Slovenska*) and the nine mandates of the SNS, Mečiar’s new ruling coalition was “ideologically” more coherent and numerically stronger than after the elections in June of 1992.⁶⁴

⁶² The Slovak political scientist Samuel Abrahám suggests that the key to the understanding of Mečiar’s personality is his almost feudal relationship with his close collaborators, with many of whom he ultimately split: “To Mečiar, anyone who got his or her position thanks to him was thus obliged to act according to the wishes and policies of the prime minister.” Samuel Abrahám, “The Rise and Fall of Illiberal Democracy in Slovakia: 1989-1999: An Analysis of Transformation in a Post-Communist Society,” PhD thesis, Department of Political Science, Carleton University Ottawa 2000, p.166. The trend of splitting with Mečiar continued after the elections of 1998. The best example is the case of Ivan Gašparovič, the Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic to which I refer in Chapter 7.

⁶³ David Rocks, “Broad coalition to govern Slovakia: Mec[č]iar steps down as new team is assembled amid hopes of jump-starting privatization,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 15, 1994.” Apart from its slightly misleading title (Mečiar did not step down himself), the article correctly identifies one of the major reasons for the change in government as the voucher privatization of large Slovak enterprises à la Klaus in former Czechoslovakia. See the election leaflet by the HZDS, first paragraph “Privatizácia” [Privatization]. The privatization of large enterprises would be possible only under the condition that the state will remain the majority owner. In *5 rokov HZDS v tlači* [Five Years of the HZDS in the Press] (Odbor verejnej mienky Kancelárie HZDS, Marec 1996), p.81.

⁶⁴ They had 83 seats in comparison with 74 seats (the HZDS) in June of 1992.

(Table 4) The results of the parliamentary elections, September 30 and October 1, 1994:
(Voter turnout: 75.65%)

Party	%	Seats
HZDS and RSS (Peasants)	35.0	61
ZRS (Workers)	7.3	13
SNS	5.4	9
Common Choice (Spoločná voľba) SDĽ, Social Democrats, Greens, Agrarians	10.4	18
Magyar Coalition	10.2	17
KDH	10.1	15
Democratic Union	8.6	15 ⁶⁵

The “18 Brumaire” of Vladimír Mečiar started with the infamous “Night of the Long Knives” on November 3, 1994. During the first and the second meetings of the National Council, the opposition was completely excluded from the distribution of legislative and executive powers. This was hardly new and unexpected, for the Moravčík government, while in power, had taken similar steps.⁶⁶ The extent and the impact of the

⁶⁵ The data come from Anton Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament v premenách času* (Bratislava: Kancelária NR SR, 2008), p.86.

⁶⁶ According to the daily *Republika*, a press source supportive of the HZDS, the Moravčík government attempted to recall 26 prefects (*prednosta*; Slovak) of regions elected in local elections and recalled the director of TASR (*Tlačová agentúra Slovenskej republiky* – The Press Agency of the Slovak Republic) Dušan Kleiman. See “Po puči likvidácia nepohodlných” [After the Putsch, Liquidation of the Inconvenient Ones], *Republika*, April 21, 1994. The article was published by the Chairmanship of the Association of Slovak Journalists. See also “Nastala normalizácia v masmédiách” [Normalization in the Massmedia Is On]. Ibidem. Vladimír Mečiar disagreed with such an interpretation of the distribution of competences in the National Council. He said that the representatives of the opposition did not come to the meeting, to which they had been invited. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, August 24, 2007.

purges by the HZDS and its allies, who took over all the posts of the heads of parliamentary committees, as well as the posts of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairmen of the National Council, cast no doubt about the impossibility of reconciliation. The deputies of the winning parties were also the only members of the Special Control Body (*Osobitný Kontrolný Orgán* – OKO [The Eye]) which controlled the Slovak Intelligence Service (*Slovenská informačná služba* – SIS). The victors canceled all decisions regarding privatization made by the Moravčík government and removed the General Prosecutor, the Director of the Slovak Radio, members of the National Property Fund, and many others from their offices.⁶⁷ On December 11, 1994, the HZDS and its allies – the SNS led by the new party chairman Ján Slota and the Party of Slovak Workers (ZRS) of Jozef Lupták – signed the Coalition Treaty in which they expressed their verbal support for democracy and the rule of law. More pragmatically, the winners partitioned the key posts in both the parliament and executive solely among themselves.⁶⁸ From that moment on, the coalition and opposition became firmly entrenched in the parliament until November of 1998, when they reversed their roles.

After March of 1994, President Kováč became the archenemy of the Mečiar government and of Mečiar himself. Mečiar's supporters and allies repeatedly referred to the opposition and Kováč as enemies of Slovak independence.⁶⁹ The HZDS did not want

⁶⁷ Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould, "Slovakia: Elite Disunity and Convergence," In *Elites after State Socialism. Theories and Analyses*, eds. John Higley and György Lengyel (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Oxford 2000), p.55.

⁶⁸ Kubín, *Rola politických elit pri zmene režimu na Slovensku*, pp. 101-102.

⁶⁹ Martin Bútorá and Zora Bútorová, "Slovakia's Democratic Awakening," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no.1 (1999), p.85, Critics of the government were labeled as "enemies," "anti-Slovaks," and "anti-state elements." The opposition opined that, had Mečiar been ousted from office, an agreement with the Magyar government on the status of the Magyar minority in Slovakia would have been easier to reach. See the article "Bez

to lose the chance to savour its triumph and sent Ivan Lexa, who was to be appointed the Director of the Slovak Intelligence Service, and Oľga Keltošová, the designated Minister of Labour and Social Affairs – both known as devoted Mečiar supporters – to see President Kováč and suggest his resignation.⁷⁰ At the same time, a parliamentary commission was created to investigate whether President Kováč had acted in accordance with the Constitution in March of 1994, when Mečiar was dismissed as the Prime Minister.⁷¹ In this atmosphere, which was carefully monitored by the media and by diplomatic corps in Bratislava, the European Commission sent a diplomatic note (*démarche*) to the Mečiar government in which, while expressing its preparedness to continue the dialogue, it voiced “concerns about some features of the political evolution in Slovakia since the last election.”⁷² In a photo taken on September 3, 1992, when the Constitution of the Slovak Republic was adopted, the Slovak sovereignists (HZDS), Nationalists (SNS) and transformed Communists (SDĽ) proudly marched in one line.⁷³ Two years later a similar snapshot would have been impossible. In addition to the

Mečiaru jednoduchšie?” [Would It Be Easier without Mečiar?], *Republika*, February 17, 1994.

⁷⁰ Prior to March of 1994, Kováč had refused to appoint Ivan Lexa as the Minister for Privatization. See Kováč’s speech (“Stenografická správa o konaní 27. schôdze Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky konanej dňa 9,10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24 a 25 marca 1994). See also the interview with Ivan Lexa “Pán prezident by mal odstúpiť” [The President Should Resign], *Zmena* (undated document), *5 rokov HZDS v tlači*, p.78.

⁷¹ Kubin, p.102.

⁷² See excerpt of the “Demarš Európskej Únie” [Diplomatic Note of the European Union] dated November 1994, (non-registered document), Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (hereafter DA MZV SR). For diplomatic warnings coming to Bratislava from western governments see Geoffrey Pridham, “The European Union’s Democratic Conditionality and Domestic Politics in Slovakia: the Mečiar and Dzurinda Governments Compared,” *Europe-Asia Studies* (Great Britain) 54, no.2 (2002), p.210.

⁷³ Anton Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament v premenách času*, p.78.

widening of the rift at home, the government had to face the growing suspicion of Slovakia's foreign partners about its true motives and goals.

5.3 Westward-ho! Or going our own way?

For the new Slovak Republic gaining the support and confidence of its neighbours and partners was vital. In 1993, Slovak foreign politics was still *in statu nascendi*. The cadres of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consisted of four major groups of professionals: 1) federal diplomats who opted for Slovakia during the breakup of Czechoslovakia, 2) former employees of Czech and Slovak institutions and state companies with international experience, 3) the young generation of diplomats trained at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia,⁷⁴ 4) and graduates of the Institute of International Relations at the Faculty of Law at Comenius University in Bratislava established in 1991.⁷⁵

In his inaugural speech, President Kováč stressed the importance of Slovakia's relations with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Ukraine, Russia,

⁷⁴ Jindřich Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé a velmoci ve XX. století, 1918-1992* [Czechoslovakia, Her Neighbours and Powers in the 20th Century, 1918-1992] (Centrum pro ekonomiku a politiku: Praha, 2002), p.363. There were some who studied in Kiev and Leningrad (Sankt Peterburg). Since independence, many Slovak diplomats were educated at western institutes that specialize in diplomatic training (Oxford, Leeds, Madrid, Paris, Washington, Stanford, Vienna, and others).

⁷⁵ Mojžita, pp. 15-17 and 66-68. The Chair of the Institute of International Relations was Associate Professor Karol Rybárik, a graduate of Comenius University in Bratislava and the Consular Academy in Vienna, who, until 1950, was posted at the embassies of Czechoslovakia in Zagreb, Sofia and Berlin. From the second half of the 1990s onward, the first graduates of the Faculty of International Relations at the University of Matej Bel (*Univerzita Mateja Bela*) founded in 1994 in Banská Bystrica, filled positions at the Ministry as well.

Belorussia, Germany, France, and the United States.⁷⁶ At the same time, Slovak politicians rejected the continuity of the newly-born Slovak Republic with the wartime Slovak Republic, the legacy of which cast a long shadow on Slovak history and society.⁷⁷ During the first year of its independence, the country was officially recognized by 122 states of which 106 established diplomatic relations with the Slovak Republic. The country became a member of several international and regional organizations such as the Conference on the Security and Cooperation in Europe (transformed into the Organization as of January 1, 1995), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Central European Initiative, and several others. It became the successor of 2900 international treaties signed by its predecessor.⁷⁸ In October of 1993, the Slovak Republic signed the Association Treaty with the European Communities as one of the two successor states of the ČSFR.⁷⁹ Similarly, its membership as the successor of Czechoslovakia within the *Visegrád Group*, enlarged from three to four members,

⁷⁶ See the copy of “The President’s Inaugural Speech,” pp.3 and 4. *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik* (file “Slovakia 1993”).

⁷⁷ For the continuing dilemma between the interpretations of the history of the wartime Slovak Republic as a culmination of the Slovak autonomist movement and its moral aspect linked to the persecution and fate of the Jewish and Roma populations see “Ján Čarnogurský o politike slovenského štátu z rokov 1939-1945: Tiso robil mravné kompromisy” [Ján Čarnogurský on the Politics of the Slovak State in the Years 1939-1945: Tiso Made Moral Compromises], *Domino Fórum*, November 2002. *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik*.

⁷⁸ Petruf, pp.48-49. Mojžita, p.117.

⁷⁹ See the document *Uznesenie Vlády Slovenskej Republiky zo 17. augusta 1993 č.559 k návrhu na uzatvorenie Európskej dohody o pridružení Slovenskej republiky k Európskym spoločenstvám* [Order of the Government of the Slovak Republic dated August 17, 1993 no. 559 on the Proposal Regarding the Conclusion of European Agreement on the Association of the Slovak Republic with the European Communities]. Register “Stála misia Slovenskej republiky pri Európskych spoločenstvách v Bruseli” [Register “Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the European Communities in Brussels”], box 6, 300-503 (no. 3684/1993). *DA MZV SR*.

remained valid.⁸⁰ The voting in the Council of Europe on the accession of Slovakia into the organization on June 30, 1993, in which the Hungarian representative abstained on the basis of his government's concerns over the state of the Magyar minority in Slovakia, revealed the country's soft underbelly, linked to its volatile international image depending on the rights of its minorities.⁸¹

The already uneasy Slovak-Magyar relationship was burdened by an agreement signed in 1977. Following the fall of Communism, the Hungarian Government unilaterally halted further participation in the enormously costly Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Dam along the Danube River.⁸² It based its arguments on the devastating effects of the

⁸⁰ Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland had originally created the group on February 15, 1991 with a direct reference to the historical legacy of the co-operation of the Kings of Bohemia, Hungary and Poland and their meeting in Visegrád (Hungary) in 1335 designed to solve any potential dispute among their kingdoms. The aim of the V-4 has been to eliminate the relics of Communism, to overcome historic animosities, to reach integrational goals of the member states collectively and with mutual support while transforming their societies and developing political cooperation among political elites. See www.visegradgroup.eu (history).

⁸¹ Opinion such as "There is no membership with NATO for that Hungary, which collaborates with the separatist movements in Slovakia and Romania, that Hungary in which nationalist groups are gaining power in order to attempt to annex the respective territories and their nations" were rare. For the citation from the interview by James Baker, the former Secretary of State in the George Bush Sr. administration, in the Japanese Daily *Asahi Shimbun*, see *Slovenský národ*, February 8, 1994. For a catastrophic scenario in the countries with a significant Magyar minority (Slovakia, Romania, Serbia), including economic decline, persecution, ethnic cleansing, and emigration, see the article by Stephen Engelberg "Now Hungary Adds Its Voice to the Ethnic Tumult," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1993.

⁸² See *Zmluva medzi Československou socialistickou republikou a Maďarskou ľudovou republikou o výstavbe a prevádzke Stavebného vodného diela Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros* [Treaty between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic on the Building and Management of the Water Dam Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros]. The Treaty was signed on September 16, 1977. The Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dispute and the issue of the state of the Magyar minority in Slovakia were constantly part of the agenda at the meetings of Slovak representatives with their partners from the EU (EC) and the United States. See the minutes of the meeting of Jozef Prokeš, the Chairman of the SNS and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, with Sir Leon Brittan, the Commissioner of the European Commission for External Economic Affairs and

project on the environment in the surrounding areas. Since the Slovaks had already completed 80% of their part of the project, they decided to continue by damming the waterbed of the Danube River in order to secure sufficient water supply for a derivation canal (the so-called variant C). The Magyar side then claimed that Czechoslovakia had broken the Treaty and that the border between the two countries was shifted.⁸³ The government of the Czech and Slovak Federation, and notably its Minister of the Environment Josef Vavroušek, were willing to minimize the potential environmental damage. The Slovak government, led by Ján Čarnogurský, decided to go ahead with the project.⁸⁴

The conflict over Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros was portrayed by the media and some scholars as a conflict between the “Concrete Lobby” of former communist managers, supported by the Slovak public fearing a resurrected Magyar revanchism.⁸⁵ The cause,

Trade Policy. Register “Stála misia SR pri Európskych spoločenských v Bruseli,” box 6, 300-503/1993 (no.2359/93). *DA MZV SR*.

⁸³ See the letter by the Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Ivan Gašparovič on the situation and the standpoint of the Slovak Republic on the problem to the President of the European Parliament Egon Klepsch on March 11, 1993. Register “Stála misia SR pri Európskych spoločenských v Bruseli,” box 8, 305-104/1993. *DA MZV SR*. Gašparovič states that “Contrary to the facts, the Hungarian Republic constantly accuses the Slovak Republic of breaking international law” and “the present state is evaluated as a struggle of the Hungarian Republic for its own political prestige...regardless of the factual substance of cause.” *Ibid.*, pp. 2 and 3. Slovaks were confident that the concerns over the environmental risks were unsubstantiated. See the letters by Dominik Kocinger, the Representative of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Construction and Management of Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros, to Professor Jacques Cousteau and to the management of the World Wildlife Fund in which he invited them to inspect the project and to exchange views. Register “Stála misia SR v Bruseli, box 8, 305-104/1993. *DA MZV SR*

⁸⁴ Jan Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa: Česko-slovenské vzťahy 1989-1992* (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2002), pp.307-310.

⁸⁵ Edward Snajdr, *Nature Protests: the End of Ecology in Slovakia* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008), pp.106-107. The Slovak conciliatory stance to the early stage of the dispute materialized into an invitation to international monitors and the involvement of the European Commission. See “Vyhlásenie Národnej rady

which on the Slovak side was perceived as a matter of national prestige, no less than it appeared as a matter of expertise on the side of their southern neighbour, was brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The ICJ made its ruling on September 25, 1998. Due to its recommendatory character, the dispute on the implementation of the Treaty is still not over and the search for a mutually acceptable solution of the problem has continued.⁸⁶

Aware of the importance of the Slovak-Magyar relationship and its international impact, Vladimír Mečiar signed the so-called Basic Treaty (*Základná zmluva*) with his Magyar counterpart, the Prime Minister Gyula Horn in Paris on March 19, 1995. This was a part of the Pact of Stability for Europe – a French diplomatic initiative that sought to balance the influence of reunited Germany in the region.⁸⁷ The ability of the Slovak

Slovenskej republiky o Sústave vodných diel Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros” [Declaration of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the Water-Dam Construction G-N]. In *Vyhlasenia Slovenskej národnej rady a Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 1990-1998* (Bratislava: NR SR I. volebné obdobie, 1998) [Declarations of the Slovak National Council and the National Council of the Slovak Republic - the first electoral term, 1998], pp.16-18, §§ 7 and 8.

⁸⁶ The Judgment found that Hungary was not entitled to unilaterally abandon the Treaty concluded in 1977 and Slovakia as the successor state of Czechoslovakia became a part of the Treaty which was still effective. On the other side, though Czechoslovakia was entitled to start preparations for an alternative provisional solution (variant “C”), it was not entitled to put it in operation as a unilateral measure. Both sides were encouraged to negotiate in good faith and take all necessary measures to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the 1977 treaty while compensating each other for the damage caused by their conduct. See “Judgment in the Case Concerning Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project,” September 25, 1997 (81 p.), and the “Summary of the Judgment.” Accessible at www.icj-cij.org (cases, pending cases, Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros {Hungary-Slovakia}). Both parties eventually gave up their claims for financial compensation in January of 1998. See “Maďarsko a Slovensko sa vzdali vzájomných nárokov na odškodnenie” [Hungary and Slovakia Gave Up their Claims for Compensation], *Sme*, January 10, 1998.

⁸⁷ For a detailed analysis of the Treaty and its domestic political context in Slovakia see Eleonóra Sándor, “The Slovak Hungarian Basic Treaty,” In *Global Report On Slovakia: Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends from 1996*, eds. Martin Bútora and Péter Hunčík (Bratislava: Sándor Márai Foundation, 1997), pp.55-61. U.S. President Bill

and Magyar prime ministers to sign the treaty was applauded by the EU as well as the United States, both of which were concerned about the possibility of spreading the conflict from the territory of the former Yugoslavia to Central Europe. The most sensitive issue in the bilateral relations between the two countries – the rights of Magyar minority – was mentioned rather generally in Article 15 of the Treaty. The article referred to the Recommendation of the Council of Europe No.1201 (Article 11), which suggested that “persons belonging to a national minority shall have the right to have at their disposal appropriate local or autonomus authorities, or to have a special status, matching the specific historical and territorial situation and in accordance with the domestic legislation of the state.”⁸⁸ The ambiguity of this stipulation, together with the overall recommendatory character of the document, was interpreted differently by each side.⁸⁹ It took another year until the Treaty was ratified in the National Council of the Slovak Republic in March of 1996, when the Slovak nationalists eventually gave in to pressure from the HZDS with the addendum that it was Mečiar and his party who were to bear responsibility for future consequences.⁹⁰ In return, the HZDS supported the adoption of the new Language Law which made Slovak the state language (*štátny jazyk*)

Clinton sent a letter to Mečiar encouraging him to sign the document in order to solve “the potential sources of misunderstanding and tension in Central Europe” within the framework of the Pact of Stability for Central Europe. See Sharon Fisher, “Treaty Fails to End Squabbles Over Hungarian Relations,” *Transition* 1 no.9, (June 1995), p.4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.5.

⁸⁹ The Magyar parties interpreted the document on the basis of collective rights. Their Slovak counterparts accepted and interpreted it solely on the basis of the rights of individuals. Ibidem.

⁹⁰ As a concession, the Law on the Protection of the Republic drafted by the SNS was supported by the HZDS and its allies in the National Council. See Sándor, “The Slovak-Hungarian Basic Treaty,” p. 61.

as the only language in official communication.⁹¹ This politically rather premature step became a reason for major concern for the political parties representing the Magyar minority in Slovakia and for the country's image abroad.

With the submission of the application for Slovakia's membership in the European Union to the French Presidency in June of 1995, the third Mečiar government continued to fulfill the country's obligations as a signatory of the treaty on Slovakia's accession into the European Union signed in October of 1993.⁹² At the same time, Slovakia reached out to France and Germany for their support in the envisaged processes of the Union's enlargement. Mečiar's wishes were met in Germany with only partial success. He was awarded the Peutingen Collegium Prize for the development of European solidarity after he gave a lecture ("Slovakia in the New European House") in Munich in the presence of the Minister President of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber from the ruling coalition CDU (Christian Democrats) and CSU (Christian Social Union). However, the federal government in Bonn and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, being a Christian Democrat

⁹¹ See *Zákon č. 270/1995 Zb. o štátnom jazyku Slovenskej republiky* (The Law no. 270/1995 on the Slovak Language as the State Language of the Slovak Republic). In the Preamble, the Law refers to the Slovak language as the most important feature of Slovak selfhood (*osobitosť*) and the expression of Slovak sovereignty. It envisaged the exclusive use of Slovak in all official communication. See the § 1, article 2 "The State Language has priority over minority languages. Compliance with the Law's stipulations was enforced by fines up to 500,000 Slovak crowns (cca 16,000 USD). See §10, Article 1, letter *b* of the Law. Accessible at www.zbierka.sk

⁹² See the document "Informácia o výsledkoch rokování delegácie Slovenskej republiky na summite Európskej únie v Cannes" [Information on the Negotiations of the Delegation of the Slovak Republic on the Summit of the European Union in Cannes]. Register "Vedenie Ministerstva zahraničných vecí Slovenskej republiky" [Register "Directoriat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic"], 105-104/1995-1998 (no. 81.911/95-POLS). *DA MZV SR* At the summit, Mečiar had a meeting with Jacques Chirac during which French President declared the support of France for Slovakia's accession into the EU. See the article with the boastful title "Slovensko je v popredí a ukazuje cestu iným" [Slovakia is in the Forefront and Shows the Way to Others], "5 Rokov HZDS" (unspecified newspaper, probably *Republika*), p.105.

himself, gave the Slovak Prime Minister the “cold shoulder” as an official meeting of the two never took place and Mečiar was not interested in a private meeting with the German Chancellor.⁹³ The Slovak – German relationship during the period of the third Mečiar government, in contrast to that with France, was discordant and more critical and less reciprocated in Bonn than desired by Bratislava.⁹⁴

In the late summer of 1995, Slovakia’s fragile and already negative international reputation suffered another setback. On August 31, Michal Kováč Jr., the son of the President Kováč, was kidnapped and abducted by unknown persons to Austria where he was found by the police, drugged and tied in the trunk of a passenger car.⁹⁵ The continuing pressure on the President, who was asked to resign in October of 1997, and the state of minority rights, resulted in a second wave of diplomatic warnings sent by the

⁹³ Miroslav Wlachovský, “Foreign Policy,” *Global Report on Slovakia: Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends from 1996*, eds. Martin Bútora and Péter Hunčík (Bratislava: Sándor Márai Foundation, 1997), p.39. A visit by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Klaus Kinkel to Slovakia in May of 1997 appeared as an inspection of the state of democracy in the country rather than an expression of unreserved support for Slovak integrationist ambitions. See Miroslav Wlachovský, Alexander Duleba, Pavol Lukáč, and Thomas W. Skladony, “The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic,” In *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Martin Bútora and Thomas W. Skladony (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998), p.91.

⁹⁴ Slovak diplomacy succeeded in organizing an official visit of Vladimír Mečiar to Paris in March of 1996 in the government’s search for a “privileged relationship” with France. Mečiar was received by the President Jacques Chirac. France, although interested in increasing its economic presence in Slovakia, did not step out of the common position of the EU and the European Commission towards Slovakia. The country’s progress was to be measured by its compliance with the political criteria for enlargement as adopted by the Copenhagen conference of the EU in 1993. See Wlachovský, Duleba, Lukáč, Skladony, “The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic,” p.91.

⁹⁵ The Slovak political opposition blamed Mečiar and Ivan Lexa, the head of the Slovak Intelligence, for the abduction. To this date, despite several investigations, nobody was found guilty and sentenced for this crime. The motive behind the abduction was to leave Kováč junior in Austria in the apparent hope that he would be extradited to Germany where he was being investigated for fraud. Erika Harris, *Nationalism and Democracy Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp.102-103.

Troika of the European Union and by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. This time the warnings had to be taken very seriously, if the country wanted to access the Union and NATO, along with the other members of the *Visegrád* Group.⁹⁶ The opposite happened, as tensions between the coalition and the opposition grew. In April of 1996, Róbert Remiáš, a contact person to the key witness to the kidnapping of Kováč junior,⁹⁷ was murdered when his car exploded in Bratislava. This spread fear, not only among the political opposition and the media that criticized Mečiar on a regular basis, but also among ordinary citizens.

The negative balance sheet of the ruling coalition for the year 1996 was closed with the case of František Gaulieder, a deputy of the HZDS who defected to the opposition. As a consequence, the HZDS saw to it that his mandate was taken from him against his will and he was expelled from the National Council. Gaulieder had previously protested (in March of 1994) against the persecution of those who had remained loyal to Mečiar in regions after the “putsch” by Moravčík’s “provisional” government. Two and a half years later, his name became the symbol of the fight for

⁹⁶“L’Union Européenne est vivement préoccupée par les tensions institutionnelles qui se manifestent en Slovaquie...L’Union Européenne a observé avec inquiétude l’éventualité que d’actions à l’encontre du Président de la République qui pourraient porter atteinte à la Constitution slovaque et aux normes et engagements démocratiques communes inscrits dans les textes de l’OSCE.” See *Déclaration Du Représentant Permanent De L’Espagne Au Nom De L’Union Européenne Sur La Slovaquie*, November 2, 1995 (ref. PC/644/95). The second *démarche* - *Statement by the Permanent Representative of Spain on Behalf of the European Union on Slovakia* dated November 16, 1995 and presented to the Plenary Assembly of the OSCE in Vienna, expressed the hope that the new language law would not undermine minority language rights. Register “POLSEVEÚ,” 305-101/1995 (both documents). *DA MZV SR*.

⁹⁷ Karen Henderson, *Slovakia: the Escape from Invisibility* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 46. The direct witness to the abduction was Oskar Fegyveres, a defector from the Slovak Intelligence Service, who went into hiding, fearing for his life after the abduction.

democracy in Slovakia.⁹⁸ The Constitutional Court ruled that the National Council had violated the law. More important than the fact that the Gaulieder's mandate as an MP was not renewed, was the stance taken by the Court, which made its ruling on the basis of legal professionalism and judicial independence.⁹⁹ The major obstacle to the complete political dominance of the HZDS was President Kováč. He could not be removed from office by constitutional means, since the coalition lacked the three-fifths majority (90 votes) necessary to change the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.¹⁰⁰

The quarrels at home tarnished the otherwise technically solid position of the Slovak Republic represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence in negotiations with the EU and NATO. In 1996 it became evident that Slovakia began lagging behind its partners from the *Visegrád Four*. Though macroeconomic results were quite impressive,¹⁰¹ Brussels frequently warned Bratislava

⁹⁸ On Gaulieder's appeal against the persecution of those who remained loyal to Mečiar and the HZDS after March of 1994 see the article "Dočasná vláda sa pokúsila vydierať prednostov okresných úradov" [The Provisional Government Attempted to Blackmail the Prefects of Regions], *Republika*, April 22, 1994. Gaulieder was expelled on the basis of a letter of resignation, of which he denied being its author. Two days later a bomb exploded at his residence. Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p. 266. For the official protest of the international community see the document "Déclaration de la Présidence au nom de l'Union européenne sur la décision du parlement slovaque dans l'affaire du député František Gaulieder" (Communiqué de Presse, 4 octobre 1997).

"Register PVEÚ," 305-107/1997" (a copy of the document appended to the Telegram in claris no. 9046/97 by the Embassy of the SR in Brussels, October 4, 1997). *DA MZV SR*.

⁹⁹ See *Nález Ústavného súdu Slovenskej republiky sp.zn.I ÚS 8/97 z 23. júla 1997* [The Findings of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic no. I US 8/97, July 23, 1997]. Accessed at www.concourt.sk (findings and rulings). For a detailed account on the case see Darina Malová, "Slovakia: From the Ambiguous Constitution to the Dominance of Informal Rules," In *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, ed. Jan Zielonka (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.359.

¹⁰⁰ Henderson, p. 44.

¹⁰¹ The Slovak GDP in 1996 reached 6.6% and was expected to slightly decrease to 6.1% in 1997. Meanwhile, the inflation was 6.6% and was expected to decrease to 5.9% in the following year. See the document "Informácia o účasti delegácie Slovenskej republiky vedenej J. Šestákom, štátnym tajomníkom MZV SR, na 2.zasadnutí

about the government's failure to comply with political criteria and values shared by the member states of NATO and the EU.¹⁰² A statistical survey in October of 1997, provided by the Institute of Public Affairs (*Inštitút pre verejné otázky – IVO*), the leading non-governmental think-tank in Slovakia, revealed the fears and frustrations of Slovak citizens concerning domestic developments, as well as the international position of the country. To the question "How has the situation in Slovakia changed since the 1994 parliamentary elections," 84% of participants in the poll responded that citizens' safety has worsened and 59% stated the same about Slovakia's international status. In addition, 70% of respondents were dissatisfied with the state of justice in society and 54% voiced their opinion that the state of democracy had worsened as well (see Table 7 in the Appendices).¹⁰³ Due to the domestic tensions between the coalition and the opposition, the latter channelled its concerns about the excesses of the government to EU institutions and NATO. At home, the opposition was accused by the coalition of carrying on with "politics on its knees" (*kolenačková politika*). This accusation pointed

Asociačného výboru SR/EÚ v Bruseli dňa 11.decembra 1996" [Information on the Participation of the Delegation of the Slovak Republic led by the State Under-Secretary J. Šesták at the 2nd Meeting of the Association Committee SR/EU in Brussels on December 11, 1996). Register "Vedenie Ministerstva zahraničných vecí Slovenskej republiky", 105-104/1995-1998 (no. 161.421/96-POLD). *DA MZV SR*. The macroeconomic results were assessed as "impressive" by the foreign members of the Committee. *Ibidem.*, p.1.

¹⁰² See the document "Informácia o návšteve člena Európskej komisie H[ansa] Van Den Broeka v Bratislave, 29.5.1997 [Information on the Visit of the Member of the European Commission Hans Van Den Broek in Bratislava, May 29, 1997]. Register "Political Department D," 305-106/1997. *DA MZV SR*. While appreciative to the economic results reached by the Slovak government, the EC Commissioner voiced concerns over the cause of Gaulieder, freedom of the press, minority rights and transparent privatization. On this see also Zora Bútorová and Martin Bútor "1989-1994: The Years of Milestones," In *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia. A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition*, ed. Zora Bútorová (Bratislava: IVO, 1998), p.10.

¹⁰³ See Zora Bútorová and Oľga Gyárfášová, "Social Climate Three Years after the 1994 Elections;" In *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia. A Public Opinion of A Country in Transition*, ed. Zora Bútorová (Bratislava, IVO, 1998), p.54 (Table 7).

to the quite non-standard method of searching for external support while facing domestic political problems.¹⁰⁴

In January of 1995, the third Mečiar government proclaimed Slovakia's membership in NATO and the EU to be its highest priorities. Whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was proceeding along this directive and its experts were participating at regular meetings in the headquarters of both organizations,¹⁰⁵ some practical steps taken by political leaders of the coalition cast doubts on how sincere and compatible with official statements their goals were.¹⁰⁶ Exposed to the growing reluctance and barrier in communication with western partners, Mečiar made his famous statement: "If they do

¹⁰⁴ Jozef Šesták recalled the moment when an MP for a Magyar political party in the NR SR during a meeting with the representatives of the European Commission in Brussels appealed to them to prevent Slovakia's membership in NATO and the EU on the basis of discrimination against the Magyar minority. Author interview with Jozef Šesták, Bratislava, June 13, 2007. Ján Čarnogurský stressed the inevitability of such an approach by the opposition to voice its concern over the state of democracy in Slovakia to foreign partners. Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 24, 2007.

¹⁰⁵ "Slovakia is determined to become a full-fledged member and has done the maximum to be fully prepared and ready to join the Alliance...Nevertheless, we have noticed that representatives of some NATO members are excluding us from the first group, which means Slovakia might not be invited in [at] the same time as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. We believe that this is not the case otherwise it would be a double standard approach to particular CE countries. What we call for is the [an] objective evaluation of the Slovakia's performance. See "Statement of Mr. Jozef Šesták, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic to the NATO Senior Political Committee Reinforced (16+1)", Brussels, April 4, 1997. *Personal documents of Jozef Šesták*.

¹⁰⁶ The kidnapping of Kováč junior, the abuse of power and the situation regarding the rights of minorities were major reasons why Slovakia was not initially accepted to access NATO. Miroslav Čaplovič, "Slovenská vláda do poslednej chvíle neverila, že NATO jej ukáže chrbát" [The Slovak Government Did Not Believe until the Last Moment that NATO Would Turn its Back on It], *Pravda*, March 27, 2009. The article refers to Ron Asmus, the former Foreign Undersecretary of State, and Bruce Jackson, the former Chairman of the US Committee on NATO, both of whom voiced their distrust of the government and Mečiar himself.

not want us in the West, we turn to the East". This was seen as a proof of foul play.¹⁰⁷

Comparing Slovakia's economic potential and political weight with that of Russia representing the East, Karen Henderson suggested that

Fraternizing with Russia was essentially part of Mečiar's balancing act between east and west, through which he attempted to avoid the political constraints of wholehearted commitment to the country's more natural westward path. Yet the idea of Slovakia forming some kind of vital bridge between east and west was always an illusion...Russia was pragmatic in its foreign policy...and though it welcomed Slovak support, Slovakia was simply not weighty enough to assist Russia in major aims such as preventing NATO's eastward enlargement. In the end, NATO ignored Slovakia and enlarged without it.¹⁰⁸

In the meantime, Slovakia's relations with the Czech Republic and Hungary worsened. As for the former, the reason behind it was the personal animosity between Mečiar and Václav Havel that dated back to March of 1991 and had deteriorated

¹⁰⁷ "The government of Mečiar made its orientation towards Russia an alternative to Slovakia's integration into western organizations." Alexander Duleba, "Desať rokov slovenskej východnej politiky: Hlavné omyly a poučenia" [Ten Years of Slovak Eastern Politics: the Main Failures and Lessons], *Listy SFPA*, January - February 2003, p.1. Vladimír Mečiar said to me that by 'East' he meant a broader territorial context, notably Japan, from which Slovakia desired loans and credits after it had been rejected in the West. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ Henderson, p. 106. Though this observation seems legitimate in a general perspective, Russian foreign policy was not completely indifferent to Slovakia's placement between East and West. The First Deputy Minister of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Mityukov, said for the Slovak Daily *Pravda* on February 10, 1996: "We have a hundred-year old history of Slovak-Russian relations and Slovakia today is the only country of Central Europe in which no prejudices are held against Russia...individual politicians spoke about a so-called positive neutrality [the SNS] in connection with NATO enlargement. This means that Slovakia adopts, in principle, a cautious approach to this issue with a view to ensure [the] security of the Slovak state." Wlachovský, *Foreign Policy*, p.43. František Šebej from the Democratic Party accused the Mečiar government of a "systematic deconstruction of [a] democratic state and the rule of law" and of "carrying on with the planned and perfidious scenario designed to disqualify the Slovak Republic from membership in the EU and NATO." See the article "Premiér Mečiar je zástancom ruských, a nie slovenských záujmov, tvrdí Šebej" [PM Mečiar Defends Russian, Not Slovak Interests, Šebej Says], *Sme*, December 16, 1996.

since.¹⁰⁹ The mutually respectful relationship of Mečiar with the Prime Minister of Hungary Gyula Horn that helped to prevent the issue of the Magyar minority in Slovakia from boiling over was broken during in the Hungarian city of Győr in August of 1997. There, allegedly, Mečiar proposed an exchange of population which would have particularly concerned the Magyars living in Slovakia.¹¹⁰

On the eve of 1997, both the government and the opposition were ready for a major confrontation. The opposition suggested that the next president should be elected directly by popular vote instead of by the National Council. The HZDS responded by refusing to schedule a parliamentary debate on the amendment to the Constitution. In January of 1997, the opposition launched a petition signed by more than 500,000 people who demanded the direct election of the president. The drive for a constitutional change collided with the efforts of the government to shift the responsibility for the expected failure of Slovakia's integration into NATO by passing a resolution in the National Council that directed President Kováč to call a referendum on Slovakia's membership in NATO before its summit in Madrid in July of 1997. When President Kováč announced the date of the referendum, he also decided to attach a fourth question regarding the direct election of the President to the three that had dealt with Slovak entrance into

¹⁰⁹ In April of 1997, Havel in an interview for *Le Figaro* pointed to Mečiar's "characteristic paranoia" in his attitudes towards NATO. This led to the recall of the Slovak Ambassador in Prague for "consultations" that lasted for two weeks. Mečiar also cancelled his visit to Prague. See the article by John Chipman "Relations Between Czech, Slovak Republics Turn Sour," *The Globe and Mail*, May 23, 1997. What the article failed to mention was that the Slovak government asked for an apology from Havel on the basis of the breach of diplomatic rules and elementary principles in official communications between two sovereign states.

¹¹⁰ Mečiar said to Horn that, if Magyars felt unhappy in Slovakia and wanted to live in Hungary, he guaranteed that the state would buy their properties from them. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007. For details see Wlachovský, Duleba, Lukáč, Skladony, "The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic," p.85.

NATO. The government refused to accept the fourth question and instructed the Minister of the Interior, Gustáv Krajčí, to print and distribute ballots that contained only the three original questions on NATO membership.¹¹¹ Following embittered appeals of the opposition, voters either stayed at home or did not cast their votes after having observed that the ballots were incomplete. Barely 10% of eligible voters participated in the obstructed referendum, which destroyed what had been left of the image of the country as a credible partner and that of the Mečiar government in particular.¹¹²

In October of 1997 the President and the Prime Minister managed to issue a joint statement in which they supported the accession of the Slovak Republic into the European Union as the country's highest priority.¹¹³ However, in contrast to its neighbours – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland – at the summit of the EU in Luxembourg held in December of 1997, Slovakia was not invited to begin talks on its accession into the Union. It fell into the second group of countries with Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania.¹¹⁴ Next to its failure to secure an invitation to join

¹¹¹ Malová, "Slovakia: From the Ambiguous Constitution ...," pp.366 and 367, and Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, pp.246-247.

¹¹² Zora Bútorová: "Public Reactions to Domestic Political Issues," in *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia*, ed. Zora Bútorová, pp.120-121. "A referendum intended to show the West that Slovakia is ready for NATO membership has degenerated into a fiasco, tarnishing the country's already damaged image abroad." David Rocks, "Referendum Fiasco Leaves Slovak Officials Red-Faced," *The Globe and Mail*. May 27, 1997. See also "Mečiarova vláda zmarila šance Slovenska na vstup do NATO a Európskej únie" [A Chance for Slovakia to Enter NATO and the European Union Ruined by Mečiar's Government], *Sme*, May 26, 1997.

¹¹³ See the document "Joint Declaration of the President of the Slovak Republic and the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic." Register "Political Department D," 305-106/1997. *DA MZV SR*. The last sentence reads: "Therefore, the President and the Prime Minister declare that they will refrain from any actions or statements calling the above mentioned principles [democracy, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and freedoms] into question."

¹¹⁴ See the document "Správa o zasadnutí Európskej rady v Luxemburgu v dňoch 12-13.decembra 1997" [Report on the Meeting of the European Council in Luxembourg on

NATO in Madrid in July of the same year, the exclusion of Slovakia from the first group of most advanced countries in Luxembourg represented a heavy blow. This was especially so for those who had prioritized membership in the European Union over that with the Alliance while overestimating Slovakia's geo-strategic position and relying on the automatic inclusion of Slovakia into the latter organization solely on the basis of geopolitical factors.¹¹⁵

5.4 Slovakia's first five years of independence: a mixed picture

The third Mečiar government brought about several negative phenomena that alienated Slovak politicians, divided the population and severely damaged the international image of the country, which was compared to a "black hole."¹¹⁶ As a consequence, Slovakia was excluded from its accession into NATO and from the negotiations with the EU within the first group of candidates because of the

December 12-13]. Register "Political Department D," 305-101/1997. *DA MZV SR*. The government made an effort to suggest that nothing wrong had happened and that both groups were equal in regard to their start of negotiations with the EU. The difference was, in fact, significant. Whereas the first group was expected to open negotiations in the spring of 1998, the second group was expected to begin talks on their preparedness to negotiate accession into the EU. See pp. 3 and 5 of the document.

¹¹⁵ Wlachovský, "Foreign Policy," *Global Report on Slovakia (1995-1996)*, p.51. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pavol Hamžík, confirmed that, though the accession into NATO and the EU were two separate processes, membership with each organization required acceptance by the other. Author interview with Pavol Hamžík, Bratislava, June 28, 2007.

¹¹⁶ The comparison was made by the U.S. State Secretary Madeleine Albright. See Eduard Kukan, "Slovakia and the World, the World and Slovakia," In *Slovakia after Communism and Mečiarism*, ed. Kieran Williams (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2000), p.20. The author is a respected career diplomat trained at the MGIMO in Moscow. He became the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in the Moravčík government in March of 1994. Kukan rejected Mečiar's offer to lead the M.F.A. after the change in government in October-November of 1994. Source: my personal recollection.

government's inability to comply with political criteria.¹¹⁷ The new and previously unknown aspects of Slovak public life were the intimidation of political opponents and the press, as well as of constitutional representatives, and the unexplained murders of people connected with non-transparent financial transactions.¹¹⁸ The fragile institutional skeleton of the nascent Slovak democracy suffered from malnutrition that stemmed from a lack of experienced personnel and from a confrontational style of politics and the personal vendettas of the leaders.

