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# METAPHORS OF THE NATURAL AND THE ARTIFICIAL IN CZECH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Legitimation of the new post-socialist order and of the post-socialist states is an important part of the process of transformation of the former socialist countries. The article concentrates on one particular aspect of this process in the Czech republic: the legitimation of the creation of an independent Czech state and of the particular way in which it was created. It does so by analysing the discourse about Czech statehood which emerged after the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989 and which gained prominence after the elections in 1992. It is argued that the discourse gained persuasive power because it drew effectively on various premisses of Czech culture, particularly on the conceptual dichotomy between 'the naturally constituted' and 'the artificially created'. The attention paid to the invocation of shared cultural meanings, and to the key metaphors and symbols through which they are expressed, can link specifically anthropological concerns with those of the other social sciences engaged in the study of the major social change currently taking place in post-socialist countries.

The creation of independent Czech and Slovak states is generally seen as one particular instance of the general process of transformation which is taking place in the former socialist countries and in which the ideology of communism is replaced by that of nationalism. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, accompanied by the rise of an often violent nationalism, as well as the peaceful disintegration of Czechoslovakia along national lines, reinforce the image of nationalism as 'the last word of communism', as a Czech sociologist expressed it (Alan 1992: 8).

However, the image of the rise of nationalism as an ideology which has filled up the ideological vacuum created by the demise of communism is to a great extent an illusion. Verdery (1993) has argued that the roots of ethno-national conflict in former socialist societies are not to be sought primarily in 'age-old enmities' and that it would be a mistake to imagine that ethnic and national conflicts were simply suspended and held in 'cold storage' under socialism. On the contrary, national ideology and thinking in national terms were fostered by the political economy of socialism itself, particularly by its 'economy of shortage'.

Although this particular explanation does not fit the Czechoslovak case, Verdery is right to point out the presence of national sentiments under socialism, in spite of the fact that all open political expressions of nationalism were suppressed in all socialist countries. As far as socialist Czechoslovakia is concerned, hand in hand with the officially proclaimed ideology of 'proletarian internationalism' went the recognition of the national principle in the organization of

communist society and the communist state, and the awareness of national identity and of membership of a nation has in many ways been strengthened by official policy. Post-war Czechoslovakia declared itself the common state of Czechs and Slovaks officially conceptualized as two equal nations. The federation of 1968 was a federation of two republics created on a national principle. The parliament – the Federal Assembly – consisted, not only of the Chamber of the People, but also of the Chamber of Nations, the deputies of which were not the representatives of the citizens of the state but of their respective nations. People were made aware of their nationality and reminded that it mattered in the occasional population censuses and by having their nationality written on their identity cards.

The national principle in politics and the division of the political scene along national lines remained in place after the revolution of 1989 in spite of the new political rhetoric which increasingly began to emphasize the ideals and values of civil society. The post-communist state retained the pre-war system of separate Czech and Slovak political groupings<sup>1</sup> and the constitutional law of 1991 stipulated again that the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic was a voluntary union of two equal republics of the Czech and Slovak nations based on the right of self-determination of each of them.

Verdery (1992) points out various other causes for the rise of national sentiments and xenophobia which are now observable in all former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Among these other reasons, she mentions that nationalism is in ascent because it provides a convenient means of allocating blame for the economic and political backwardness of former socialist countries in comparison with their Western counterparts. The idiom of national difference has become a way of assigning blame for this perceived backwardness to somebody other than 'us', the guilty 'them' being the ethnic others. In post-1989 Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks habitually blamed the Czechs, and the Czechs blamed the Slovaks, for all the ills of their common socialist past. According to opinion polls carried out in 1991,<sup>2</sup> most Czechs and most Slovaks felt that they were financially subsidising the other nation. In March 1991, 92 per cent. of Czechs were of the opinion that the Slovaks benefited more from the common state than they did themselves and 86 per cent. of Slovaks expressed the opposite view (*Respekt* 1991, No.16: 1).

It seems to me that the reasons for the rise of national sentiments in the countries of Eastern Europe also stem from the perception of socialism as an alien, Soviet imposition, which ruthlessly destroyed the traditions and values which people saw as 'theirs'. The opposition to this alien system was constructed and understood as 'us' (the nation) standing against 'them' (the alien state or system), and the overthrow of socialism in all countries of Eastern Europe took the form of a national liberation (for Czechoslovakia, see Holy 1993). Since then, national awareness has been nourished by the pro-European rhetoric of those advocating privatization, a market economy and democracy which has a long history in this part of Europe (for Hungary, see Gal 1991) and which is instrumental in constructing the dichotomy between culturally specific (i.e. national) and universal (i.e. European) values.