New state institutions that had emerged during the winter of 1989-1990 were expected to become the carriers of democratic change. Elected MPs were supposed to not only establish parliamentary rules similar to those in functioning democracies, but to learn how to behave according to them. From 1990 to 1992, the National Council had played a decisive role in the search of Slovaks for sovereignty. The creation of the

¹¹⁷ Karen Henderson, "Slovak Political Parties and the EU: From Symbolic Politics to Policies." In *The European Union and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Paul G. Lewis and Zdenka Mansfeldová (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2006), p.149. See also the document "Informácia o účasti delegácie Slovenskej republiky vedenej P. Hamžíkom, ministrom zahraničných vecí, na 3. zasadnutí Asociačnej rady EÚ/SR v Bruseli dňa 25.februára 1997" [Information on the Participation of the Delegation of the SR led by P. Hamžík, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the 3rd meeting of the Association Council EU/SR in Brussels, February 25, 1997]. Register "PVEÚ," 305-106/1997 (no. 2002/305-106/1997). *DA MZV SR*. The document says that "...despite the existence of some open issues (*otvorené otázky*) there is enough political will and culture towards the constitutional and democratic solution of any problem." *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹¹⁸ President Kováč and the President of the Constitutional Court Milan Čič received letters with death threats "if they would not stop being against Slovakia." See "Prezidentovi sa vyhrážajú fyzickou likvidáciou" [President Receives Threats On His Physical Liquidation], *Sme*, December 23, 1996. For the problem with the freedom of press in Slovakia see "Novinári žiadajú záruky" [Journalists Ask For Guarantees], *Pravda*, March 11, 1995. Aidan White, the Secretary General of the International Federation of Journalists based in Brussels, stated that an impression arose that the attacks on the press in Slovakia was a part of the government strategy. Vladimír Mečiar claimed that during his term as the PM, the press in Slovakia was free. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

Slovak Republic led to the completion of the building of state structures.¹¹⁹ As the political conflict between the coalition and opposition intensified, it automatically spread to state institutions. Though the National Council managed to remain the major playground for Slovak politics, its previous position as the sole arena of political contest did not remain unchallenged. The case of MP Gaulieder and the obstructed referendum demonstrated that the Constitutional Court, which appeared as the highest formal and also highly informally respected authority, became an important agent of democratic change in Slovakia. The fact that the Court was bombarded by both sides for its rulings led to the general perception of its being one of the most trusted institutions.¹²⁰

The new institutional framework provided Mečiar not only with opportunities, but also with constraints.¹²¹ This was particularly evident in the effort of the HZDS to recall the President from office, which the coalition never managed to do. The fragile substance of Slovak democracy in regard to the respect of the law appeared in full in the case of Gaulieder who was denied his mandate by the Mandate and Immunity Committee of the NR SR, despite the previous ruling of the Constitutional Court in favour of the MP.¹²²

The role of the Constitutional Court in Slovak domestic policies can be compared to that played by other institutions involved in direct communications and negotiations with Slovakia's foreign partners. They were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the

¹¹⁹ Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe*, p.83. Haughton refers to the period after the creation of the Slovak Republic as a second phase of institutional building in Slovakia, the first one being that from 1990 to 1993.

¹²⁰ Malová, "Slovakia: from the Ambiguous Constitution..." p.372.

¹²¹ Haughton, p.81.

¹²² *Ibidem*, p.31. Jozef Šesták claimed that the domestic political fight between the coalition and the opposition was a major hindrance to more efficient diplomatic efforts. Author interview with Jozef Šesták, Bratislava, June 24, 2007.

National Bank, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture.¹²³ Tim Haughton suggested that the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to start from scratch. It is important to note, however, that while understaffed, the top and the middle rank executives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Bank, both involved with negotiations with their partners abroad, were the former employees of the federal institutions, many of whom opted for Slovak citizenship in 1993. Among those experts were also Eduard Kukan, Pavol Hamžík, Jozef Šesták and several others. In 1988, 30% of the diplomats of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs were Slovaks in comparison with 10% at the beginning of the communist federation in the late 1960s.¹²⁴ The key players in this process, the ministers of the M.F.A. – Juraj Schenk, Pavol Hamžík and the Under-Secretary of State Jozef Šesták – worked hard for Slovakia’s accession into NATO and the EU. Even Mečiar’s domestic opponents, let alone the Ministry’s partners abroad, did not entertain or insinuate the idea that the Ministry’s activities were non-professional, untrustworthy or insincere.¹²⁵ In fact, it was the results reached on the level of experts that ensured that Slovakia, after the change in

¹²³ Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities...*, pp. 3. Similar was the opinion of Svetoslav Bombík, one of the founders of the Ministry for International Relations, the predecessor to the M.F.A., established in 1990. See Miroslav Wlachowský, “Foreign Policy,” *Global Report on Slovakia...*, p.49.

¹²⁴ Jindřich Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé a velmoci ve XX. století (1918 až 1992)*, p.363. The Ministry’s cadres were also recruited from academia and among intellectuals with international experience and contacts. See Mojžita, *Kňazko, Demeš, Kňazko: Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie...*, pp. 97-98.

¹²⁵ See the article “Bojovný Šesták” [Combative Šesták] published in *Práca* (no date available, refers to the article published in the *Financial Times*, October 16, 1997). See also “Slowakei verspricht politische Reformen” [Slovakia Promises Political Reforms] by Wolfgang Böhm, *Die Presse* (Austria), October 27, 1997.

government in the fall of 1998, was able to catch up with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary.¹²⁶

The Slovak government was about to pay for its mistaken calculations regarding accession into NATO and notably the EU. It happened mainly due to the inconsistency, inexperience in diplomatic communication and emotions that spread from domestic to foreign politics.¹²⁷ Still, it is doubtful that the HZDS and its leader intended to systematically sabotage their own program.¹²⁸ Access to privatization divided former allies no less than their attitudes to the integration processes. In fact, privatization seems to be a key to the internal division of Slovak political elites in the mid-1990s. This division continued to play an instrumental role also after the change of government in the fall of 1998.

¹²⁶ Whereas Juraj Schenk was a moderate person under all circumstances, the irritated Pavol Hamžík once responded to the Slovak press which had accused the Ministry of disregarding signals from the U.S. Ambassador in Bratislava Ralph Johnson about Slovakia having fallen behind in the accession process with NATO, by saying: "I do not see why the ministry should react to appearances of ambassadors; there are 'x' number of them here." See Wlachovský, Duleba, Lukáč, Skladony, "The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic," *Global Report 1996-1997*, p.92. Hamžík's abdication after the obstructed referendum, "which he could not explain to himself, so how could he explain its results to its partners," clearly demonstrated his stance in favour of NATO enlargement. Author interview with Pavol Hamžík, Bratislava, June 28, 2007. Both Vladimír Mečiar and Jozef Šesták, claimed that catching up with the most advanced countries in the accession processes into the EU and NATO by the Dzurinda administration were the results of the work of the previous government. Author interviews with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007, and with Jozef Šesták, Bratislava, June 13, 2007.

¹²⁷ A deputy of the HZDS, Roman Hofbauer, accused the EU and the opposition of plotting against the Slovak government and Mečiar in regard to his declaration of the amnesties pertinent to the abduction of Michal Kováč junior, as well as to the obstructed referendum. See the article "Britský veľvyslanec vyvracia Hofbauerove tvrdenie o spiknutí EÚ s opozíciou" [British Ambassador Denounces Hofbauer's Allegations on a Plot by the EU and the Opposition], *Sme*, April 4, 1998.

¹²⁸ According to Hamžík, Mečiar knew that there was no alternative to the western direction in Slovak foreign policy. After having been rejected by western partners, he sought a way to make the rejection acceptable to the electorate supporting him. Author interview with Pavol Hamžík, Bratislava, June 28, 2007.

In spite of the stark contrast between Mečiar's third government's goals and deeds, the neglected abduction of Michal Kováč Jr. and the assassination of Róbert Remiáš, together with the refusal of the coalition to accept the ruling by the Constitutional Court on the validity of Gaulieder's mandate, became also something more than the transgressions against morality. They cumulatively merged into the major political blunder that definitively closed the door for those who wished to enter the "gentlemen's club" without giving sufficient guarantees for being compliant with its rules.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ See the newspaper article "Solana upozornil, že podmienkou prijatia do NATO je uznávanie tých istých hodnôt" [The Condition for Acceptance by NATO is Respect for the Same Values, Solana Warns], *Sme*, March 6, 1998. Javier Solana was the Secretary General of NATO from 1995 to 1999. Compare with the classic verdict "C'est pire qu'un crime, c'est une faute," by Napoleon's Minister of Police in reply to the abduction of Duc D'Enghien from a neutral territory and his execution. Stefan Zweig, *Joseph Fouché* (Paris: Grasset, 1931), p.166.

CHAPTER 6
THE THIRD MEČIAR GOVERNMENT AND SLOVAK SOCIETY:
THE CHANGE OF 1998

6.1 Civil society in Slovakia and its 'Return to Europe'

In his contemplation of the historical mission of the Habsburg monarchy in Central Europe and the Danubian Basin, the doyen of European politics, Prince Klemens von Metternich, Chancellor of Austria, stated that "Asia begins at the Landstrasse" in a reference to the cultural, even civilizational dichotomy existing within the Empire.¹ The minuscule river Leitha represented the demarcation line not only between Austria and Hungary (alternatively known as Cis- and Trans-Leithania), but also between the European West and the East. From the 18th century onward, Eastern Europe has mostly been identified with the Byzantine and the Ottoman Empires and Russia, all of which have been Eurasian powers.² In the East the cultivation of the relationship between the state and citizen, in contrast to the West shaped by the Enlightenment, was neglected.³ The communist regime subordinated the previously

¹ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p.9. The Landstrasse leads from Vienna to the East.

² Peter Turchin, *War and Peace and War: the Life Cycles of Imperial Nations* (New York: Pi Press, 2006), p.77. The author commented on the idea of "the intellectual tradition of dumping on the Byzantines [that] began in the eighteenth century with Edward Gibbon's book [*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*]." See also Malia's statement on Russia as the "eastern extreme of gradation of European Old Regimes running from the elaborate and developed to the more simple and brutal. In short, she is the backward rear guard of Europe at the bottom of the slope of the West-East cultural gradient." Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York-Toronto: Free Press-Maxwell Macmillan, 1994), p.55.

³ "The state is a collection of individuals who live together the better to secure their own welfare, and it is the duty of rulers to rule as to bring about – by means which can be ascertained by reason – the greatest welfare for the inhabitants of their territory. This is

existing civil society in Czechoslovakia to a political society limited to and represented by a single political party. The fall of Communism and the subsequent period of transformation of post-communist states revealed the depth of the division between West and East often identified with Asia in terms of civic and political culture.

In the mid-1980s, the Czech writer-in-exile Milan Kundera insisted upon the cultural inseparability of Central Europe from the West and their togetherness in defiance of the devastating impact of Communism that brought to Central Europe an alien culture.⁴ After 1989, post-communist countries in East Central Europe began racing towards western and trans-Atlantic organizations. The most prominent speaker for a “return to Europe” was Václav Havel, who became the spokesman of the moral rhetoric of Central European states on their thorny road into NATO and the EU.⁵ The post-communist governments individually presented their cases and compliance with the new rules in Brussels and Washington, while distancing themselves from their “easterness.” This tendency was observed by western scholars and politicians:

Czech national identity depends on Slovakia as one of its others and the dichotomy European/Asian is routinely invoked to demarcate the border between the two. Slovenian discourse not only underlines the ‘Europeanness’ of Slovenia but the Balkan character of Croatia. In Croatia one is told that Croatia is in Europe, whereas Serbia is definitely non-Europe. Serbs will underline that they and other

the social pact which unites men together, and defines the rights and duties of rulers and subjects.” Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1966), p.10.

⁴ Milan Kundera, “A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out,” *Granta*, 11 (1984), p.100.

⁵ Sami Moisió, “EU Eligibility, Central Europe, and the Invention of the Applicant State Narrative,” In *Geopolitics* 7, no.3 (Winter 2002), pp.89-116. Havel claimed that “the Western states should rid themselves of their subconscious drive for a dominant position in their own sphere of interests...they should stop trying to outwit history by reducing the idea of Europe to a noble backdrop against which they continue to defend their own petty concerns.” Ibidem, p.104. For a “return to Europe” by post-communist societies in general see Judy Batt, “Introduction: Defining East Central Europe.” In *Developments in Central and East European Politics* 3, eds. Stephen White, Judy Batt and Paul G. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp.17-22.

traditionally Orthodox Christian states such as Russia and EU member Greece are European, while Bosnia, which insistently is referred to as a 'Muslim' state is not. In Hungarian discourse, it is, to put it politely, not uncommon to hear Romania represented as non-European. Romanians, in turn, stress their Europeanness by pointing to the lack thereof where Ukraine is concerned. In Ukraine one is told that Ukraine is Europe and Russia is most certainly non-European.⁶

After the "Night of the Long-Knives" in November of 1994, diplomatic warnings on Slovakia's potential exclusion from its integration with the EU and NATO poured into Bratislava. As a result, the country could have easily found itself where it did not want to be anymore – at the same place where it had been before. External observers had no doubts that geographically and historically the Slovaks were part of Central East Europe. The question of admittance to western organizations, however, was not that of a discourse on historical traditions, but on the style of politics and respect for democratic rules, both formal and informal.⁷ After the obstructed referendum on the country's accession to NATO in March of 1997, it became clear from that moment that the citizens, not the government, had to decide where Slovakia wanted to belong.⁸

The classic definition of a civil society is that of an "arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their

⁶ Iver B. Neumann, "European Identity, EU Expansion, and the Integration/Exclusion Nexus," In *Constructing Europe's Identity: The External Dimension*, ed. Lars-Erik Cederman (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), p.153. Slovenia in particular distanced itself from Slovakia very explicitly on several occasions.

⁷ On the discourse "historicity versus the legacy of Communism" see Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "European Roots: The Case of Slovakia," In *Central European History and the European Union*, ed. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.11 and 20.

⁸ "Vstup do EÚ závisí od SR a jej obyvateľov" [Accession into the EU Depends on the Slovak Republic and its Inhabitants], *Sme*, January 14, 1998.

interests.”⁹ Based upon the principles of social solidarity and the rule of law (*Rechtstaat*),¹⁰ civil societies in the West gradually grew stronger, strengthening the social and political cohesion of their respective states.¹¹ Western societies had always appeared very attractive in the popular imagination of communist Central and Eastern Europe due to the former’s civic freedom and abundance of material benefits. Yet western societies, despite their rich traditions of civiness or because of them, were far from being static conglomerates of happy citizens living in perfect harmony. They were the outcomes of a long-lasting evolution that reflected internal tensions and

...multiple forms of interaction and collective solidarity [which] are often incommensurable, fragile and subject to serious - violent - conflict. Modern civil society is a restless battlefield where interest meets interest. It unfolds and develops in an arbitrary, blind, semi-spontaneous manner. This means not only that civil society cannot overcome its own particularities, but also that it tends to paralyse and undermine its own pluralism.¹²

This intra-societal dynamic, previously tamed by Communism, became particularly observable in post-communist Slovakia during two periods: from 1990 to 1992 and in its more developed and complex form from 1996 to 1998.

⁹ Juan Linz, “Democracy and its Arenas,” In *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, eds. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore and New York: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.7.

¹⁰ The idea formulated and elaborated by Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel in his seminal work *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* [Philosophy of Right] (Berlin: 1821).

¹¹ “The cohesion of the state and loyalty to it depends on its capacity to ensure the welfare of the individual, and in him, love of the fatherland is a function of [the] benefits received.” Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1966), p.12. “Building social capital will not be easy, but it is the key to making democracy work.” Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton University Press, 1993), p.185.

¹² John Keane, *Civil Society. Bold Images, New Visions* (Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 50.

By the early 2000s, views on the continuity of the evolution of Slovak society began to change.¹³ A first step was the observation that the example of Slovakia's small, but existing civil society "may shed the light on the prevailing nature of civil society in Eastern Europe; i.e., not that it is necessarily non-existent, but that it is largely local and small-scale."¹⁴ The fact that national revivalism in Slovakia in the early transitory period from Communism to democracy (1989-1992) had a non-violent character deserves special attention since it "contradicts the widespread perception of Slovak nationalism as an extreme and radical political phenomenon, particularly when it is compared to the countries in the region."¹⁵ The mainstream of the Second National Movement that began to grow at the beginning of the 1990s, as part of a return to the national history inspired by Slovak awakeners in the 19th century, transformed itself into civic associations. The most important ones – the *Štúrova spoločnosť* (The Society of Štúr) and NEZES (The Independent Association of the Economists of Slovakia) – managed to avoid potential escalation of the already-existing political discontent in Czechoslovakia and its spillover into more radical forms of conflict. The non-violent character of Slovak national revivalism in the early 1990s was the result of the absence of territorial disputes with the Czechs, the long-term existence of mixed families and, last but not least, the tradition of civiness preserved by civic associations. In 1918, there were 16,000 such associations

¹³ Shari J. Cohen, *Politics Without A Past: The Absence Of History In Postcommunist Nationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), p.176.

¹⁴ Cas Mudde, "Civil society in post-communist Europe: Lessons from the 'dark side'." In *Uncivil society: Contentious politics in post-communist Europe*, eds. Petr Kopecký & Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p.167.

¹⁵ Darina Malová, "The Slovak National Movement: A Case of Successful Contention," In *Uncivil Society? Contentious politics...*, p.72. For the reference to Slovaks as the most ethno-nationalist polity among post-communist countries in East Central Europe see Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulbricht K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in post-communist societies: rebuilding the ship at sea*, (Cambridge - New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.256.

on Slovak territory.¹⁶ Although the wartime Slovak state suppressed the majority of them, they re-emerged with remarkable speed in 1945-1948, numbering 10,000 organizations with more than half a million members.¹⁷ After February 1948, the communist regime put those associations that were allowed to exist under its control. It generated new ones and incorporated them into the National Front, in order to pretend to formal plurality. This benevolence had a simple explanation: an already existing tradition. The regime could not afford to disregard the natural needs of the people of Czechoslovakia for assembling in various professional and leisure associations, the legacy of which go back to the 18th century and even earlier, without the risk of deepening the gap between the party and the rest of society.¹⁸

The Slovak National Movement, which emerged and evolved with astonishing rapidity in the winter and spring of 1990, was a reaction to the suppressed historical memory linked to national emancipation. Besides intellectuals and experts who could

¹⁶ “Slovakia was frequently perceived as a country with a late modernization process, strong nationalism and a weak civil society... Only later, after the 1998 parliamentary elections, has the perception of the country changed.” Malová, “The Slovak National Movement...,” p.55. For more details see Elena Mannová, “Spolky a ich miesto v živote spoločnosti na Slovensku v 19.stor. Stav a problémy výskumu” [Associations and Their Role in the Life of the Society in Slovakia in the 19th Century: The State and Problems of the Research]. *Historický časopis* 38, no.1 (1990), p.15.

¹⁷ Malová, “The Slovak National Movement...,” p.59.

¹⁸ Mannová, “Spolky a ich miesto...,” p.20. Among the most important functions of civic associations in Hungary in the 19th century were their political and lobbying-like activities that contained the “nucleuses of representation of political orientations.” Ibidem, p.25. After the fall of Communism, Slovak historians began to focus on the place and role of the Slovak gentry and bourgeoisie in the transition from capitalism to Communism after 1948. For the Slovak bourgeoisie preserved the middle-class anti-capitalist mentality, it was liquidated by the communist regime as an “exploitative class” (*vykoristovateľská trieda*). The residua of the bourgeois mentality and its resistance, particularly in the urban environment, are the subject of continuing research. See Elena Mannová, “Meštianstvo na Slovensku v 19. a 20.storočí ako predmet historického výskumu [Bourgeoisie in Slovakia in the 19th and 20th Centuries as the Subject of Historical Research], *Historický časopis* 45, no.1 (1997), pp.85-90.

not forget the reform movement of the 1960s, it also comprised many university students, as well as members of the re-emerging political parties, institutions and civic associations. To all of them the idea of national identity was closely tied to the defence of “national interests” formulated in the early 1990s. The *Matica slovenská*, the oldest Slovak cultural institution, became its patron. By the time of the creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993, the first phase of the (Second) national movement was over, since the major goal of the movement had been achieved.¹⁹ Some of the participating associations halted their activities and their leaders returned to their professions; some of them entered politics or became employees of state institutions.²⁰

The Slovak National Movement in the 1990s testified to the presence of cycles in the life of Slovak society.²¹ The gatherings in 1848, 1861 and 1918, the commemorative assembly in Nitra in 1933, the Congress of the Slovak Youth in 1935 in Turčianske Teplice, the Slovak National Uprising in 1944, the parliamentary elections in May of 1946, the reform movement in the 1960s, religious resistance and the environmentalist movement in the 1980s, let alone developments during and after the “Velvet Revolution,” all were milestones on the same road. It did not matter whether those events had happened in Hungary or Czechoslovakia, nor did it matter whether they were shaped by Capitalism or Communism.

¹⁹ According to Malová, the second SNM included three phases. The next two were those of 1994 and 1998. Malová, “The Slovak National Movement...,” p.63.

²⁰ “Civil society is not one homogenous entity, but rather a heterogeneous sphere in which various groups exist and at time mobilize; sometimes together, sometimes apart, sometimes together against the state, sometimes alone against each other. In general, successful mobilization of one group/network is followed by its demobilization (and possibly the inclusion of its leaders into the state).” Cas Mudde, “Civil society in post-communist Europe: Lessons from the ‘dark side,’ .In *Uncivil society...*,” p.168.

²¹ Mudde, pp.167-169.

6.2 Forming the opposition: the rise of the non-governmental sector

During the mid-1990s, reacting to the third Mečiar government, civil society in Slovakia began to grow. Its flagbearer became the non-governmental sector. Known in Slovakia as the “Third Sector,” its roots can be traced back to the civic form of discontent in the second half of the 1980s – religious and environmental. In 1991, the Gremium of the Third Sector (*Grémium tretieho sektora* – G3S) was established during a conference held in Stupava, in West Slovakia. The goal of the G3S was to represent the interests of non-governmental agencies and ordinary citizens in various areas parallel to existing political structures.²² Since then, numerous non-governmental organizations (*nevládne organizácie* or *mimovládky*) were created, of which the most active and visible were the Slovak Academic Information Agency’s Service Center for the Third Sector (SAIA-SCTS), the Center for Conflict Prevention and Resolution, the Center for Social Policy Analysis, the Slovak Humanitarian Council, the Pontis Foundation and many others. They closely cooperated with foreign foundations, such as the Open Society Fund, the USAID Democracy Network Program, the Donors’ Foundation, the Civil Society Development Foundation, and others. The civic association ChangeNet helped to create the system of mutual communication within an independent Internet server. SAIA-SCTS has published the monthly journal *NonProfit*, which provided large-scale information on various aspects of civil society and on the activities of the NGOs in

²² Martin Bútorá, Pavol Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, eds. Martin Bútorá, Grigorij Mesežnikov, Zora Bútorová, Sharon Fisher (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.157. For the characterization of the emerging non-governmental sector in Slovakia see also Ruth Hoogland DeHoog and Luba Racanska, “Democratization, Civil Society, and Nonprofits: Comparing the Czech and Slovak Republics,” *Nonprofit Sector Research Fund*, Working Paper Series Spring 2001, The Aspen Institute, Washington, p.21. Accessed at: http://www.nonprofitresearch.org/usv_doc/55883pdf. All references to this source have been made upon the kind consent by the publisher.

Slovakia. In February of 1998, 14,400 organizations were registered with the Ministry of the Interior, of which approximately 12,000 were civic associations, 422 were foundations, 161 were non-investment funds, and 16 were non-profit organizations.²³ Similar to the activities of the opposition parties, the non-governmental sector had to face the distrust of the government, which eventually made attempts to eliminate their role and potential impact by the adoption of the Law on Foundations.²⁴ Its stipulations allowed the government to control the activities of the non-governmental sector and obstruct the activities of those associations that were considered “unfriendly” to it. International agencies and foreign officials soon became concerned by pressures brought on the NGOs by the Slovak government. While visiting Slovakia in July of 1996, Hillary Clinton vigorously stepped into the debate on the Law on Foundations.²⁵ During her meeting with the concerned Slovak NGO representatives in the Reduta Symphony Hall in the Bratislava’s Old Town, Mrs. Clinton sent strong signals to Mečiar’s

²³ Bútorá, Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections,” p.157.

²⁴ According to the stipulations of the Law of Foundations of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (*Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky č.207/1996 Zb. o nadáciách*; dated June 20, 1996), foundations became primarily funding organizations significantly dependent upon foreign sources. Organizations that provided services were classified as non-profit or civic associations. They were either voluntary organizations or were also receiving grants. Each NGO had to comply with the following criteria: 1) registration with the Ministry of the Interior, 2) capital assets, or endowment of 100,000 Slovak crowns [3,300 USD approx.] to remain untapped in the foundation, 3) a focus on public goals, 4) an annual audit and report, 5) a primary function of grant-giving, 6) a board structure governing the foundation, 7) a public record of donors and founders. Paragraph 6 of the Law explicitly forbade financing the activities of political parties and political movements by foundations. See the full version of the Law on www.zbierka.sk (Electronic Register of Laws of the Slovak Republic), pp. 1486-1492. For an analysis of the law see Hoogland DeHoog and Racanska, “Democratization, Civil Society, and Nonprofits...,” pp.24-25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8.

administration: “Any government that wants to make sure that democracy lives...must understand that the NGO is a partner in that process.”²⁶

The government quickly recognized the potentially mobilizing effect of the non-profit sector on civic associations and reacted without delay. It created its own ‘non-governmental’ sector composed of service agencies active in the fields of culture, recreation, youth and social services. All of them received generous support from funds at the government’s disposal. The counterpart of the Gremium of the Third Sector was the Union of Civil Associations and Foundations of the Slovak Republic. It became the umbrella that shaped 335 NGOs assembled within eight elected regional councils. This pro-government non-profit sector received grants from Slovak ministries and sought support from PHARE funds sponsored by the EU.²⁷ DeHoog and Racanska observed that “the main purpose of the parallel organization was to control the flow of money from the PHARE program as the Mečiar government was not happy that the grant money did not end up in the hands of the NGOs close to the coalition government.”²⁸ Mečiar tactically used the non-profit sector he formed in an effort to neutralize the effect of the NGOs within the Gremium of the Third Sector and their impact on the public. He concentrated on facing the challenge from a defiant political opposition. As in the case of the parallel non-profit sector, Mečiar used against his opponents a combination of

²⁶ Terry Moran, “U.S. First Lady, Albright pay quick visit,” *The Slovak Spectator*, July 17-30, 1996.

²⁷ Poland and Hungary Assistance for Restructuring their Economies (PHARE) was established in 1989 to help overcome the economic difficulties of post-communist transformation. The ČSFR and other post-communist states joined the program. In 1994, Slovakia received 6.9 billion Slovak crowns in assistance, out of which 1.75 billion was allocated for private sector development. Miroslav Wlachowský, “Foreign Policy,” In *Global Report on Slovakia 1995: Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends from 1996*, eds. Martin Bútora and Péter Hunčík (Bratislava: Sándor Márai Foundation, 1997), pp.47-48.

²⁸ Hoogland DeHoog and Racanska, p.22.

pressure and benefits. As a close observer of Slovak politics pointed out, “loyalty towards Mečiar was generously rewarded and even rank-and-file members of the coalition were corrupted by generous hand-outs and lucrative positions.”²⁹

In the mid-1990s, ordinary Slovak citizens became concerned primarily about their families’ standards of living and social security no less than by the rise of crime and its possible connection with state authorities.³⁰ A survey conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs in October of 1997 revealed that the public apprehensions were linked to both the domestic and the foreign policies of the government. According to the poll, the major concerns of citizens included criminal aspects of economic life (76%), the exclusion of Slovakia from the first wave of integration with the EU (54%), the murder of Robert Remiáš (54%), the obstructed referendum in May of 1997 (53%), and the kidnapping of Michal Kováč, Jr. (52%) (see Graph 1 in the Appendices).³¹ Furthermore, 80% of the respondents stated that they felt that their attitudes and opinions had no impact on government policies. The “feeling of civic helplessness” (*pocit občianskej bezmocnosti*) in society was widespread. According to Slovak sociologists Zora Bútorová and Oľga Gyárfášová, it was “deeply rooted in Slovakia’s passivist political

²⁹ Samuel Abrahám, “The Rise and Fall of Illiberal Democracy in Slovakia: 1989-1999: An Analysis of Transformation in a Post-Communist Society,” PhD thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, p.183. On the other hand, it was a general opinion that “nobody believes that Mečiar himself is getting money, but he is arranging things so that his supporters get the biggest slices of the pie,” said the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and the MP of the Democratic Union Eduard Kukan. See the article “2-Year-Old Slovakia Toddling Toward Democracy,” by Stephen Kinzer, *The New York Times*, March 19, 1995.

³⁰ See Zora Bútorová and Oľga Gyárfášová: “Social Climate Three Years after the 1994 Elections,” In *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia: A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition*, ed. Zora Bútorová (Bratislava: IVO, 1998), p.52.

³¹ Bútorová, Gyárfášová, “Social Climate...,” p.59.

culture.”³² Though debatable in terms of its general validity, this observation correctly pointed to the fact that, despite growing discontent with the politics of the government, opposition parties, due to their isolation from each other, as well as from concerned citizens, could not benefit from this window of opportunity.³³ For the opposition it became imperative to discover how to mobilize dormant social and political capital and how to create a common front which would include undecided voters.

On January 23, 1998, eleven presidents from Central and East European countries met in Levoča, a historic town in Eastern Slovakia. They were invited by President Michal Kováč to discuss the role of civil society in the transformation of post-communist countries.³⁴ By accepting Kováč’s invitation in unprecedented numbers, the heads of the respective states demonstrated their unreserved support for Kováč as an advocate of the independence of civil society.³⁵ Besides its tradition as a royal free city that granted privileges to its citizens, the choice of Levoča as the place for the meeting had a specific meaning pertinent to the more recent period of Slovak history. Before and during the communist era, every year Slovaks had made religious pilgrimages at the

³² Z. Bútorová, O. Gyárfášová, “Social Climate...”, pp.65-66.

³³ Zora Bútorová, Oľga Gyárfášová, and Vladimír Krivý: “Parties, Institutions, and Politicians,” pp.69-110. In *Democracy and Discontent...*, p.69. Though for 80% of graduate students at high schools (18 years old), who were expected to go to the polls in September, Mečiar and the HZDS were unacceptable, they were still unsure about for whom they would cast their votes. “Pre 80% mladých je HZDS neprijateľné [HZDS Unacceptable for 80% of Young], *Sme*, June 17, 1998. The article refers to the data gathered by the Foundation Ekopolis.

³⁴ Martin Bútor, Pavol Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections...*, pp. 159-160.

³⁵ See the article “Podľa Kováča sú motorom integrácie slobodní občania slobodných demokratických spoločností” [According to Kováč, Free Citizens of Free Democratic Societies are the Engine of Integration], *Sme*, January 24, 1998. The participating presidents were Petar Sojanov of Bulgaria, Václav Havel of the Czech Republic, Árpád Göncz of Hungary, Aleksandr Kwaśniewski of Poland, Thomas Klestil of Austria, Emil Constantinescu of Romania, Milan Kučan of Slovenia, Roman Herzog of Germany, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro of Italy and the host of the event Slovak President Michal Kováč.

Basilica of St. Mary. The event became international even during the communist era as thousands of participants from the neighbouring regions and countries, notably from Moravia and Poland, came to Levoča as well.³⁶ With its rich cultural history and traditions of self-governance and respect for civic values, Levoča represented to the visiting presidents the last refuge of civic dignity. Their meeting had the potential to re-awake Slovak society and to mobilize it into active participation in the upcoming election.

Two months later, the mandate of Michal Kováč as President of the Slovak Republic ended. Since all previous attempts to elect the president by a three-fifths majority of the MPs in the National Council had failed, Kováč announced a referendum for the direct elections of the president for April of 1998. Mečiar, who was well aware of the attitudes of citizens and their electoral preferences, canceled the referendum, and the presidential competences passed on to him.³⁷ According to the polls, 50% of all citizens were concerned by the accumulation of presidential powers in the hands of Vladimír Mečiar, and 62% would have taken part in the canceled referendum.³⁸ Though presidential competences in the Slovak constitutional system are mostly reduced to

³⁶ See “Státisíce pútnikov prosilo na Mariánskej hore nad Levočou o odpustenie hriechov” [Hundreds of Thousands of Pilgrims Begged for Forgiveness of Sins on the Hill of Maria Above Levoča], *Sme*, July 6, 1998. In the two-day event (June 5 is the Saints Cyril and Methodius Day and a national holiday in Slovakia) approximately 500,000 people participated. The Sunday mass was celebrated by Cardinal Joachim Meisner of Cologne, who stressed the importance of Levoča pilgrimages for the fall of communist regime and compared them to those in Fatima (Portugal) and Częstochowa (Poland).

³⁷ See the statement by Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, MP of the Coexistence and the representative of the Magyar minority: “All these steps indicate that we have to be prepared for dictatorship and increasing tyranny in Slovakia.” See “Mečiar Consolidates Hold on Power in Slovakia” by John Chipman, *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1998.

³⁸ Zora Bútorová: “Public Reactions To Domestic Political Issues,” in *Democracy and Discontent...*, p.124.

formal representation, the president holds some important powers, such as the right to appoint and recall ambassadors. In March of 1998, Mečiar recalled twenty-eight of them after he had taken over presidential powers.³⁹ Since the President was also the Supreme Commander of the Slovak Armed Forces, there were concerns that Mečiar could abuse his presidential powers in an effort to impose restrictions on the elections and to initiate laws regulating the election system.⁴⁰

Indeed, Mečiar and his allies prepared the Election Law Amendment that made Slovakia a single constituency, declared a 5% threshold as the limit to be passed for obtaining a mandate in the National Council, and allowed for the election campaign to be conducted only within the state-controlled media.⁴¹ The law, which was severely criticized by the domestic opposition and legal experts,⁴² was aimed at eliminating the potential for creating coalitions of political parties in opposition. The three parties on the right of the Slovak political spectrum – the Christian Democrats, the Democratic Union

³⁹ On the one hand, the speed of that reaction may confirm the objections that it was an act of political revenge, particularly against those ambassadors who had remained close to the parties in opposition. On the other hand, the fact is that their four-year and in some cases even longer terms of missions abroad had expired within a short period of time, as Slovakia had appointed its heads of diplomatic missions *en masse* in 1993. Shortly after the parliamentary elections of September, 1998, nominees of the new coalition were posted abroad as diplomats on a massive scale as well. More importantly, the previous step made by Mečiar was interpreted as a symptom of the weakness of his government and its lack of self-confidence before the upcoming elections. See the article “Slovak Foreign Service Castled,” *The Slovak Spectator*, March 26-April 8, 1998.

⁴⁰ Kováč confirmed that he was ready to call citizens to the streets had the election been postponed or annulled by Mečiar. See “Slovakia’s President Resigns, Vowing to Fight for Democracy,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 3, 1998.

⁴¹ For a detailed analysis of the *Law no. 187/1998 on the Amendment of the Law No. 80/1990 on the election to the Slovak National Council* (accessible on www.zbierka.sk) see Peter Lebovič, “Political Aspects of the Election Law Amendments,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, eds. Martin Búďtóra, Grigorij Mesežnikov, Zora Bútorová, Sharon Fisher (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), pp.39-47.

⁴² See the article “New Election Law Proposal Draws Criticism,” *The Slovak Spectator*, March 26 - April 8, 1998.

and the extra-parliamentary Democratic Party – had formed the so-called “Blue Coalition” already in the winter of 1997. They were joined by other minor political parties such as the Social Democrats and the Greens,⁴³ thus turning the existing “Blue Coalition” into a “Rainbow Coalition” in the spring of 1998. Except for the KDH, the small parties in opposition against Mečiar would have had only a slight chance to pass the 5% quorum. Therefore, the leaders of the opposition parties formed the Slovak Democratic Coalition (*Slovenská demokratická koalícia* – SDK) in July of 1998.⁴⁴

Political opposition to Mečiar was still divided into two separate camps formed along ethnic lines represented by the SDK and the Party of the Magyar Coalition (*Strana maďarskej koalície* – SMK), which emerged from three parties representing the Magyars in Slovakia between January and March of 1998.⁴⁵ By contrast, the Magyar People’s Movement for Reconciliation and Prosperity (*Maďarské ľudové hnutie za zmierenie a prosperitu* – MLHZZP), which was created in 1995 as a left-wing party and led by the

⁴³ A question that arose was why the Social Democrats did not join the Party of the Democratic Left? Innes answered that, while referring to the unpredictability of the SDE. The party, though formally in the opposition, was willing to support the Mečiar government in 1996, when quarrels on privatization threatened his ruling coalition. Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p.248. The SDE continued to exist as the weakest part of the Dzurinda government after the 1998 elections. This will be discussed in Chapter 7.

⁴⁴ Zora Bútorová, Oľga Gyárfášová and Vladimír Krivý: “Parties, Institutions and Politicians,” In *Democracy and Discontent...*, p.71. Before the creation of the SDK and the SMK there were 66 political parties and 22 political movements in Slovakia. See the article “Ministertvo vnútra registruje 88 politických subjektov” [The Ministry of the Interior Registers 88 Political Subjects], *Sme*, March 17, 1998.

⁴⁵ Dušan Štrauss, “Systém politických strán a hnutí [System of Political Parties and Movements], In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Natália Rolková (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2004), p.84. Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics,” In *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšin, Tom Nicholson (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.54.

physician György Gyimesi from South-East Slovakia, did not become a part of the coalition of the Magyar parties.⁴⁶

The Slovak Democratic Coalition preserved the individual legal status of the parties from which it was created. They delegated their representatives to the SDK's franchise restricted to 150 party members on the basis of electoral preferences for each party's candidates.⁴⁷ This exposed the SDK to some risks and Mečiar did not hesitate to attempt to use this advantage by claiming before the Supreme Court (*Najvyšší súd*) that the SDK was not a political party under the stipulations of the election law, but a coalition of parties. The Supreme Court resisted the political pressure and dismissed the case.⁴⁸ This step eventually proved counter-productive for Mečiar's government as it drove his opponents even closer to each other and to the adoption of a common strategy for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The potential of the opposition to defeat the government increased by the creation of a new political party – the Party of Civic Understanding (*Strana občianskeho porozumenia* – SOP) established in the winter of 1997. The party was led by Rudolf Schuster and Pavol Hamžík.⁴⁹ The first had quite a turbulent political career as a

⁴⁶ László Szarka, “Menšinový politický pluralizmus a budovanie komunitnej identity maďarskej menšiny. Činnosť maďarských strán na Slovensku v rokoch 1989-1998” [Minority Political Pluralism and the Building of a Community Identity of the Magyar Minority: Activities of the Magyar Parties in Slovakia in 1989-1998], In *Maďari na Slovensku (1984-2004). Súhrnná správa. Od zmeny režimu po vstup do Európskej únie* [Magyars in Slovakia, 1984-2004. A Summary Report: From the Regime Change to the Accession into the European Union], eds. József Fazekas and Péter Hunčík (Šamorín: Fórum Inštitút pre výskum menšín, 2008), p.8. In the 1998 parliamentary elections, the party received 0.19% of the votes (6587). Ibidem, p.26.

⁴⁷ Lebovič, “Political Aspects of the Election Law Amendments,” p. 46. Štrauss, “Systém politických strán...,” p.84.

⁴⁸ Lebovič, “Political Aspects...,” p.43

⁴⁹ The two other leaders were the mayor of the city of Banská Bystrica Igor Presperín and the representative of the Confederation of the Trade Unions Marián Mesiariik. See

progressive communist politician, Chairman of the Slovak National Council in the fall of 1989 and winter of 1990, Ambassador of post-communist Czechoslovakia to Canada and a respected mayor of the second largest Slovak city Košice. The ambitious Pavol Hamžík was the former Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Mečiar government, who had resigned after the obstructed referendum on NATO accession in May of 1997. The party positioned itself at the left of the political spectrum with the ambition to integrate a polarized society.⁵⁰ A survey of electoral preferences held in April of 1998 indicated that the SOP was the third strongest political party in Slovakia with 17.2% support, while the SDK had the support of 24.5% of prospective voters, followed by the HZDS with 21.9%.⁵¹

6.3 Election campaigns

In the fall of 1997 and during the winter of 1998, both the government and the opposition mobilized their electorates in an effort to prepare themselves for the elections scheduled for September 25 and 26, 1998. Given the fact that there was still a critical mass of either indifferent or undecided voters, it was imperative for both sides to gain their support. The idea of a civic election campaign was conceived by Slovak NGO's as a consequence of citizens' fears for the fairness of the elections. The initiative, called

Rudolf Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky* [Return to High Politics] (Košice: PressPrint, 1999), pp.69-72. This is a second volume of Schuster's political autobiography linked to Slovakia's transformation. The first one, called *Ultimátum*, referred to the events that had taken place in the fall of 1989 and the spring of 1990. For details see Chapter 4.

⁵⁰ Bútorová *et al.*, "Parties, Institutions, Politicians..." pp.72-73. For an alternative vision of the party's creation as being a "temporary tool to accommodate some people's political ambitions" see the article by Peter Tóth "Bez ideológie a so záujmami" [Without Ideology and With Interests], *Sme*, February 17, 1998.

⁵¹ Bútorová, "Parties, Institutions, Politicians..." p.73. In the survey, the Party of the Democratic Left finished fourth with 9.7%, and the Party of Magyar Coalition fifth with 9.6%.

“The ‘O.K.’ 98 Civic Campaign” (*Občianska kampaň*), was officially established in the city of Zvolen in Central Slovakia in March of 1998.⁵² Supported by the Mott Foundation and the Foundation for Civil Society, its purpose was to increase public participation and ensure the upcoming parliamentary elections were free and fair.⁵³ Hundreds of activists and volunteers headed towards various Slovak regions to explain the detrimental impact of the Mečiar government’s policies that led to the international isolation of Slovakia. The government, which was already viewed from abroad as “increasingly hostile to political and media pluralism,” made sure it controlled the two major media – Slovak Television (*Slovenská televízia* – STV) and Slovak Radio (*Slovenský rozhlas* – SR).⁵⁴ The non-profit sector thus faced a serious challenge in balancing their influence on public opinion. The NGOs were portrayed by the media close to the government as enemies of the state, which they wanted to subvert.⁵⁵ They responded by launching the project “MEMO’ 98,” supervised by the Helsinki Citizens Assembly and the Association for the Support of Local Democracy, to monitor the broadcasts of major television and radio stations, as well as news by major daily

⁵² Bútorá and Bútorová, “Slovakia’s Democratic Awakening,” p.88. Bútorá, Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations....” p.160.