After the fall of the communist system, the Czechs habitually blamed the Slovaks for all the perceived ills of the socialist past, as well as for the difficulties accompanying the post-socialist transformation of society. The most striking expression of the idiom of national difference as the means of assigning blame is the prevailing view of both Czech intellectuals and ordinary people that the unwanted demise of Czechoslovakia is also the result of Slovak nationalism, Slovak anti-Czech sentiments and Slovak separatist tendencies. However, this view is not quite accurate, for against Slovak nationalism stands what may be called Czech nationalism: the awareness of separate Czech identity, the deep-rooted conviction about the existence of a Czech nation, and a conscious or tacit identification with it. To many foreign observers, Czech nationalism could easily have remained hidden in the shadow of the manifest Slovak nationalism; the same applies to many Czechs themselves who, paradoxically, manifest their nationalism through its vehement denial. This seemingly hidden face of Czech nationalism is due to the fact that it is a nationalism of a dominant nation which, unlike the Slovaks, has already achieved its national sovereignty in the Czechoslovak republic.<sup>3</sup> Although Czechoslovakia was a polyethnic state, the Czechs identified themselves fully with it. They considered it to be the successor to the historical Bohemian kingdom and they saw in the Czechoslovak republic the renewal of their statehood after 300 years of Habsburg rule under which their own state had gradually withered away. In 1945, when the German population of the Czech lands was transferred to Germany, the population of Bohemia and Moravia – with the exception of the Gypsies – became virtually ethnically homogeneous for the first time in history. Czechhood is not felt to be under threat and it does not need to be openly asserted. This led to the often expressed view that there does not exist ‘a sufficiently developed Czech nationalism’ and that if nationalism exists in Czech lands at all, it emerges only as a reaction to Slovak nationalism with its openly expressed anti-Czech sentiments. Nationalism is something that plagues others – Slovaks, Serbs, Croats and various nations of the former Soviet Union, but not the Czechs.

### *Czech-Slovak relations*

Soon after the founding of the Czechoslovak republic in 1918, a growing number of Slovaks began to look with dissatisfaction at the dominant role of the Czechs in the new republic, and they gradually began to perceive their own position in it as the replacement of their former subordination to Budapest for subordination to Prague. The growing Slovak desire to achieve national sovereignty led to the declaration of the independent Slovak state under Nazi tutelage in 1939, to the constitution of Czechoslovakia as a federal state in 1968, and to the confirmation of the federal structure after the demise of communism in 1989.

After the fall of the communist system, the problematic nature of Czech-Slovak relations came to the fore in the spring of 1990, when the Federal Assembly debated the country’s change of name. There was agreement on omitting the adjective ‘socialist’ from the official name of the country which had until then been called the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and as most members of the

parliament apparently subscribed to the legacy of the pre-war republic, it was generally expected – at least in the Czech lands – that the country would again be called by its pre-war name of the Czechoslovak republic. However, this was unacceptable to the Slovak deputies who insisted on calling the country the Czecho-Slovak Republic (Martin 1990: 14). This provoked strong aversion among the Czechs, as this had been the official name of the truncated republic that had come into being as the result of the Munich agreement of 1938. Eventually, a compromise in the form of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic was accepted.

The accepted official name of the country indicated that post-communist Czechoslovakia endorsed the federal structure set up in 1968. But whereas the communist government might have pursued the legalistic rhetoric and effectively ignored its own laws in actual practice (Henderson 1993: 20-1), the post-November regime was determined to build a legal state and in practice had then, at least initially, to operate the structure of government and the laws inherited from the previous system. One of them was the constitutional law which required the Chamber of Nations to approve any legislation passed by the Federal Assembly. The Czechs and Slovaks had the same number of deputies in the Chamber of Nations to prevent the possibility of an automatic majority of one nation over the other (Henderson 1993: 25). This made it virtually impossible for the Federal Assembly to approve any controversial legislation and it resulted in the political immobilism which plagued the post-communist state from its very beginning and which was eventually resolved only by the division of Czechoslovakia into two separate states. Virtually the whole period between November 1989 and the elections in June 1992 was marked by protracted negotiations between Czech and Slovak politicians about the areas which should belong to the jurisdiction of the federation and those which should be in the jurisdiction of the republics, as well as by different interpretations which the Czech and Slovak politicians read into their existing agreements. The negotiations were perpetually complicated by the occasional demands of Slovak politicians to subordinate the federal laws to the laws passed by the parliaments of the respective republics, by their demands to sign a treaty between the two republics prior to the acceptance of a common federal constitution, and by the demands to pay specific attention to Slovakia which would be more adversely affected than the Czech lands by the proposed economic transformation. Another complicated factor in the situation was the demand of some Slovak politicians that Slovakia should act as an independent subject of international law and have its own army and currency. There was also the looming threat that Slovakia would adopt its own constitution, which would not necessarily respect the existing constitution of the Czechoslovak federation, but would serve as the basis for any further negotiations about the future form of Czech-Slovak relations. In coming forward with these proposals, the Slovak politicians emphasised that they were not seeking full Slovak independence but were aiming only at achieving Slovak sovereignty as a pre-condition of signing a treaty with the Czech republic about mutual co-operation (Měchýř 1991).