⁵³ Hoogland DeHoog, *Racanska*, p.26. The major purpose of the campaign of the NGOs was more concrete: to defeat Mečiar and his coalition.

⁵⁴ Slovak Radio was not such a flagrant case of failing ethics in providing objective information as was Slovak Television. See Andrej Školkay, “The Media and Political Communication in the Election Campaign,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections....*,” eds. Bútorá *et al.*, pp.119-120. For detailed information on the help received by Slovak NGOs from the West see Karen Ballentine, “International Assistance and the Development of Independent Mass Media in the Czech and Slovak Republics,” In *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, eds. Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p.93.

⁵⁵ Bútorá, Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations....,” p.164.

newspapers.⁵⁶ To monitor the election campaign in the electronic media, the government originally set up the Council of the Slovak Republic for Radio and Television Broadcasting (*Rada Slovenskej republiky pre rozhlasové a televízne vysielanie* – RSRRTV). Meanwhile, new legislation established the rules for the election campaign and imposed strict penalties for breaches of the law.⁵⁷

The privately-owned media did not remain passive and fought back. According to Karen Ballentine, a research coordinator for the International Peace Academy in New York,

throughout the Mečiar era the Slovak media displayed a dogged capacity to defend its constitutionally enshrined rights to operate free of state interference. Also still weakly developed, several professional associations for radio broadcasters, print journalists, and television producers helped to defeat the government's attempts to pass restrictive media legislation.⁵⁸

Despite its strong determination, the independent media alone would have hardly won the election. The active presence of hundreds of volunteers working for Slovak NGOs in distant regional areas was an absolute necessity for securing the final success. Overall, the Slovak NGOs organized almost 60 projects supported by the “Donor’s Forum” within the “O.K. Civic Campaign” alone.⁵⁹ One of the most successful was the “Road for Slovakia,” prepared and managed by the civic association “Gemma 93.” During a fifteen-day long march from August 18 to September 3, 350 activists passed through

⁵⁶ A major founder of MEMO was the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute. See Školkay, “The Media and Political Communication in the Election Campaign,” p.114. Among print media, the daily *Sme* was the main critic of the government.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.112-113. The penalties included fines from 5,000 to 5,000,000 Slovak crowns. RSRRTV dealt with 17 breaches of the law and intervened on both sides.

⁵⁸ Karen Ballentine, “International Assistance...,” p. 99.

⁵⁹ Hoogland DeHoog and Racanska refer to 58 Slovak NGOs cooperating in 63 projects. Hoogland DeHoog, Racanska, p.27.

more than 850 Slovak towns and villages, travelling 3,000 kilometers.⁶⁰ They distributed half a million brochures that explained the importance of the upcoming elections.

The effect of the NGOs' campaigns was multiplied by the massive participation of young people in concerts sponsored by the Foundation for a Civil Society. The "Rock the Vote" campaign, which comprised a series of thirteen rock concerts, started in Eastern Slovakia and ended in the center of Bratislava. It was the largest project centered on Slovak youth and specifically on first-time voters. The European Association of Student Rights" organized visits to thirty high schools in seventeen towns, providing students with information on voting rights.⁶¹ Similarly, the "Head 98" (*Hlava 98*) project's primary goal was to organize sporting activities for young voters. Several actors, singers and entertainers took part in the project "I Think, Therefore I Vote." At the meetings, they voiced their support for a return to democracy, humanity, and tolerance.

This part of the campaign of the non-governmental sector was connected to meetings organized by opposition parties. Ladislav Chudík, the most respected Slovak actor of the older generation, appeared on the billboards of the SDK, along with Mikuláš Dzurinda, the leader of the opposition, who promised to double the salaries of Slovak citizens.⁶² Luciano Pavarotti agreed to perform live in Košice, a bastion of the opposition. Similarly, the Slovak opera singer Peter Dvorský helped to popularize the

⁶⁰ Pavol Demeš, "The Third Sector and Volunteerism," In *Slovakia 1998-1999. A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivantyšin, Tom Nicholson (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.350.

⁶¹ Bútor, Demeš, "Civil Society Organizations...", p.161.

⁶² See "SDK zvolila za svojho predsedu M. Dzurindu, sľubuje zvýšenie miezd na dvojnásobok" [M. Dzurinda Elected as Chairman by the SDK, Promises to Double Salaries], *Sme*, July 6, 1998. During its term in the National Council, the SDK committed itself to create 150,000 new jobs and to build 14,000 apartments, increase the pensions by 50% and lower the tax for small and middle entrepreneurs.

Party of Civic Understanding. He appeared on the party's franchise and was elected a deputy.⁶³ Other artists also engaged in the campaigns, either through public appearances or by addressing audiences.⁶⁴ Less than a month before the election, Schuster rose in public polls as the most popular politician in Slovakia with 21.21% of electoral support, followed by Dzurinda and Mečiar, both of whom were supported by 16.83% of potential voters.⁶⁵

To lure the voters from the opposite camp, both sides partly switched their tactics in an effort to penetrate into the very zone of their opponents. The SDK presented itself as patriotic party in order to convince the hesitant voters concerned by the lack of national motives in its campaign. The party broadcast a spot called "The Magic Eight" (the SDK number was 8) on television, which pointed to the fact that major historic events in Slovakia's history occurred on the dates ending with the number eight.⁶⁶ The HZDS abandoned the overuse of nationalistic motives in its campaign as it wanted to present itself as a modern party that cared about civic aspects no less than its opponents. Meanwhile, Pavol Kanis from the Party of the Democratic Left led his own campaign. He went into the countryside to chop firewood for the widows of partisans of Slovakia's

⁶³ Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky*, pp.68-68 and pp.72-73. After the election Dvorský resigned his mandate.

⁶⁴ Martin Porubjak, "I Think, Therefore I Vote: Cultural Figures in the 1998 Election Campaign," In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections...* eds. Bútora et al., pp.179-185. As in the rest of society, the cultural scene in Slovakia was also divided into supporters of the regime and its opponents as a consequence of the *Kulturkampf* led by the government against those who were unsympathetic towards it. Porubjak, the former member of the Public Against Violence, is a scriptwriter.

⁶⁵ See the article "Dôvera: 1. Schuster, Dzurinda dostihol Mečiara [Confidence: 1. Schuster, Dzurinda Ties with Mečiar], *Sme*, September 4, 1998.

⁶⁶ Školokay, "The Media and Political Communication..." p.128. Memorable events in Slovak national history had happened in 1848, 1918, 1938, 1948, 1968, and 1988 (The Candle Demonstration as an overture, from the Slovak perspective, to the Velvet Revolution in 1989).

National Uprising in 1944 because “people forget about them.”⁶⁷ The Slovak National Party remained conservative. Its logo with an eagle and slogan “every eagle protects its nest” was meant as a reference to the need to defend Slovakia from its enemies.⁶⁸

Mečiar did not want to fall short of his opponents. His campaign involved actors and faces from public domain as well. Thanks to the vast funds at the HZDS’s disposal provided by the manager of the campaign Alexander Rezeš, the majority owner of the privatized steel giant, the Eastern Slovak Steel Works (*Východoslovenské železiarne – VSŽ*),⁶⁹ western celebrities were hired to propagate the image of Vladimír Mečiar as a widely popular figure. The two Claudias – Cardinale and the top-model Schiffer – showed up for a day, each having been paid roughly six million Slovak crowns per stay (approximately 200,000 USD). Likewise, the French actor Gérard Depardieu was flown to Košice by a private company jet for a couple of hours. He appeared beside Mečiar at a soccer stadium, and afterwards he summarized his short stay in Eastern Slovakia with the famous sentence “he calls me Gérard, and I call him Vladimír.” Instead of the French star Jean-Paul Belmondo, who was also invited, his son Paul was present at the ceremony of the opening of a section of the superhighway in the High-Tatras Mountains.⁷⁰

The difference between this type of campaign and that led by the NGOs and political parties in opposition was made by the latter’s spontaneity and authenticity.

⁶⁷ Školkay, p. 129.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

⁶⁹ Porubjak, “I Think Therefore I Vote...,” p.184. Školkay, p. 127. Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership on Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.32.

⁷⁰ Claudia Schiffer was criticized for allowing herself to be “used by an autocratic dictator in a media appearance that was good publicity for him” by the German Minister of Economy Otto Graf Lambsdorff. See “Starstruck PM angers voters” by Joanne Laucius, *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 1, 1998.

Even those voters, who were sympathetic towards the government, were angered by the cost of those poorly-arranged and in the final analysis rather indecisive events. Martin Porubjak's assessment was that "the result of these connections was megalomania, aggressiveness, and bad taste."⁷¹ Moreover, some artists, such as the Czech pop-diva Lucie Bílá and the Slovak icon Marika Gombitová, refused to perform at meetings of the HZDS despite the offered lucrative promotions. Others, like singers Josef Laufer and Michal David brought to Slovakia from the Czech Republic, noticed only after being in place that they were about to perform at an event organized by a political party.⁷²

In addition to events concentrated on establishing direct contacts with voters in outlying regions, the opposition began to organize "Democratic Round Tables," in which representatives of civic associations, trade unions, municipalities and students participated. According to sociologist Martin Bútora and the leader of the non-governmental sector Pavol Demeš, "Democratic Round Tables epitomized the most important achievement of pre-election efforts in Slovakia: the ability to create democratic alliances."⁷³ The faces of the previously invisible leaders of the non-governmental sector became publicly known during a series of TV debates called "Steps" (*Kroky*), a regular Sunday afternoon political broadcast on Slovak Television. As the election drew closer, the debates became confrontational. The branding of the

⁷¹ Porubjak, p.184. In interviews after the elections, representatives of the HZDS, including Mečiar, confessed that the campaign was both badly planned and poorly organized.

⁷² Porubjak, p.184. The resemblance to the presidential campaign in the United States in 2008 is striking. Even the buzz-word "Change" was the same.

⁷³ Bútora, Demeš, p.163. The non-governmental sector comprised the Gremium of the Third Sector, the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Unions of Cities and Villages, and the Youth Council of Slovakia. Hoogland de Hoog, Racanska, p.27.

representatives of the NGOs as “the enemies of Slovakia” proved to be counter-productive for the government.⁷⁴

The already massive bloc of the opposition still had the potential to grow. The two largest Churches in Slovakia, the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical Lutheran, expressed their concerns about the situation and the general atmosphere within society since 1996. The Catholic Church was the fifth most trusted institution with the support of 55% of the population, preceded by the Slovak Army (74%), Slovak Radio (71%), private television Markíza (60%) and the Constitutional Court (58%).⁷⁵ The activities of the Churches were oriented to appeals for the preservation of civic values and the importance of a healthy society, not to lending direct support to political parties on either side. However, in April of 1998, nine bishops of the Conference of the Bishops of Slovakia (*Konferencia biskupov Slovenska*) sent an open letter to the government in which they voiced their concern regarding the

...division caused by the constant incitement of political hatred, by the lack of readiness to tackle organized crime and social problems, by the refusal to accept Constitutional Court rulings, by the clear attempt at manipulating the elections through amendment of the election law, as well

⁷⁴ Bátor, Demeš, p.163. The targets of the attacks were Pavol Demeš and Šarlota Pufflerová as the most visible members of the Executive Committee of the “O.K.’ 98 campaign.” The latter acted as the civic campaign’s spokesperson and made frequent appearances in several televised debates.

⁷⁵ Miroslav Kollár, “Churches and the 1998 Elections,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections*, eds. Bátor, Mesežnikov, Bátorová, Fisher, p.187. An extract of the letter was published in the article “List deviatich biskupov” [A Letter of Nine Bishops], *Sme*, April 24, 1998. The Slovak government held the signatories of the letter responsible for a “unilateral interpretation of the political situation in Slovakia and the increase of tensions within society and its polarization.” See “Vláda obviňuje časť biskupov zo zvyšovania napätia” [Government Accuses Some Bishops of Increasing Tensions], *Sme*, April 29, 1998. For the poll results see “Najdôveryhodnejšou inštitúciou v SR je armáda, na poslednom mieste vláda a NR SR” [The Most Trusted Institution in the Slovak Republic is Army; the Least Trusted are the Government and the National Council], *Sme*, June 23, 1998.

as by the unculturedness and vulgarity and the devastation of moral values at all levels of public life.⁷⁶

During his meeting with Herbert Bösch, the Co-Chairman of the EU-Slovak Joint Parliamentary Committee, Bishop Rudolf Baláž of the diocese of Banská Bystrica voiced his fears regarding the revision of the electoral law. A few weeks before the election, Pope John Paul II stated, while receiving the Slovak bishops in the Vatican that “Catholics cannot stand at the periphery of social and political life,” thus sending a strong message for participation of believers in the election.⁷⁷ The government tried to eliminate the impact of the churches on the electorate in a series of tough responses by using tactics that condemned their activities and labeled their representatives “unworthy successors of Anton Bernolák, Štefan Moyzes and Andrej Hlinka.”⁷⁸

Another important component of the front emerging against the Mečiar government was trade unions. They traditionally held a strong position in communist Slovakia due to mandatory membership of employees of socialist organizations, despite the fact that their membership had decreased from 2.4 million in 1990 to 1.1 million by 1997.⁷⁹ The Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (*Konfederácia odborových zväzov Slovenskej republiky – KOZ*), abandoned the idea of being fixed on any political party or government in 1994. KOZ became distrustful of the third Mečiar government in 1997 when it unilaterally introduced a law on wage regulation without consultation of its tripartite partners (trade unions and employers) in the Council for

⁷⁶ Kollár, p.188.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.189-190.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.190.

⁷⁹ Darina Malová, “From Hesitation to a Calculated Strategy: The Confederation of Trade Unions in the 1998 Elections,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections...*, eds. M.Bútorá, G. Mesežnikov, Z. Bútorová, S. Fisher, p.169.

Social and Economic Agreement (*Rada sociálnej a hospodárskej dohody*; est.1990).⁸⁰ Hence, Mečiar chose a tactic similar to the building of the parallel non-profit sector. He established the “Economic and Social Council” to preserve the image of the government as a social benefactor. Aware of their weight and the growing discontent with government economic policies, trade unions opted to play a separate role in the election. At the KOZ assembly held on December 9, 1997, trade unions chose the strategy of waiting for the next development in an effort to receive the “maximum amount of information about the electoral platforms of the political parties, about their relations with the unions, and their positions on important social and economic issues.”⁸¹ This “wait and see” strategy could be seen as a calculation on leaning towards the most probable winner. In the summer of 1998, the KOZ eventually joined the meetings organized by the opposition.⁸²

During the summer of 1998, a leaflet “Big tips from KOZ” was distributed at meetings organized within the framework of the “O.K.98” campaign. The leaflets provided voters with information on political parties and their deputies according to their stances towards social issues. In July and August, KOZ was already fully involved in building contacts with the non-profit sector, churches, youth organizations, regions and municipalities. While following its strategy of concentrating on topics of “social peace

⁸⁰ For detail see www.gov.sk (poradné orgány vlády [advisory bodies], Hospodárska a sociálna rada SR [Economic and Social Council of the SR]).

⁸¹ Malová, p.173.

⁸² KOZ was not as monolithic as may be felt from Malová’s article. Its leaders had contacts with political parties on both sides. The former high representative of trade unions Jozef Kalman was a deputy for the ZRS (Slovak Workers). During his term in the National Council he switched to the HZDS. For a short time in the summer 1998 he was appointed the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Other high representative of KOZ, Alojz Engliš, accepted a place on the candidate list of the HZDS and became the party’s deputy after the 1998 parliamentary elections.

in society” (*sociálny zmier*), KOZ, according to Malová, achieved its goal: the greatest possible turnout of its members in the elections.⁸³ Although the voting patterns of the members of KOZ cannot be specified,⁸⁴ it is legitimate to assume that the trade unions’ merger with the “O.K.’ 98” campaign helped to strengthen electoral participation.

Despite the summer vacations, the election campaign culminated in August of 1998, as both sides were thrilled while facing each other in various televised debates. The scorching heat in many Slovak cities and towns was overshadowed by massive flooding in Eastern Slovakia, which devastated mainly the Roma population.⁸⁵ The campaign entered its last phase with the case of the private television station *Markíza*, which became enormously popular in Slovakia immediately after its establishment in 1996. *Markíza*, while following the example of the Czech private TV station NOVA, switched its repertoire, which had mostly included films and entertainment programs, to broadcasting political debates and investigative journalism in 1997-1998.⁸⁶ In August of 1998, representatives of a company called Gamatex claimed ownership over *Markíza*. The situation became dramatic in the middle of September, when security services of Gamatex occupied the premises of *Markíza* headquarters in Záhorská Bystrica, a Bratislava suburb, and the new owners dismissed the TV station’s 20 reporters and administrative staff. The leader of the opposition Mikuláš Dzurinda accused the HZDS

⁸³ Malová, p.175.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁵ Approximately 1000 volunteers from both the local population and NGOs helped the people in the areas hit by the floods. The opposition voiced the opinion that the government did not react promptly and adequately to the situation. See Pavol Demeš, “The Third Sector and Volunteerism,” In *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society*, p. 350.

⁸⁶ Samuel Abrahám, “The Rise and Fall of Illiberal Democracy in Slovakia: 1989-1999: An Analysis of Transformation in a Post-Communist Society,” PhD thesis, Department of Political Science, Carleton University Ottawa 2000, p. 203.

and Slovak Intelligence of attempting to take over the station. The HZDS responded by saying that “Dzurinda had grossly manipulated public opinion.” On September 16, nine days before the elections, all leaders of the opposition parties and many representatives of the NGOs and KOZ came to Markíza to demonstrate their support for a free media and civic rights, including the right of access to information. A crowd of five thousand gathered around them. The protesters came not only from Bratislava and its surrounding areas, but from all over Slovakia.⁸⁷

According to political scientist Grigorij Mesežnikov, the *Markíza* case revealed “the strong civic support which the democratic forces could have mobilized if an abuse of power had occurred either during or immediately after the elections.”⁸⁸ On the other hand, there exists a more pragmatic explanation of the *Markíza* case based upon commercial activities and preferences of the TV station and the promotion of Rudolf Schuster and Mikuláš Dzurinda as leaders of the opposition. Abrahám pointed to a rather “cynical calculation by the owners...that the mood in society was turning against Mečiar, and being in opposition to him could bring financial benefits.”⁸⁹ Regardless of the motives behind it, the *Markíza* affair was the last test to manifest the determination of the opposition and its public support before the upcoming elections.

⁸⁷ See the article “Televízia Markíza obsadená” [TV Markíza Taken Over], *Sme*, September 16, 1998.

⁸⁸ Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics,” In *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. G. Mesežnikov, M. Ivantyšin, T. Nicholson, p.32. For a ‘moral’ perspective see the article “R. Schuster verí, že kauza Markíza presvedčí nerozhodnutých voličov [R. Schuster Believes That the Case of Markíza Will Convince Undecided Voters], *Sme*, September 16, 1998.

⁸⁹ Abrahám, “The Rise and Fall of Illiberal Democracy in Slovakia...,” p. 204. The wife of the owner of Markíza TV, Pavol Rusko, appeared on the list of candidate deputies of the Party of Civic Understanding. After the election, Robert Fico, from the Party of the Democratic Left, who was to become the founder of the *Smer* (Direction) Party in 1999, apologized to the public for having been manipulated into the public support for the TV Markíza.

After the notorious case of František Gaulieder, and particularly after the obstructed referendum in May of 1997, concerns regarding the possibility of the elections' manipulation arose in the international community.⁹⁰ Opposition demands to invite international observers to Slovakia were first refused by Mečiar.⁹¹ After a dispute on who fit the status of an international observer, the government sent a letter to the OSCE with an invitation to only 18 out of its 54 member states. Among those who were invited, observers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Great Britain, and the United States were symptomatically missing. Responding to both domestic voices that accused the government of being an insufficient guarantor that the administration of the elections would not be abused, and to foreign criticism, voiced particularly by the United States and Great Britain, Mečiar eventually allowed international observers to come to Slovakia. While ignoring them, he launched a counter-offensive. Slovak Television produced a program in which Mark Almond, chairman of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group (BHHRG) appeared, acting as a representative of an election and human rights monitoring group. In a series of interviews broadcast by Slovak television and published by the *Slovenská Republika*, the HZDS's mouthpiece, Almond criticized the observers of reporting from Slovakia according to instructions from their home states. Daniel Adams of the same agency referred to OSCE missions that may have been

⁹⁰ See the statement by the Commissioner of the EU for External Relations Hans van den Broek on the fair and free election in which all political subjects should have equal access to the media. "Van den Broek kládol dôraz na slobodné voľby" [Van den Broek Accentuated Free Election], *Sme*, June 19, 1998. For the Gaulieder case see the previous chapter, pp.191-192.

⁹¹ Jeremy Druker, "International Observers and the 1998 Elections," In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, p.87.

“infiltrated by, for example secret services of its member states, or by other similar organizations that may be present but not known.”⁹²

Debates that accompanied the presence of international observers in Slovakia’s elections in 1998 and the animosity towards them shown by the government did not lead to conflict. In total, 206 observers participated in the election. They visited 1,700 polls. The overall grade for the elections in the report to the OSCE in 1999 was 3.45 on a scale of 0 to 4. The presence of international observers eventually “helped to calm the opposition’s fears that the elections would be manipulated.”⁹³ Still, despite some grave incursions of the executive power into the civic spheres that occurred during the third Mečiar government, it is hard to believe that the government and Mečiar wanted to manipulate the results of elections carefully watched by the international community.⁹⁴

6.4 The 1998 parliamentary elections and the change in government

The parliamentary elections took place on September 25 and 26, 1998. The voter turnout – 84.24% (3,359,174 registered voters) – was the second highest after the first free elections in post-communist Czechoslovakia in June of 1990 (95.39%). Six political parties finished above the threshold of 5.0% valid votes required for entering the National Council with the following results:

⁹² Druker, p.93.

⁹³ Ibid., pp.94-95.

⁹⁴ Calling observers to Slovakia was a risky business for the opposition. If Mečiar had won the election, his victory would have meant an international *imprimatur* for him as a democratically-elected politician. As in previous cases, Mečiar opted for handling the situation in a moderate rather than a radical way that would eventually discredit him in the eyes of his own electorate. See Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould, “Elite Division and Convergence in Slovakia,” In *Elites After State Socialism: Theories and Analysis*, eds. John Higley and György Lengyel (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), p.65.

(Table5: Election results of major political parties in the 1998 parliamentary elections)

Political party	Percentage of the votes cast	Seats (out of 150)
HZDS	27.00	43
SDK	26.33	42
SDE	14.66	23
SMK	9.12	15
SNS	9.07	14
SOP	8.01	13 ⁹⁵

The HZDS emerged, once again, with the largest number of votes. Its share of the votes was higher as expected by the pre-election polls by 3%. Its main opponent, the Slovak Democratic Coalition, came second with 26.3% of the votes (28% expected).⁹⁶ Among the newcomers the Party of Civic Understanding finished third with more than 8.0% of the votes which was the biggest surprise, as in a survey conducted in April, the party's support had been 17.2%.⁹⁷ Eleven other parties were left behind, with the Association of Workers of Slovakia, Mečiar's ally, among them (1.3%). The gap between the Party of

⁹⁵ See the excerpt from the table "Výsledky parlamentných volieb konaných 25.-26. septembra 1998 (The Parliamentary Election Results, September 25-26, 1998). Natália Rolková, "Formovanie parlamentnej a priamej demokracie. Parlamentný systém a voľby v Slovenskej republike" [The Forming Process of Parliamentary and Direct Democracy: Parliamentary System and the Elections in the Slovak Republic], In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Natália Rolková (Bratislava: Matica slovenská, 2004), p.71.

⁹⁶ See *Volebný výskum, Medzinárodný republikánsky inštitút, Agentúra Focus*, 25.-26. September 1998 [Election Research, International Republican Institute, Focus Agency, September 25- 26, 1998] (see first two tables). *Personal Archives of Professor M. Mark Stolarik*.

⁹⁷ Zora Bútorová, Oľga Gyárfášová, Vladimír Krivý, "Parties, Institutions, Politicians." In *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia. A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition*, ed. Zora Bútorová (Bratislava: IVO, 1998), p.73.

Civic Understanding as the last among the Big Six and the most successful party among the losers, the Communist Party, was 5.2%.⁹⁸ Though the HZDS garnered the largest number of votes, the number of its sympathizers decreased from 1,148,625 in 1992 and 1,005,488 in 1994 to 907,103 in 1998.⁹⁹

The election results confirmed the existence of a line of division between the electorates in urban and rural areas and across regions. Since both camps had relatively stable and balanced support from decided voters, the key to success were undecided voters and first-time voters (380,000). In 1997, feelings of “civic helplessness and passivity” were present in this group. However, in November of 1997 the expected turnout of first-time voters was 50%, and in July-August 1998 it already ranged between 54-57%. In September it reached 73% and peaked with 80% participation in the election, which was only slightly below the overall voter turnout.¹⁰⁰ Among the parties that benefitted the most from the votes cast by first-time voters were the opposition parties: the Slovak Democratic Coalition (30.4%), the Party of the Democratic Left (18.4%), the Party of Civic Understanding (13.3%), and the Parties of the Magyar Coalition (8.0%). The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia received only 10.8% of their votes, an amount below the average the party received from other groups of voters. In comparison, the Slovak National Party, which finished fifth in the elections, received 13.2% of votes cast by first-time voters (see Table 8 in the Appendices).¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Vladimír Krivý, “Election Results,” In *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society* (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.65.

⁹⁹ The data calculated with respect to the total number of eligible voters. Krivý, “Election Results,” p. 66.

¹⁰⁰ Olga Gyárfášová, Marián Kúška, Marián Velšic, “First-Time Voters and the 1998 Elections,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections...*, p.235.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.236.

After the elections an inquiry was made as to discover how the first-time voters felt about the impact of the campaigns by the NGOs, particularly “Rock the Vote,” “I Vote Therefore I Am,” “The Road for Slovakia,” and “Head 98” that were specifically oriented towards the youth. To the question “Did the NGO campaign influence you in deciding whether to take part in the elections?” 46% of respondents at least noticed the campaign, while 54% did not notice it at all. Despite the fact that the “O.K.’ 98” election campaign was geared towards activating voters to participate in the election, not to directly promote individual political parties and their leaders, the response of society to the impulses coming from NGOs was positive.¹⁰² The key to explaining the votes cast by first-time voters can be found in their professed political principles and value orientations. The elections showed that Slovak youths were concerned about both the worsening domestic socio-economic situation and the government’s failure to catch up in the processes of the Euro-Atlantic integration (see Table 9 in the Appendices).¹⁰³ Another important aspect in the communication with first-time voters was the NGOs’ ability to respect their life-styles and reflect that fact in the election campaign.¹⁰⁴ As a result, 70% of first-time voters cast their votes for the opposition while 24% did the same for the ruling coalition. The numbers given indicate a clear success for the opposition in addressing this category of voters who projected their expectations for the future into the new government consisting of the parties in opposition.

¹⁰² Oľga Gyárfášová, Marián Kúška, Marián Velšic, “First-Time Voters and the 1998 Elections,” p. 242.

¹⁰³ Michal Ivantýšyn, Marián Velšic, and Zora Bútorová, “First-time voters,” In *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia*, p.138.

¹⁰⁴ Gyárfášová, Kúška, Velšic, “First-Time Voters...,” p. 242.

Next to first-time voters, the other important group in the electorate was undecided voters.¹⁰⁵ They were to be found in urban rather than in rural areas, in regions with no strictly defined loyalty to any political party. The elections demonstrated the well-known fact that electorates in urban areas cast their votes for a change in government, whereas voters in rural areas opted for maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, whereas the voters in rural areas, and specifically in small communities, were traditionally steady and consistent in participating in elections, voters in urban centers showed the tendency to neglect electoral events. In the particular case of the 1998 parliamentary elections, however, urban voters were gradually mobilized by the effect of the summer election campaigns.¹⁰⁶

Assuming that the non-profit sector was supposed to “remain nonpartisan...not endorsing or appearing to support any political party, candidate, or coalition,”¹⁰⁷ its role, in terms of election participation, was a success. According to a survey made by the Institute of Public Affairs in October of 1998, 38% of respondents gave grades 1 and 2 (on the scale of 1 to 5) to NGOs and to the “O.K.’ 98” campaign prior to and during the parliamentary elections. 13% gave them a grade of 3, and 8% gave grades of 4 and 5 (the worst grades). 11% of respondents considered the involvement of NGOs and the campaign useless and 30% were not able to evaluate their place in the elections (see

¹⁰⁵ On the role of undecided voters in civil society who are “often of a critical importance in shifting the regime/opposition balance” see Juan Linz, “Democracy and its Arenas,” In *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, eds. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.8.

¹⁰⁶ Krivý, “The Election Results 1998-1999,” In Mesežnikov, Ivantyšin, Nicholson, *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections..*”, pp.67-68. The differences in electoral turnout between small villages and cities in the 1994 elections were 88% vs. 66%; in the 1998 they narrowed as 89% vs. 82%. According to Krivý, this phenomenon explains to a certain extent the shift in the election results.

¹⁰⁷ Hoogland DeHoog, Racanska, p.27.

Table 10 in the Appendices).¹⁰⁸ In total, at least 59% of respondents were aware of the impact of the NGOs' campaigns on the elections. According to researchers from the Institute for Public Affairs, "the NGO campaigns were also instrumental in raising the participation of first-time voters from approximately 60% in 1994 to over 80% in 1998."¹⁰⁹ This opinion was echoed by Bútorová that "the O.K." campaign filled the empty space between the passive position of isolated individuals and the competing political parties."¹¹⁰ Based on a comparison of the data gathered from the preferences given to the political parties before the start of campaigns and the election results, the following statement by sociologist Martin Bútorá and the leader of Slovak NGOs Pavol Demeš convincingly encapsulate the overall role of Slovak NGOs in the 1998 parliamentary elections:

...with the increased civic participation, NGOs became one of the decisive factors in the cultural change that was taking place in Slovakia. Without exaggeration, it is possible to say that if it had not been for the dozens of NGOs and hundreds of volunteers, which included an unprecedented number of young people, the 1998 elections would have taken a different course and had a different outcome.¹¹¹

The election results were the major determinant of political change, as, despite its numerical victory, the HZDS had zero potential to create a new government. Mečiar, who knew it well, did not participate in the negotiations with the leaders of the former opposition. Instead, he delegated Ján Smerek from the HZDS's branch in Košice to discuss the possibility of forming a new coalition with his irreconcilable opponents. The

¹⁰⁸ Bútorová, "Development of Public Opinion..." p. 209.

¹⁰⁹ M. Bútorá, G. Mesežnikov, Z. Bútorová, "Overcoming Illiberalism: Slovakia's 1998 Elections," In *"The 1998 Parliamentary Elections..."* p.18.

¹¹⁰ Bútorová, "Development of Public Opinion..." p.208

¹¹¹ Bútorá, Demeš, "Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections," p.155.

HZDS could not find a rift in the wall of disinterest and rejection.¹¹² As a result, on October 29, Vladimír Mečiar appeared on the TV program “What next, Mr. Prime Minister?” at the end of which he gave his bitter farewell to the public.¹¹³

Following the rejection of Mečiar’s offers, the four victorious political parties – the SDK, SĎP, SOP and the SMK – signed the Coalition Treaty which became the basis for the distribution of executive and legislative posts. The new government, led by Mikuláš Dzurinda (SDK), was formed during the negotiations that lasted from October 16 to October 28, 1998. The government was sworn on October 30, 1998.¹¹⁴ The newly-elected National Council’s first session began under the chairmanship of Jozef Migaš, the Chairman of the SĎP. The chairmanship of six of the eighteen parliamentary committees in the Slovak National Council was offered to the HZDS and the SNS.¹¹⁵ With minor exceptions, they rejected the offer.¹¹⁶

In the National Council the “Big Four” consisted of the Slovak Democratic Coalition (42 seats), the Party of the Democratic Left (23 seats), the Party of the Magyar Coalition (15 seats), and the Party of Civic Understanding (13 seats). The opposition had

¹¹² Peter A. Toma. Dušan Kováč, *Slovakia from Samo to Dzurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press: 2001), p.343. For international resonance reacting positively to Mečiar’s defeat see the articles “Slovak opposition to form coalition,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 28, 1998, and “Slovak opposition awaits Mečiar’s nod,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 29, 1998.

¹¹³ Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia...*, p. 255. See “V demokracii politik občanom po voľbách poďakuje, hovorí G. Mesežnikov o vystúpení premiéra” [In Democracy, A Politician Thanks to the Citizens, Comments G. Mesežnikov on the Prime Minister’s Appearance], *Sme*, October 2, 1998.

¹¹⁴ Luboš Kubín, *Rola politických elít pri zmene režimu na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Veda, 2002), p.120.

¹¹⁵ Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, p.254.

¹¹⁶ The HZDS wanted the position of Chairman of the National Council, which was not accepted by the coalition. Marián Anđel from the SNS became the Deputy Chairman of the Council. Rudolf Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky*, pp.189-190. Likewise, Ján Šlota, the Chairman of the SNS, became a member of the Committee for the Control of the Slovak Intelligence Service.

43 seats by the HZDS and 14 by the SNS. Optically, the new ruling coalition, with its 93 seats, was in a better position than the former coalition of the HZDS, the SNS, and the ZRS. The parties in power had three seats more than three-fifths constitutional majority required for passing legislation. From a long-term perspective, however, the stability of the coalition was unpredictable.¹¹⁷ Dominated by the right-wing parties and led by Mikuláš Dzurinda and Ivan Mikloš, its future was questionable, as was the willingness of the representatives of leftist parties to support the radical and, at the same time socially drastic economic reforms. The coalition's future also depended on the stances of the leaders of the KDH and the Party of the Democratic Left. After the alleged 'betrayal' of the left-wing parties by the Social Democrats, who had joined the right-wing SDK prior to the elections on the same ticket, along with the failure of the ZRS to be re-elected in the National Council, the latter was now caught in the middle by becoming a part of the right-wing dominated coalition.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ See the article "Ústavná väčšina bude pri riešení personálnych otázok asi krehká, hovorí politológ G. Mesežnikov" [In Solving Personal Matters, The Constitutional Majority Will Rather Be Fragile, Opines the Political Scientist Grigorij Mesežnikov], *Sme*, November 9, 1998.

¹¹⁸ Grigorij Mesežnikov, "The 1998 Elections and the Development of the Party System in Slovakia," In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections...*, eds. M. Bútora, G. Mesežnikov, Z. Bútorová, S. Fisher, p.57. Ján Čarnogurský held the position of the Minister of Justice. Two weeks after the new government was sworn-in, he voted against the adoption of the government program regarding the financing of religious and secular schools and the envisaged Basic Treaty [*Základná zmluva*] with the Vatican. See the article "Ján Čarnogurský ako jediný člen vlády hlasoval proti jej programovému vyhláseniu" [Ján Čarnogurský as a Sole Member of the Government Voted Against its Program], *Sme*, November 23, 1998. The major clash was between Čarnogurský and Milan Ftáčnik from the SDĽ, the Minister of Education. The SDĽ indicated its focus on "democratic socialism" already in September of 1998. See the article "Neopustíme svoje hodnoty, lebo dopadneme ako Ľuptákova strana, tvrdí Migaš" [We Shall Not Abandon Our Values Otherwise We Would Meet the Same End as Ľupták's Party (ZRS), Migaš Claims]. *Sme*, September 30, 1998.

6.5 *Mečiarism* without the -ism

What was the regime that existed in Slovakia from November 1994 to September 1998 which some have named for its major representative?¹¹⁹ Was it authoritarian, semi-authoritarian, or was it a soft-dictatorship when looking at the political practices in Slovakia for four years? Was it illiberal democracy, third-wave democracy, pseudo-democracy, semi-democracy, when looking at the state of society?¹²⁰ Who was Vladimír Mečiar as a political leader who gradually became a synonym for Slovakia's failure on the road to democracy? And, most importantly, was the sudden "awakening" of Slovak civil society in the years 1997-1998 a 'miracle' when compared to its "traditional passivity"?¹²¹

The image of Vladimír Mečiar in the 1990s and the early 2000s was that of an "autocratic prime minister" (Bútorová, Cohen), a "charismatic populist leader" (Bútorá, Bútorová), an "extremely powerful prime minister" (Henderson) and a skilful "political entrepreneur" (Innes). Samuel Abrahám, on the other hand, aspired to respond to the question, why did Mečiar, with all his deficits and failures, not become an autocrat.¹²² He argued that Mečiar had several opportunities to resort to radical solutions, yet, despite decreasing support for him, he never called the people into the streets to fight

¹¹⁹ See Kieran Williams, "What Was Mečiarism?" In *Slovakia after Communism and Meciarism*, ed. Kieran Williams (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2000), pp.1-16.

¹²⁰ See Zora Bútorová, *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia: A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition* (Bratislava: IVO, 1998), pp.9-13. For a recent popular view on *Mečiarism* as a totalitarian system which comprised a cult of personality and abused the political naivety of the Slovak electorate see the article "Mečiarizmus produkt socializmu" [Mečiarism as a Product of Socialism], *Pravda*, May 27, 2009. The statement identifies Communism (Socialism) with *Mečiarism* as its updated form. The author of the article is a layman, not a scholar or a journalist.

¹²¹ See Bútorová, Gyárfašová, "Social Climate Three Years after the 1994 Elections....," In *Democracy and Discontent....*, p. 65.

¹²² Abrahám, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy....," p. 205.

for him at opportune moments, such as in the summer of 1991, in the spring of 1994, and after he lost the elections in 1998. On the other hand, his opponents would not have hesitated to do so in rescuing democracy in Slovakia.¹²³ According to Abrahám, there are several reasons to explain that: the presence of civil society, the dislike of extremism among the majority of the population, Slovakia's place in Central Europe, international pressure, and, particularly Mečiar's own reluctance to create an authoritarian country in 1998.¹²⁴

More recently, western scholars have switched their focus on the Mečiar era as seen from a Manichean perspective, in which his government and regime appeared as bad and the opposition as good, to more pragmatic explanations. For Tim Haughton, crucial to the understanding Mečiar's role in Slovakia's evolution lies in an institutional dialectic that stemmed from the efforts of Mečiar as the HZDS and the state builder to model institutions according to his needs. Mečiar failed to reach that objective because he never managed to achieve sufficient electoral support that would guarantee him a three-fifths constitutional majority in the National Council.¹²⁵ Adding to the personal dimension of Mečiar style of politics, it seems legitimate to assume that Mečiar's political ambitions and tendencies to authoritarianism had external limits not only because of the impact of existing institutions and mobilized civil society that blocked him at certain moment, but also because Mečiar did not cross his mental Rubicon – the

¹²³ See the interview with Ján Čarnogurský “Čarnogurský vyzýva do boja” [Čarnogurský Calls to Arms], *Plus 7 dní*, July 12, 1995, pp.17-19. Author interview with Peter Zajac. Bratislava, August 8, 2007.

¹²⁴ Abrahám, p.209. The author's conclusion coincides with my opinion on the unlikelihood that Mečiar would have attempted to manipulate the 1998 elections.

¹²⁵ Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.81 and 94-95. Next to Henderson and Innes, Haughton's study represents one of the most insightful and informed works on the political evolution of Slovakia since the 1990s.

last barrier of a physical clash between the regime and the rest of society.¹²⁶ Mečiar thus appears as both a product and an organic part of late East-Central European communist societies and their transition into the new *sui generis* post-communist entities.¹²⁷ There is a difference, though. Mečiar, influenced by the reform movement in the 1960s and formed by it, should not be automatically compared with other post-communist leaders in East Central Europe, who did not have a similar experience.¹²⁸

Mečiar, a political self-made man, represented a hybrid type of politician, typical yet unique, in the transitory period in post-communist Europe – too democratic for a communist regime and too authoritative for the taste of western democracies. His stigma of coming from the periphery to the center two decades after having being banned from politics, alongside with his mistrustfulness of others, often resulted in a split with his own supporters. These features became observable during his meteoric political career

¹²⁶ A tendency to withdraw from a conflict when unsupported can be observed already in the summer of 1990 when Mečiar clashed with the KDH regarding the resignation by the Minister of the Interior Anton Andráš, the nominee of the KDH. The reason was to control the files kept by the Communist State Secret Police (ŠtB). The KDH eventually gave up in October, but only after Mečiar, who was at that time enormously popular, disappeared for a couple of days. See the article “Andraš - Prvý, koho Mečiar odstrelil” [Andraš - The First One Who Was Shot Down by Mečiar], *Sme*, January 13, 2002. The same happened in October of 1998, when Mečiar “got lost.” Rudolf Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky*, p.138.

¹²⁷ On the essence of democracy in East Central Europe as a “mixture of formal and substantive democracy” see Zora Bútorová and Martin Bútor, “1989-1994: The Years of Milestones,” In *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia...*, p.12. See also Piotr Dutkiewicz, Marketa Geislerova, Vladimir Suchan, “Postcommunism and Globalisation.” *From Global Security to Transborder Initiatives*. Kielce Conference Proceedings, September 16-18, 1999 (The Global Project Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.91.

¹²⁸ “Although it is true that Vladimír Mečiar displayed political traits similar to those of Alyaksandr Lukashenka in Belarus, Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, that the history of the Slovak nationalism in various ways resembles Serbian and Croatian nationalism, and that Slovak political culture shows [an] inclination to authoritarianism, in the 1998 elections, Slovak society as a whole resisted these tendencies.” Martin Bútor and Zora Bútorová, “Slovakia’s Democratic Awakening,” *Journal of Democracy* 10, no.1 (1999), p.82.

in the 1990s, his abrupt fall in 1998 and an awkward return to Slovak politics in 2006.¹²⁹ Despite Mečiar's exemplary *Wille zur Macht*,¹³⁰ his final failure as a political leader was, in part, the result of amorphous, often poorly coordinated, policies of his government and institutions paying the price for their overall inexperience. Similarly, the politics of HZDS deputies and allies, which were sometimes made grudgingly, sometimes inconsistently, but always under pressure,¹³¹ copied the style of their leader. As a consequence, they mostly appeared as an improvization rather than as a well-planned, coordinated and synchronized activity.¹³²

Mečiar's regime eventually turned into political cronyism, a non-transparent distribution of state assets into the hands of friendly individuals and enterprises, the polarization of society and, last but not least, the inclination of state authorities to use the

¹²⁹ See the interview "Vladimír Mečiar: 1989 was beautiful," *The Slovak Spectator*, November 29, 1999, by Daniel J. Stoll. For the characterization of *Mečiarism* see also Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye*, pp.255-256. According to Innes, there were three major tasks before Mečiar: 1) to define the independent Slovak nation so "as to shed the Johnny-come-lately tag so successfully ascribed to it by the Czechs," 2) to rescue the Slovak economy, and 3) to establish a functioning state. The results were quite the opposite – a lack of national vision, the mimicking of democracy instead of building it, and international isolation as a result of nationalism. *Ibidem*, p.256.