The Czech political representatives who emerged from the elections of June 1992 found the Slovak demands for this future form of Czech-Slovak co-existence unacceptable and insisted on the creation of two independent states whose future mutual relations would be determined by particular treaties. This political agenda was accepted by the Slovak politicians elected in 1992, and after prolonged negotiations the Czech republic and the Slovak republic came into being as two fully independent states on 1 January 1993.

The purpose of this article is not to analyse and explain the reasons which led to the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Henderson (1993) has persuasively argued that this was the result of an inability to deal with the specific problems brought about by the post-communist transformation of society within the framework of the Czechoslovak political institutions inherited from the communist past. The politicians who agreed among themselves to divide Czechoslovakia into two independent states would probably agree with this interpretation. They certainly saw their decision as rational and as the only possible solution to the persistent political crisis in which Czechoslovakia found itself after the demise of the communist system. But however rational particular decisions may appear to the political elites who pursue their interests within a given institutional framework, they still need to legitimize them to the population at large. In the case of the creation of an independent Czech state, this need was particularly acute because, unlike the politicians, ordinary Czechs did not see the break-up of Czechoslovakia and the creation of an independent Czech state as the only possible way out of the political crisis, and many of them were of the opinion that Czechoslovakia could have been saved if the politicians had had the will to do so. In this article, I concentrate on the way in which the creation of an independent Czech state and the particular way in which it was created were legitimized in the discourse about Czech statehood that emerged soon after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, and that gained prominence after the elections in Czechoslovakia in June 1992.

It was the anthropologists' concern with the social processes of legitimation that eventually brought together their interest in the 'relationship between language, as concept-bearer, and the practices and processes in social life which might be identified with the political' (Grillo 1989: 5). This interest in the relationship between language and politics, which stems from Bailey's (1969) pioneering work on speech as a 'strategy of control', stimulated an interest in rhetoric. Against Bloch's (1975) view of rhetoric as reinforcing traditional authority, Paine (1981) expounded the 'view of rhetoric as negotiated political persuasion' (Parkin 1984: 356). Sapir and Crocker (1977) focused attention on the crucial role of metaphor in rhetoric and both Paine's (1981) and Bailey's (1981) subsequent work concentrated on the formal analysis of various rhetorical devices and techniques, including tropes and figures of speech. Apart from problems with ethnocentric assumptions to which Parkin (1984) has drawn attention, another uneasiness remains about the analysis of rhetoric or ideological discourse. It stems from emphasizing form and structure at the expense of content, and from underplaying the fact that discourse also always says something about something (Thompson 1984: 8, 100; 1990: 287 sqq.). Concentrating on the symbolic or metaphorical elements in legitimation as a social

process, I argue that the discourse about Czech statehood gained a persuasive power because it drew effectively on various premisses of Czech culture, in particular on the conceptual dichotomy between 'the naturally constituted or given' and 'the artificially created through deliberate human design'.

Czech society is stratified in terms of economic and educational status; it is differentiated along the urban-rural divide and it embraces differentiated shades of political orientation. Nevertheless, in spite of this diversity, the Czechs recognize a common cultural identity and in numerous contexts talk about themselves as a community sharing the same culture. This shared system of notions, premisses, beliefs, ideas, dispositions and understandings, which makes it possible for the Czechs to communicate meaningfully with one another and to make sense of each other's attitudes and actions, is to a great extent the creation of the 'discursive practices of intellectuals and state officials' (Foster 1991: 235) and is promulgated not only through schools, but nowadays also by television, newspapers and other mass media.