¹³⁰ Recently, western political scientists have shown the tendency to return to ancient history in looking for analogies with the present. For an indirect typological comparison of Mečiar with the 5th Century BC Roman Republican leader Coriolanus, who "is a hero [in wartime], but an embarrassment in peacetime," see F.G. Bailey, *Humbuggery and Manipulation: the Art of Leadership* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press), p.36, as cited by Haughton in *Constraints and Opportunities...*, p.10.

¹³¹ Despite his control of Slovak Television and Slovak Radio, the only government outlet among the print media was *Slovenská Republika* (formerly *Republika*), with rather mediocre popularity, whereas the opposition could rely on the unreserved support of the widely read dailies *Sme* and *Pravda* (the latter was close to the SDL, yet anti-Mečiarist), the privately-owned TV Markíza and the Radio Twist. The coalition shaped and dominated by Mečiar and the HZDS had a stronger "ground force" stemming from their political control of the National Council while the opposition dominated the air, both explicitly and figuratively, as well as the channels of communication with western governments and media.

¹³² The ineffectiveness of the government policies was a systemic deficiency resulting from transforming political and institutional frameworks. See Chapter 5, pp.199-202.

techniques of manipulation in dealing with civil society. Though it was Mečiar's name that became the synonym for democratic deviation in Slovakia in the mid-1990s, certain political elites that supported him and hid behind his back are no less to blame. They left politics to the passionate 'Old One' (*Stary*; Mečiar's nickname among his supporters) while profiteering from uncontrolled privatization in the privacy of their villas in Spain and Croatia, driving fancy cars and buying soccer players or whole teams. All these characteristics that dominated Slovak politics in the mid-1990s can be subsumed under the rather vaguely defined term the "Slovak path" with which the epithet "goulash nationalism" was associated as well.¹³³

Fareed Zakaria's comparison of Slovakia with Third-World countries branded as illiberal democracies in the mid-1990s¹³⁴ had a twofold effect on Slovak intellectual elites. It positively provoked and mobilized the Slovak opposition to challenge the regime that was responsible for the decrease of democracy in the country and its very negative international image.¹³⁵ Dialogue and close cooperation between the political parties in opposition and the non-profit sector enabled society to resist and eventually defeat the regime. This was possible due to the existing traditions of civil society mobilized in 1989, 1990-1992 and 1997-1998, the emergence and the rapid development

¹³³ Bútorová lists twelve main characteristics of Mečiar's regime. For details see Bútorová, "Overcoming Illiberalism: Slovakia's 1998 Elections," pp.12-14. In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections...*, pp.12-14. Innes compares Kádár's goulash socialism in communist Hungary with Mečiar's goulash nationalism or "Godfather's nationalism" in post-communist Slovakia. Innes, p. 261. Political scientist Jacques Rupnik refers to "Vladimír Mečiar's authoritarian populism." Jacques Rupnik, "The International Context," In *Democracy after Communism*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p.135. A complex portrait of Vladimír Mečiar, like that of Gustáv Husák, still has to be written.

¹³⁴ Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no.6 (1997), pp.22 and 41.

¹³⁵ Bútorová, "Overcoming Illiberalism...", p.19.

of the non-profit sector in 1995-1998, financial as well as social capital support for Slovak NGOs pouring in it from western governments and NGOs, and the ability to create a broad coalition of political parties in opposition.¹³⁶

Regarding the existing political and societal tensions in Slovak politics in the mid-1990s, the most important fact was that the opposition parties would not have been able to win the 1998 parliamentary elections without the support of civil society. For Slovak NGOs were too little experienced in building a common front against Mečiar, it was inevitable that the personnel of Slovak NGOs was trained by western NGOs and received financial support and know-how from them and from western governments. The civic campaigns in the summer of 1998 helped to create a network of citizens engaged in an active expression of their civic stances. In contrast with the 1980s, when a few intellectuals, apart from religious dissenters, who were separated from the rest of society, represented the “islands of political deviation,” the Slovak NGOs in the mid- and the late-1990s developed into a vibrant and efficient “civil archipelago” of positive action.¹³⁷

The campaigns led by the NGOs and the outcome of the 1998 parliamentary elections revealed that the evolving complexity of Slovak society did not match the traditional linear scheme: no civil society → pervasive and virulent nationalism → an inclination to authoritarianism bound up with traditional political passivism → all of them linked to a somehow miraculous comeback to democracy in 1998.¹³⁸ The weakest

¹³⁶ According to Vladimír Mečiar, the flow of financial support to the Slovak NGOs from foreign donors was documented, yet uncontrollable. Author interview with Vladimír Mečiar, Bratislava, August 24, 2007.

¹³⁷ Bútorová, “Overcoming Illiberalism...,” p.18.

¹³⁸ The scheme described above reflects the fusion of traditional interpretations of Slovakia’s deviated and delayed progress to democracy by the authors to whom I have referred in this chapter, particularly from the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) in Bratislava.

part of this assumption lies in its inner contradiction. Had civil society in Slovakia not existed or had it been too weak, then it could not have been mobilized within a couple months with such high efficiency. The previous suggestion requires a modification, which defies the idea of “traditional political passivity” of Slovak society while stressing its proven ability to be mobilized in the appropriate time. The electoral campaigns, as well as the passing of power from one government to another in the summer and fall of 1998 repeatedly confirmed the ability of Slovak society to withstand the risk of physical confrontation. This rather proved Ghia Nodia’s theory of non-pervasive nationalism coexisting with emerging democracy during the transitory change in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe.¹³⁹ Finally, the regime that helped to build an independent state and was accepted as such due to its proven leadership and merits in the early 1990s gradually lost its grip over society due to the discontent and subsequent mobilization of its substantial portion. This led to regime change.

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the defeat of Mečiar’s third government in the 1998 parliamentary elections was viewed by some observers through the prism of morality, which justified the efforts of the “awakened” Slovak civil society to overthrow the “illiberal” regime.¹⁴⁰ The viewing of the Mečiar era in Slovakia as *Mečiarism*, on the one side, helps to discern between two camps and their orientations, which were seen as pro-democratic (pro-Western) and anti-democratic (anti-Western) forces. On the other hand, such a strict delineation leads to the continuation of internal fragmentation in

¹³⁹ Ghia Nodia, “Nationalism and Democracy,” In *Nationalism, Democracy, and Ethnic Conflict*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp.4-22. Nodia objects to the classic liberal scheme of an inimical character in the relationship between democracy and nationalism. Ibidem, pp.3, 9-10. See Chapter1, p.22.

modern Slovak history which had started in the late 1940s with the building of Socialism (translated as Communism in the West). The reform movement in the 1960s, normalization in the 1970s, the “Velvet Revolution” at the end of the 1980s, Slovak nationalism in the early 1990s up to *Mečiarism* as a Slovak version of illiberalism in the mid-1990s was not the last stop in the post-communist transformation of Slovakia. For the supporters of the left-wing parties, these developments continued with *Dzurindism* from 1998 to 2006 and, most recently, with what appeared to the supporters of the right defeated in the parliamentary elections in July of 2006 as *Ficoism*. This approach cuts one period in Slovak history from another on the basis of political criteria and preferences instead of viewing them as parts of an evolutionary process. Therefore, it seems more justified to refer to this period as the “Mečiar regime” as this term sufficiently identifies the substance of the regime and characterizes its creator. The period from 1994 to 1998, however, represents only a part of Slovakia’s post-communist transformation. The most decisive factor of the “change” in 1998 – its inner quality and sustainability – which would substantiate such a sharp delineation between the two presumably different periods in Slovakia’s post-communist transformation, is scrutinized in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7
POLITICAL PARTIES, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETY DURING THE
DZURINDA GOVERNMENTS: THE ACCESSION, 1998-2004

7.1 Back on track

The events that transpired in Slovakia in the summer and fall of 1998 were seen by some scholars as the “delayed Velvet Revolution.”¹ From this perspective, the years from 1989 to 1994 may be compared with the reform movement in the 1960s and the third Mečiar government with ‘normalization’ in the 1970s. The major actor, Vladimír Mečiar, cumulatively played the roles of both Dubček and Husák and eventually gave his face to ‘illiberal’ democracy as Husák did to ‘normalization’. In this analogy, the political opposition that emerged in the mid-1990s might appear as “new dissidents” similar to those who had existed in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. But was it so?

A majority of Slovak politicians, whether on the winning side or their defeated opponents, were raised during the communist era. While Vladimír Mečiar struggled to keep going after having been expelled from the Communist Party in 1970,² future democrats, with the exception of the irreconcilable religious, environmentalist and civic dissenters, who had been harrassed by the communist police and persecuted throughout the 1970s and 1980s, were compliant with the regime. They could be found among the high dignitaries of the Communist Party of Slovakia, diplomats serving in western

¹Martin Bútorá, Zora Bútorová, Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Overcoming Illiberalism - Slovakia’s 1998 Elections,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, eds. M.Bútorá, G.Mesežnikov et al.(Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p 11.

² For the impact of Mečiar’s expulsion from the KSS on his private life see the interview “Vladimír Mečiar: 1989 was beautiful,” *The Slovak Spectator*, November 29, 1999, by Daniel J. Stoll.

countries, diligent students who rhymed about the “Victorious February,” poets who mourned the death of communist leaders, representatives of the Slovak Communist Youth (*Slovenský zväz mládeže* – SZM), the directors of industrial strongholds, and historians stressing the accomplishments of the working class led by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. They also went to study stays at western universities, banks and research institutes with party approval, or strove to become its members with all its privileges.

The fall of the communist regime and the breakup of Czechoslovakia and its aftermath taught Slovak politicians how easy it was to enter and exit a party. The shadows of collaboration with the communist Secret Police, in some cases also with the KGB,³ were distributed quite evenly on all sides.⁴ Some Slovak politicians, including the highest state representatives, were pardoned by Slovakia’s western democratic partners. The rationale seems to have been their ability to follow integrationist goals.⁵ In the autumn of 1998, there was no clear distinction between the past and present, as had not been the case in the early 1990s.⁶ To test the perspective of an instant democratic

³ Vladimír Mečiar rejected such insinuations on several occasions. See the interview with V.M. “Máme svoj štát” [We Have Got Our State] published in *Literárny týždenník* on December 31, 1993, p.3.

⁴ The names of persons alleged to have collaborated with the Communist Secret Police can be retrieved on the web page of *Ústav pamäti národa* (Nation’s Memory Institute in Bratislava) www.upn.gov.sk (English version available).

⁵ “The past of Mr. Schuster, in spite of the complicated history of Central Europe, is not a problem to us.” Ralph Johnson, the U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic in the interview given to the *Domino Fórum*, a conservative weekly, published on November 5, 1998, as quoted by Rudolf Schuster in *Návrat do veľkej politiky* (Košice: PressPrint, 1999), pp.201-202.

⁶ One of major problems was the presence of former ŠtB agents in public life. See “Vyrovňovanie s minulosťou sa skončilo na Slovensku v slepej uličke” [Settling With the Past in Slovakia Ended Nowhere], *Sme*, May 3, 2000. See also “Agenti ŠtB vo verejnom živote neprekážajú 73 percentám Slovákov” [Agents of the ŠtB in Public Life Do Not Bother 73% of Slovaks], *Sme* (the same date). In 2001, General Alojz Lorenc,

awakening of Slovak society and the presumably new quality of political life after *Mečiarism*, it is pivotal to explore whether the period after 1998 was completely opposite to what had preceded it.

After his emotional farewell, which was broadcast by Slovak Television on October 27, 1998, Mečiar resigned as a deputy of the National Council. His mandate passed onto Ivan Lexa, the former Director of the Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS) loyal to him.⁷ Mečiar retired to his Elba - a villa called Elektra, in Trenčianske Teplice - an attractive spa town in North-West Slovakia. Meanwhile, Lexa felt uncomfortable in sharing a parliamentary seat with his former enemies who took control over his former domain. After a series of investigations, custodies and releases, he fled the country.⁸ In 2002, Slovak Intelligence and Interpol traced him to South Africa and brought him back.⁹ All attempts to send Lexa to prison failed, as various Slovak courts, independent from political power, though not from political pressure, did not find him guilty of the abduction of Michal Kováč Jr. and other crimes he had allegedly committed. In

the last head of the ŠtB in communist Czechoslovakia was sentenced by a Czech court to 15 months in prison. Slovakia did not extradite him. See “Láskavý rozsudok pre Lorenca” [A Kind Verdict for Lorenc], *Sme*, December 5, 2001.

⁷ “Predseda HZDS V. Mečiar sa vzdal mandátu v prospech bývalého riaditeľa SIS I. Lexu” (The Chairman of the HZDS V. Mečiar Resigns on His Seat in Favour of the Former Director of the SIS I. Lexa). *Sme*, October 30, 1998.

⁸ See the article “Podľa Palka je prítomnosť Lexu v NR SR ‘hanbou’, pretože je ‘notoricky známe’, že sa dopustil zločinu” [Presence of Lexa in the National Council is a “shame,” for it is “notoriously known” he committed the crime, says Palko], *Sme*, November 11, 1998. The ruling coalition rejected Lexa’s presence on the Parliamentary Committees for Defense and Security and for the Control of Slovak Intelligence]. See the article “Poslanci odmietli zaradiť I. Lexu do výboru pre obranu a bezpečnosť a výboru pre kontrolu SIS” [Deputies Refuse to Place I. Lexa on the Committees for Defense and Security and for the Control of Slovak Intelligence), *Sme*, November 12, 1998. The old-new director of the SIS became Vladimír Mitro, a nominee of the SDK, who was the director of the SIS during the government of Jozef Moravčík from March to October of 1994.

⁹ “Ivana Lexu zadržali v Juhoafrickej republike” [Ivan Lexa Caught in South Africa], *Sme*, July 16, 2002.

compensation for his suffering, Michal Kováč Jr., son of the former president, was sent to New Delhi as a diplomat by Eduard Kukan who, after almost four years in the parliament as a deputy for the Democratic Union, returned to his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new coalition's major goal was to catch up to the missed train of the integration with NATO and the European Union.¹⁰ As a prerequisite, the leaders of the four victorious parties, the SDK, the SDE, the SMK and the SOP, who created a collective political body – the Coalition Council (*Koaličná rada*) – were determined to put things, both domestically and internationally, in order.

New ministers began to prepare so-called “Black books” (*čierne knihy*) that pointed to the depth of the economic downfall hidden behind the façade of favourable macroeconomic statistics reached under the previous government.¹¹ The Coalition did not hesitate to recall many of those who were appointed ambassadors by Mečiar in his capacity as Acting President prior to his defeat in the 1998 parliamentary elections. Most visible was the case of Zdenka Kramplová, who held the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs after the resignation of Pavol Hamžik in May of 1997. She was appointed ambassador to Canada by Mečiar in the summer of 1998. After having received an *agrément* from Canadian authorities, she travelled to Ottawa at the end of August of 1998 only to be recalled by Eduard Kukan three months after the beginning of her

¹⁰ See the interview with Eduard Kukan “Štyri roky sa nedajú dohnať za dva mesiace” [Catching Up in Two Months What Was Neglected for Four Years is Impossible], *Sme*, January 24, 1999.

¹¹ Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics,” In *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. G. Mesežnikov, M. Ivantýšyn, T. Nicholson (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.25. The “black books” prepared by each Ministry were published in February of 1999 in a summarizing “Black Book: Analyses of the Inherited Social and Economic Situation.” Ibid.

diplomatic mission.¹² The other high-ranking diplomat strongly associated with Mečiar was Jozef Šesták, the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who was recalled from his post as Ambassador to Austria.¹³ His successor as the chief negotiator for the accession of the Slovak Republic into the European Union became Ján Figel' from the conservative wing of the KDH.

The new government, which comprised nine members of the SDK, six members of the SDE, three members of the SMK and three members of the SOP,¹⁴ knew very well that it was supposed to accept an obligation to improve the rights of the Magyar and Roma minorities. On October 7, 1998, Rudolf Schuster and Pavol Hamžík met with Max van der Stoel, the High Commissioner of the OSCE for Minorities in Hainburg, Austria. They confirmed their will to support the solution of the problems stemming from the controversial Law on the Official Language adopted in 1995.¹⁵ The Coalition bowed to

¹² See the article "Former Slovak Ambassador Feared Assassination At Home," by Garry Dimmock, *The Ottawa Citizen*, May 19, 1999. In a balanced perspective, the article examines the circumstances and the outcome of Kramplová's case. She was recalled by Minister Kukan in November of 1998 and returned to Slovakia in May of 1999. On the insinuations that Kramplová was about to ask for political asylum in Canada see the article "Exveľvyslankyňa Zdenka Kramplová vraj žiada o politický azyl, MZV bude uvažovať o jej výpovedi" [Ex-Ambassador Zdenka Kramplová Allegedly Asks for Political Asylum; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Considers Firing Her], *Sme*, December 15, 1998.

¹³ Kukan was criticized for his protection of Šesták, who remained an employee of the M.F.A. as an advisor to the Minister. See Martin Bruncko and Pavol Lukáč, "Hlavné trendy v zahraničnej politike SR, [Major Trends in Slovakia's Foreign Policy], In *Slovensko 2000. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* [Slovakia 2000: A Global Report on the State of Society], eds. M. Kollár, G. Mesežnikov (Bratislava: IVO, 2001), pp.331-332.

¹⁴ Mesežnikov, "Domestic Politics," p.24.

¹⁵ Rudolf Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky* (Košice:Pressprint, 1999), pp.139-140. For the discordance between the SDE and the SMK and the risks of the emergence of an alliance of the former with the apostates from the HZDS and the SNS see pages 147-148 of Schuster's book. Béla Bugár, the chairperson of the SMK said that if such a situation was to happen, "they (SDE, HZDS, and SNS) would have surely been slapped from abroad ["dostali by zo zahraničia určite po nose"]. Ibid.

pressure from Austria, a fervent opponent of the use of nuclear power, and Slovakia's western neighbour, who might have otherwise blocked the beginning of talks on Slovakia's accession into the EU.¹⁶ Slovak officials agreed to shut down by 2006 and 2008 two reactors in the nuclear power plant in Jaslovské Bohunice in western Slovakia, which was located 100 km northeast of Vienna. At the same time, the new Slovak government expressed its readiness to consider an earlier closure date "depending on additional financial compensation for decommissioning."¹⁷

In December of 1998, Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda and his entourage went to the summit of the European Union held in Vienna. They expected that Slovakia would be moved from the group of "laggards" to the first group of candidate countries for EU membership. To their disappointment, this did not happen,¹⁸ for the representatives of the EU wanted to make sure that the process of re-democratization of Slovakia was irreversible. Fears existed that Vladimír Mečiar might be elected the President of the

¹⁶ Austria feared for the safety of nuclear plants in Slovakia and the Czech Republic because they were built with obsolete Russian technology. See "The Price of Power In Eastern Europe," by James O. Jackson, *Time*, March 20, 1995.

¹⁷ See the letter by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Eduard Kukan to the Vice-Chancellor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria Wolfgang Schüssel dated December 3, 1999. Ref: 202.251/99-KAMI (Cabinet of the Minister]. *DA MZV SR*.

¹⁸ See "Telegram in claris, no.1577/98, Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Bonn (refers to the interview given by M. Dzurinda to *Frankfurter Rundschau*), dated December 18, 1998. Register "POLD-EVEÚ," 305-101/1998. *DA MZV SR*. On the improbability of the sudden change in approaches to Slovakia on the summit of the EU in Vienna see the talks between Jacques Poos, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Duchy of Luxembourg and its Minister of Foreign Affairs with Ján Figel', "Správa z rokovaní štátneho tajomníka MVZ SR J. Figel'a s predstaviteľmi MZV Belgicka a Luxemburska a zo stretnutia pracovnej skupiny na vysokej úrovni medzi SR a Európskou komisiou v Bruseli (19. a 20. november 1998)" [Report from the Negotiations of the Secretary of the M.F.A. of the SR Ján Figel' with the Representatives of the M.F.A.s of Belgium and Luxembourg, and from the Meeting of the High-Level Working Group of the SR and the European Commission in Brussels, November 19-20, 1998], dated December 1998. Register "Vedenie MZV SR" [Directoriat of the M.F.A.], no. 105-104/1995-1998, p.3. *DA MZV SR*.

Slovak Republic in the upcoming election.¹⁹ This would bring about a situation similar to what had existed from March of 1994 to March of 1998, when Michal Kováč as president challenged the political dominance and legislative initiatives of the Mečiar government. If elected, Mečiar might block the drafts submitted by the new ruling coalition in the National Council, appoint or refuse to appoint ambassadors, to declare referenda and even to undertake foreign policy initiatives on his own.²⁰

Though controlling the National Council, the ruling coalition decided that, despite the risk of a Mečiar victory,²¹ the next presidential election would be by popular vote and the common candidate of the coalition would be Rudolf Schuster.²² In March of 1999, the National Council approved this decision.²³ In the first round, ten candidates ran for presidency.²⁴ According to expectations, the winners of the first round held on

¹⁹ See the discussion of the nascent coalition on October 16, 1998, on whether the next president should be elected, as previously, by the National Council, or by popular vote. Rudolf Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky*, pp.152-153.

²⁰ *Ústava Slovenskej republiky* [the Constitution of the Slovak Republic], Article 102.

²¹ During the third Mečiar government, the opposition demanded that the president should be elected by popular vote. To elect Schuster by the National Council might have been seen as a sign of weakness and lack of self-confidence on the side of the new ruling coalition. Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky*, p.201.

²² Next to the SOP, instrumental in engineering support for Rudolf Schuster was the SDL. See Schuster, *Návrat do veľkej politiky* (reference to the meeting of the Coalition on October 22, 1998), p.174.

²³ See “Rozhodnutie predsedu Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky z 19.marca 1999 o priamej voľbe prezidenta Slovenskej republiky” [Ordinance of the Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the Election of the President of the Slovak Republic by Popular Vote, March 19, 1999]. Accessible on www.zbierka.sk (Electronic Register of Laws of the Slovak Republic], document no.47/1999.

²⁴ They were the former operative of the ŠtB Ján Demikát, the ex-President Michal Kováč (he withdrew his candidacy shortly before the first round), the former ambassador of Slovakia to the Czech Republic Ivan Mjartan, the former actress and Ambassador of the ČSFR to Austria Magda Vášáryová, the Chairman of the SOP Rudolf Schuster, the Chairman of the HZDS Vladimír Mečiar, the Chairman of the SNS Ján Slota, university professors Boris Zala and Michal Lazarčík and the former rector of Comenius University in Bratislava Juraj Švec. See www.statistics.sk (Election statistics, Election of the President of the Slovak Republic 2009).

May 15, 1999, were Rudolf Schuster and Vladimír Mečiar with 34.58 and 27.18 % of the votes. Both advanced to the second round, which was held two weeks later on May 29. Schuster defeated Mečiar with an even wider margin than in the first round: 57.18 % of the votes against 47.81 % in favour of Mečiar.²⁵ Schuster's victory was welcomed with relief and satisfaction by western governments.²⁶

Since October of 1995, when the last version of the language law was adopted, constant tensions between the Mečiar government and the SMK regarding the use of Slovak and Magyar in regions with ethnically mixed populations existed until Mečiar's defeat. Aware of the fact that each of its steps was carefully monitored abroad, the ruling coalition knew that it had to adopt new legislation on the status and use of minority languages in general, and Magyar in particular. Although the draft of the new language law began as a joint project, the coalition soon broke up as the SMK, dissatisfied with the draft, began to work on its own version.²⁷ In July, 1999, the National Council eventually adopted the new language law. However, the SMK voted against it.²⁸ The question now became whether the new language law was acceptable to Slovakia's western partners. After a meeting of Deputy Prime Minister Ľubomír Fogaš (SDL) and

²⁵ See www.statistics.sk (Election of President 1999 – second round; number and share of valid votes given to the candidates).

²⁶ “New President Looks West,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 31, 1999.

²⁷ For details see Ondrej Dostál, “Narodnostné menšiny,” In *Slovensko 2000: Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* [Slovakia 2000: A Global Report on the State of Society], eds. Miroslav Kollár, Grigorij Mesežnikov (Bratislava: IVO, 2000), p.183-184. The SMK asked for the use of the minority languages in communications with central state bodies, not only in local administration. It also asked for the lowering of the threshold for the use of the minority language in regions with ethnically mixed population from 20% to 10%.

²⁸ See *Zákon o používaní jazykov národnostných menšín č.184/1999 Zb.* [Law no. 184/1999 on the Use of Minority Languages], July 10, 1999. Accessible on www.zbierka.sk See the article “Parlament schválil jazykový zákon; SMK bola proti” [Parliament Approved the Language Law; the SMK Dissatisfied of It], *Sme*, July 12, 1999.

the Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Kukan, the ambassadors of the EU countries accredited in Bratislava declared that “on the political level, nothing stands against the preparation of a very positive report of the EU about Slovakia.”²⁹

Before Schuster’s victory in the presidential elections, a coordinated diplomatic offensive led by PM Dzurinda and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kukan had already begun. The two found the doors wide open in Brussels and Washington as in all European capitals, including Slovakia’s neighbours.³⁰ During Dzurinda’s first visit to Brussels in October of 1998, the joint European Commission - Slovakia High Level Working Group was created. In February of 1999, an “Action Plan” was adopted by the Slovak government to demonstrate Slovakia’s ability and preparedness to comply with entry criteria for integration into the EU.³¹ The second report of the European Commission, published in October of 1999, already praised Slovakia for “doing its utmost to meet the Copenhagen political criteria.”³² At the summit of the EU in Helsinki in December of 1999, Slovakia finally received an invitation to begin talks on its

²⁹ See “Prezident podpísal jazykový zákon; Slovensko vraj pootvorilo dvere do Bruselu” [President Signed Language Law: Slovakia Allegedly Opened Up the Door to Brussels]. *Sme*, July 21, 1999.

³⁰ See the article “Vo Washingtone sa podľa Kukana potvrdila nová kvalita vzťahov vlád USA a Slovenska” [New Quality of Relationship between the U.S. and Slovak Governments Confirmed in Washington, Kukan Says], *Sme*, January 25, 1999. See also Juraj Marušiak, Juraj Alner, Pavol Lukáč, Rudolf Chmel, Ivo Samson and Alexander Duleba, “The Foreign Policy and National Security of the Slovak Republic,” In *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. G. Mesežnikov *et al.* (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.173. After the meeting of the *Visegrád Group* in Bratislava in May of 1999, the V-3 became again V-4 as the PMs of the member states returned to regular meetings. See the article “Visegrádska spolupráca získala konkrétny obsah” [V-4 Gets its Meaning], *Sme*, October 17, 1999.

³¹ Marušiak *et al.*, “The Foreign Policy and National Security...,” pp.181-182.

³² Geoffrey Pridham, “The European Union’s Democratic Conditionality and Domestic Politics in Slovakia: The Mečiar and Dzurinda Governments Compared,” *Europe-Asia Studies* (Great Britain) 54, no.2 (2002), p.216.

accession into the EU.³³ Though having passed the test of compatibility with the Union on the political level, a technically even more complicated task remained – adjusting the Slovak legal system with the legislation of the EU within the framework of the *acquis communautaire*.³⁴ On February 15, 2000, the EU decided to begin negotiations with the Slovak Republic. During the opening session of the conference in Brussels, Eduard Kukan expressed his conviction that Slovakia would be ready to accept the *acquis* by January 1, 2004.³⁵

The attitudes of the Slovak public audience towards NATO were more reserved than those towards integration into the European Union. Following a civil war and humanitarian crisis in Kosovo, the Alliance launched air strikes on Serbian targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) from March to June of 1999.³⁶ Several commentators criticized the legitimacy of this action, which was seen as ruthless aggression by the West against the small Serbian nation.³⁷ After the coalition decided to

³³ Martin Bruncko and Pavol Lukáč, “Hlavné trendy v zahraničnej politike SR,” p.326.

³⁴ For the opinion that “all political criteria are being fulfilled and the focus has to be on economic criteria and *acquis communautaire*,” see the report from the meeting of the Associate Council of the EU and the Slovak Republic “Asociačná rada EÚ-SR,” April 29, 1999. Register “EVEÚ,” 305-107/1999. *DA MZV SR*. The screening process had begun already during the third Mečiar government. From April to October of 1998, 16 out of 31 chapters of *acquis* were screened. See Marušiak *et al.*, “The Foreign Policy and National Security...,” p.182.

³⁵ See “Informácia o priebehu otváracieho stretnutia Medzivládnej konferencie o pristúpení Slovenskej republiky k Európskej únii, 15.2.2000” [Information on the Opening Session of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Accession of the Slovak Republic into the European Union, February 15, 2000] Register “Vedenie MZV,” 105-104/2001, no.109.369/00-ODHV, p.2. *DA MZV SR*.

³⁶ Bruce Jackson, the Co-Chairman of the NATO Committee in the Congress, admitted that public support for Slovakia’s accession into NATO after the crisis in Kosovo was too low. See the article “Slovensko sa musí zbaviť pesimizmu” [Slovakia Must Get Rid of Pessimism], *Sme*, December 17, 1999.

³⁷ See two articles, both written by foreign authors, published in *Literárny týždenník*: “Kosovský omyl” [The Kosovo Error] by Miguel Herrero de Miñón, *LT*, April 15, 1999,

open Slovakia's air space to NATO during its military engagement in the FRY without consulting the National Council, the HZDS and the SNS gladly embraced this opportunity to criticize the government, as well as the Alliance. The National Council had to validate, post-facto, the decision of the government. In practical terms, this support by the Slovak government and the coalition parties opened for Slovakia the door to NATO.³⁸ In the summer of 2000, the first phase of the diplomatic offensive was completed by Slovakia's acceptance into the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). Though Slovakia's application as a part of a larger clash between the EU and the United States was first blocked by the former and subsequently by the latter, the country eventually became the member of this club of the most developed world economies on July 28, 2000.³⁹

Problems with the image of Slovakia as a country resentful of its minorities arose once again in 1999 and 2000. Referring to their persecution and discrimination,

and "Kosovo – smrteľne krátkozraké riešenie" (Kosovo – A Deadly Short-Sighted Solution) by John Miroslav Ličko (A Slovak-Canadian), *LT*, May 6, 1999.

³⁸ The first information given to the other members of the government by PM Dzurinda and the M.F.A. Kukan was that only transport planes were allowed to fly over Slovakia. Author interview with Pavol Hamžík, Bratislava, June 28, 2007. For the Kosovo crisis and its impact on Slovakia's integration into NATO see Martin Bruncko and Pavol Lukáč, "Hlavné trendy...", pp. 328-329. See also the article "Slovensko sa stáva hnacou silou ďalšieho rozširovania aliancie" (Slovakia Becomes the Engine for NATO's Further Enlargement). *Sme*, November 11, 1999. This is how Slovakia was viewed in the Congress after Dzurinda's second visit to Washington during which the Slovak PM was received, for the second time in a couple of months, by President Bill Clinton.

³⁹ Slovakia began its negotiations with the OECD in 1994, but its application was rejected as the Mečiar government excluded strategic industries from privatization. The U.S. blocked the Slovak application due to the political crisis in 2000 that may have resulted in the potential breakup of the ruling coalition in Slovakia (see the following sub-chapter). An objection raised by France was linked to the regulation of audiovisual transmission within the EU. It had a wider EU-U.S. context. Both sides reached an agreement on July 24, 2000. For details see Vladimír Bilčík, Martin Bruncko, Ivo Samson, "Integrácia SR do EÚ, NATO a OECD," In *Slovensko 2000 Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*, eds. Miroslav Kollár and Grigorij Mesežnikov, pp.355-361.

thousands of Slovak Roma⁴⁰ travelled to Great Britain, Belgium, Finland, Norway, Luxembourg, and the Czech Republic in search of political asylum.⁴¹ As a first step, the visa-free regime between western countries and Slovakia was immediately suspended. Since the exodus started two weeks after the publication of a report by the European Commission that indicated the placement of Slovakia in the first group of the candidate countries (June 13, 1999), this situation caused a panic among Slovak politicians. They became afraid that, if political asylum was granted, this might be another serious obstacle to Slovakia's integrationist ambitions. The Under-Secretary of the M.F.A. and chief negotiator with the EU Ján Figeľ, the Deputy Prime Minister for Minorities Pál Csáky (SMK), as well as the Government Commissioner for Romany Affairs Vincent Danihel, himself a Roma, claimed that the "Roma's exodus was politically motivated" and "the Roma wanted to complicate Slovakia's bid for EU accession."⁴² After careful monitoring and examination of the situation, Western states refused to grant political asylum to Slovak Roma and adopted a position similar to that of the Finnish

⁴⁰ An estimated 300,000 - 400,000 Roma live in Slovakia today. See Juraj Janto, "Rómovia v slovenskej spoločnosti" [Roma in the Slovak Society], In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Natália Rolková (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2004), p.689. Despite various censuses, it is hard to get precise data as Slovak Roma often claim either Slovak or Magyar nationality. In 2001, only 98,620 identified themselves as Roma. Ibidem (Table 1).

⁴¹ See the article "Za vidinou lepšieho života necestujú iba Rómovia zo Slovenska" [The Slovak Roma Are Not the Only Ones Who Seek A Better Life Abroad], *Sme*, July 3, 1999.

⁴² In turn, the politically divided Slovak Roma asked Csáky to resign on the basis that he cared only for the "demands of the Hungarian minority." See *East European Constitutional Review* 8, no.4 (Fall 1999). Accessible on <http://www1.law.nyu.edu> (Constitution watch, a country-by-country update on constitutional politics in Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR).

government, saying that “despite the shortcomings in the living conditions of the Roma, Slovakia is a democratic country.”⁴³

7.2 The fragmentation of the coalition and the rise of new political parties

On June 15, 1999, Rudolf Schuster was inaugurated as the second President of the Slovak Republic. At the ceremony, the presidents of Slovakia’s neighbouring countries participated in expressing support for their colleague, though not in the same numbers as in Levoča a year and a half earlier.⁴⁴ During his term in office, Schuster decided to play the role of the president – integrator, in contrast to Kováč who positioned himself as the president – defender.⁴⁵ To stress this determination and links to ancient Slovak history, a part of the inauguration ceremony was held on Hviezdoslav Square in Bratislava’s Old Town. Its purpose was to symbolize the unity between the three highest constitutional authorities: the President, the Chairman of the National Council and the Prime Minister.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Schuster, similar to Mečiar, was perceived in the capital and its political and cultural establishment as an intruder. He brought with him to Bratislava his close collaborators, including his personal physician, and commuted from Košice to Bratislava and back every week. This did not increase his

⁴³ Ibidem. The Slovak public and some politicians saw the exodus of Slovak Roma as “economic tourism.” See Michal Vašečka, “Rómovia” [Roma]. In *Slovensko 2000, Súhrnná správa...*, eds. Miroslav Kollár and Grigorij Mesežnikov (Bratislava: IVO, 2001), p.206.

⁴⁴ They were Thomas Klestil from Austria, Václav Havel from the Czech Republic, Árpád Göncz from Hungary, Alexander Kwaśniewski from Poland and Leonid Kuchma from Ukraine.

⁴⁵ See the interview with Rudolf Schuster “Čas tolerancie a zjednocovania” [The Time for Tolerance and Unification], In *Literárny týždenník*, September 30, 1999.

⁴⁶ According to historical tradition, the Great Moravian King (*rex*) Svätopluk (871-894), shortly before his death, summoned his three sons and obliged them to rule over the empire in unity. He demonstrated the disadvantage of division by easily breaking each of three sticks given to his sons. When bound together, the sticks could not be broken.

popularity among the political establishment and cultural elites by whom he was accepted as a “lesser evil.” During the following five years, Schuster, due to his language skills and contacts, notably with German politicians, was more successful in foreign than domestic politics as the latter remained in the exclusive domain of the political parties.⁴⁷

The new ruling coalition and its leaders had no less an appetite for power than the previous Mečiar-led coalition. They inherited and developed the clientelist system introduced by the previous government and parcelled among themselves the major posts from the central organs to regional and municipal administrations.⁴⁸ The nominees of the ruling coalition controlled the financial institutions and state-owned companies.⁴⁹ Whereas Mečiar’s HZDS had dominated the previous coalition that comprised also one medium (the SNS) and one small party (the ZRS), the dominance of the SDK as the largest party over the rest – the SĎĽ, the SMK and the SOP as medium sized parties – was questionable as the parties depended upon each other. At first sight, the most homogeneous appeared to be the SĎĽ and the SMK. The unpredictable future of the SOP was closely bound with the fate of its few leaders, notably president Schuster, who

⁴⁷ Author interview with Rudolf Schuster, Bratislava, May 24, 2007.

⁴⁸ Lubomír Kopeček, *Demokracie, diktatury a politické stranictví na Slovensku* [Democracy, Dictatorship and Political Partisanship in Slovakia] (Brno: CDK, 2006), p. 258.

⁴⁹ Erik Láštík, “Strany a štát na Slovensku: osudová príťažlivosť?” [Political Parties and the State in Slovakia: A Fatal Attraction?], In *Vláda strán na Slovensku. Skúsenosti a perspektívy* (The Rule of Parties in Slovakia: Experience and Perspectives), eds. Oľga Gyárfášová, Grigorij Mesežnikov (Bratislava: IVO, 2004), pp.108-110. The author refers to *patronage* (patronát) as a system that “allows to use public sources for particular political purposes.” *Patronage* led to contradictions and disequilibrium in political control over various state-owned enterprises, such as in case of the joint-stock company *Slovenské Elektrárne* (General Electric Slovakia), where a party (ANO; after 2002) with the 8% support controlled this strategic industry, the second largest in East Central Europe, with three members out of the five of the Board of Directors. Ibidem, p. 108.

had to resign from his party in order to be politically unbiased. The Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Pavol Hamžík, was known for his negotiating skills and rational style of politics rather than personal charisma. Another challenge for Dzurinda as the leader of his “Rainbow Government” was to solve the puzzle that stemmed from the uncertain degree of the homogeneity of his own party – the SDK. While preparing for battle with Mečiar in 1997 and 1998, the SDK sheltered not only the strong KDH with its stable and steady electoral support, but also tiny liberal-socialist parties – the Democrats, Democratic Unionists, the Greens, and the lilliputean Social Democrats,⁵⁰ all of whom would have otherwise not been able to get into parliament.

The tensions between the SDL and the SOP on the one hand and the KDH on the other, resurfaced during negotiations with the Vatican about the conclusion of the long delayed Basic Treaty (*Základná zmluva*) that started in the fall of 1999.⁵¹ Remembering Čarnogurský’s vote against the government program in November of 1998, and being aware of the risk of losing support within his own ranks in the future, Dzurinda, whose political career began with the KDH in 1990, had to decide which direction the SDK should follow.⁵² He formed a new subject, the Slovak Christian Democratic Union

⁵⁰ Another minor and short-lived political party was the Party of the Democratic Centre (*Strana demokratickeho stredu*) founded in August of 1999, led by Ivan Mjartan, the former Slovak Ambassador in Prague and presidential candidate in the first round of the election in May of 1999.

⁵¹ See “Ľavicové strany sú proti akejkoľvek zmluve s Vatikánom, tvrdí Palko” [Leftist Parties Oppose Any Treaty with the Vatican, Palko Claims], *Sme*, October 29, 1999.

⁵² Tensions within the SDK arose when Gabriel Palacka (the KDH-SDK), the Minister of Transportation, Post and Telecommunications was forced to resign, due to pressure by Čarnogurský and the KDH, nine months after his appointment. The reason was Palacka’s interference with the processes of the selection of the operator of the cellphone network GSM 1800, disputes concerning the future of Slovak airlines and the sale of the bonds of Slovak Telecommunications. See “Palacka odstúpil, premiér obviňuje KDH z rozbíjačstva” [Palacka Resigns: PM Accuses KDH of Factionalism], and “Dzurinda

(*Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – SDKÚ*), in the spring of 2000 as a conservative-liberal party.⁵³ The KDH decided to go its own way. Ján Čarnogurský, “the only statesman among the losers,”⁵⁴ understood well that the principles he intended to follow might sporadically become incompatible with the goals of the government.⁵⁵ Therefore, he resigned as Chairman of the KDH in October of 2000 and was replaced by Pavol Hrušovský, also a lawyer.⁵⁶ The party could rely on veteran politicians such as František Mikloško, and the new generation of politicians who gained political experience during the post-communist transformation, such as Vladimír Palko. The “angry young man,” not in style, but in substance, of the team, always ready for a clash with opponents, particularly with those with a communist past, was Daniel Lipšic (1974) educated, in part, in North America.⁵⁷

obviňuje KDH, Čarnogurský je sklamaný” [Dzurinda Accuses the KDH, Čarnogurský Is Dissatisfied], *Sme*, September 8, 1998.

⁵³ Kopeček, p.206.

⁵⁴ This is how Fedor Gál, the former leader of the VPN, characterized the difference between Čarnogurský and other Slovak politicians. See the article “Odchod” [The Departure] by F.G. in *Domino Fórum*, October 26, 2000. Gál used a more derogatory term (“sráči”) for the rest of the Slovak politicians.

⁵⁵ Čarnogurský, a Russophile, was a strong supporter of Slovakia’s integration into the EU, but not with NATO. Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 24, 2007.

⁵⁶ “Predsedom KDH je Pavol Hrušovský” [Pavol Hrušovský Becomes Chairman of KDH], *Sme*, October 22, 2000. The other candidate was Ján Figel’ who received 179 votes against 249 for Hrušovský.

⁵⁷ Besides graduating from the Faculty of Law at Comenius University in Bratislava, Lipšic studied at the Georgetown University Law Centre, at the University of Minnesota Law School (1994) and earned his licenciante in law from the Harvard Law School, Cambridge (1998-2000). During the First Dzurinda Government (1998-2002), he held the post of the Head of the Office of the Ministry of Justice. During the second Dzurinda government, he became Minister of Justice. See www.osobnosti.sk (Daniel Lipšic). Due to their young age and ambitions, Lipšic and some other young politicians, such as Lubomír Andrassy from the SĎĽ and Miroslav Beblavý from the SDKÚ were called by the opposition “Wunderkinder” (Child geniuses).

The process of political fragmentation did not bypass the SNS. In 1999, the party chairman Ján Slota was forced to resign due to various scandals and was replaced by the ambitious Anna Malíková.⁵⁸ A year later, Slota formed a new political subject – the Real Slovak National Party (*Pravá Slovenská národná strana* – PSNS).⁵⁹ As the Party of Slovak Workers vanished from the scene, the only stable political subject in opposition was the HZDS. In the absence of Vladimír Mečiar, the HZDS deputies, notably Vojtech Tkáč, Katarína Tóthová, Ivan Gašparovič, Roman Hofbauer, Tibor Cabaj and Ján Cuper were the most active in parliamentary debates, attacking the coalition over a wide range of topics from social to foreign policies.⁶⁰

The SĎĽ did not escape the process of internal fragmentation either. Two major groups emerged in 1999 and 2000. The first group comprised the reformed Communists who had split with the KSS and created the SĎĽ in the fall of 1990 and spring of 1991. They were Peter Weiss, Milan Ftáčnik and Brigita Schmögnerová. The second group⁶¹ included two major figures: the party chairman Jozef Migaš, who replaced Weiss, and

⁵⁸ “Národnariom od soboty velí Anna Malíková” [As Of Saturday, Anna Malíková Is In Command of Nationalists], *Sme*, October 3, 1999. A few days earlier, Slota lost his post in the parliamentary committee for the control of the SIS. See “Slotu pre jeho škandály odvolali z funkcie šéfa parlamentného výboru na kontrolu SIS” [Facing Scandals, Slota Ousted from Being Chief of the Committee for the Controll of Slovak Intelligence], *Sme*. September, 30, 1999. One of the most infamous statements of Ján Slota was his encouragement of the Slovaks to get into tanks and invade Budapest, which he uttered in a state of drunkenness.

⁵⁹ Kopeček, “Demokracie, diktatury...,” p.201.

⁶⁰ In 1999 and 2000, the HZDS initiated ten no-confidence votes against various members of the Dzurinda government. See Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán” [Domestic Political Development and the System of Political Parties], In *Slovensko 2000: Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti*, pp.23-24.

⁶¹ The three other important politicians of the SĎĽ, Pavol Kanis (the Minister of Defense), Peter Magvaši (The Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family), and Jozef Stank (Slovak Ambassador in Prague and the Minister of Defense; replaced Pavol Kanis in 2001), positioned themselves in-between. For their official curricula see www.osobnosti.sk

the Minister of Agriculture Pavel Koncoš. Both positioned themselves as defenders of low-income citizens and economically underdeveloped regions.⁶² The situation culminated in the spring of 2000, when Jozef Migaš as the Chairman of the National Council, voted in favour of the no-confidence motion against Dzurinda initiated by the HZDS.⁶³ For that, Migaš was heavily criticized by the press and the supporters of the coalition at home and abroad.⁶⁴ In the fall of 2001, Migaš resigned as the SDE chairman and was replaced by Koncoš, who held the post of the Chairman of the National Council until the end of the election term.

If Weiss and Ftáčnik, and to certain extent Schmögnerová, hoped, that social-democratic platform within the SDE would help them to survive the possible split with the populist wing represented by Migaš and Koncoš, they were wrong.⁶⁵ In the autumn of 1999, a young and energetic politician named Robert Fico (1964), a former member of the KSS (1987), disappointed with the politics of the SDE, founded the new political

⁶² See the article by Eva Zelenayová “Koncoš: Dost’ bolo arogancie Dzurindu a Mikloša” [Enough with Dzurinda’s and Mikloš’s Arrogance!], *Extra Plus*, March 7, 2002. For the economic imbalance among Slovak regions see “Rozdiely medzi regiónmi sa výrazne prehlbujú” [Differences Among Regions Widen], *Sme*, December 30, 1999.

⁶³ See the address by the Deputy Chairman of the HZDS Sergej Kozlik for the reasons for the no-confidence vote against PM Dzurinda delivered at the meeting of the National Council on April 13, 2000. www.nrsr.sk (Archive, NR SR 1998-2002, Stenographic Record from the 29th Meeting of the NR SR, April 13, 2000, pp.4-6). The no-confidence vote did not pass as 72 out of 141 deputies voted against and 62 in favour of the proposal (9 abstained). *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁶⁴ See the interview with the political scientist Grigorij Meseznikov “Migaš hral vabanek” [Migaš Played Vabanque], *Sme*, April 20, 2000. The author stressed the impact of Migaš’s unprecedented move which destroyed his reputation, not only among his coalition partners, but also abroad.

⁶⁵ Milan Ftáčnik created the Social-Democratic Alternative (*Sociálno-demokratická aleternatíva* – SDA). The party received only 1.79% votes in the 2002 parliamentary elections and did not pass the quorum.

party *Smer* (Direction).⁶⁶ The new subject lured, as the next election was about to show, not only the voters of the SDE and SOP, but also the SDKÚ.⁶⁷ Similarly, inspired by the quick success of the SOP in the 1998 parliamentary elections and backed by a powerful medium – Markíza TV – of which he was Director General and co-owner, Pavol Rusko (1963) decided to create a new political party as well. In May of 2001, the Alliance of a New Citizen (*Aliancia nového občana* – ANO) as a liberal party was added to a long list of Slovak political parties emerging from 1990.⁶⁸ The party was about to have the same problems as its predecessor which it imitated (SOP): weak regional structures and the dependance of party members on too few leaders.⁶⁹

In July of 2000, President Schuster became seriously ill. Following the provisions of the Constitution, the Chairman of the National Council Migaš, and Prime Minister Dzurinda, temporarily took over his competences. Schuster, who eventually overcame the illness in a private clinic in Innsbruck, Austria, later claimed that “for both I was already dead. They had their candidates and successors behind the scenes and counted the votes.”⁷⁰ Barely two years after forming a coalition, mutual trust among its leaders was irreparably broken. The only factor that bound the coalition together was the fear of

⁶⁶ Fico’s departure from the SDE was generally interpreted as a consequence of not receiving a ministerial post, or other high-ranking function, in the new government. See G. Mesežnikov, “Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán,” p.84. After becoming the PM in the summer of 2006, Fico did not forget about his former colleagues Weiss and Migaš, who stood on opposite sides, and supported their nominations for Ambassadors of the Slovak Republic in Hungary (Weiss) and the Russian Federation in 2009. Migaš was Slovak Ambassador in Kiev during the third Mečiar government.

⁶⁷ Kopeček, p.199.

⁶⁸ There were more than 200 of them. As of August 5, 2008, there were 42 political parties and movements active in Slovakia. See *Zoznam politických strán a hnutí na Slovensku*. Accessible on www.chelemendik.sk.

⁶⁹ The only real leader of the ANO was Rusko himself, as he was the major sponsor of the party. Kopeček, pp.265-267.

⁷⁰ Mesežnikov, “Vnútropolitický vývoj...,” p.35.

Mečiar returning to power⁷¹ in the upcoming parliamentary elections and the fact that Slovakia was already knocking on the door of NATO and the EU.

With the half-time of the Dzurinda government had passed, the HZDS decided to test the mood of the electorate by pushing for a referendum for pre-term parliamentary elections with no success.⁷² This has been in response to the step taken by Brigita Schmögnerová, a liberal Minister of Finance from the SDE. She cut the financial artery of the HZDS that bound it to its major sponsor – the East Slovak Steelworks in Košice – by changing its management.⁷³ Alexander Rezeš, the former General Manager of the VSŽ and the sponsor of the HZDS commented that its financial deficit of 11 billion Slovak crowns (370 million USD) was created “on purpose.”⁷⁴ After the defeat of the

⁷¹ To give Mečiar a taste of the feeling of not being “untouchable,” Slovak police raided his villa Elektra using explosives on Black Friday (April 21) 2000. They accused him of paying bonuses to members of his cabinet against the law. See the article “Slovakia Arrests Ex-Prime Minister” by Andre Lorinczova, *The Globe and Mail*, April 21, 2000. President Schuster opined that the charges were not serious enough to have warranted the police operation. This act proved counterproductive to the government as it caused an uproar among the Slovak public, not only among Mečiar’s supporters. The HZDS’s spokesman said that the HZDS held Prime Minister Dzurinda responsible “for this unbelievably brutal act and abuse of the police.” It is not hard to believe that Mečiar calculated his steps carefully and expected the outcome.

⁷² In a referendum held in December of 1999, which was initiated by the HZDS, only 20.03% of the registered voters participated. The low participation in the referendum was welcomed by western politicians and understood as support for the continuation of reforms. See the article “Až také fiasko nikto nečakal” [Nobody Expected Such a Fiasco], *Sme*, December 11, 2000.

⁷³ Strata VSŽ je pre HZDS tvrdou ranou” [The Loss of VSŽ Is A Heavy Blow to HZDS], *Sme*, October 30, 1999.

⁷⁴ “Alexander Rezeš: Niekol’komiliardovú stratu VSŽ vytvorilo umelo nové vedenie” [Alexander Rezeš: Several Billion Deficit of the VSŽ Created Artificially], *Sme*, October 8, 2000. On November 24, 2000, the VSŽ was bought by The United Steel Corporation based in Pittsburgh. See www.usske.sk (History).

referendum, HZDS deputies returned to their parliamentary seats and to the strategy of criticizing individual ministers of the coalition and suggesting their resignations.⁷⁵

This was not that difficult because corruption continued to be a problem also for the Dzurinda government. In a survey by Transparency International, a watchdog over corruption across the globe, in the fall of 1999 the Slovak Republic finished 53rd among 99 countries.⁷⁶ While these statistics referred to the state of affairs that had existed during the third Mečiar government, the new ruling coalition continued the trend. In 2001, the Minister of Transportation Jozef Macejko was involved in a dubious tender-offer regarding the purchase of 35 light trains in which the chair of the commission was the brother of the Prime Minister. This cause involved a letter from the president of Switzerland to the President Schuster on this non-transparent competition. Macejko was fired.⁷⁷ Bribing officials by entrepreneurs in order to receive licences for export of their products did not cease. Rather it became customary.⁷⁸ In 2001, Pavol Hamžík, the

⁷⁵ They already succeeded in the case of Ľudovít Černák, the former Chairman of the SNS in 1993, who switched from having been a Nationalist to the the Democratic Union, became a deputy of the SDK and was appointed the Minister of Trade in the first Dzurinda Government. Though the opposition failed to recall Černák in the National Council in September of 1999, after having lost the support of his peers, he resigned his post in October. Mesežnikov, “Vnútropolitický vývoj...,” p.41.

⁷⁶ “Slovensko v korupcii 53, hneď za Južnou Kóreou” [In Corruption Slovakia Takes 53rd Place Trailing South Korea]. *Sme*, October 27, 1999. The problems with corruption were perceived by Slovak society as “one of the most serious long term social problems.” Emília Sičáková-Beblavá, “Transparency and Corruption,” In *Slovakia 2004: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov and Milan Kollár (Bratislava: IVO, 2005), p.683.

⁷⁷ “It is a conspiracy aimed against me and the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union,” said Dzurinda. See Daniela Zemanovičová and Emília Sičáková-Beblavá, “Transparency and Corruption,” In *Slovakia 2002: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov, Miroslav Kollár, and Tom Nicholson (Bratislava: IVO, 2003), p.677. On this also see the article “Kauza vláčiky” [The Cause of Light Trains], *Sme*, February 2, 2005.

⁷⁸ “Za licenciu sa dáva úplatok aj 100,000” [For a Licence to be Given Expect to Pay 100,000 in Backsheesh], *Sme*, February 7, 2001.

Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, had to step down for the misuse of Euro-funds by one of his subordinates.⁷⁹ Paradoxically, it was President Schuster who had to accept Hamžík's resignation. Since then, the steady decline in preferences for the SOP was evident. Of no help was its coalition with the even weaker Social Democrats, or rather what was left of them after the cream of the party became deputies of the SDKÚ in the fall of 2000.

Meanwhile, an old-new party was waiting for the right moment to return from obscurity. Calling the "Velvet Revolution" a putsch, Jozef Ševc, the Chairman of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), the son-in-law of Vasil Biľak, was ready to help to lead Slovakia from the "morass of a deep economic, social, moral and spiritual crisis."⁸⁰ Since the right-wing parties were held responsible for the deepening of a gap between Bratislava and western Slovakia on the one hand, and the much poorer regions of Central and Eastern Slovakia on the other, and following the total collapse of the SDL, the chances of the KSS returning to parliament after more than a decade were improving. The biggest surprise was still to come. In July of 2002, Ivan Gašparovič, one of the closest collaborators of Mečiar, who was the Deputy Chairman of the HZDS, did not get the party nomination for the upcoming parliamentary elections. On July 12, only hours before the registration of political parties was completed, a new party – the Movement for Democracy (*Hnutie za demokraciu* – HZD) led by Gašparovič himself –

⁷⁹ Retrieval at: <http://www.transparency.org/newsletters/2001.2/reports.html#slova>.

⁸⁰ See the article "Podľa predsedu KSS Jozefa Šveca bol november 1989 obyčajným pučom" [November 1989 Was An Ordinary Putsch, Says Jozef Ševc, the Chairman of the KSS], *Sme*, November 11, 1999.

was registered by the Ministry of the Interior and allowed to enter the electoral campaign.⁸¹

7.3 The Dzurinda government and Slovak society in the 2002 parliamentary elections: *un mariage arrangé*

In December of 1998 the representatives of the Slovak NGO O.K. 98 sent an open letter to the parties of the winning coalition, stating:

Political parties do not have a patent for understanding. Citizens are sufficiently aware and know how to distinguish decent, diligent, and sensitive politicians from conceited, over-ambitious and corruptible ones, no matter which political party they belong to. Responsibility for the state was not entrusted to you by citizens forever, but only for a short period of four years... Your acts will not be measured by citizens in terms of the extent of political success attained by your party, but by the level of willingness from public service and the modesty in providing it. They will take into consideration how far Slovakia will go in strengthening democracy, rule of law and personal freedom... We are prepared and willing to cooperate further with all forward-looking forces who act in the interest of our citizens and the democracy of our country.⁸²

The letter proved prophetic. Before the 2002 parliamentary elections, Pavol Rusko, the leader of the ANO and his lieutenant, the journalist and political commentator Ľubomír Lintner, stated that Dzurinda “was deceiving citizens” and that “public tender [light trains] in Slovakia had become a symbol of corruption.”⁸³ After the

⁸¹ See “Gašparovičova odplata Mečiarovi – HZD” (Gašparovič’s Revenge to Mečiar – the HZD). *Sme*, July 12, 2002. Dušan Štrauss, “Systém politických strán a hnutí,” In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Natália Rolková, p.89.

⁸² Martin Bútora, Pavol Demeš, “Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections,” In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, eds. M. Bútora et al.(Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.166.

⁸³ Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics and the Party System,” In *Slovakia 2002: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. G. Mesežnikov, M. Kollár, T. Nicholson (Bratislava, IVO, 2003), p.62.

elections, ANO became part of the ruling coalition. In September of 2003, after the Minister of the Economy Robert Nemcsics had to resign over dubious financial activities, Rusko took his post. He was forced to resign as a result of financial transactions incongruous with his status as a high-ranking state official in August of 2005.⁸⁴

In the atmosphere of apathy stemming from the general perception that the new rulers were no better than their predecessors,⁸⁵ Slovak NGOs had the onerous task of mobilizing the electorate and bringing voters to the polling stations again. The authors of the 2002 NGO campaign were well aware of the fact that “the overall climate in society was very different from that in 1998, because fear and tension had given way to skepticism and disgust as the government had failed to meet any of the expectations that the ‘voters of change’ had formed four years before.”⁸⁶ The only rallying point, similarly to 1998, remained foreign policy and the completion of the integration with NATO and the EU. Though the election was won by the slightly changed coalition led again by Mikuláš Dzurinda, the trust of citizens in political parties, whether in opposition or in

⁸⁴ After Rusko had lost the support of Prime Minister Dzurinda due to the scandal with his massive private loan from an entrepreneur (*kauza zmenky*), President Schuster recalled Rusko from his function. See “Prezident odvolal Pavla Ruska” [President Recalls Pavol Rusko]. *Pravda*, August 24, 2005.

⁸⁵ In the late 1990s, graffiti with political and social undertones, such as “Long-live the Coalition’s Victorious February” [Nech žije koaličný Víťazný Február], that appeared on the facades of the buildings on Vajnorská street in Bratislava, and “People, buy combs, lousy times are coming” [Ľudia, kupujte hrebene, prichádza všivavá doba] in the train station in Trenčianska Teplá, testified to the pessimism of ordinary citizens in the capital, as well as in the regions.

⁸⁶ Peter Novotný, Daniel Forgács, Marián Velšic, “Non-Governmental Organizations and the 2002 Elections,” In *Slovak Elections 2000: Results, Implications, Context*, eds. G. Mesežnikov, O. Gyárfášová, M. Kollár, T. Nicholson, pp.195-214 (Bratislava: IVO, 2003), p.196.

coalition, was shattered. Moreover, the sense of unity and mutual trust which made Slovak NGOs so successful in 1998 was melting as well.

The campaign of the Slovak NGOs was conceptually similar to that of 1998. This time it was not that inventive and only copied the past. The foreign partners provided the non-profit sector with some financial aid. In comparison with the recent past and traditional contributors such as the Open Society Fund, the German Marshall Fund, the C.S. Mott Foundation, the British, U.S., Canada's, Norway's and the Netherlands' Embassies, the main donor to the 2002 election campaign was the Freedom House Foundation.⁸⁷ The buzzword "Change," which had such a strong mobilizing effect four years earlier, was replaced by the more moderate slogans "We decide" and "We are not indifferent," that reflected the overall political fatigue. Communication with the electorate was the task of the Institute of Public Affairs, the Civic Eye, Head 98, Gemma 93, Citizen and Democracy Foundation. They were helped by NGOs in all regions such as the Civic Forum of Prešov in East Slovakia, the Informal Association of Trenčín in North Slovakia, the Association for the Development of the Third Sector in Banská Bystrica in Central Slovakia, Pro Trnava in West Slovakia, and some others.⁸⁸ The Alliance for Support of Fair Play was established with the aim of preparing a Code of Conduct designed to watch over the behaviour of political parties and their compliance with the rules and to monitor their spending during the campaign.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Novotný, Forgács, Veštic, "Non-governmental organizations and the 2002 Elections," p.197.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.203.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.201.

In the elections held on September 20 and 21, 2002, seven political parties passed the 5% quorum (Table 6: percentage and seats):

Party	%	Seats
HZDS	19.5	36
SDKÚ	15.1	28
<i>Smer</i>	13.5	25
SMK	11.2	20
KDH	8.3	15
ANO	8.0	15
KSS	6.3	11 ⁹⁰

The biggest surprise was the victory of the right-wing parties.⁹¹ Yet the election results showed that the three most stable parties of the ruling coalition, old and new, the SDKÚ, the KDH and the SMK, with their 63 mandates were not capable of maintaining control over the National Council. They had to rely on the ANO with its 15 mandates. Even with this support, the Big-Three was still shy of 3/5 majority by 12 mandates. Depending on the law, they had to resort to a discreet communication with either the HZDS or *Smer*.⁹²

⁹⁰ Anton Hrnko, *Slovenský parlament v premenách času* (Bratislava: Kancelária Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky, 2008), p.95. Overall, 26 political parties participated in the elections. See www.statistics.sk (election statistics, elections to the Parliament, elections to the Parliament of the SR in 2002).

⁹¹ “Šok z volieb: tón udáva pravica” [Election Shock: The Right Sets the Tone], *Sme*, September 22, 2002.

⁹² “Sociológ Krivý: Fico v opozícii bude neľútostný” [Sociologist Krivý: Fico in Opposition Will Be Unmerciful], *Sme*, September 22, 2002.

For the fourth time since the 1992 elections, the HZDS emerged with the largest number of votes – 19.5% (36 seats). However, the decline of its electoral support in comparison with the 1998 parliamentary elections (27%; 43 seats) was sharp. As in October of 1998, the party was not in a position to find a partner for negotiations regarding the creation of the cabinet and President Schuster was in a hurry to give the mandate to Dzurinda to form a new government.⁹³ Surprisingly, *Smer* lagged far behind expectations as it received only 13.46% of the votes.⁹⁴ The party did not participate in the formation of the new government which consisted of the SDKÚ, KDH, SMK, and the ANO. The HZDS and *Smer* went into opposition. Together with the KSS, they had 62 seats. Despite being unsuccessful in the elections, *Smer* erected a wall between itself and the rest of the political parties. Being in opposition meant giving enough time and space to the old-new coalition to discredit itself even more in the eyes of ordinary citizens with its unpopular social policies.⁹⁵ After a long thirteen years, the Communist Party of Slovakia returned to parliament ready to fight “vulgar capitalism.”⁹⁶ As during the previous term, the opposition attempted to recall members of the government, and particularly Ivan Mikloš, the Deputy Prime Minister in the second Dzurinda

⁹³ “Prezident: Vládu zostaví Dzurinda” [President: Dzurinda Will Form the Government], *Sme*, September 27, 2002.

⁹⁴ Fico explained this failure as a consequence of his push for a law documenting the origins of assets. See “Fico pripisuje volebný neúspech Smeru aj zákonu o preukazovaní pôvodu majetku [Fico Ascribes Smer’s Failure also to Law on Documentation of the Origins of Assets], *Sme*, April 27, 2003.

⁹⁵ Peter Učeň, “Centristický populizmus ako nová kompetitívna a mobilizačná stratégia v slovenskej politike” [Centrist Populism as a New Competitive and Mobilizing Strategy in Slovak Politics], In *Vláda strán na Slovensku: Skúsenosti a perspektívy*, eds. Oľga Gyárfášová, Grigorij Mesežnikov (Bratislava: IVO, 2004), p.57. Kopeček, *Demokracie...*, pp.261-262

⁹⁶ “Communists Blame Velvet Revolution for ‘Moral Decay’” by Beata Balogová. *Kanadský Slovák*, Toronto, November 25, 2000 (originally published in the Slovak Spectator). Vladimír Krivý, “Election Results and Trends,” In *Slovak Elections 2002...*, eds. G. Mesežnikov, O. Gyárfášová, M.Kollár, p.63.

Government and the Minister of Finance, who was considered the author of economic reforms in Slovakia, and as such held responsible by the opposition for the deterioration of social conditions.

The voter turnout, which was slightly over 70%, the lowest since the 1990 elections, confirmed the growing electoral apathy.⁹⁷ This was particularly evident among two categories of voters: first- and second-time voters who played such an important role in the 1998 elections. In a survey conducted by IVO in April of 2002, more than half of 350,000-380,000 potential first-time voters (8%) expressed their lassitude in participating in the elections as a consequence of frustration.⁹⁸ Eventually, both first-time voters and second-time voters came to the polls in September, with 44.3% and 48.1% of the votes cast for the parties that formed the government.

There was a tendency to interpret their voting behaviour as support for pro-reform and pro-integration political parties. Nevertheless, for both categories of voters their main concern was not foreign policy issues or the image of the country. They were concerned with socio-economic issues: employment opportunities, housing for young families and access to education.⁹⁹ The party that received the largest number of votes by first-time voters was *Smer* (21.2% of an expected 24.8%; see Graph 2 in the

⁹⁷ This was, except for the elections in 1998, rather a permanent characteristic of Slovak post-communist society. See the article “Občania sú zmenami po novembri sklamaní” [Citizens Disappointed with the Change after November (1989)], *Sme*, November 7, 1999. 42% of respondents voiced their dissatisfaction with changes after the “Velvet Revolution,” only 3% had the opposite opinion. The responses were almost identical with those in a similar survey conducted in November of 1993. A slight majority of the Slovaks thought that Communism was a better system than the present one. See “Podľa 53 percent Slovákov bol komunizmus lepší” [Communism Was Better, 53% Slovaks Say], *Sme*, April 18, 2000.

⁹⁸ Marián Velšic, “Young Voters,” In *Slovak Elections 2002. Results, Implications, Context*,” eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov *et al.*, p.141.

⁹⁹ Velšic, “Young Voters...,” p. 150.

Appendices).¹⁰⁰ Despite their political frustrations, patterns of electoral loyalty could be found particularly among second-time voters who cast their votes for the SDKÚ, which received the largest share of the votes in this category of voters (18.8% compared to 14.3% expected; see Graph 3 in the Appendices).¹⁰¹

A positive factor in the elections was the convergence of the urban↔rural gap that characterized the elections in 1994 and 1998. Slovak sociologist Oľga Gyárfášová viewed the 2002 parliamentary elections as an interest-based political competition, in contrast to the previous elections that were traditional competitions over identities which would point to the internal stabilization of society.¹⁰² Similarly, her colleague Vladimír Krivý opined that

While the 2002 elections were also extremely important for Slovakia, by this time [the] HZDS regarded by many at home and abroad as a threat to democracy, was so isolated – due partly its own behaviour, and partly to statements from abroad – that it was unlikely the elections would yield an outcome that would severely damage the country’s national interests. In this regard, the stakes were not as high and the game [was] not as dramatic as in 1998.¹⁰³

The 2002 election results confirmed the assumption expressed by Jeanne Kirkpatrick, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in the late 1990s that *at least* two election periods are needed to stabilize democracy in Slovakia.¹⁰⁴ The second and unexpected victory of the

¹⁰⁰ Velšic, p.151.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁰² Gyárfášová, "Voting Behaviour," In *Slovak Elections 2002*, p.134.

¹⁰³ Vladimír Krivý, "Election Results and Trends," In *Slovak Elections 2002*, p.66.

¹⁰⁴ "Slovakia needs one or two more democratic elections in order to make the West overcome its mistrust caused by Mečiar," Soňa Szomolányi, "Slovakia's Transition Path and the 1998 Elections," In *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia*, eds. M. Bútorá, G. Mesežnikov, Z. Bútorová, S.Fisher (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), p.33.

right-wing parties was the result of the quarrels that plagued the left rather than of the quality of the right and the trust of citizens in it.

A survey by the Institute for Public Affairs showed that 25% of respondents gave NGOs and their role in the 2002 election campaign the marks 1 and 2 within the 1-5 scale, while 31% of respondents gave NGOs a 3. Twelve % of respondents gave NGOs the grades 4 and 5 respectively (the worst marks) and 32% of respondents were unable even to rate the campaign (see Graph 4 in the Appendices).¹⁰⁵ In comparison with a similar survey made four years earlier, this indicated a decrease in the activities of civil society and the NGOs in public perceptions. The 2002 parliamentary elections showed a drop in the election turnout of 14%, an approximate 10% drop in the participation of young voters, as well as a significant increase of votes cast for new parties that based their campaigns upon distancing themselves from the practices of the ruling coalition (*Smer*). A decrease in the public awareness of the activities of the non-governmental sector thus mirrored the overall decline of public trust in old political parties.

Slovak society and specifically its younger members wanted to hear from politicians concrete solutions to urgent socio-economic problems. Politicians offered the foreign policy goals as the only rallying platform. Therefore, it may be said that in September of 2002 the voters of the 1998 “Change” came to the polls with their jaws firmly clenched to finish what had begun four years earlier. Not by coincidence, John Goodish, President of U.S. Steel Košice, expressed his conviction that the outcome of the 2002 parliamentary elections was more important in gaining the trust of foreign

¹⁰⁵ Peter Novotný, Daniel Forgács and Marián Velšic, “Non-Governmental Organizations and the 2002 Elections,” In *Slovak Elections 2002...*, p. 211.

investors than the invitation to join NATO that followed in November of the same year.¹⁰⁶

7.4 The accession

The Second Dzurinda government consisted of six members of the SDKÚ, four of the SMK, three of the KDH and three of the ANO. It was appointed by President Schuster on October 16, 2002.¹⁰⁷ The unexpected electoral victory of the ruling coalition, in which ANO as a firm supporter of the integration with NATO replaced the ambiguous SDE,¹⁰⁸ confirmed that the time was ripe for Slovakia to join the rest of the *Visegrád Group* in the Alliance and to enter the European Union together with its post-communist neighbours.¹⁰⁹ On November 21, 2002, Slovakia was finally invited to join NATO at the Alliance's summit in Prague. Bearing in mind that public support for the country's membership in NATO was traditionally lower than that for the European Union,¹¹⁰ it appeared that now it was the Alliance which wanted to fill the "black hole"

¹⁰⁶ "Goodish: Voľby boli pre investorov dôležitejšie, než pozvanie do NATO [Goodish: Election More Important for Investors Than Invitation from NATO], *Sme*, November 24, 2002.

¹⁰⁷ "Druhá Dzurindova vláda zavládla" [The Second Dzurinda Government Has Begun]. *Sme*, October 17, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Pavol Kanis, the Minister of Defense nominated by the SDE was accused of leaving 29 former communist "politruks" (officers responsible for Marxist indoctrination and propaganda) in the Ministry's leading posts, which complicated communication with the Alliance. See "NATO nie je 'pakáreň'" [NATO Is Not a Bully] by Peter Tóth. *Sme*, July 7, 1999.

¹⁰⁹ See the observation by the French political scientist Jacques Rupnik in 1999 that "Slovakia will not decide upon when it becomes a member of the EU, but it will decide upon when it becomes ready." Jacques Rupnik in the interview "Skúsenosť s Vladimírom Mečiarom pomohla Slovensku k demokracii" [The Experience with Vladimír Mečiar Helped Democracy in Slovakia], *Sme*, December 1, 1999.

¹¹⁰ See "Slováci uprednostňujú úniu pred USA" [Slovaks Prefer the EU Over the U.S.], *Sme*, November 11, 2001. The article refers to the report by the State Department based on a survey conducted by the Slovak agency Focus in the summer of the same year.

in the centre of the *Visegrád Group*. However, U.S. diplomats had warned Slovak politicians in February of 2002 that Mečiar's participation in a future Slovak government was a matter of "significant concern" and could hamper Slovakia's accession into NATO¹¹¹ and thus automatically into the EU. In March of 2002, Mečiar travelled to Washington where he was received by Henry J. Hyde, the Chairman of the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives. During the meeting, Mečiar was told that the United States would not support Slovakia's accession into NATO if he was about to become a part of the new Slovak government after the upcoming parliamentary elections.¹¹² Until 2006, Mečiar and the HZDS complied.¹¹³

The invitation to join the EU came at the summit of the Union in Copenhagen three weeks after the summit of NATO in Prague. The timing corresponded with the informal rule that a post-communist country could not slip into the EU without being or becoming the member of NATO. At a press-conference held at the end of the summit, Mikuláš Dzurinda congratulated Slovak citizens, as well as diplomats and professionals, for reaching Slovakia's major goal. He reminded them that the country was eventually able to catch up with the first group that comprised the six most advanced candidate

¹¹¹ Nicholas Burns, the U.S. Ambassador in Brussels, informed Mikuláš Dzurinda, Daniel Lipšic, Pavol Rusko, Pál Csáky and Robert Fico about the position of the U.S. government at a dinner at the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava. See the article "S HZDS to nepôjde, počuli politici na americkej večeri" [HZDS Not Welcome, Politicians Were Told at American Dinner], *Sme*, February 28, 2002.

¹¹² "Mečiaru prijali, no povedali mu nie" [Mečiar Received, Told 'No'], *Sme*, March 20, 2002. See also "Albrightová: Mečiar je zodpovedný, že SR nebola v prvej skupine krajín NATO [Albright: Mečiar Responsible for Slovakia's Exclusion From the First Group of Candidate Countries], *Sme*, November 24, 2002.

¹¹³ Together with *Smer* and the Slovak Nationalists, the continuously-shrinking HZDS joined the government led by Robert Fico in July of 2006.

countries within the span of two years.¹¹⁴ The summit set May 1 in 2004 as the date for Slovakia's entrance into the EU. However, there were still two important steps to take: to sign the Accession Agreement after the vote in the European Parliament that would endorse the accession; and to approve the accession in a national referendum.¹¹⁵

At the same time, the Second Dzurinda government set itself a new ambitious objective. It foresaw Slovakia's accession into the *Eurozone* in the period 2008-2010.¹¹⁶ To reach this goal, it was necessary to make complex changes in fiscal, budgetary, taxation and social policies and legislation. In April of 2003, the government adopted the *Strategy of Public Finance Reform* to reduce the deficit below 3% of GDP by 2006. In June, the government prepared the draft of *Taxation Reform Concept for 2004-2006*. The new concept of taxation, which introduced a very competitive 19% flat tax regardless of the type of income, became effective as of January 1, 2004.¹¹⁷ A new Labour Code was adopted in such a way as to accommodate the needs of foreign investors. These steps, along with the presence of the skilled work force, good infrastructure, and Slovakia's position as a crossroads of North and South as well as West and East, helped to attract the attention of foreign investors on a previously unseen scale.¹¹⁸ To facilitate an easier flow of foreign investments to Slovakia, the government

¹¹⁴ "Dzurinda zablahoželal občanom Slovenska k pozvánke do EÚ [Dzurinda Congratulated Citizens of Slovakia for the Invitation to Join the EU], *Sme*, December 14, 2002.

¹¹⁵ Vladimír Bilčík, "Slovakia's Integration to the European Union," In *Slovakia 2003: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov and M. Kollár (Bratislava: IVO, 2004), p.307.

¹¹⁶ Marek Jakoby and Karol Morvay, "Overall Economic Development," In *Slovakia 2003: A Global Report on the State of Society*, p.347.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp.342-343.

¹¹⁸ Rastislav Káčer and Marián L. Tupý, "Out of the Black Hole," *Wall Street Journal*, February 17, 2005. R. Káčer, the graduate from the Institute of International Relation at

created the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (*Slovenská agentúra pre rozvoj investícií a obchodu* – SARIO) in 2002. The years 2003 and 2004 established Slovakia's reputation as a Hong-Kong of East Central Europe and a driving force for a “more free-enterprise, entrepreneurial era.”¹¹⁹ The flat tax policies of the Slovak government and the governments of the Baltic States that followed the same course were objected to by France and Germany, who accused them of “subsidising their low taxes with EU aid money.”¹²⁰ By 2004, the list of foreign investors in Slovakia increased fivefold.¹²¹ The arrival of auto manufacturers such as Kia and PSA (Peugeot-Citroën), all of whom built modern assembly plants, together with the already present Volkswagen in Slovakia, helped to build the image of the country as a “Detroit of Eastern Europe.”¹²² According to a representative of the World Bank, Slovakia was “the most pro-reform country worldwide in 2004.”¹²³

Whereas foreign politics and macroeconomic results were showing rapid progress, the situation on the domestic political scene in 2003 resembled the medieval “bellum omnia contra omnes.” Tensions arose between the Christian Democrats and the liberals from ANO regarding Abortion Law in April. As the draft law passed its second reading in the National Council with the support by the deputies of the SMK, SDKÚ and ANO,

Comenius University, was the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Washington from 2003 to 2008. www.osobnosti.sk

¹¹⁹ Steve Forbes, “Investor’s paradise,” *Forbes*, August 11, 2003. Scott Steele, “A European Powerhouse,” *Canadian Business*, September 13, 2004.

¹²⁰ “How Slovakia became a Great Place to Do Business,” *Money Week*, May 19, 2006.

¹²¹ Káčer and Tupý, “Out of the Black Hole.”

¹²² “Detroit East: Eastern Europe is becoming the World’s Newest Car Capital,” *Business Week*, July 25, 2005. The article underlines that the Volkswagen plant in Bratislava, with its production of 250,000 cars a year, including luxury Audi SUVs Q7 (more recently also Porsche Cayenne) is the most profitable among 42 others worldwide, due to “low labor costs, flexible manufacturing and a motivated work force.”

¹²³ Robert Grawe, the Director for Central Europe and the Baltic States. “Slovensko je reformná jednotka” [Slovakia is a Reform Unit], *Sme*, September 9, 2004.

the KDH said that it considered the law as a breach of the coalition agreement.

Eventually, the SDKÚ and the SMK expressed their support for the KDH and reassured its ally that they would not vote for the law. The ANO, however, did not withdraw from its position until July of 2003, when the both sides left the issue to the Constitutional Court.¹²⁴ The conflict between the KDH and the ANO spread to an institutional level, as Pavol Rusko, the chairperson of the ANO, claimed that he was wiretapped at meetings with his partners in the High-Tatras. He accused Vladimír Palko, the Minister of the Interior from the KDH, as well as the Slovak Intelligence Service, of being behind the efforts to discredit him.¹²⁵

In August of 2003, the affair of wiretapping of politicians and businessmen suddenly gained a new dimension. Prime Minister Dzurinda accused Ján Mojžiš, the Director of the National Security Office (*Národný bezpečnostný úrad – NBÚ*), and a “certain small group” (cause *skupinka*) of engineering scandals on purpose with the aim of taking economic advantage of them.¹²⁶ Dzurinda eventually succeeded in recalling Mojžiš from his post by a vote in the cabinet, but the cost was high. The KDH and SMK

¹²⁴ Grigorij Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics and the Party System,” In *Slovakia 2003: Global Report of the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov *et al.* (Bratislava: IVO, 2004), pp.35-36.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.37.

¹²⁶ The daily *Sme*, which had proven several times during the Mečiar era that it had access to confidential and classified information, posted Dzurinda’s testimony on the Internet. See “Výpoveď premiéra Dzurindu sa ocitla na Internete” [PM Dzurinda’s Testimony Appeared on the Internet], *Sme*, December, 9, 2003. Dzurinda identified the lobbyist Miloš Žiak and Ján Mojžiš as members of the group that put across its interests in several lucrative tender-offers. The others were Milan Šimečka, the editor-in-chief of *Sme*, the journalist Milan Žitný, the businessmen Peter Lukeš and Milan Lazar, and the chief investigator of serious crimes (*vyšetrovateľ závažnej trestnej činnosti*) of the Ministry of the Interior Jozef Šátek. See Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics...,” pp.39-40. The Slovak Secret Service asked Army Intelligence (*Vojenské obranné spravodajstvo – VOS*) for help in looking for information on Mojžiš. The VOS refused to co-operate. See the article “SIS hľadala pomoc pri spochybnení Mojžiša” [SIS Sought Help in Discrediting Mojžiš], *Sme*, October 9, 2003.

ministers were hesitant to vote for the PM's proposal. Ivan Šimko, the Minister of Defense, one of the founding members of the KDĽ and an MP of the SDKÚ, opposed Dzurinda's move. Šimko was recalled and replaced by Juraj Liška, the young mayor of the city of Trenčín and an MP of the SDKÚ on October 10, 2003.¹²⁷ In a gesture of defiance, Šimko created a new political subject – the Free Forum (*Slobodné fórum* – SF) – which was registered with the Ministry of the Interior in January of 2004. Ironically, at the first party congress in March of 2004, Šimko lost his bid for the party chairmanship to another apostate from the SDKÚ, Zuzana Martináková, who was a former protégé of Dzurinda.¹²⁸

At the same time, the parties in opposition faced similar problems of defections. Embarrassed by the ineffective party leadership, Vojtech Tkáč, one of the most loyal members of the HZDS in the past, led a group of eleven HZDS deputies out of the party in February of 2003. These included the former Minister for Social Affairs Oľga Keltošová, and Rudolf Žiak, a top officer of the Slovak Intelligence Services (SIS) under Ivan Lexa, all of whom decided to form the Caucus of Independent Deputies (*Klub nezávislých poslancov* – KNP). Their membership in the HZDS was instantly suspended. Tkáč and his colleagues left their former party and created the People's Union (*Ludová únia* – LÚ) in May.¹²⁹ The fate of this new arrival in Slovak politics was similar to that of the Free Forum. The *Smer* and the Communist Party were more stable than the

¹²⁷ www.osobnosti.sk Juraj Liška

¹²⁸ Grigorij Mesežnikov, "Domestic Political Developments and the Political Party System," In *Slovakia 2004: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov and Miroslav Kollár (Bratislava: IVO, 2005), pp.92-93.

¹²⁹ G. Mesežnikov, "Domestic Politics and the Party System," In *Slovakia 2003: Global Report of the State of Society*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov and Miroslav Kollár (Bratislava: IVO, 2004), p.76.

HZDS. The former increased as the remnants of the SOP merged with it in March.¹³⁰ The Communists lost one deputy, who was expelled for his ideological heresy in December of 2003.¹³¹ The three parties in opposition stuck together on two occasions when they unsuccessfully initiated a no-confidence vote against Ivan Mikloš (SDKÚ) and Pál Csáky (SMK).¹³²

On December 7, 2003, President Rudolf Schuster delivered his report on the State of the Republic in the National Council. Next to praising the accomplishments in the integration processes, he criticized the ruling coalition in general and the Prime Minister in particular for forming short-lived alliances in an effort to make decisions without his partners. Schuster warned that 80% of citizens voiced their dissatisfaction with the existing social situation and stated that “democratic discussion...was replaced by power decision-making.” He pointed to the internal split of the government and claimed that the National Council had to deal with its own quarrels instead of solving real problems. The critique culminated with the observation on the presence of “methods that were expected to vanish, yet they returned in a quasi-cultivated form.”¹³³ This was a powerful message by the Slovak President as the political parties already had their candidates ready for the upcoming presidential elections envisaged for May of 2004.

¹³⁰ “SOP dnes ukončila svoju činnosť a spojila sa so stranou Smer” [SOP Ceased to Exist. It Merged with Smer], *Sme*, March 1, 2003.

¹³¹ The expelled deputy was Herman Arvay, who identified himself as “cosmopolitan, inclining towards liberalism and social democracy.” Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics...”, p.74.

¹³² Mesežnikov, “Domestic Politics...”, p.25. Csaky held again the position of the the Deputy PM for European Integration, National Minorities and Human Rights.

¹³³ See “Správa o stave republiky – prejav prezidenta Rudolfa Schustera [Report on the State of the Republic – the Speech by the President Rudolf Schuster], *Sme*, December, 8, 2003.

Before, Rudolf Schuster, together with Mikuláš Dzurinda, Eduard Kukan and Ján Figel', represented the Slovak Republic at the "European Conference on the Accession into the European Union" in Athens from April 15-17 in 2003.¹³⁴ At the ceremony, both Schuster and Dzurinda stressed the beginnings of a "new era" in Slovak history. The former thanked the citizens of Slovakia for bringing their country to the doorstep of the new, unified and free Europe.¹³⁵ During his visit to Bratislava a month later, the Commissioner of the European Commission for Enlargement, Günther Verheugen, reminded the Slovak leaders that there was one more step to take – the referendum. Though Verheugen expressed opinion that he did not expect the outcome of the referendum to become problematic, he underlined the importance of the participation of citizens in it. He suggested that, from now on, Slovakia had to concentrate on two major tasks: the building of the administrative capacities for receiving available Euro-funds and on fighting corruption.¹³⁶ Despite its success in the integration with western democracies, Slovakia remained in the West one amongst the most invisible candidate

¹³⁴ "Politici: je to historický deň" [Politicians: It is a Historic Day], *Sme*, April 17, 2003. The article stresses the unity of European leaders while facing the crisis in Iraq.

¹³⁵ See the document "Informácia z priebehu slávnostného podpisu Zmluvy o pristúpení k Európskej únii a zasadnutia Európskej konferencie v Aténach v dňoch 15.-17.4. 2003 [Information on the Ceremonial Signing of the Treaty on the Accession into the European Union and the Meeting of the European Conference in Athens, April 15-17, 2003]. Register "Vedenie MZV SR" [Register "Directoriat of the M.F.A. of the SR"], 105-104/2002-2003 (no. 124.599/03-KOR2). *DA MZV SR*. See "Prejav prezidenta SR" [The Address of the President] (Appendix 1), and "Vystúpenie predsedu vlády SR M. Dzurindu" [The Address of the PM of the SR M. Dzurinda] (Appendix 2).

¹³⁶ "Informácia o návšteve komisára EK pre rozširovanie G. Verheugena v SR v dňoch 5.- 6. mája 2003" [Information on the Visit of the EU Commissioner for Enlargement G. Verheugen in the SR, May 5-6, 2003], Register "Vedenie MZV SR," 105-104/2002-2003 (no. 122.985/2003- EVVI). *DA MZV SR*.

countries, falling behind the rest of the *Visegrád Group* – Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.¹³⁷

As Slovakia was preparing to enter NATO, a report by the U.S. State Department looked at the state of democracy and human rights in the country. The report criticized corruption, police brutality against the Roma, forced sterilization of Roma women, the influence of politicians over the media and the presence of anti-Semitism in the investigation of the “small group” affair. The reactions of Slovak politicians were rather neutral. Unexpectedly, Ján Figel’ expressed the opinion that the other side might have been asked some questions, too.¹³⁸ On March 29, 2004, Slovakia became a full-fledged member state of NATO.¹³⁹ On this occasion, Pavol Hrušovský, the Chairman of the National Council, stressed that, by becoming part of the Alliance, Slovakia would have to assume obligations that stemmed from its membership.¹⁴⁰ The Slovak public, while appreciative of the protection provided by the U.S. troops, had a different opinion in regard to the increase in military spending.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ See “Telegram in claris by the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to European Communities in Brussels ‘Prieskum Eurobarometra: rozširovanie EÚ a obraz Slovenska’ [Eurobarometer Poll: The EU Enlargement and the Image of Slovakia]. Register “EVVA,” 305-101/2003 (no. 4763/2003 BESMI). *DA MZV SR*.

¹³⁸ “USA skritizovali Dzurindu aj SIS” [U.S. Criticized Dzurinda and SIS], *Sme*, February 27, 2004. In its report, the SIS originally pointed to the Jewish origins of some members of the “small group.”

¹³⁹ “Po rokoch čakania sme súčasťou NATO” [After the Years of Waiting, We Are Part of NATO]. *Sme*, March 30, 2004.

¹⁴⁰ “Slovensko sa stáva súčasťou bezpečnejšieho priestoru” [Slovakia is Becoming a Part of a More Secure Space], *Sme*, March 29, 2004. Slovakia sent troops to both Iraq and Afghanistan. The contingent in Iraq was withdrawn in 2007 by the Fico government. At the present, Slovak troops serve in Kosovo and Afghanistan. See www.mosr.sk (Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, Operations, NATO operations).

¹⁴¹ “Prieskum: Američania odíďte” [Poll: Americans Leave], *Sme*, October 22, 2003. The title of the article is misleading. 53% of the respondents expressed their trust in the United States, while 41% were distrustful. At the same time, 54.3% voiced their distrust of Russia in comparison with 37.8% who thought the opposite. The poll results are

With membership in NATO in its pocket and that in the European Union within reach, Slovakia was ready to elect a new president. There were twelve candidates among whom Vladimír Mečiar and Eduard Kukan appeared as the most serious contenders.¹⁴² Against all expectations, the nominee of the SDKÚ Eduard Kukan, who was recognized for his diplomatic qualities both domestically and internationally, yet opposed by some segments of the population for his communist past, did not make it into the second round of the elections, receiving only 22.10% of votes.¹⁴³ Experts saw the reason for his failure in low electoral participation (47.9% against 73% in 1999), the recent scandals of the SDKÚ and the inability of the coalition to provide a joint candidate.¹⁴⁴

similar to the poll regarding the perception of other countries by Slovaks in 2004, in which Russia was positively viewed by 58% (negatively 39%) and the United States by 57% (40%) of respondents. See Oľga Gyárfášová, Zora Bútorová, Marián Velšic, “Slovakia’s First Year of EU and NATO Membership,” In *Slovakia’s Euro-Atlantic Integration: A Year After*, Vladimír Bilčík *et al.* (Bratislava: IVO, 2005), p.52 (see Table 14). For concerns on the rise in military spending see “Ľudia sú nespokojní, ale tradične pokojní” [People Are Dissatisfied, Yet Traditionally Calm], *Sme*, December 4, 2003.

¹⁴² The other candidates were Ivan Gašparovič, Rudolf Schuster, František Mikloško, Martin Bútora, lawyer Ján Králik, the Chairman of the minor political party *Leftist Bloc* [Ľavicový blok] Jozef Kalman, journalist and entrepreneur Július Kubík, diplomat Jozef Šesták, the mayor of the city of Martin Stanislav Bernát, and actor Ľubo Roman. See Vladimír Krivý, “Elections in 2004,” In *Slovakia 2004: A Global Report on the State of Society*, eds. G. Mesežnikov and M. Kollár, p.103.

¹⁴³ See “Politickí väzni nechcú za prezidenta Kukana” [Political Prisoners Do Not Want Kukan For President], *Sme*, January 9, 2004. The World Congress of the Former Political Czech and Slovak Prisoners sent a letter to Kukan with the request to resign as a candidate. Likewise, they called upon V. Mečiar and R. Schuster not to make their bid for the presidency due to their past.

¹⁴⁴ “SDKÚ prehrala svoj boj o prezidenta” [The SDKÚ Lost Its Battle for President]. *Sme*, April 4, 2004. “Prečo vlastne Kukan vo voľbách neuspel? (Why Kukan Did Not Succeed in the Election?),” *Sme*, April 8, 2004. The author of the second article, the political scientist Jozef Majchrák, suggested that instead of blaming the supporters of Martin Bútora and František Mikloško as independent candidates of the right without a communist past, it was the ruling political parties themselves, together with some intellectuals, who bore the responsibility for Kukan’s defeat by overlooking better alternatives.

The result of the presidential election's first round caused panic in the West. Now it was Ivan Gašparovič, with whom Mečiar had angrily split in the summer of 2002, who stood as the only obstacle to the political come-back of his former chief. The voter turnout in the second round of the election held on April 17 was lower than in the first round – 43.5% (47.94%). As in 1999, Mečiar was denied victory in the second round. He finished with 40.09% of votes (32.74% in the first round) while Gašparovič received 59.91% (22.28%). In the first round Gašparovič benefited from the support of the electorate of the *Smer*, in the second round he also gained the votes from supporters of the ruling coalition who were afraid of a potential Mečiar victory. A calculation of the ruling parties to leave the decision whom to support in the second round¹⁴⁵ met the instincts of voters, who, once again, seemed to have opted for the “lesser evil,” casting their votes for Gašparovič as they had for Schuster in May of 1999.¹⁴⁶

On May 1, 2004, Slovakia became a member of the European Union. Thousands, mostly younger people in the cities, celebrated Slovakia's success. Small groups of skeptics carried banners with slogans that paraphrased those that had been ubiquitous during the communist era, such as “Workers of the World Unite” in which ‘Commissars’ replaced workers, and “With the Soviet Union Forever And Nothing Else” in which the ‘European Union’ substituted for the Soviet one.¹⁴⁷ In the referendum

¹⁴⁵ See Krivý, “Elections in 2004,” p.110. The author admits that the leaders of the coalition left the decision to the voters as to which candidate they would support in the second round, for they may have thought that they could come to terms with Mečiar easier than with Gašparovič backed by *Smer*, at that time the strongest political party in Slovakia.

¹⁴⁶ See the articles “Ľudia Mečiara odmietli, ostal Gašparovič [People Rejected Mečiar, Gašparovič Remained], *Sme*, April 19, 2004, and “Analytici: Rozhodol strach ľudí” [Analysts: Fear of the People Was Decisive], *Sme* on the same date.

¹⁴⁷ “Slovensko začalo oslavovať už v piatok o polnoci” [Slovakia Began to Celebrate Already On Friday at Midnight], *Sme*, May 3, 2004.

on the accession of the Slovak Republic into the EU held on May 16 and 17, the voter turnout was 52.15%, the second lowest among the *Visegrád Group*.¹⁴⁸ 86.76% of participants confirmed their willingness to join the Union in contrast with 11.93% of those that opposed the accession.¹⁴⁹ The majority of participants in the referendum were the voters of the SDKÚ and the HZDS.¹⁵⁰ Fifteen years after the fall of Communism and eleven years after the creation of the independent Slovak Republic, the country, as an observer fittingly observed, eventually “staggered towards success.”¹⁵¹ The voter turnout in the first elections for the European Parliament, which followed in June of 2004, was only 16.96%.¹⁵² In the elections to the European parliament, the deputies of five political parties were elected. The SDKÚ, HZDS, *Smer* and KDH each received 3 mandates, while the SMK received 2 mandates.¹⁵³

7.5 Mobilis in mobile

In 1998-2004, the two slightly modified ruling coalitions successfully navigated the country into membership in NATO and the EU. At the same time, the “old” political parties established in the early and mid-1990s suffered from fragmentation and

¹⁴⁸ The referendum turnout in Hungary was 45.62%, in the Czech Republic 55.2%, and in Poland 58.5%. Accessed on http://www.gallup-europe.be/epm/epm_slovakia.htm

¹⁴⁹ Natália Rolková, “Formovanie parlamentnej a priamej demokracie” [Forming of Parliamentary and Direct Democracy], In *Desaťročie Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Natália Rolková (Martin: Matica slovenská 2004), pp.76 and 78.

¹⁵⁰ 17.10% and 17.04%. See Krivý, “Elections in 2004,” p.116 (Table 12).

¹⁵¹ “Slovensko sa dopotácalo k úspechu” [Slovakia Staggered Towards Success], *Sme*, November 15, 2004.

¹⁵² Oľga Gyárfášová, Zora Bútorová, Marián Velšic, “Slovakia’s First Year of EU and NATO Membership,” In *Vláda strán na Slovensku: Skúsenosti a perspektívy*, eds. Oľga Gyárfášová, Grigorij Mesežnikov (Bratislava: IVO, 2004), p.17. This was the second referendum held in three months, as in March of 2004 a referendum initiated by the trade-unions on early parliamentary elections had failed. Krivý, “Elections in 2004,” p.25.

¹⁵³ Rolková, “Formovanie parlamentnej a priamej demokracie...,” p.79.

decreasing confidence of Slovakia's citizens. Paradoxically, the political system based on the dominance of political parties that controlled the parliament showed more internal coherence during the Mečiar era than during the "Change."¹⁵⁴ Partocracy did not vanish in the late 1990s and in the early 2000s.¹⁵⁵ "Office seeking" still prevailed over "policy seeking" among both politicians and executives.¹⁵⁶ Political and financial scandals resulted in public mistrust of institutional players and the creation of new political subjects which differed little from their predecessors. The "stupid mood" was ubiquitous.¹⁵⁷ It was shunted aside only in the 2002 parliamentary and 2004 presidential elections in which the pro-integrationist electorates¹⁵⁸ dutifully returned to the polling stations to cast their votes for the completion of the 'Change', which had started in September of 1998. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that a survey done a year after Slovakia's accession into NATO and the EU showed that the most trusted institutions in Slovakia were municipal and local governments (56%) followed by non-governmental organizations (42%). The least trusted were the government (19%), political parties

¹⁵⁴ Darina Malová, "Vláda strán, parlamentu alebo kabinetu: Kríza reprezentatívnej demokracie" [The Rule of the Parties, Parliament, or Cabinet: A Crisis of Representative Democracy?], In *Vláda strán na Slovensku: Skúsenosti a perspektívy*, p.17.

¹⁵⁵ See "Kusý: Stále tu máme vládu strán" [Parties Still Dominate Slovakia], *Sme*, November 16, 2004.

¹⁵⁶ Malová, "Vláda strán, parlamentu alebo kabinetu..." p.19.

¹⁵⁷ The social climate in Slovakia that resulted from many corruption scandals, continuing political fragmentation, poor legislative performance, and inconsistent reforms was perceived as a "stupid mood" (*blbá nálada*). See Peter Novotný, Daniel Forgács, Marián Velšic, "Non-Governmental Organizations and the 2002 Elections," In *Slovak Elections 2002: Results, Implications, Context*, eds. Grigorij Mesežnikov *et al.* (Bratislava: IVO, 2003), p.196.

¹⁵⁸ The accession into NATO was opposed by the KSS. The party, however, supported Slovakia's integration in the EU.

(12%) and the Slovak Intelligence Service (9%).¹⁵⁹ Slovakia's "success story" linked to the country's integration was thus contrasted by multiple fractures across society.¹⁶⁰

Slovak intellectuals reflected on becoming a part of the key western organizations prior to the accession into the EU. In an interview given in the winter of 2003, Miroslav Kusý, a former Slovak Marxist philosopher who evolved into a liberal one, pointed out: "We are still the diligent students who are doing their assignments only... We still lack the idea of statehood."¹⁶¹ To that František Mikloško added "We, Slovaks, look like we have no memory. We are uprooted (*vykorenení*). We do not know our history and Communism had spoiled our habits. Today, we struggle for some worldview, yet we do not know whether to follow the West, or to stay with our traditions, or to find something in-between."¹⁶² The opinions by the two former dissidents, liberal and Catholic, reflected the puzzling character of post-communist transformation in Slovak society which still suffered from the legacy of Communism.

Meanwhile, three Slovak intellectuals with different experiences with Communism and the nation and state-building processes – Roman Kaliský, Imrich Kružliak and Ján Čarnogurský – were looking ahead. Kaliský, who was active in the reform movement of the 1960s, doubted the necessity of Slovakia's membership in NATO on the basis of Slovak historical experience with military blocs and suggested

¹⁵⁹ Oľga Gyárfášová, "Politické strany v spoločnosti: Ich vnímanie a hlavné trendy volebného správania" (Political Parties in Society: Their Perception and Major Trends in Electoral Behaviour). In *Vláda strán na Slovensku*, pp. 113-126, p.114 (Graph 1).

¹⁶⁰ "Je Dzurinda sám zodpovedný za krízu štátu?" [Is Dzurinda Alone Responsible for the Crisis in the State?], *Prešovské pohľady* (a monthly regional newspaper), December of 2003, pp.1-2.

¹⁶¹ "Slovensku stále chýba idea vlastnej štátnosti" [Slovakia still lacks the idea of its statehood]. An interview with Miroslav Kusý, *Listy SFPA* [Letters of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association), January - February, 2003, p.3.

<http://www.sfpa.sk/pages/common/archiv/listynove/listy.php?no+0103&it+9> .

¹⁶² "Slovensko dnes nemá sen" [Slovakia Has No Dream Today], *Sme*, October 8, 2004.

that a referendum should be held on the matter.¹⁶³ Kružliak (KDH), a respected political commentator who returned to Slovakia from exile in 1989,¹⁶⁴ voiced his disappointment with the leaders of the Magyar minority in Slovakia who paid attention only to the issues relating to the situation of the Magyars instead of the state of which they were a part.¹⁶⁵ This echoed the situation in the mid-1990s, when the deputies of the HZDS and the opposition to Mečiar, including the Magyar politicians, clashed over the same problem. On the eve of Slovakia's accession into the two organizations, Čarnogurský warned that Slovak diplomacy in the pursuit of integrationist goals was too much fixated on following the West while weakening Slovakia's ties with its neighbours, particularly with Poland, as the region's only medium-sized country unafraid to defend the interests of post-communist countries vis-à-vis France and Germany.¹⁶⁶ The courage to voice their opinions on Slovakia's future was still marginal when compared to the Czech President Václav Klaus, who warned against the danger of "Europeism" and "internationalism" from which stemmed the less visible, yet even more "perfidious attempts to restrict the freedom of people under the pretext of newly-formulated public interests and the so-called higher objectives."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Roman Kaliský, "Slovensko, NATO a referendum" [Slovakia, NATO, and Referendum], *Literárny týždenník*, November 14, 2002.

¹⁶⁴ The writer and publicist Imrich Kružliak went into exile in 1949 (Austria, Germany, the USA). He worked for Radio Free Europe and was an Executive Vice-President of the Slovak World Congress (*Svetový kongres Slovákov*). www.osobnosti.sk

¹⁶⁵ During the political crisis in 2001 representatives of the SMK contemplated their depart from the coalition which would have had a serious effect on Slovakia's integrationist ambitions. Imrich Kružliak, "Pomýlená cesta do Európy" [The Wrong Road to Europe], *Literárny týždenník*, September 6, 2001.

¹⁶⁶ Ján Čarnogurský, "Nech žije Európa troch rýchlostí" [Long Live Europe of Three Speeds], *Literárny týždenník*, January 14, 2001.

¹⁶⁷ See "Klaus: hrozbou už nie je komunizmus, ale európeizmus" [Klaus: Europeism, Not Communism, Is A Threat], *Sme*, May 20, 2004.

Facing such a variety of opinions and attitudes, the major argument of this study – the ability of Slovak society to overcome the difficulties in its evolution and the obstacles in its transformation by its inner strength and coherence, while reaching integrationist goals – seems to contradict itself. This suspicion may grow stronger by the inability of post-communist elites to transform themselves into new, truly democratic entities. As suggested by scholars, this failure was twofold: in a political microperspective, the “political parties in the East aim[ed] to imitate their counterparts in the West without having any ‘history’.” In addition, post-communism ceased to be viewed as a short transitory period from Communism to democracy as it “rather acquired a *sui generis* quality.”¹⁶⁸ In this still continuing transformation, the Slovak political elites and society hardly represented an exception.

In the mid-1990s, it was believed that the solution to the problem would be generational change. For instance, Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka assumed that

Young people born and raised in the period when the socialist system was already crumbling and approaching its demise have had the good luck to escape the most efficient and pervasive indoctrination and habituation. Youth gives a chance of independence. The proportion of those irreparably tainted by [the] communist experience, and therefore resistant to new cultural demands, is quickly diminishing.¹⁶⁹

This opinion emerged in the mid-1990s, when the former dissidents in the post-communist states in East Central Europe were losing popular support and when many former Communists regained constitutional power under the umbrella of redesigned and

¹⁶⁸ Piotr Dutkiewicz, Marketa Geisler, Vladimir Suchan, “Postcommunism and Globalization,” *From Global Security to Transborder Initiatives*. Kielce Conference Proceedings, September 16-18, 1999 (Kielce: The Global Project Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.90-91.

¹⁶⁹ Piotr Sztompka, “The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29.2 (1996), p.127.

renamed political parties.¹⁷⁰ Electoral behaviour in the 1998 and 2002 parliamentary elections in Slovakia and the rise of new political parties, particularly of the *Smer*, contradicted the assumptions that the more time elapses from the demise of Communism, the lesser would be there a risk of electoral support for populism. Following public demands, political parties in Slovakia, as elsewhere in post-communist East Central Europe, switched their rhetoric from general references to democratic values to that of solutions of domestic problems. This often blended with demagoguery.¹⁷¹ However, young people in post-communist states, including Slovakia, seem to have understood the rules of the game very well. They seem to prefer careers as executives in EU agencies and international companies¹⁷² over the uncertainty of being advocates of new ideas generated by often redundant political parties that come and go.¹⁷³

To answer the question, how negative aspects in the most recent phase of the evolution of Slovak society, which has been seen as qualitatively positive in comparison

¹⁷⁰ Mostly as Social Democrats and Socialists, but also in centrist parties.

¹⁷¹ Lecture by the President of the Institute for Public Affairs in Bratislava (IVO), Grigorij Mesežnikov, delivered at the Institute of Central East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa. October 27, 2004.

¹⁷² The growing number of young executives in business suits at the airports in Munich, Zurich, London, Frankfurt, Prague, Vienna, as well as in the streets of Bratislava, especially during the week, cannot be overlooked. Source: my experience from encounters while travelling from Canada to Slovakia during the period 2004-2008.

¹⁷³ During my study stay in Slovakia in the spring and summer of 2007, I posed the question of the probability of the emergence of new political parties to several Slovak politicians. Though they did not exclude this possibility completely, they were rather skeptical that a new political party would survive for a long time. The only party which seems to have the potential to attract voters to the polls in 2010 with its program is the newly-created Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Sloboda a solidarita*) led by the economist Richard Sulík. See "Predsedom novej strany Sloboda a solidarita je Richard Sulík [Richard Sulík Becomes the Chairman of the New Party Freedom and Solidarity], *Pravda*, March 29, 2009. There is still a risk of the emergence of extremist political parties and movements as a consequence of persisting ethnic and racial conflicts.

with the previous government, can turn to an overall positive argument, one may recall the earlier definition of civil society as “a restless battlefield where interest meets interest. It unfolds and develops in an arbitrary, blind, semi-spontaneous manner. This means not only that civil society cannot overcome its own particularities, but also that it tends to paralyse and undermine its own pluralism.”¹⁷⁴ During the communist era in the 1980s and in the mid-1990s, Slovak society was mobilized *against* the regimes that tried to suppress it. In the 1998 and 2002 parliamentary elections Slovaks voted *for* what they believed to become “the change”. In this regard, some see Slovak political parties as unstable and their relationship with the rest of the society to develop too slowly.¹⁷⁵ This and the previous chapter have wanted to demonstrate also something else: the ability of Slovak society to generate political parties and democratic institutions and “punish” their representatives if they fail to keep with their promises. Based on a long-term Slovak historical experience, there is a good chance that this relationship may improve. This expectation may happen when the Slovaks become more self-confident in their own abilities to create healthy societal environments, which will eventually prevail over its negative aspects, such as persisting corruption, cronyism and nepotism.¹⁷⁶

From the fall of Communism onward, the two major lines of confrontation in Slovak politics, ‘emancipationist’ against ‘anti-emancipationist,’ and ‘integrationist’

¹⁷⁴ John Keane, *Civil Society. Bold Images, New Visions* (Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 50. See the full citation in Chapter 6, p.207.

¹⁷⁵ Malová, “Vláda strán na Slovensku...,” p.20.

¹⁷⁶ “Getting rid of [a] dictator is much easier than getting rid of corruption.” On corruption as one of the main obstacles for completing democracy in East Central Europe see Richard Rose, “A Diverging Europe,” In *Democracy after Communism*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 2002), p.158. A new form of corruption in Slovakia after its accession into the EU was bound with the allocation of EU subsidies. See the article “Pridelovanie eurodotácií ovládol klientelizmus” [The Allocation of Euro-Subsidies Has Become the Domain of Clientelism], *Sme*, October 25, 2004.

versus ‘anti-integrationst,’ produced three major major groups of politicians: 1) charismatic leaders such as Vladimír Mečiar and Rudolf Schuster, 2) politicians with no vision except for power at worst, and as versatile executives at best, and 3) so far the only man in Slovak politics with both a vision and principles – Ján Čarnogurský. Mečiar sacrificed everything in order to preserve his influence and, after his defeat, political survival. Čarnogurský went in the opposite direction. He sacrificed his political career because it collided with his Christian political and moral principles. Although both of them were exceptional in their own ways, neither of these provides a model for leadership in the future. In a “New Europe,” the coming generation of Slovak politicians will have to fit, hopefully, the design as outlined by Thucydides rather than by Plato.¹⁷⁷

Slovakia’s accession into the European Union represents another milestone in its national history, not its end. As a part of the community of European nations, Slovaks have not only the right, but also the duty to expect that their ability to comply with criteria for membership should be equaled by the ability of the Union to provide fair and indiscriminate treatment, free of paternalistic approaches.¹⁷⁸ This will help the Slovaks to grow and appear as a modern and self-confident nation, visible and judged according

¹⁷⁷ “It is frequently a misfortune to have very brilliant men in charge of affairs. They expect too much of ordinary men.” Thucydides (*The History of the Peloponnesian War*). For the discourse on the Thucydides versus Plato dichotomic (pragmatic versus intellectual) model of government see Charles Norris Cochrane, *Thucydides and the Science of History* (London: Oxford University, 1929), pp. 79-106 (The Problem of Government). “For Plato, profoundly distrusting human nature, is prepared to defy its own instincts and crush its aspirations, in order to realize his kingdom of the saints, the effective domination of the wisest and best. On the other hand, Thucydides, moved by a deep confidence in the constitution of man and nature, sees in the state a peaceful means of reconciling and harmonizing interests within a whole, leaving it to the initiative of individuals and groups to find their level within the community. Ibidem, p.105.

¹⁷⁸ George Schöpflin, “Vytváranie Európskej kultúrnej identity? Stredná Európa v rozšírenej Európskej únii” [Creation of a European Cultural Identity? Central Europe in [an] Enlarged European Union], *Listy SFPA*, March-April 2003.

to their efforts and accomplishments. In this regard, speculation on Slovakia's cultural and civilizational proximity with either the East or the West, which bothered so many domestic and foreign politicians and intellectuals in the mid-1990s, are secondary. The adjectives that identify the region geographically, also point to its uniqueness based on the perpetual vacillation, both cultural and political, between East and West.¹⁷⁹ Of primary importance is the ability of Slovak society to maintain and strengthen its internal integration and to continue to proceed in its mental transformation. This requires the ability and willingness of Slovak society to reproduce itself on the basis of its historical traditions while embracing democratic values, as well as a pluralist and consensual system of governance and politics.¹⁸⁰ At the same time, the membership of Slovakia and other Central Eastern European post-communist states in the European Union provides it with an opportunity to learn from the collapse of the former communist bloc by evolving into a community of truly equal members.

¹⁷⁹ See the article "Pavol Demeš: Éra dominancie Západu sa končí" [Pavol Demeš: The Era of Western Dominance Ends], *Sme*, July 4, 2009. The author, a former Slovak Minister for International Relations and the leader of the Slovak non-governmental sector, is the President of the German Marshall Fund for Central and Eastern Europe based in Bratislava. In the article he refers to the cultural dominance of the West.

¹⁸⁰ Július Filo, "Slovensko potrebuje vnútornú integráciu" [Slovakia Needs Internal Integration], *Literárny týždenník*, March 10, 2004. The author was Bishop General of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovakia from 1994 to 2006. www.osobnosti.sk

CHAPTER 8
THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSFORMATION OF SLOVAKIA FROM AN
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN ASSESSMENT

8.1 Seeming and being: myths in the history of East and West

The self-challenging motto of the Andrassy family of Hungarian nobles, *Non videri, sed esse* (Not Seeming but Being), which inspired medieval and early modern societies, stands in direct opposition to modern approaches to social reality that tend to put image over substance.¹ In this regard small nations are at greater risk of being overlooked, even misjudged by bigger nations.² While it is hardly imaginable that the views of a Slovak or a Czech scholar on the history of Great Britain, the United States or Canada would have the same resonance and impact on the international image of those countries, western scholars have scrutinized the history of Czechoslovakia and its two nations with significant consequences.³ This could happen since the capacity of Slovak historians to conduct independent research and publish its results during the

¹ Eva Šmelková and Július Barczy, “Andrassyovci a Rožňava” [The Andrassy Family and the city of Rožňava], *Forum Historiae* 2/2008, p.5. Accessed on www.forumhistoriae.sk/FH_2/smelkova.pdf

² See the interview with the Norwegian writer Egil Lejon “Slovensko príkladom” [Slovakia As An Example] on the parallels between the historical evolution of the Slovaks and the small Scandinavian nations in the 19th century. *Literárny týždenník*, August 12, 1994, pp.1 and 11.

³ Even big states are vulnerable to intrusions into their national histories that contradict domestic interpretations. For an example see the internet article “Russia Will Never Let Anyone Falsify [the] History of [the] Second World War.” In reference to the image of the soldiers of the Red Army in WW II as looters and rapists, Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, stated that: “As a matter of fact, we find ourselves in the situation when we must defend the historic truth and even prove the facts that seemed to be absolutely obvious not so long ago.” Russia has created a special committee to counteract the “attempts of distorting history to the detriment of Russia’s interest.” A Russian expert warned against the falsifiers of history ‘who use history as a legend to the benefit of the present political environment,’ *Pravda* (Russian Daily). Accessed on www.pravda.ru, May 20, 2009.

communist era was the subject of ideological indoctrination and political constraints. Moreover, Slovak historians, in contrast to their Czech colleagues, until recently did not work systematically on a conceptualization of Slovak history and minimalization of its invisibility which would have also helped to “sell” their cause abroad – the legitimacy and viability of the existence of Slovakia as a sovereign state – long after its creation. In the 1990s, this gap was filled by foreign scholars and the media in a way that simplified and, in some cases, distorted the mostly unknown Slovak history waiting for its reinterpretation at home and rediscovery abroad. The Slovaks were depicted, in terms of their missing statehood, as a non-historic nation, which, after the creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993, cured its historical complexes and democratic deficiencies at the expense of their advanced neighbours with whom they shared a common history – the Czechs and the Magyars.⁴ To that, some Slovak scholars and politicians reacted with fervor instead of providing a systemic and efficient alternative.⁵ Consequently, they created solitary and isolated interpretations of Slovak history that clashed with stereotypes and automatically brought about the risk of being viewed either as hard-core nationalists or revisionists.⁶ In the early 2000s, when western scholars such as Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, Karen Henderson, Abby Innes, Cas

⁴ George Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 280-297 (“The Slovak case study”).

⁵ Looking for internationally-known personalities with Slovak origins at any cost to improve the image of Slovakia could result in quite opposite effects. See Greg Steinmetz’s article “Slovaks desperately searching for famous countrymen,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 27, 1996. Similarly, the publishing of another variant of the multi-volume “History of Slovakia” in the Slovak language with short résumés in German, English, French and Russian, and picture books with too descriptive texts designed for common readers are hardly ways to provide a conceptual and critical synthesis of Slovak history known and accepted internationally.

⁶ František Vnuk, Milan Ďurica and other historians grouped around the *Matica slovenská*.

Mudde and others expressed their doubts concerning clichés linked to Slovak history and suggested that the cause was the varying familiarity of their authors with the facts, this skepticism was partly revised. The progress in the rediscovery of Slovak history in the West since the beginning of the 2000s cannot be overlooked as the new generation of scholars did their fieldwork in the Slovak Republic and critically examined the earlier interpretations of Slovakia history emerging in the 1990s.⁷ Although the trend of foreign and Slovak historians coming closer is evident, there is still a lot of work to be done on both sides.⁸

Furthermore, in the modern era the role of the media in building popular perceptions on the basis of simplified interpretations of historical developments has

⁷ Next to Karen Henderson and Abby Innes, the best examples are the works by Tim Haughton, John A. Scherpereel and Edward Snajdr. The British scholar George Schöpflin, however, sees a great challenge for historians of East Central Europe to become familiar with the Anglo-Saxon, German, French, Russian, and Italian scholarly literature. Schöpflin opines that “the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon methodologies lasts further to exist and the British or American intellectuals care only rarely about French or German intellectual thinking.” This observation indirectly points to the reasons for the invisibility of Slovak history in the West in general and in North America in particular. See George Schöpflin, “Vytváranie európskej kultúrnej identity? Stredná Európa v rozšírenej Európskej únii” [Creation of a European Cultural Identity? Central Europe in the Enlarged European Union], *Listy SFPA*, March-April 2003, pp.2-3.

⁸ “...it is hardly surprising that any effort to straighten the Slovak spine is seen as nationalism (the equivalent of n[N]azism), fascism and the oppression of minorities. It may be hard to believe but the greatest enemies of Slovakia are Slovaks themselves. On several occasions, I have had an opportunity to witness the way in which Slovak historians have given lectures on Slovakia to foreign audiences. Nearly all of them have had one thing in common: they present the Slovaks as a nation without a history, without culture and traditions – and surprise – as the oppressor of minorities. Nor do they neglect to mention Slovakia’s fascist and n[N]azi past. Their spiritual kin in the West have gone so far in their blind, ignorant hatred as to blame the Slovaks for the hanging of c[C]ommunists and Jews in Košice in January 1945. According to one German commentator, the massacres in Košice were ‘one of the last abominations of the fascist Slovak state and ally of Adolf Hitler.’ The fact that Košice belonged to Hungary at that time and that this sad, vile act was committed by the Hungarian fascists “Wild Rose Crosses,” is apparently of interest to no one, the least to our own historians.” Darina Vergesová, “Dajte Ďuricovi pokoj” [Leave Ďurica in Peace], *Kritika & Kontext*, nos. 2-3 (1997), pp.59-60.

been increasing. A reasonable objection can be made as to why a scholarly study should be bothered by what the media say. They can popularize and simplify history more effectively than scholars who create their interpretations only after years of studying a particular problem. Thus, in creating a public image, it is the media which paints the final picture, not scholars.⁹ Paraphrasing Clausewitz, the media may be seen as the continuation of historiography and social science by other means.¹⁰ This was evident in the case of Slovakia's image as hyper-nationalist in the early 1990s and during the country's quasi-miraculous instant awakening in 1998. Views by the media helped to reduce this phase in modern Slovak history to the Manichean conflict between "evil" and "good" politicians, and, implicitly, between the progressive and backward electorates and segments of Slovak society.¹¹

Next to the risk of perspectives based on simplified portrayals of reality is the problem of divergent approaches towards the same phenomena in the history of the

⁹ "A separate chapter in our [Slovak] media is that of the methodical loss of national memory," Pavol Dinka, *Slovenské médiá: Metódy manipulácie* [Slovak Media: the Methods of Manipulation] (Bratislava: PPA, 2008), p.21. The impact of the media can be compared with the impact of films in creating popular perceptions. Due to its image inherited from the 1990s, Slovakia was depicted in three films – "Hostel" (2004), "Eurotrip" (2004) and "Hostel 2" (2007) – as a nest of dangerous and perverted criminals and mafia. For details see www.imdb.com

¹⁰ On the shift of the media in the time of globalization from being the Fourth Power (provider of information) to the Fifth Power (manipulator of information) see the article by Ignacio Ramonet, "Le cinquième pouvoir," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April-Mai (2005), pp.74-78 "Dans la nouvelle guerre idéologique qu'impose la mondialisation, les médias sont utilisées comme une arme de combat. L'information, en raison de son explosion, de sa multiplication, de sa surabondance, de ses partis pris, se trouve littéralement contaminée, empoisonnée par toute sorte des mensonges, pollué par les rumeurs, les distorsions, les manipulations." Ibid., p.77.

¹¹ Lubomír Kopeček, *Demokracie, diktatury a politické stranictví na Slovensku* (Brno: CDK, 2006), p.308. A survey conducted in Slovakia in the mid-1990s looked at the degree of tolerance towards minorities, disrespect for the law by politicians, positive opinions on the communist regime before its fall and engagement in civic association activities.

East and West. The classic saying goes “if disease is beautiful, it is generally someone else’s disease.”¹² Apart from its complimentary aspect, Chesterton’s aphorism can be applied to nationalism and its negative characteristics associated primarily with the East. In the 1990s, the resurrected nationalism of East Central Europe gained a negative image linked to the ethnocentric nationalism of the 19th century. This resulted in the categorization of post-communist states into progressive ones and those which lagged behind. It is true that the downfall of Communism and the subsequent disintegration of the communist bloc resulted in an explosion of ethnic tensions. When examining the roots of nationalism and its capacity for political and social mobilization, it should become clear that the same primordial instincts attributed to the East had existed among western *literati* in the 19th century. In multi-ethnic Britain the same elements of linguistic and ethnic tensions shaped by nationalism can be found in historical novels designed with the same purpose as those by writers in East Central Europe.¹³ The similarities between the nation-building processes in Western and East Central Europe can particularly be observed in the creation of multi-ethnic Great Britain as a political nation during the period 1707-1837, where the impact of external threats helped her to overcome the historical centripetal tendencies based on ethnic diversity.¹⁴ What worked in Great Britain did not work in Austria-Hungary from 1848 to 1918 and in Czechoslovakia, where centripetal tendencies eventually prevailed.

¹² Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: The Bodley Head, 1949), p.12.

¹³ On the Norman-Saxon ethno-linguistic division and societal hierarchy in medieval England see Sir Walter Scott’s historical novel *Ivanhoe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992). For the major argument of the book see the introduction, pp.1-9. See also the comparison of the Magyars with the English “who have violently Anglicized ten millions of Irishmen and Scotsmen” made by a Magyar Deputy in the

Recalling the earlier indication by Cas Mudde of double standards in explaining ‘bad’ and ‘good’ nationalism in Slovakia during the period 1989-1992, nationalism, in general, appeared as progressive when it had helped to create nation-states in the West from the 16th to the 19th centuries, whereas it became perverted in state-building processes in post-communist Eastern Europe in the 1990s.¹⁵ Though the concerns of multi-ethnic states about the possible consequences of various forms of nationalism, past and future, to which modern historiography and political science have legitimately pointed, are understandable, the common roots of nationalism should not be forgotten so as to avoid the traps of nationalism’s general recrimination in East Central Europe, including Slovakia, regardless of the context within which it emerged and had been shaped.¹⁶

In addition to the perception of the Slovaks as intolerant nationalists, the image of the country has been that of a non-historic nation due to the viewing of unexplored

Hungarian Diet in 1879 in justification of the forced *Magyarisation*. R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (New York: H. Fertig, 1972), p.217. There is a significant difference between Great Britain and Hungary. Whereas the former made, at least formally, its *Compromise* in 1707, the radical part of Magyar political elites failed to do it until it was too late.

¹⁵ For the opposite view see Egil Lejon’s argument which sees the creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993 as a result of Slovak historical traditions and an emancipation movement which accelerated in 1848 and later. Interview with Egil Lejon “Slovensko prikladom,” *Literárny týždenník*, August 12, 1994, p.11. Lejon suggests that the Slovaks are not nationalistic enough in terms of what modern nationalism requires: cultural self-confidence, national pride, and loyalty.

¹⁶ See Kedourie on the selective use of the antonyms ‘progressive’ – ‘regressive’ in regard to nationalism in the Marxist interpretation of history (progressive during the advent of capitalism replacing feudalism, progressive in the fight of colonial and post-colonial nations against imperialism, and regressive within capitalism resisting socialism). Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1966), pp. 90-91. Applying Mudde’s observation, the “bad” case of nationalism in the early 1990s was the split of Czechoslovakia, whereas the good cases were the dismemberments of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Then, again, the rise of Slovakia, Serbia and the Russian Federation, were cases of “bad” nationalisms. In contrast to the two latter, Slovak nationalism, as shown in Chapter 6, did not involve violence.

parts of Slovak history as myths. As mentioned in Chapter 2, myth can appear either as a “normal neutral narrative of concern” (Pynsent) or a “bridge too far” in regard to its practical implications in nation and state-building processes (Eyal, Cohen, partly Haughton). While applying the first flexible definition, it may be postulated that myths are constantly emerging. An effective way to understand the essence of a myth in terms of its value as a possible source of historical facts is to compare both of its forms.

The official mythology of the European Union is that it was born out of a sudden inspiration that had fallen upon Jean Monnet – a Romulus to the European Community – during his trip to the Alps. The idea was apparently instrumental in reconciling France and Germany during the meeting of Robert Schumann and Konrad Adenauer in May of 1950, which gave birth to the European Coal and Steel Community.¹⁷ Others see this process in an all-European myth-deconstructing perspective as the outcome of the decisive involvement of the United States, tired of the French-German reluctance to reach an agreement.¹⁸ Concurrently, some scholars have viewed the creation of the European Union in the early 1990s as the culmination of the tireless work of lobbyists, who had effectively executed the wishes of great corporations to create a common

¹⁷ “Chaque année, si je le peux, je vais faire de grandes courses dans les Alpes...J’y retrouve l’expression de l’inquiétude qui oppressait l’Europe cinq ans après la guerre: une autre guerre est proche devant nous si nous ne faisons rien. L’Allemagne n’en sera pas la cause, mais elle en sera l’enjeu. Il faut qu’elle cesse d’être un enjeu, qu’elle devienne au contraire un lien. Seule la France peut actuellement prendre une initiative.” Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p.342.

¹⁸ John Gillingham, *Coal, Steel and the Rebirth of Europe, 1945-1955: The Germans and French from Ruhr Conflict to Economic Community* (Cambridge University Press, 1991). Particularly explicative is the role of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany John McCloy in bringing the French and Germans together to the signing of the Treaty of Paris (April 18, 1951), which instituted the European Coal and Steel Community. Gillingham stressed the fact that McCloy “summoned” the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in his office for a “dressing down” for his unwillingness to sign the document. Ibidem, p.280.

market which was about to grant the architects of the EU even greater economic profits.¹⁹ A different group of authors opposed such ignoble motives with their hagiographic vision of the institutional emergence of the EEC and the EU as the outcome of exceptional negotiating and diplomatic skills of supranational executives who were serving the citizens of Europe.²⁰ It is clear that each perspective has its merits and this adds to the perplexing complexity of the issue and resulting interpretations.

This variability points to the core of the problem linked to the non-historicity of Slovaks and their questionable ability to cope with more recent problems in the transformation of their society. The skeptically insinuated ‘mythical’ legacy of 9th century Great Moravia and the invisible link from it to modern Slovak politics, apart from its distance from the present, which partially legitimizes its appearance as a myth, disregards the simple fact that to the Slovaks it was a lighthouse, not a matrix blindly to follow in the creation of a sovereign Slovakia. There is no difference in this regard between small and big nations who honour their historical traditions that often blend with myths. Most importantly, it is not Great Moravia itself, but the *connection* between it and the 19th and 20th centuries that matters in the discourse on the historicity of Slovaks. This link was hardly reflected, let alone examined, by western

¹⁹ Belén Balanyá, Ann Doherty, Olivier Hoedeman, Adam Ma’anit and Erik Wesselius, *Europe Inc.: Regional and Global Restructuring and the Rise of Corporate Power* (London-Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000). The authors stress their perception of the creation of the European Union as the result of the plan made by the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT) composed of 45 captains of the largest European transnational corporations. See Preface of the book, xi-xv.

²⁰ Ken Endo, *The Presidency of the European Commission under Jacques Delors. The Politics of Shared Leadership* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999). Helen Drake, *Jacques Delors. Perspectives on a European Leader* (London-New York: Routledge, 2000).

scholars in the 1990s in contrast to their predecessors – the historians R.W. Seton-Watson, R.A. Kann, O. Halecki, and C.A. Macartney.²¹ After the extinction of the Árpád dynasty (1301), which had represented the ethnic Magyars, the foreign rulers of the Kingdom of Hungary – the Angevins, the Luxembourgs, the Jagellons, the Habsburgs – were wisely and clairvoyantly tolerant towards the ethnic groups of Hungary as the state otherwise would have not survived for the next seven centuries.²² Once the glory of the Kingdom and privileges of a political nation were to be attributed to one nationality in the 18th and 19th centuries, there was no incentive for others, who felt degraded to second-class citizens, than to nourish and strengthen their own identities – linguistic, cultural, social, and political. Paradoxically, a tendency to be suspicious of the interpretations of Slovak history as an indivisible part of the history of the Kingdom of Hungary still prevails.²³ Until a shift in this perception happens, Slovaks may be further viewed as a non-historic entity despite empirical and heuristic

²¹ For a most recent example of Slovak history as seen in its historical continuity by a foreign Slovak scholar see the article by the Austrian historian Arnold Suppan, “Die Slowakei zwischen Grossmährischen Reich und Europäischer Union: Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten” [Slovakia between the Great Moravian Empire and the European Union: Continuities and Discontinuities], In *Plus Ultra. Die Welt Der Neuzeit. Festschrift für Alfred Kohler zum 65. Geburtstag* [Plus Ultra: The World of Modern Times. Festschrift to the 65th Anniversary of Alfred Kohler], eds. F. Edelmayer, M. Fuchs, G. Heilingsetler, P. Rauscher (Münster: Aschendorf, 2008), pp.331-368.

²² Disregarding the multi-ethnic aspects and dynastic ruptures in the medieval and modern history of Hungary would be the same as excluding the early Plantagenets from the history of England due to their appearance as non-Anglo-Saxon elements. The history of England would have to begin anew with the Tudors. The rupture *progressive* versus *regressive* (see Kedourie) in the history of the United States is observable in the interpretations of the Civil War and its aftermath. A similar rupture exists in the history of Germany in the first half of the 20th century before it became a democratic state.

²³ On the contrast between the perspective which sees Great Moravia and the wartime Slovak Republic as the only pillars of Slovak national history versus that of the “one thousand-year of oppression” see, for instance, Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.5.

evidence that testifies to their genuine participation in the societal and institutional life of the state they shared with others in times when language and ethnicity meant less than social status and class affiliation.²⁴

The myth versus ‘myth’ ambiguity in the interpretations of the history of East and West testifies to the existence of a wide range of applicable perspectives and alternative interpretations. A better awareness of this ambiguity, which exists in both East and West, may help us to understand also the reasons for the ruptures in Slovak history, fractured into its *being* and *seeming*. The most visible anomalies of this split consequently appeared either as ‘betrayals’ or ‘awakenings’ mentioned further.

8.2 Seeming and being in Slovak history as a part of the history of Czechoslovakia and Hungary

In 1991, Slovak historian Anton Hrnko expressed the idea that the book by Slovak politician Ivan Dérer on the rulings of the National Court in the First Czechoslovak Republic,²⁵ written from the perspective of an ardent unitarist and *Czechoslovak*, was conveniently accepted by Marxist historiography. The reason was obvious as the adversary was the same – the Slovak autonomist movement and the

²⁴ “The Slovaks on their side lost their national existence [after the defeat of Great Moravia] in that of their Asiatic conquerors, entered into their ranks as soldiers, and participated thence-forward in all their fortunes... The language however is the only remnant of their national existence which the Slovaks have preserved; in every other respect they belong to the Hungarian nation, of which they form an ingredient part, as the Magyars form another; and on the glory of whose valiant deeds they have an equal claim.” Therese Albertine Louise von Jacob Robinson, *Historical View of the Language and Literature of the Slavic Nation* (New York: BiblioBazaar, LLC, 2006) (Reprint of the original version published by George P. Putnam in New York in 1851), pp.186-187.

²⁵ Ivan Dérer, *Slovenský vývin a ľudácka zrada* [Slovak Evolution and the Populists’ Betrayal] (Praha: Kvasnička a Hampl, 1946).

legacy of the wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945). Having provided statistical data on the topics of the studies published by Slovak historians, Hrnko argued that the history of interwar Czechoslovakia (1918-1938) belonged to one of its most ideologically distorted segments.²⁶ This vacuum was filled by the works of court historians who helped to create myths as the politically and ideologically “subjective projection of desirable horizons.”²⁷ If a ‘myth’ could emerge relatively recently with plenty of primary documents at hand, one can ask a question - are there more of them? To respond to it at least in part, it is necessary to return to the early 1990s, when ideological constraints were removed from scholarship and academia and the attention of scholars and media turned towards nationalism.

Miroslav Hroch’s classification of nationalities in East Central Europe on their advancement in the national reawakening, which was published in the year when Czechoslovakia broke up, put the Slovaks a step behind the Czechs and the Magyars, without providing details, except for a very general reference.²⁸ This dissertation suggests that, until the revolution of 1848, Slovaks did not lag behind the Czechs in terms of the press, programs, the creation of a literary language and the petition movements. Hroch was more accurate when pointing to the forced *Magyarisation* that started after 1867 as a major hindrance to Slovak national progress, including its social and economic aspects. Yet even that historical period has to be re-examined very

²⁶ Anton Hrnko, “Zatemnené dejiny: Obraz medzivojnovnej slovenskej spoločnosti v prácach slovenských historikov” [Darkened History: The Picture of Interwar Slovak Society in the Works of Slovak Historians], *Literárny týždenník*, June 28, 1991, p.10.

²⁷ See the statement by Marianna Oravcová in Chapter 2, pp.38-39.

²⁸ Miloslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe,” *New Left Review*, I/198 (March-April 1993), pp.60-77, p.64.

carefully as it had not been a time of complete silence, though it would be convenient to see it in that way.

Communist historiography in the 1950s gladly embraced the earlier idea that Slovaks had been saved by the Czechs from extinction as a nation, a concept which slipped into western scholarship. This hypothesis was based on censuses which showed the decreasing number of Slovak intelligentsia and schools. A conclusion was made that the Slovaks would have been assimilated by the Magyars in one or two generations.²⁹ There had previously been two generations of Slovaks living under *Magyarisation* from 1875 to 1914, yet the Slovak press, though under censorship and constant pressure, was full of political articles and calls for national, social and cultural progress.³⁰ Magyar elites knew very well that Slovak identity did not depend solely on schooling in their native language, but also on the family environment. Therefore, they forcibly took away Slovak children from poor families and transported them to regions where Magyar was spoken.³¹ The unrest in Turiec and Zvolen County in Central Slovakia that led to attacks on local Magyar authorities was a mixture of social and

²⁹ For the opposite argument against the traditional view that the Slovaks could not create their intelligentsia because of harsh *Magyarisation* see Dušan Kováč, Roman Holec, Elena Jakešová, Elena Mannová, Milan Podrimavský, *Na začiatku storočia, 1901-1914* (At the Beginning of the 20th Century) (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), p.44.

³⁰ Milan Krajčovič, "Slováci v emancipačnom pohybe nemad'arských národov [Slovaks in the Emancipation Movement of the Non-Magyar Nations], In *Slovensko na začiatku storočia: Spoločnosť, štát a národ v súradniciach doby* [Slovakia at the Beginning of the 20th Century: Society, State and Nation in the Contemporaneous Context], eds. Milan Podrimavský and Dušan Kováč (Bratislava: HÚ SAV, 1999), pp.48-65.

³¹ "By the Law of 1891, the State has deliberately assumed the attitude of the Sultans in earlier centuries. Just as the Christian rayah was regarded as a breeding-machine to supply janissaries, so to-day non-Magyars of Hungary are breeding-machines whose children must be taught Magyar from the earliest age in the hope that they may become renegades to the traditions of their ancestors." R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary...*, p.222.

national elements of resistance. They testified to the continuing, even increasing Slovak resilience against *Magyarisation* as observed by Robert W. Seton-Watson.³² Finally, in 1918, it was the masses of peasants and lower strata of Slovak society that had preserved, as Ismo Nurmi suggested, a high degree of self-consciousness. They were instrumental in embracing the idea of their future coexistence with the Czechs under the provisions of the Pittsburgh Agreement, but under no circumstance with the Magyars. Without this support the few intellectuals at home and abroad could hardly have reached their political goals in October and November of 1918 when the Czechoslovak Republic was born.

It is equally true that significant numbers of Slovak *Magyarones* gave up their ethnicity for the sake of their careers while following the example of the Slovak nobility and gentry which were “easily and gladly” *Magyarised* in the course of the 19th century.³³ Still, it is hard to believe that three million Slovaks at home and abroad, with the most resistant of them in North America, would have been completely *Magyarised* even if Hungary had been preserved in its pre-war boundaries. A possible analogy with the Irish resistance, underscored by the role played in national emancipation by leaders such as Milan R. Štefánik and Štefan Osuský, who left Hungary and vehemently fought for the Slovak cause abroad, comes to mind. Their work done at the highest political and diplomatic levels was supplemented by dozens of zealous Slovak national activists in the United States.³⁴

³² See Chapter 2, p.54.

³³ C.A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors. The Treaty of Trianon and its Consequences 1919-1937* (Oxford University Press, 1965), p.91.

³⁴ The Slovak press in North America – 30 newspapers with a circulation between 130,000-150,000 in 1910-1914 – was such a force that the Hungarian government as early as in 1890 had banned the imports of some of them and began subsidizing pro-

After WW II, Konštantín Čulen, a Slovak publicist in exile, suggested that living with the Czechs was for the Slovaks a rather negative experience.³⁵ Čulen's arguments were based on the constant rejection of Slovak autonomy in Czechoslovakia by President Edvard Beneš, who had never shown any particular affection for the Slovaks, and the execution of Msgr. Jozef Tiso, President of the wartime Slovak Republic. With the situation of the Slovaks in Southern Slovakia ceded to Hungary by the Vienna Award of November 1938 in mind, it is legitimate to assume that cohabitation with the Czechs, though far from being idyllic, included fewer risks for the completion of Slovak national emancipation than their hypothetical existence in Hungary after WW I. Furthermore, the Czechs in 1918 were already significantly ahead of the Slovaks as far as societal cohesion and socio-economic progress of their societies were concerned. The animosity started with the Czech disrespect toward the Catholic Church and with their disregard for the continuing socio-economic development of Slovakia. The

Hungarian publications in the United States. M.Mark Stolarik, *The Role of American Slovaks in the Creation of Czecho-Slovakia, 1914-1918* (Cleveland: Slovak Institute, 1968), p.20. Count Albert Apponyi, one of the main protagonists of *Magyarisation* and a representative of the Hungarian government on his visit to the United States attempted to present Hungary as a free and democratic country. He was denounced as a tyrant and pressed by a huge mob comprising members of "Slavic nationalities and Hungarian socialists" during his lectures. In Chicago, Apponyi escaped the fury of the mob and fled to his car only with the protection provided by the police. See the *New York Times*, February 25, 1911, p.3. For the Slovak resistance against the territorial aspirations of fascist Hungary see the boastful statement by Gustáv Husák on February 28, 1945: "I openly declare that Slovakia's frontiers [with Hungary] as they had existed in the [prewar] Czechoslovak Republic are stable. Slovakia is united and non-divisible. Any irredentism by Magyar fascists will end in vain. Our nation, which has been able to resist the military power of Germany, will find enough strength to firmly defend its borders." See the document "Z referátu Gustáva Husáka na konferencii Komunistickéj strany Slovenska" [From the Address by Gustáv Husák at the Congress of the KSS], February 28, 1945. *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II* (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998), ed. Michal Barnovský, document no. 270, p.400.

³⁵ Konštantín Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi druhá naša hlava: Politický životopis Dr. Jozefa Tisu* (Cleveland: The First Slovak Catholic Union, 1947).

problem became acute in the 1930s, when the Slovak intelligentsia, which increased remarkably by that time, as well as ordinary citizens, could not find work in Slovakia because the best jobs were filled by the Czechs. In contrast to the situation that had existed in the 1920s, Slovaks were ready to become executives, administrators, teachers, lawyers and doctors. This happened in 1939 and after. Unfortunately, after WW II Czech political leaders, both civic and communist, were not willing to admit that the Slovaks had grown up and were able to govern themselves.³⁶

The Czech historical experience was strongly influenced by the Protestant reformation, secularism and greater industrial advancement due to their proximity to and cohabitation with the Germans. With the creation of Czechoslovakia after WW I, the Czechs proved themselves worthy followers of their predecessors and for a moment also a barrier erected by the victorious Allies against German dominance over Central and Eastern Europe. After the incorporation of Slovakia into Czechoslovakia, the national self-confidence of the Czechs was on the rise. After WW II, the Czechs led by the Communist Party and with the mighty Soviet Union backing them, returned to the concept of a unitary Czechoslovakia. To them, the push for reforms, which was interpreted as the “Prague” rather than the “Czecho-Slovak Spring,” was also a return to their national history. The invasion by the armies of the Warsaw Pact, led by the Soviet Union, the former liberator of Czechoslovakia and the only Slavic Superpower, was especially traumatic for them.

This trauma imposed from outside was complemented by a domestic one: the effects of ‘normalization’ and federalization, both seen as a part of the chain of Slovak

³⁶ Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: the Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton University Press, 1987), p.89.

“betrayals.” The Slovaks were rebelling from 1920 onward. First, they asked for autonomy, than they allegedly “conspired” with the Magyars and the Poles against the prewar Republic, and eventually got a taste of the forbidden fruit of political emancipation in the form of their nominally independent state.³⁷ In the meantime, in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia the Czechs were ruled over and persecuted by the Germans.³⁸ With this perception of national history in Czech minds, the disappearance of the communist regime in 1989, which was allegedly harsher in the Czech Lands than in Slovakia and which sponsored the Slovaks in the same way as did the First Czechoslovak Republic, was a golden opportunity to rebuild the state to their expectations. After recognizing that Slovaks were not willing to accept what they considered to be the continuation of the imbalance in the distribution of competences in a joint state, the Czechs opted for the territorially-reduced variant of Czechoslovakia while inheriting its trademark. Since then, they have fared very well.³⁹ It may seem that this chapter of their history was closed and sealed. The aftermath of the “Velvet Divorce” and the relationship between the two former federal nations was not always rosy.

³⁷ Leff, *National Conflict...*, pp.26 and 164. For a Slovak perspective on the history of the Slovak-Czech and Czecho-Slovak relations since 1918 as the “history of broken pacts and unfulfilled promises” see Anton Hrnko, “Politické zápasy na Slovensku v lete a na jeseň 1990,” *Historický zborník* no.1 (2000), p.77.

³⁸ Though the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia had its own administration, it was an indivisible part of the Third Reich, which saw itself as a historic successor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.

³⁹ See the article “Slovakia’s Economy Is Doing Well, Too” by Peter Burian, *The New York Times*, June 1, 1996. The author, chargé d’affaires of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, responded to a similar article in the NYT on the Czech Republic doing well “with luck and without Slovakia” while providing data on GDP (7.4% growth), unemployment (7.4%), doubled foreign currency reserves, positive trade balance and low foreign debt per capita (800\$).

Throughout the 1990s, it was not difficult to contrast the progress made by the Czech Republic with Slovakia's problems. In the early 2000s, with the Mečiar era left behind and economic advancement that surprised many, the previous negative image of Slovaks as nationalists turned to the delay in democratic transformation of their society.⁴⁰ In recent books on Czech history since the early medieval era the Slovaks are hardly mentioned. With Slovakia's progress in the integration processes, substitutes for Slovak nationalism appeared instantly.⁴¹ Despite mutual sympathies as documented by surveys of public opinion and praise by Slovak and Czech politicians of their good relations, from 1993 onward free of economic quarrels,⁴² the clash of bitter memories continued. They have ranged from topics such as investment opportunities by renowned international companies,⁴³ to the often derogatory comments on domestic

⁴⁰ According to Professor Filip Palda from *L'Ecole nationale d'administration publique* in Montreal, "Separation in 1992 allowed the Czechs to halt the payola on which Slovaks had come to depend. Since separation in 1992, the Slovaks have gone the way of Argentina, whereas the Czechs are now preparing to enter the European Union." See "Argentina north" by Filip Palda. *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 21, 2002. Anton Hykisch expressed his opinion that for Hungary and the Czech Republic Slovakia's economic success in the early 2000s was a big surprise which was hard to accept. Author interview with Anton Hykisch, Bratislava, June 5, 2007.

⁴¹ For the contrasted view on the political systems and parliamentarism in the Czech and Slovak Republics as advanced and less developed see Petr Kopecký, *Parliaments in the Czech and Slovak Republics: Party competition and parliamentary institutionalization* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). The Czech political scientist Lubomir Kopeček opines that in comparison with the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, the evolution of the Slovak political system is unfinished and the system itself is unstable. As a result, Slovakia is a "semi-consolidated democracy." Lubomír Kopeček, *Demokracie, diktatury a politické stranictví stranictví na Slovensku* (Brno: CDK, 2006), pp. 307 and 310.

⁴² See the article "Klaus: Vzťahy Slovenska a Česka môžu byť príkladom pre celú Európu" [Slovak-Czech Relations – An Example for Europe], *Pravda*, June 29, 2009. It became a tradition that the first official visit of the newly-elected presidents and prime ministers of each country have been made with their closest neighbour.

⁴³ According to a poll by the Czech Private Equity and Venture Capital Association based in Prague, four out of five of its economists and financial analysts said that foreign investment would flow to the Czech rather to the Slovak Republic. See

politics and rivalry in sports, with frequent references to the “sins” in national histories of the two nations.⁴⁴

Until the revolutionary years 1848-1849, Slovaks and Magyars had cohabitated peacefully. Four decades of forced *Magyarisation* were a hard time for the Slovaks, yet there was still some moral and socio-political capital left for the improvement of a mutual relationship. If this failed in 1918, Slovaks could hardly have been blamed for it as their political weight and influence in Hungary was marginal. In the fall of 1938, after two decades of the existence of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia was stripped of its territories by the Vienna Award.⁴⁵ Almost seven years of the existence of Slovak expatriots in Hungary (1938-1945) returned them to a life which resembled what they had lived before 1918. After the Second World War and until 1989, the relationship between the Slovaks and Magyars might have appeared as normal, but it was not. Once the Soviet Union was gone and the fate of Czechoslovakia disputed, the old animosities

“Investori uprednostnia Česko pred Slovenskom” [Investors Will Prefer the Czech Republic Over Slovakia], *Sme*, May 29, 2009. Slovak readers rejected the idea as wishful thinking on the Czech side and suggested that a poll conducted by a Slovakia-based company would have shown the opposite.

⁴⁴ They can be frequently found on the Czech web sites www.seznam.cz, www.idnes.cz and their Slovak counterparts www.sme.sk and www.pravda.sk. On April 1 of 2009 when the Slovak football team defeated its opponent in Prague in the qualifier for the World Cup in South Africa (2010), debates among the fans of both teams turned to their common past with references to the “betrayal” in 1938-1939 and to the Slovak complex of inferiority towards the Czechs. Slovaks pointed to Czech compliance with German rule in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and by saying that they did not care about measuring themselves with the Czechs – a fixed idea on the Czech side.

⁴⁵ Július Mésároš, “Some Deformations in the Interpretation of Censuses in Recent Slovak-Magyar Controversies,” In *Slovak & Magyars*, ed. Pavol Števček (Bratislava: Ministerstvo kultúry, 1995). The census of 1910 showed the presence of 885,397 Magyars on the territory which became part of Slovakia in 1918 (30.3% of population). Mésároš argues that even “this number was not the result of natural development, or Slovak-Magyar and Magyar-Slovak bilingualism, but a result of purposeful Magyarization and oppression of Slovaks.” *Ibid.*, p.78.

resurfaced. For all Slovak governments since 1989, the status of the Magyar minority became a litmus test in measuring the state of democracy in Slovakia by western governments and scholars. During the Mečiar years, Magyars in Slovakia voiced their dissatisfaction with the approaches of Slovak governments in administrative, linguistic, financial and cultural matters. Claims made by their leaders for more tolerance and understanding on the side of the Slovaks have been in stark contrast with the ambiguous language of the representatives of the Magyar minority regarding its autonomy.⁴⁶

While the Slovaks and the Czechs after 1992 were able to reach the highest level of mutual respect and understanding in their history, Slovaks and Magyars remained mentally anchored in the period between 1918 and 1945. The trauma of Trianon in 1920 and their expulsion from South Slovakia in 1945-1947 is deeply engraved in the minds of Magyars, as is forced *Magyarisation* and the effects of the Vienna Arbitration in the minds of their Slovak counterparts. Each side continues to interpret the causes and outcomes of those events according to its own perception and sentiments. A partial solution of the problem – history textbooks written by Slovak and Magyar historians

⁴⁶ The representatives of the Magyar political parties in Slovakia, with the exception of Miklós Duray and Pál Csáky from the SMK, were careful about speaking of autonomy for Slovak Magyars publicly, though the idea of their political and administrative autonomy has frequently appeared – *sotto voce* – as their ultimate goal. Most recently, Duray admitted that territorial autonomy is unrealistic, but the chance for a vaguely defined “personal” autonomy for the Magyar minority in Slovakia still exists. See the article “Duray o veľkom Maďarsku nesníva, autonómia je však podľa neho reálna” [Duray Does Not Dream of Great Hungary Though the Autonomy Is, According to Him, Still a Possibility], *Pravda*, August 4, 2009.

together – is to this date still “in progress” and it is hard to predict when and if they will ever be finished and distributed to schools in both countries.⁴⁷

History is firmly tied into daily politics in East Central Europe. Its revival outside of scholarly conferences and seminars and its use as a model for the present or future by politicians may lead to the release of a genie from the bottle.⁴⁸ This refers particularly to Slovakia as being possibly identified as the weakest link within an informal *Little Entente*.⁴⁹ If both nations do not want to waste what has remained positive from the legacy of their peaceful cohabitation, and if they wish to get rid of the shadows of the past, they have to reach a mutually respectful Slovak – Magyar and Magyar – Slovak *Compromise*. Not by political gestures, but by the inner force of their societies. Neither of the two nations, closely bound together for centuries, can pass this test of national and civic maturity, separately.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Vilam Kratochvíl, “K možnostiam oslabovania predsudkov a stereotypov v tvorbe učebníc dejepisu” [On the Possibilities of the Weakening of Prejudices and Stereotypes in the Preparation of History Textbooks], In *Mýty a predsudky v dejinách. Historická konferencia 7. decembra 2004* [Myths and Prejudices in History. Proceedings of the Historical Conference held at December 7, 2004], ed. Attila Simon (Šamorín-Dunajská Streda: Forum Inštitút pre výskum menšín, 2005).

⁴⁸ See the interview with Slovak historian Ivan Kamenec. “Kamenec: Politici sú najhorší žiaci histórie” (Kamenec: Politicians Are the Worst Students of History). *Sme*, May 9, 2009. Kamenec refers to the diverging interpretations of the period 1944-1948.

⁴⁹ Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, in which Magyar minorities live. Ján Čarnogurský said that the highest challenge in Slovakia’s foreign policy after accession into NATO and the EU remains the country’s ability to face continuing interference by right-wing Magyar politicians into Slovakia’s domestic affairs through issues regarding the status of the Magyar minority in Slovakia. Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 24, 2007. In a poll in January of 2004, 21.3% of participants identified Hungary as a major threat to Slovak national security. See Boris Benkovič, “Výskumná správa” [Research Report], In *Verejná mienka a politika. Medzinárodné vzťahy a zahraničná politika Slovenskej republiky* [Public Opinion and Politics: International Relations and Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic], ed. Miroslav Pekník (Bratislava: Veda, 2005), p.38 (see Graph 9).

⁵⁰ For the necessity for mutual respect between the Slovak majority and minorities that would lead to their loyalty to the state based on civic principle see Milan Zemko,

8.3 The myth of a sudden awakening of Slovak society in the 1998

parliamentary elections

The major problem in Slovak history from an outside perspective – its invisibility linked to a fragmented appearance as a part of the history of Hungary and Czechoslovakia – influenced also its recent domestic interpretations. In reference to the Slovak national anthem, sociologists Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová compared Slovak society in 1989 to “Sleeping Beauty.”⁵¹ They went as far as to say that “...in November 1989, an overwhelming majority of people in Slovakia accepted political change passively.” This view is similar to those that refer to “socialism with a human face” in the second half of the 1960s as a purely Czech affair,⁵² and those that see Charter 77 as the only agent of civic resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Earlier observations by Karen Henderson point to preconceived approaches to Slovak history suffering from “dangerous analytical misconceptions that have to work backward.”⁵³ As mentioned in Chapter 5, theories on the institution-building processes in communist and post-communist Czechoslovakia view the

“Moderný politický národ” [A Modern Political Nation], In *Slovenská otázka dnes*, ed. László Szigeti (Bratislava : Kalligram, 2007), p.192. Zemko refers to Renan’s idea of a “nation as a daily plebiscite” in a continuous building of a Slovak political nation: “L’existence d’une nation est...plébiscite de tous les jours, comme l’existence de l’individu est affirmation perpétuelle de vie.” Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882. *Oeuvres Complètes d’Ernest Renan* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, editor, 1882), p.27.

⁵¹ Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová, “Slovakia’s Democratic Awakening,” *Journal of Democracy* 10.1 (1999), p.80.

⁵² Ibidem, p.83. Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulbricht K. Preuss, *Institutional design in post-communist societies: rebuilding the ship at sea* (Cambridge - New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The authors came to the conclusion that “The 1968 vision of socialism with a human face was entirely a Czech, not Slovak phenomenon.” Ibidem, p.264.

⁵³ Karen Henderson, “Evaluating the Slovak Transition: What Creates the Image of Slovakia?” In *Slovakia after Communism and Mečiarism*, ed. Kieran Williams (London: School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, 2000), p.26.

institutions emerging during the transitory period as a result of *bricolage* – the innovative building of new institutions by politicians who function as *bricoleurs*.⁵⁴ A similar approach can be taken when examining the most important moments in modern history of Slovakia and their contrasting interpretations seen in “bricks.”

Works by political scientists are often based on deductive reasoning (see the Bricolage I at the end of this chapter): If Slovakia deviated from its course towards western democracies in the mid-1990s (Brick A), the explanation was obvious: it happened because of the country’s past, bound with the immaturity of its society following the breakup of Czechoslovakia, which stemmed from pervasive Slovak nationalism. This led to ungratefulness towards the Czechs and revenge towards the Magyars (Brick B). Likewise, it has been argued that a high degree of compliance with the communist regime and its detrimental impact on Slovak society kept societal life frozen (Brick C). Moreover, the weak economic base of Slovakia inherited from Hungary, along with the controversial character and legacy of wartime Slovakia (Brick D), did not help to eliminate the socio-economic backwardness, political inexperience of Slovaks and thus their negative international image (Brick E).

Deductive reasoning has its merits. It is even more convincing when supported by direct experience and contact with the subject of the study, buttressed by familiarity with primary sources. A new generation of western scholars who did their research in Slovakia in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, helped to broaden a variety of perspectives on Slovak history, which Slovak historians themselves have been unaware of. It is intriguing to observe that it is western, not Slovak scholars, who

⁵⁴ John A. Scherpereel, *Governing the Czech Republic and Slovakia: Between State Socialism and the European Union* (Boulder - London: FirstForumPress, 2009), p.68.

argue in favour of the capacity of Slovak society to build new institutions during the communist and post-communist era (Scherpereel, Haughton). Western scholars have referred to the importance of a “critical mass of educated citizens” and political stability in Slovakia prior to, during and after the “change” in 1998 (Henderson), and stressed the presence of a “profound and sizeable Slovak opposition to the culture of Communism” (Innes), whilst Slovak sociologists and political scientists (Szomolányi, Gyárfášová, Bútorová, Marušiak) have been more skeptical.

From a long-term historical perspective based on inductive reasoning, the context and nuances of Slovakia’s post-communist transformation appear significantly different from a microperspective as applied by social sciences. This perspective suggests that, to understand the evolution of Slovak society with all its accomplishments and failures, the key is to start from the beginning, not from the end or the middle, and not by theories and generalizations, but with facts, particularly in contested perspectives. Interpretations based on deductive reasoning may result, and they often did, in theories on and explanations of the reasons for the still continuing building of the Slovak political nation and democracy in the country as an “unfinished business,” making it the hare-turtle race. Such perspectives attribute nationalism in the 1990s exclusively to the Slovaks, while ignoring the fears of Slovak society stemming from its historical experience, linked to the years 1867-1918, 1918-1919, 1938-1939, 1945-1948 and after.

Moreover, such perspectives suffer from inner contradictions. Despite the partly beneficial impact of Czechoslovakia on Slovakia, the latter was in 1993, similar to the years 1918, 1938-1939 as well as during communist Czechoslovakia, socio-

economically a less developed part of the common state.⁵⁵ Likewise, the Slovak political experience in prewar Czechoslovakia has been seen as weak due to the detrimental impact of a different and underdeveloped political culture inherited by the Slovaks from Hungary, for which two decades of the existence of democratic Czechoslovakia (1918-1938) was too a short period to improve.⁵⁶ Thus, due to the “historic deficits” in the evolution of Slovak society, its civic attitudes linked to pluralism during Communism did not develop properly.⁵⁷

This perspective does seem not to apply to other Slovak neighbours, the Magyars and the Poles, with their limited experience with parliamentary democracy before and after WW II, which were similar to Spain and Italy in the West. Hungary and Poland apparently redeemed themselves in the eyes of the West by the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the activities of the Solidarity Movement from 1980 onward. The question, however, is how could those events of undisputed civic bravery substitute for democracy as a system of governance that needs time to develop? By contrast, the non-compliance of Slovak society with the communist regime, as demonstrated by repeated mass-scale participation in religious events, has either been downplayed or referred to as having had no impact on politics in communist Czechoslovakia.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Miroslav Londák, “K niektorým problémom ekonomického vývoja na Slovensku na prahu roka 1968 [On Some Problems of the Economic Evolution in Slovakia on the Threshold of the Year 1968], *Historické štúdie* 44 (2006), p.188.

⁵⁶ Kopeček, pp.27-34 and 311.

⁵⁷ Based on a survey conducted in May of 1968, in which 69.5% of the respondents in the Czech Lands as compared with 54.6% in Slovakia supported the existence of more political parties. At the same time, 53% of Czech participants saw positively the role of civic associations in political life, while in Slovakia it was only 32%. Kopeček, pp.143.

⁵⁸ Kopeček stresses the continuity in Czech dissent linked to the reform movement in the 1960s and the role of Charter 77, which was signed by 1800 Czechs in comparison with two dozen Slovaks as the flagbearer of civic resistance against Communism in Czechoslovakia. Kopeček, p.145. Ján Čarnogurský vigorously opposes the assumption

After the 1998 parliamentary elections, Slovak sociologists and leaders of the non-governmental sector helped to create and spread a positive image of Slovak society in favour of the country's integrationist ambitions by contrasting the Mečiar era with the progress in the integration with western organizations during the two Dzurinda governments.⁵⁹ They suggested that the electoral behaviour of voters in rural and economically underdeveloped regions, who voted in favour of the HZDS and the SNS,⁶⁰ resembled support for the Hlinka Slovak People's Party in the wartime Slovak Republic – the infamous *ľudáks*. In contrast to their earlier suggestions, they see positively the ability of Magyar communities in Slovakia, which live in rural areas and cast their votes for the Magyar political parties in each election,⁶¹ while referring to it as a “higher form of civic participation and social engagement.”⁶²

that religious dissent in Slovakia had a limited impact on the regime. According to him, the massive pilgrimages to Velehrad and Levoča helped to soften the harassment of dissenters and citizens by communist authorities. Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 24, 2007. Compare this with Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.36-37.

⁵⁹Such delineation is, technically, an anachronism, as the third Mečiar government did not oppose the integration, particularly into the EU, though it eventually brought Slovakia into international isolation.

⁶⁰The SNS, which, next to the KDH in the early 1990s and the HZDS in the mid-1990s was also compared with the HSĽS, has always been supportive of the legacy of the Slovak National Uprising in stark contrast to the perspective of the *ľudáks* and the *neo-ľudáks*. The same is valid for the HZDS.

⁶¹After more than a decade (1997), there will be more than one political party to represent ethnic Magyars in Slovakia. Next to the SMK led by Pál Csáky, a new party the *Most- Híd* (Slovak and Magyar; the Bridge) was established in July of 2009. Its chairman became Béla Bugár, the former chairman of the SMK, who lost to Csáky in the party elections in April of 2007. The party's goal is to bring the Slovaks and Magyars closer together. See “Ministerstvo vnútra zaregistrovalo Bugárovu stranu” [The Ministry of the Interior Registered Bugár's Party], *Pravda*, July 3, 2009. The constitutive assembly of the *Most-Híd* party took place in the city of Komárno on Slovakia's border with Hungary on July 11, 2009.

⁶²See the article “Maďari sú aktívnejší než Slováci, tvrdí prieskum,” *Sme*, March 28, 2009. The article refers to a survey conducted by the Slovak Academy of Sciences and

Inductive reasoning provides the reader with the opportunity to view Slovakia's post-communist transformation in a complex, evolutionary perspective (Bricolage II):

Brick A – “Antecedents” (1848-1918): During and after the Revolution in 1848-1849, Slovaks were aware that Magyars were not willing to allow them to exist autonomously and started to design their political programs, build institutions, schools, and political parties. Fearing *Panslavism*, Magyar radicals attempted to *Magyarise* the nationalities in Hungary, including the Slovaks, with some success (*Magyarones*). As a consequence, some Slovak, mostly Protestant, intellectuals, opted for cultural, and possibly political, cooperation with the Czechs. A majority of Slovaks, mostly Catholics, still believed that a solution for Slovakia within Hungary could be found. The period from 1890 to 1914, which was traditionally seen as the “dark ages” of Slovak national emancipation, brought about even more resilience against *Magyarisation*. In October of 1918, the Slovaks decided to join the Czechs in a common state. They rejected the offer by the Károlyi government for autonomy within Hungary. From November of 1918 onward, a series of military clashes occurred between Magyar and Czechoslovak troops. In June of 1919, the Hungarian Red Army invaded East and South Slovakia for a short time.

Difference (traditional views↔the dissertation): Slovaks were socially and politically active, not passive in Hungary, even during the time of the harshest *Magyarisation* in 1890-1914, which coincided with the process of the formation of the Slovaks as a political nation. During and after WW I, Slovak leaders abroad and at

its interpretation by Zora Bútorová from the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), a non-governmental think-tank. The ability of Slovak Magyars defending their rights while keeping their traditions and cohesiveness of their society intact is praised as a positive quality. This was not applied to the Slovaks in Hungary and Czechoslovakia when they were doing the same.

home decided to join the Czechs in Czechoslovakia on the assumption they would receive autonomy as promised by the Pittsburgh Agreement. At the same time, the Slovak population demonstrated its dissatisfaction with the Magyar government and supported secession from Hungary by protests in which social and national aspects blended together.

Brick B – “Betrayals” (1918-1948): In prewar Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks were divided between the autonomists and the *Czechoslovaks*. In this clash the Catholic-Protestant controversy played an important role. Though the autonomists were seen in the Czech Lands as the destroyers of Czechoslovakia, they did not want to secede, as they were afraid of territorial revisionism by the Poles and the Magyars. After Munich, Slovak political parties congregated in Žilina and expressed their support for Slovak autonomy within the rump Second Czechoslovak Republic. The government of the nominally independent wartime Slovak Republic discriminated against and failed to protect its Jewish and Roma citizens. In administrative and economic spheres, the Slovaks demonstrated their capacity to form a state and administer themselves. Based on this experience, Slovak Communists, who had helped to organize the Slovak National Uprising in 1944, expected Slovakia to receive an autonomous status within the reconstituted Czechoslovakia. This was rejected by Edvard Beneš, Klement Gottwald and Antonín Novotný.

Difference: Slovaks were stereotyped in the Czech Lands as traitors since the 1920s. The fact that they did not want to secede from Czechoslovakia and stayed in the Second Czechoslovak Republic for half a year has been frequently omitted. The socio-economic progress made by the wartime Slovak Republic, in contrast with the disinterest in Slovak affairs by previous centralist Czechoslovak governments, was

significant. In May of 1946, the Communists were defeated in parliamentary elections in Slovakia, but not in the Czech Lands. By November of 1947, the Communists gained political control over Slovakia. The three Prague Agreements were felt by the Slovaks similar to the aftermath of the Munich Agreement in the Czech Lands: as a betrayal.

Brick C – “Communism” (1948-1989): The idea of Slovak autonomy and economic equalization with the Czechs was adopted by Slovak Communists. The push for reforming Communism in Slovakia accelerated with Dubček’s accession to power in 1963. The return to national history and the drive for economic reform resulted in the idea of the federalization of Czechoslovakia. This was interpreted on the Czech side as a continuation of Slovak nationalism, for the debate in the Czech Lands was oriented towards political pluralism and economic reform. In 1969 came the removal of Dubček, who was caught between the need for reform at home and the mistrust of political leaders in other communist countries. He was replaced by Gustáv Husák, another Slovak, who embodied ‘normalization.’ Whereas Czechs intellectuals voiced their dissatisfaction with the Husák regime, Slovaks, allegedly, were compliant with it.

Difference: Slovaks were no less active than the Czechs in initiating the reform movement in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s; in fact, they had helped to start it. Economic reform as a continuation of equalization stood in the forefront of the efforts of Slovak communist political leaders as well as economists. Federalization was important in regard to both political and economic competencies, whilst it was viewed by Czech society as another form of archetypal national reassertion of the Slovaks resembling the 19th century. Slovak society lived in a dichotomic situation: next to the material benefits of normalization, traditionally religious Slovaks reacted to ideological

indoctrination by massive participation in religious events. In addition to the religious dissenters, who were active already in the 1970s, environmentalists began to play an important role in the early 1980s in making also the secular part of Slovak society aware of the risks stemming from insensitive industrialization. In 1989, Slovak society as a whole and on its own initiative rejected the communist regime by massive demonstrations against it.

Brick D – “Division” (1993-1997): The “Velvet Revolution,” similar to the “Prague Spring,” indicated, how the fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia was perceived internationally. From the beginning, there was mistrust between the Slovak and Czech newly-emerging political elites. Each side had its own symbol: they were Alexander Dubček in Slovakia and Václav Havel in the Czech Lands. Since the former accepted the rather symbolic post of the Chairman of the Federal Assembly in Prague, new political leaders emerged in Slovakia instantly, first and foremost Vladimír Mečiar. In comparison with its federal partner, Slovakia had two more tasks to solve: 1) international recognition, and 2) the status of the Magyar minority. Fighting on three fronts (the third were federal competences) simultaneously, Slovak politicians were divided. Eventually, it was the HZDS, led by Mečiar, which prevailed. Contrary to their portrayal as anti-federalist and nationalist, the HZDS and its leader still aspired towards a looser form of a common state with the Czechs. This idea was unacceptable to the “technocrats,” represented by Václav Klaus and Czech nationalists such as Miroslav Macek (both ODS) and Jan Kalvoda (ODA). As a result, Slovak and Czech political leaders opted for the dissolution of Czechoslovakia as of December 31, 1992.

Difference: In contrast to the traditional perspectives that interpret renewed Slovak efforts for building an “authentic federation” in the early 1990s at the expense

of the Czechs, this study suggests that Slovaks wanted more powers in order to avoid the continuation of debates of constitutional discrepancies and socio-economic disparities that had started in the 1930s, continued in 1960s, and resurfaced at the end of the communist regime in the late 1980s. Since the Czechs had controlled Czechoslovakia for decades, regardless its constitutional form, they interpreted their nationalism as “civicness” in contrast to the old-fashioned Slovak nationalism.

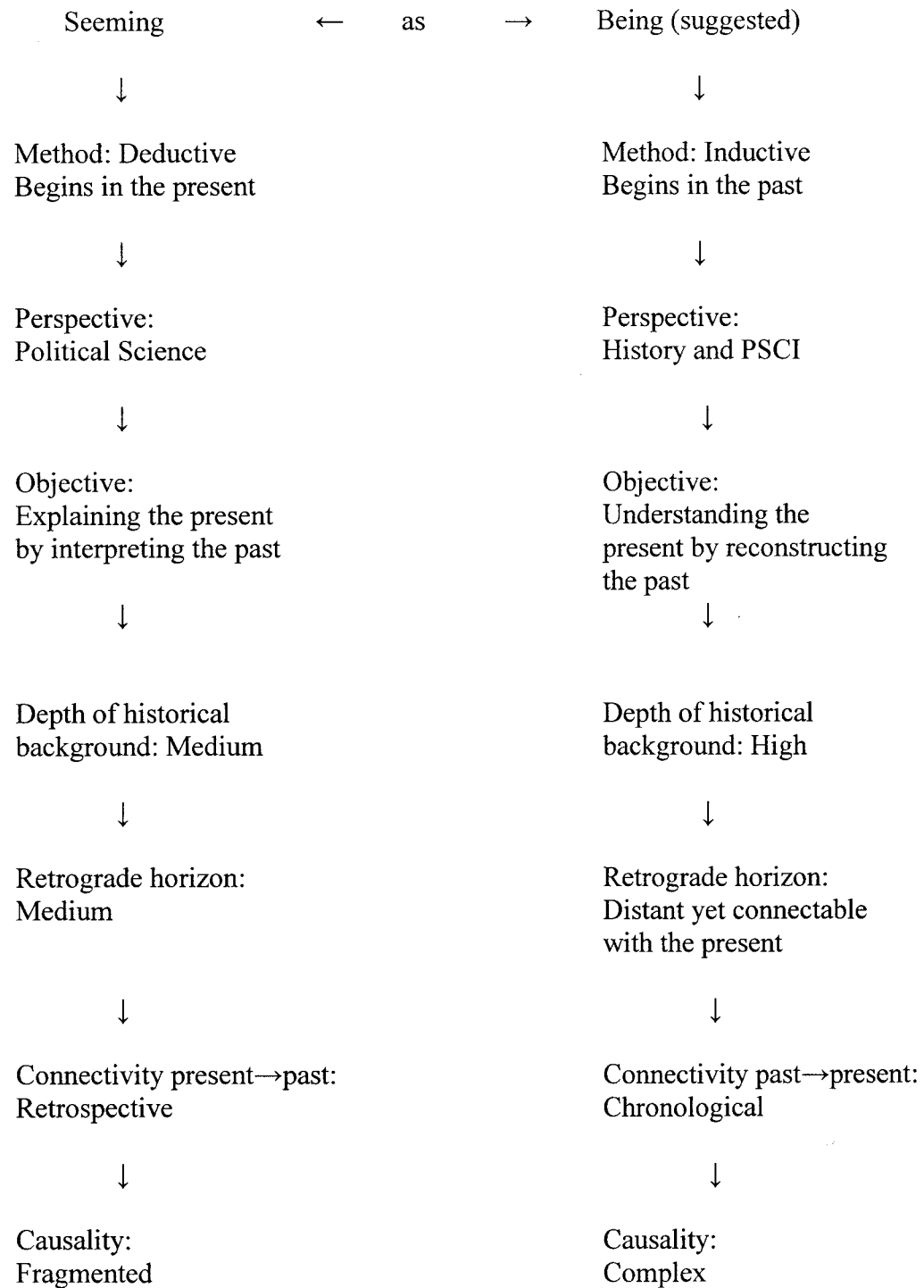
Brick E – “Europe” (“The Awakening” and the “Change”; 1998-2004): Since Slovaks were seen as passive in communist Czechoslovakia and their religious dissent was allegedly insignificant in terms of challenging the communist regime, new institutions and political parties had to emerge in the early 1990s as new entities. During the period 1990-1992, Slovaks allegedly once again focused on federal and national competencies, instead of building democracy and a market economy which were Czech priorities. By that, Slovakia, according to some sociologists, missed the chance to experience its Velvet Revolution. After the creation of independent Slovakia, the state had to re-build its structures and to strive for international recognition. It inherited a sensitive problem with the Magyar minority which resulted in tensions regarding the use of the official and Magyar languages on territories with a mixed population. In the spring of 1994, pro-democratic and pro-western forces ousted Vladimír Mečiar from office, yet the six following months was too a short period for catching up with the rest of reforming post-communist countries, particularly Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In the parliamentary elections in the fall of 1994, Vladimír Mečiar was back. Allied with the nationalists and the radical left, he imposed a harsh rule over the National Council, the opposition and the media. As a result of the abduction of the son of President Michal Kováč, who dared to defy the

government and Mečiar himself, Slovakia began to lag behind in the integration processes. In the 1998 parliamentary elections, the opposition political parties supported, though indirectly, by non-governmental organizations and awakened Slovak society, defeated the government that allegedly torpedoed its own formally proclaimed integrationist goals. The two subsequent governments, led by Mikuláš Dzurinda succeeded in transforming the country's negative international image and attracting foreign investments. Being politically stable, the country became a member of both NATO and the EU in 2004.

Difference: When attempts to reach an agreement with the Czechs on an authentic federation failed, Slovaks received, somehow unexpectedly, their own state in a way resembling March of 1939. The accusations against Mečiar as an authoritarian leader collided with divergent views on how national property should be privatized. After Mečiar's return to power in fall of 1994, Slovakia continued its efforts to access the European Union and NATO. It failed to become a member of the OECD due to the government's unwillingness to privatize strategic branches of the Slovak economy. Despite diplomatic and political warnings regarding the causes of Michal Kováč, František Gaulieder and Robert Remiáš, negotiations with the EU and NATO continued. The "change" in 1998 brought about an influx of former representatives of the non-governmental sector into the various ministries, while many of those who remained loyal to their original mission of being the watchdogs over a young democracy were disillusioned. The fragmentation of old political parties and the emergence of new ones in the late 1990s and the early 2000s were complemented by scandals stemming from corruption. In contrast with the third Mečiar government, where there were two camps clearly separated one from another, the situation in the

first and second Dzurinda governments resembled wars of all against all. The only factor that kept the coalition together was fear of Mečiar. Slovak society, which was tired of the endless chain of political conflicts and scandals, with what was left of its enthusiasm and energy, helped to complete the country's integration with the EU, which was seen as the guarantor of economic stability and prosperity.

Slovakia's postcommunist transformation from a historical perspective
(Scheme)



Bricolage I	Divergence	Bricolage II
Brick A : Result Delayed Slovak post-communist transformation and integration with EU and NATO	↔ low ↔	Brick “ Europe ” Slovakia’s integration delayed but completed on institutional level, continues on societal
↓		↑
Brick B : Sub-condition Breakup of Czechoslovakia Reason: prevalence of archetypal Slovak nationalism over the solution of practical problems	↔ high ↔	Brick “ Division ” Split with the Czechs over disparities and competences, not nation- al identity
↓		↑
Brick C : Prerequisite 1 High degree of Slovak compliance with communist regime Societal life completely hibernated	↔ high ↔	Brick “ Communism ” Slovaks partly compliant with communist regime; refuse interference in religious matters, form enviromental movement
↓		↑
Brick D : Prerequisite 2 Weak economic base inherited from Hungary; legacy of wartime Slovak Republic as a totalitarian state	↔ medium ↔	Brick “ Betrayals ” Wartime Slovak Republic created out of necessity, economically viable. Slovak autonomy rejected in postwar Czechoslovakia
↓		↑
Brick E : Historical residua Slovaks politically passive; their extinction as a nation imminent, if not saved by by Czechs	↔ medium/high ↔ →	Brick “ Antecedents ” Slovaks resilient and socially active in A-H; opt for Czechoslovakia instead of Hungary

CONCLUSION

The year 1989 stood not only for the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and the beginning of the road to Slovak independence. For the Slovaks this was also a time which revealed the gap between their perception of their national history and views of Slovak history from the outside. In the 1990s, a new generation of western scholars contrasted the post-communist change of Czechoslovakia's two nations with Communism. In their studies of recent Slovak society they rarely returned before 1918. They relied on general accounts and traditional dichotomies such as "industrial" versus "rural," "secular" versus "religious," "progressive" versus "backward." In the early 2000s, a second-wave of scholarly interest in Slovakia began. Attracted by the country's progress, western scholars began to re-examine what had seemed in the 1990s as a satisfactory explanation for peculiarities in Slovakia's post-communist transformation. They began to explore Slovak history from its "end."

This dissertation suggests that the 1960s are decisive for an understanding of the most recent chapter in Slovakia's history linked to post-communist transformation and membership in the European Union. The focal point is the 1963 study by the Slovak historian Miloš Gosiorovský, which triggered the drive for constitutional equalization with the Czechs that had been halted by the Three Prague Agreements in 1945-1946. During this process, Slovak Communists, in a hidden continuity with their politically antagonistic predecessors, both the *ľudáks* (HSEŠ) and the Democrats, became, once again, Slovak "nationalists." Had Father Andrej Hlinka lived in the early 1960s, he might have modified his earlier statement on a Slovak Protestant being closer to his heart than a Czech Catholic by replacing the name 'Protestant' with 'Communist.'

The 1960s witnessed a massive Slovak national revival in all aspects of life – social, political, and cultural. Throughout the 1960s, Slovak economists and constitutional lawyers continued in the direction suggested by Slovak intellectuals and politicians, both old and new, at the end of the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s. What had enthusiastically begun with Dubček was reached, in part, by Husák. Though the federation formally existed since 1969, all political power in Czechoslovakia was still held by the Communist Party. This, alongside the fact that federal ministries in Prague had decisive competences, made the federal constitution formal. Following the downfall of Communism in 1989, the key issue for Slovak political elites was the effort to acquire more powers for the national republics, including the right to establish contacts with foreign partners without mediation by federal authorities. This was the consequence of the processes that had started two decades earlier with Gosiorovský's study.

After the creation of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993, in addition to the former line of division between the sovereignists and pro-federalists inherited from post-communist Czechoslovakia, and that of supporters of unrestricted privatization versus those who wished to preserve control by the state over its strategic industries, a new line of division emerged in the mid-1990s between those who wanted to integrate with NATO and the EU unconditionally and the government, whose goals and deeds differed. Because of the incursions of the Mečiar government into the life of ordinary citizens, who became afraid of an illiberal regime, and, at the same time, apathetic towards politics, society was mobilized by the non-governmental sector with the aim of attracting it to participation in the 1998 parliamentary elections. This, according to some, opened a new page in Slovak history.

Shari J. Cohen is right that interpretations of modern Slovak history suffer from too many ruptures. They may appear as such due to the changes of political regimes. During less than a century, Slovaks had to start politically from the very beginning in 1918, 1938-1939, 1944-1945, 1948, 1963, 1968-1970, 1989, 1993, 1998 and 2004. On the other hand, they did not have to start anew each time as far as cohesion of their society was concerned. While often divided internally, Slovak society demonstrated a remarkable capacity to act in critical situations. The years above thus testify not only to internal divisions, but also to the opposite – cohesion and activity of Slovaks in a mixture in which good and positive merged with the bad and the negative. This cyclical and dialectical character of the evolution of Slovak society should not be conjectured with short cycles – election terms and their outcomes – desired by the leaders of political parties, as well as their sponsors and supporters, who cast out their opponents whenever they act against their will and expectations. Based on a long-term historical experience, the present generation of Slovak politicians may get caught in the future by massive drive for “change,” the protagonists of which will not care about the merits of their predecessors.

It has been suggested that the quality of political life in Slovakia after the change in government in the 1998 parliamentary elections did not differ significantly from the previous period. It was particularly evident in the fact that all actors – political parties, non-governmental organizations and citizens – behaved during and after the 1998 and 2002 parliamentary elections as rational players. While following collective goals, they also competed for individual advantages and benefits. Regardless of this unheroic and “immoral” perspective, this behaviour testifies to the normalcy of life in Slovak

society, evolving in large cycles no less than to its ability to be mobilized when the objectives are worth it.

Until Slovak political parties allow researchers to study documents in their archives, the period from 1989 to 2004, can hardly be interpreted differently. This dissertation has attempted to prove that in writing a study on a particular problem, a perspective and methodology are no less important than the facts. It argues that, to understand the period from 1989 to 2004, one has to re-examine its roots. Instead of a fragmented vision of Slovak society through the prism of its seemingly endless political and ideological “new beginnings,” this study has presented an evolutionary perspective which reflects the strong undercurrents in the mostly still invisible Slovak history.

The major ambition of this dissertation has been to build a “pontoon bridge” until one made from “concrete” will emerge. If it can be viewed as such, it is because its pylons had been erected by both Slovak and western scholars. As for their future, Slovaks, while remembering their history, should stop seeing themselves as the victims of external oppressors – the Habsburgs and Vienna, the Magyars and Budapest, the Czechs and Prague, the Communists and Moscow, the Eurobureaucrats and Brussels. By overcoming the reflexes of this mental burden, they have a fair chance to fear the coming days less than the nights that have already passed.

CHRONOLOGY

- 833-907 Existence of Great Moravia
- 997-1700 Slovaks cohabit peacefully with the Magyars and other ethnic groups in the Kingdom of Hungary
- 1700-1800 *Natio Hungarica* identified with *Natio Magyarica*; literary works on Slovak history and language spread in response
- 1787 Codification of the Slovak literary language on the basis of the western Slovak dialects by Anton Bernolák
- 1843 Re-codification of the Slovak literary language on the basis of Central Slovak dialects by Ľudovít Štúr
- 1848 The Slovak National Council established (September), armed conflict with the Magyars follows
- 1867 The Compromise (*Ausgleich*); Hungary becomes equal with Austria
- 1871 The Slovak National Party established
- 1875 *Magyarization* begins in earnest
- 1907 The tragedy in Černová
- 1913 The Slovak People's Party established
- 1918 The Slovak National Council re-emerges; opts for Czechoslovakia

- 1920-1938 Slovak Autonomists clash with *Czechoslovaks*
- 1938 The Žilina agreement; Slovak political parties support Slovakia's autonomy (October)
- 1939-1945 The existence of nominally independent Slovak Republic
- 1943 The Christmas Agreement; The Slovak National Council re-established (December)
- 1944 The Slovak National Uprising (August-October)
- 1945 The Košice Government Program envisages Slovak autonomy in a reconstituted Czechoslovakia; the Hlinka Slovak People's Party banned (April)
- 1945-1946 The Three Prague Agreements, the drive of Slovak Communists for autonomy of Slovakia in Czechoslovakia is defeated
- 1946 The Communists lost the election in Slovakia to the Democratic Party, but won in the Czech Lands and thus in Czechoslovakia (May)
- 1947 A "dress rehearsal" in Slovakia for the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia (November)
- 1948 The Communists take over the Czechoslovak government and society (February)
- 1948-1968 Czechoslovakia exists as a unitary, since 1960 also as a socialist state

- 1950-1954 Persecution of the churches and trials with “bourgeois nationalists” in Slovakia
- 1963 Slovak communist historian Miloš Gosiorovský writes a study on constitutional imbalance, suggesting the federalization of Czechoslovakia
- 1968-1969 The reform movement culminates with the “Prague Spring” and the federalization of Czechoslovakia
- 1970 “Normalization” begins
- 1977 Charter 77 established in the Czech Lands (December); religious dissent and pilgrimages in the 1980s in Slovakia
- 1985-1989 Neo-Stalinists rule over communist Czechoslovakia; reject *perestroika*
- 1988 The “Candle Demonstration” takes place in Bratislava (March)
- 1989 The communist regime is overthrown by the “Velvet Revolution” (November- December)
- 1990 The Law on Political Parties; a pluralist political system re-established (February)
- 1990 The VPN in Slovakia and the OF in the Czech Lands win the free parliamentary elections (June)
- 1992 The HZDS and the ODS are victorious in the parliamentary elections (June)
- 1992 Declaration of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic (July)

- 1992 The Slovak National Council is renamed the National Council of the Slovak Republic (October)
- 1993 The founding of the independent Slovak Republic (January)
- 1993 Michal Kováč is elected President by the National Council (February)
- 1994 Vladimír Mečiar is removed from power in March, returns in October
- 1995 The abduction of Michal Kováč Jr; international isolation begins
- 1995 The rise of the non-governmental sector (July)
- 1997 The obstructed referendum on NATO membership (May)
- 1998 The defeat of illiberal democracy in the parliamentary elections (September)
- 1999 The Dzurinda Government catches up with the rest of the *Visegrád Group* in the integration into the OECD, NATO and the EU
- 1999 Rudolf Schuster is elected President by popular vote; the fragmentation of political parties begins
- 2001 Slovakia becomes a member of the OECD (July)
- 2002 The Second Dzurinda Government begins (October); Slovakia invited to join NATO
- 2003 Slovakia invited to join the European Union (April)

- 2004 Ivan Gašparovič is elected President (April)
- 2004 Slovakia becomes a member of NATO (March) and the EU (May)
- 2006 The Second Dzurinda Government is defeated in the parliamentary elections; a new government led by Robert Fico takes over (July)
- 2009 Ivan Gašparovič is re-elected President (April)

Questionnaire

(Author interviews in Bratislava. May-August of 2007)

- 1) How would you characterize Czechoslovakia's internal development after the year 1968 when the period of the so-called "normalization" began?
- 2) Did the policies of *perestroika* executed by Mikhail Gorbachev in the U.R.S.S. have any impact in Czechoslovakia in the mid of the 1980s? If there were any changes, could you specify them?
- 3) How would you characterize the relationship between the Slovaks and Czechs in 1970-1989? Were there any tensions prior to the fall of Communism?
- 4) Did the relationship of the Czechs and the Slovaks before 1989 include elements of potential risk for a common state?
- 5) Was the constitutional framework of Czechoslovakia, as stipulated by the Constitutional Act on the Czech and Slovak Socialist Federation as of January 1, 1969, after the break of the Communist regime in November - February 1989 still satisfactory, or obsolete? Please specify.
- 6) How would you characterize political life in Slovakia under the communist regime? Was there any space left for political activities other than those executed and controlled by the Communist Party?
- 7) New generations of historians suggest that Slovak nationalism in a non-pervasive, long-term evolutionary form was present in Slovakia during the communist era and that Communism, despite its overall detrimental socio-economic effects and deformations, served the Slovaks well in making them a modern nation. Would you agree?
- 8) It is often said that, in contrast to the Czech dissident movement in the late 1970s and the 1980s, there was marginal societal regime discontent in Slovakia as a result of more conciliatory politics of the proponents of "normalization" towards those who had "sinned" in the reform movement of 1968-69? Would you agree?
- 9) How would you characterize the overall socio-economic and political situation in Slovakia on the verge of the communist regime's collapse in November of 1989?
- 10) Whereas in the late 1980s the politicians of the old regime had not been trusted by the majority of population, the newly constituted political elites in Czechoslovakia emerging in the fall and winter of 1989 and 1990 had to deal with complex political and socio-economic issues for the solution of which, despite their enthusiasm, seemed to have lacked experience. What is your opinion?

- 11) How did you perceive the processes that happened in the time of the regime change in regard to the shift of political power from communist elites to civic groups?
- 12) When did the issues of nationalism and minority problems in non-communist Czechoslovakia emerge for the first time?
- 13) What were the particular reasons from which those problems stemmed? Were Slovak politicians prepared to cope with them and what were their solutions?
- 14) Would you comment on any particular moment concerning the evolution of the Slovak political scene from the parliamentary election in June of 1990 to the elections in July 1992 when the fate of the common state with the Czechs had already been decided by the leaders such as Václav Klaus in the Czech Lands and Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia?
- 15) Could you characterize the place of Slovakia in the context of East Central Europe during the same period? Do you think that, with the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, though contrasted to the fate of ex-Yugoslavia, the position of Slovakia in the eyes of western political elites and media in spite of its efforts to join the crucial western organizations (NATO, EU, OECD) was more difficult than that of the Czech Republic? If yes, please specify.
- 16) The period of the third government of Vladimír Mečiar (1994-1998) is often described as a period of a semi-authoritarian regime and illiberal democracy which means that the regime hid its true and quasi-democratic face behind the façade of democracy. How did you perceive that period of time in Slovak domestic and foreign policies, particularly in regard to the country's efforts to join the European Union?
- 17) In general, was Slovakia under Mečiar's government politically a stable state?
- 18) One of the most protracted issues negatively bound with Slovakia's image as a democratic country in the West has been that of the treatment of the Magyar minority. Could you comment on that? According to you, were there any differences between how the various Slovak governments approached the problem? If yes, please specify.
- 19) In a long-term perspective, which political party(ies), politician(s), intellectual(s), civic movement(s) and association(s), groups of citizens, contributed to the Slovak accession into the European Union most significantly? Why?
- 20) What do you think of the quality of both intellectual and political discourse on Slovakia's accession into the security and socio-economic orbits of western democracies? Is there any relevant discourse on the impact of changed political and economic environments in Slovakia in the present day?

21) According to several scholars, such as George Schöpflin and Marc Morjé Howard, though the formal transformation from a communist regime to a standard democracy particularly in the group of *Visegrád* countries has already been accomplished, the real mental change with political culture, corruption and broken social trust pending, will take some time to happen. In regard to Slovakia, would you agree with that view?

22) Now that almost eighteen years have elapsed from the fall of communism and three from Slovakia's accession to the EU and NATO, how does democracy work in Slovakia? Are the decisive democratic institutions and their representatives doing their best? If not, what do they still lack?

23) Have the evolution and configuration of major political parties been completed? Do you expect a new significant political subject, or so far unexpected evolutionary tendency, to emerge in the future?

24) After a decade and half from the downfall of the communist regime, how would you evaluate the impact of Slovakia's independence on its socio-economic progress and place in Europe? What are the future tasks to accomplish both domestically and internationally?

25) What is your perception of the relationship between Slovakia and the Czech Republic after the break-up of their common state?

Table 7

**"How has the situation in Slovakia changed since the 1994
parliamentary elections?" (in percent)**

	Has improved	Has not changed	Has worsened	Don't know
Citizens' safety	1	13	84	2
Justice in the society	2	22	70	6
Status and opportunities of young people	10	20	65	5
Slovakia's international status	7	20	59	14
State of democracy	7	26	54	13
Respect for the Constitution and laws	4	27	51	18
Citizens' status and opportunities regardless of their political allegiance	5	29	50	16
Quality of enacted laws	4	24	42	30
Your and your family's living standard	15	42	41	2
Hungarian minority's status	22	39	18	21
Romanies' status in the society	30	39	13	18

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, October 1997.

Table 8

**Development of voting preferences of first-time voters
(in percent)**

	November 1997	May 1998	June-July 1998	25-26 September 1998
SDK	34.2	27.4	26	30.4
SOP	–	25.2	21.9	13.3
HZDS	19.7	10.4	14.3	10.8
MK/SMK	10.4	7.4	11.7	8
SNS	9.7	11.9	7.6	13.2
SDE	10.8	9.6	8.9	18.4
KSS	2.6	2.2	2.9	2.1
NSK*	–	4.2	2.2	1.3
ZRS	3.7	0.7	1.3	0.9
UPŽR**	1.5	1.5	1.3	–
SPŽ	1.5	0	1	–
KSU	2.6	0.7	0	–
other parties	3.4	2.9	0.9	1.3

Note: * Movement Our Slovakia

** Union of Small Businessmen, Entrepreneurs and Peasants

Source: IRI/FOCUS, November 1997; IRI/FOCUS, May 1998; IRI/FOCUS, June-July 1998; IRI/FOCUS, 25-26 September 1998.

Table 9

**Ratio of first-time voters concerned about events from the recent past
(in percent)**

	First-time voters	SR population
Racketeering, blackmailing of entrepreneurs	77	76
Probable exclusion of Slovakia from the first wave of EU expansion	63	54
Murder of Róbert Remiáš and the termination of investigation	52	54
Minister of Interior Krajčí's exclusion of the question on direct vote of president from the ballot	50	53
Exclusion of Slovakia from the first wave of NATO enlargement	48	41
Kidnapping of Michal Kováč, Jr. and the termination of investigation	45	52
Murder of Romany Mário Goral by skinhead	42	45
Privatization of Nafta Gbely enterprise	35	50
Deputy František Gaulieder's expulsion from Parliament	31	40
Prohibition by the Ministry of Education to issue two-language grade reports for Hungarian children	24	29

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, October 1997.

Table 10

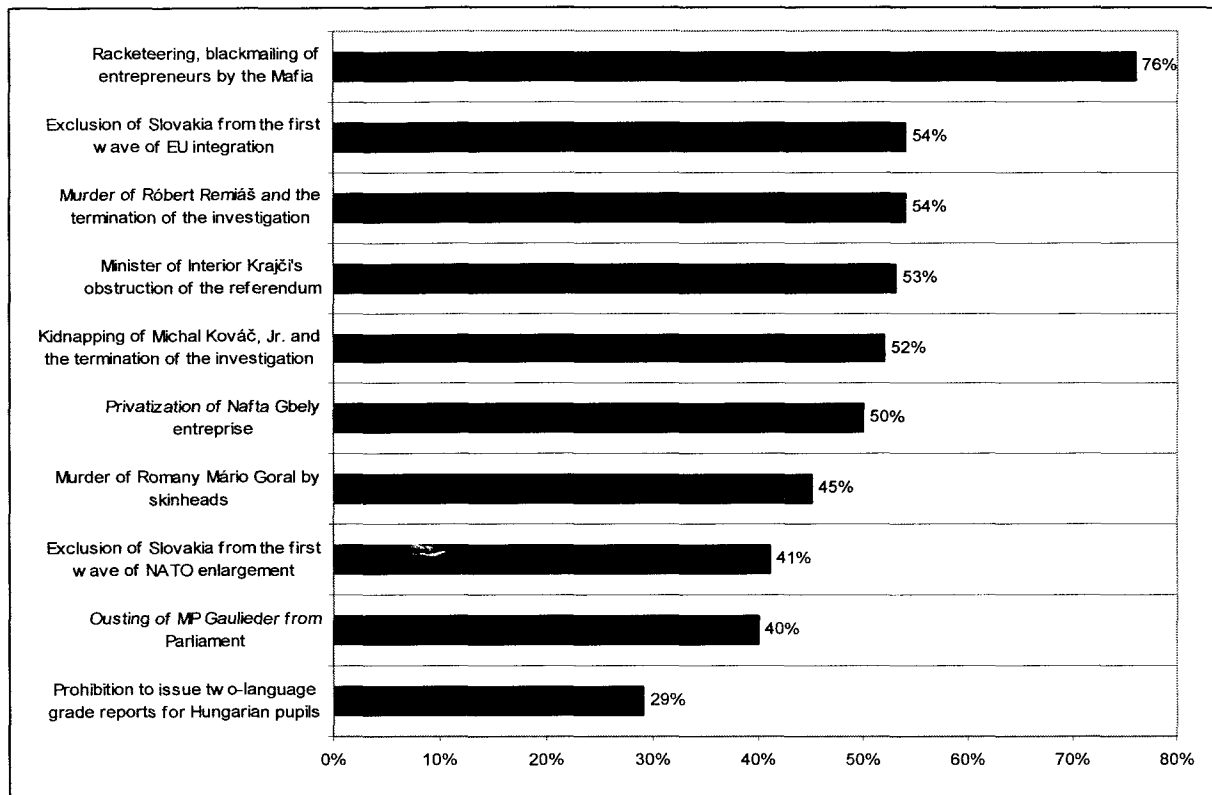
"Evaluate the work of non-governmental organizations involved in the Civic Campaign OK'98 prior to and during the parliamentary elections. Assess them with grades like in school, where a grade of 1 means that their activities were useful and a 5 means that they were damaging" (in percent)

	1+2	3	4+5	Useless	Don't know
SR population	38	13	8	11	30
Voting preferences					
SDK	65	12	1	4	19
SDE	52	19	5	5	19
SOP	50	15	1	1	32
SMK	42	12	1	0	45
SNS	20	21	17	17	25
Non-voters	20	3	4	19	54
HZDS	19	11	19	21	30
Education					
Elementary	24	12	7	14	42
Vocational	38	15	8	11	27
Secondary	48	12	10	7	24
University	70	7	7	5	11

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, October 1998.

Graph 1

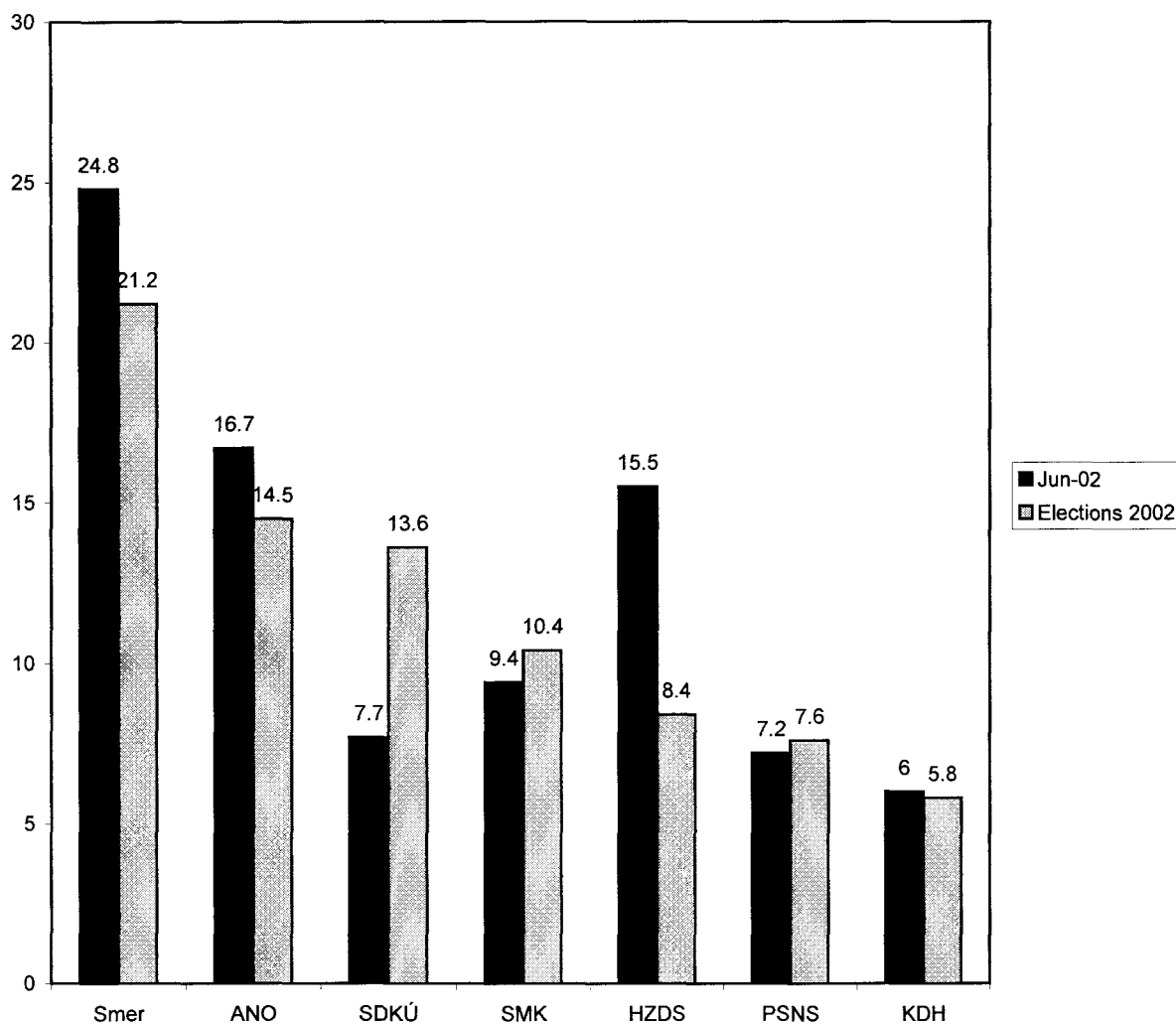
"Which events have made you seriously concerned?"



Source: Institute for Public Affairs, October 1997.

Graph 2

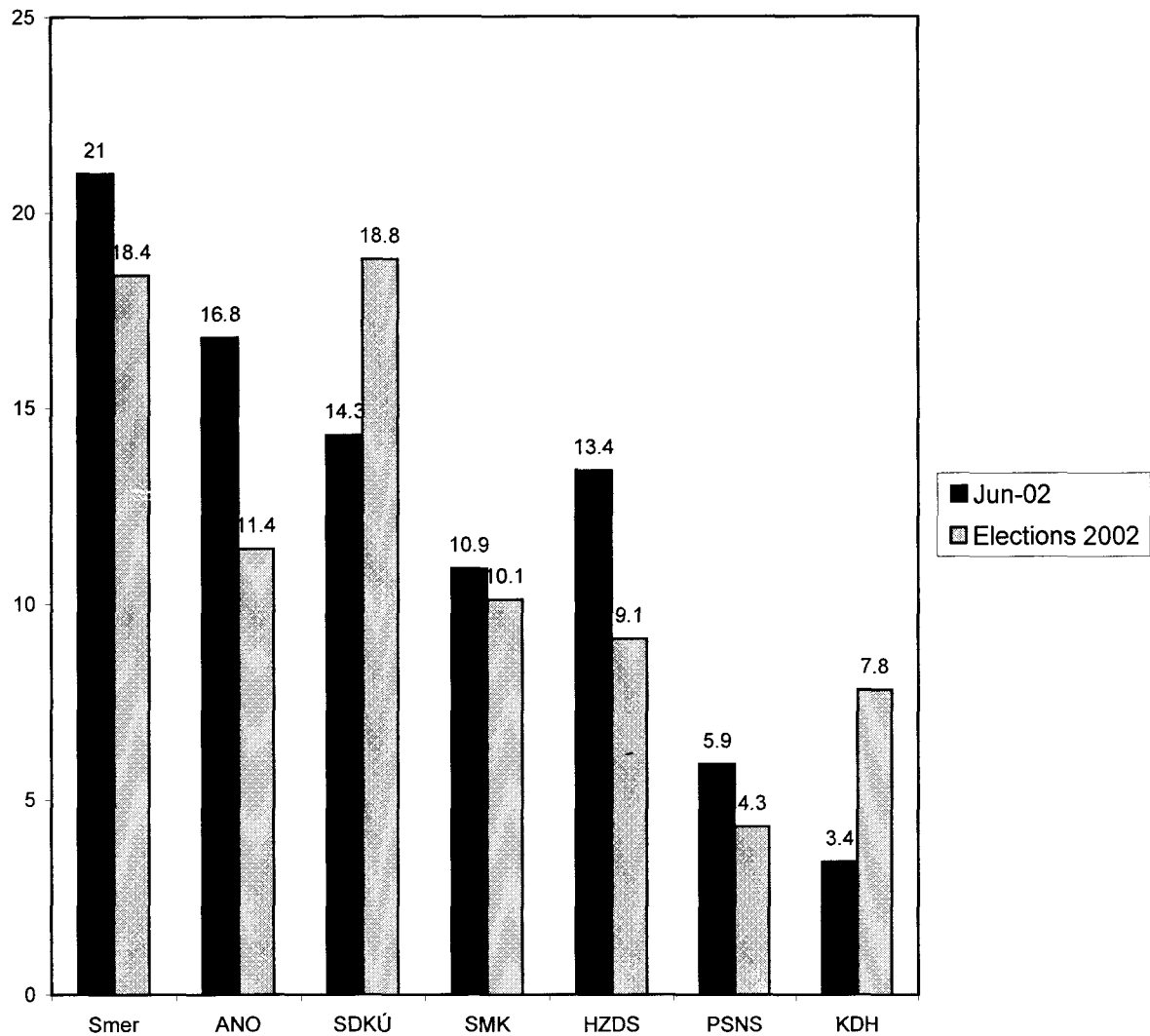
**Voter preferences and voting patterns of first-time voters
(in percent)**



Sources: Institute for Public Affairs, June 2002 (voter preferences);
Slovak Radio's Department of Media Research, September 2002 (election results).

Graph 3

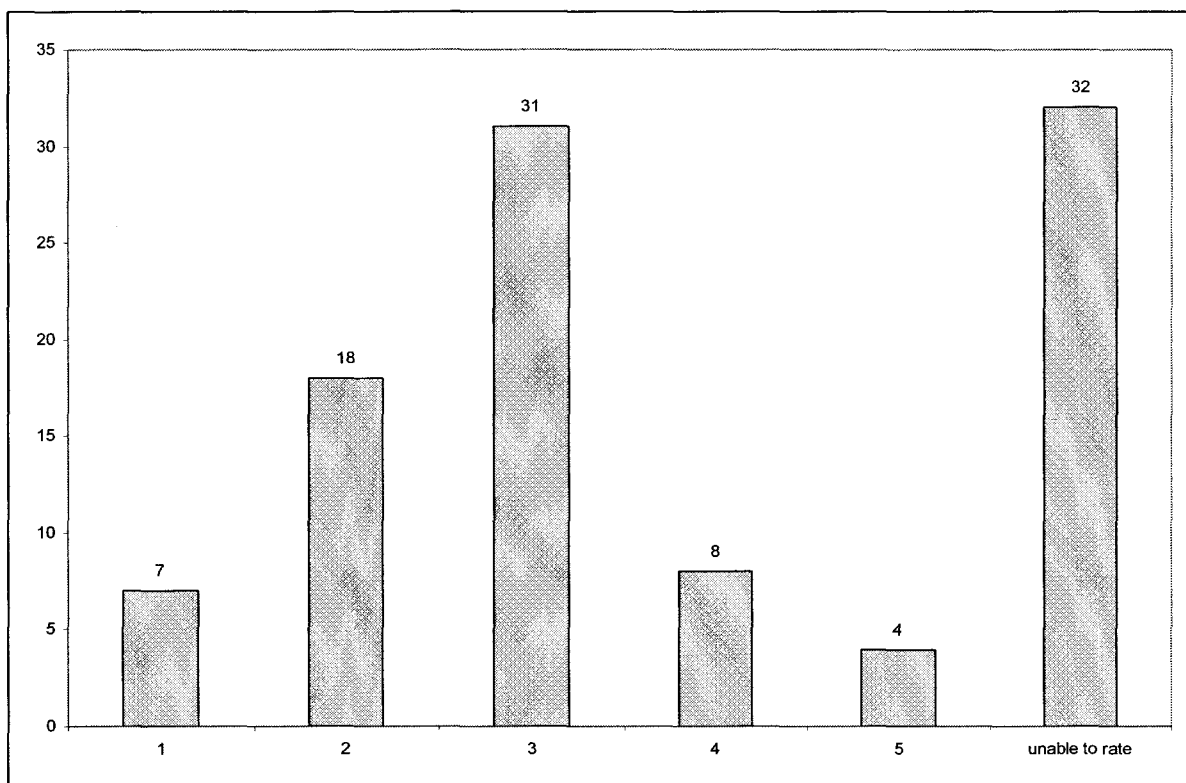
**Voter preferences and voting patterns of second-time voters
(in percent)**



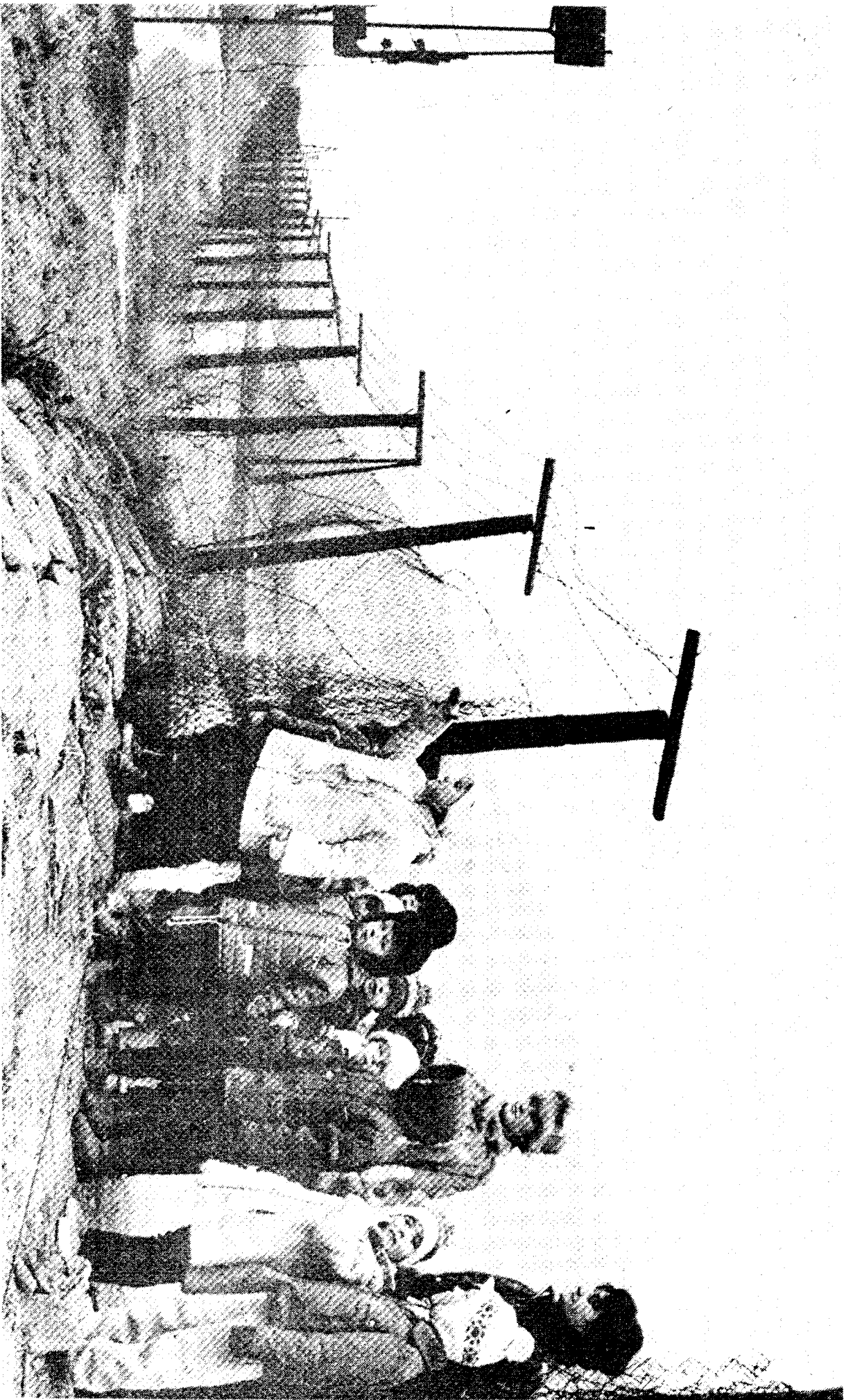
Sources: Institute for Public Affairs, June 2002 (voter preferences);
Slovak Radio's Department of Media Research, September 2002 (election results).

Graph 4

"How would you rate the work and activities of NGOs before the parliamentary elections? Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means useful and beneficial, and 5 means harmful" (in percent)



Source: Institute for Public Affairs, October 2002.



● V pondelok začali príslušníci Pohraničnej stráže s likvidáciou žerijno-technického zabezpečenia štátnych hraníc s Rakúskou republikou. Predpoludním smrečujúci deti z materskej školy v obci Devín pri Bratislave na prechádzke v bývalom hraničnom pásme, do ktorého bol donedávna vstup prísne zakázaný.
Snímka Pravda – Vladimír Martinko



THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

The peaceful route to democracy in the former Czechoslovakia was instantly dubbed the 'Velvet Revolution.'

The Velvet Revolution's lessons



Former Slovak prime minister Vladimir Meciar waves to onlookers as he is led out of his house yesterday by masked police commandos. The officers stormed the residence with explosives and axes, a move critics, including President Rudolf Schuster, are criticizing as excessive.

Agence France-Presse

Slovakia arrests ex-prime minister

!

BI SOWI SOWI! AMI OS MAS
KAZ SOWI M DALŠIO

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