### *Nation, state and homeland*

Although the concept of the Czech nation as a community of people speaking the same language and sharing the same culture is a concept which crystallized only during the period of the 'national revival' of the nineteenth century, the Czechs conceptualize this community as having existed virtually from the dawn of historical time. In line with Herder's ideas which greatly influenced the protagonists of the nationalist movement of the last century (Stern 1992: 30-2), nation is seen as a naturally constituted community. Membership of the nation is not the result of an individual's conscious decision. It is determined by the very fact of one's birth – a natural process *par excellence*. This was expressed by many people to whom I talked and who mentioned that they were Czechs because they were born in the Czech lands, or were born of Czech parents. They also frequently mentioned that they were Czechs because they spoke Czech. The language they speak is again not the result of their conscious decision, but is something that has been determined for them by the environment in which they were brought up, and which thus appears to them as something that has naturally happened to them or that has been naturally given to them. To belong to the Czech nation is seen to be as naturally given as gender or physical characteristics – it is something that cannot be changed by a conscious decision. The cultural construction of the nation as a naturally constituted entity is also attested to by the fact that many informants mentioned that they were Czechs, because they 'felt that they were Czechs'. This is a kind of belonging that also determines membership of other categories constructed as naturally given: ultimately, one is a man or a woman because one feels that one is one or the other.

Nation is not something people can build; the state, on the other hand, is not naturally constituted, but is a deliberate human construction. 'States come into being and disappear, nations remain' (Jaroslav Opat, a historian, in *Lidové noviny* 27.10.1992). We 'build the state', as the Czechs have recently been repeatedly reminded by politicians and mass media in connexion with the disintegration

of Czechoslovakia and the ensuing 'task of building the new Czech state'. The question of 'what kind of state we are going to build' has been one of the most important political issues hotly debated in connexion with the drafting of the constitution of the Czech republic, considerations of its future economic and social policy, international orientation, and military doctrine.

The construct which mediates between the naturally constituted nation and the artificially created state is 'homeland' – *vlast*. Homeland is the space in which the nation and the state intermingle and which is delineated as that socio-cultural space in which people communicate with others by using their own language and which is familiar to them in that what they do is understood by others as meaningful. It is the space in which the conduct, expectations, attitudes, feelings and reactions of others are predictable and in which one knows the rules of appropriate behaviour. These include not only the customary rules which nobody has consciously created and which evolved spontaneously, but also the rules stipulated by the state. It is the space in which the social and geographical landscape is familiar. In brief, it is that space in which, as my informants often put it, they 'feel at home'. Territorially, they delineated this space alternatively as Bohemia, the Czech lands (i.e. Bohemia and Moravia) or Czechoslovakia. These variations reflect again the admixture of nation and state, and are the result of individuals conceptualizing differently the nation of which they considered themselves to be members (i.e. whether they thought of themselves as Czechs or Czechoslovaks).

I have already mentioned the self-denial of Czech nationalism. It is part of the construction of a positive image of the Czech nation, for in Czech culture, nationalism, whether as militant movement or as heightened national feelings, has negative connotations. Nor is close identification with the state ascribed a positive value. Czech political commentators, both on the right and on the left of the political spectrum, continually criticize the prevalence of party-political interests in Czech political culture and the failure to subordinate these interests to the common interest of the state. They comment as well on the lack of identification of ordinary citizens with the state, which they say is manifested in the latter's lack of feeling that the state is their state. In pre-war Czechoslovakia, this attitude was seen as a survival from the Austrian-Hungarian empire when the Czechs had little reason to identify with the state, whose citizens they were, but which did not serve their interests. Today, this attitude is explained as a survival from the days of the communist regime, when the Czechs had every reason to see the communist state as an alien and oppressive structure constraining rather than advancing their lives. The Czechs certainly do not seem to take any special pride in the institutions of their state, whether these be the parliament, civil service, army or police. In 1992, when the political institutions of the Czechoslovak federation had been paralysed but not yet fully replaced by the institutions of the Czech state, and when the state existed without the president as its head and, moreover, when the paralysis of the state was visibly demonstrated by the impossibility of electing a president to replace Havel, nobody seemed to mind. The situation was not viewed with worry or disquiet but, if anything, with amusement. Everything seemed to be in order, since the homeland, with which the Czechs do identify, was still there.



*The Czech state and Czechoslovakia: the natural and the artificial*

Most Czechs never wanted the creation of two independent states in place of the Czechoslovak federation, and they felt it was forced on them by either the Slovak side or their own politicians who were unable to reach a reasonable political agreement with the Slovaks.<sup>4</sup> According to an opinion poll conducted in May 1992, only 6 per cent. of the respondents in the Czech lands favoured the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent states. 34 per cent. of Czechs expressed their preference for 'one state with one government', 28 per cent. favoured the federal structure, and 28 per cent. expressed a preference for a confederation or a similar form of co-existence of Czechs and Slovaks in a common state (*Lidové noviny*, 27.5.1992).

In this situation, the main problem for the Czech politicians, helped by Czech publicists, historians, sociologists and other intellectuals, was to convert the unwanted necessity of creating a new identity in that part of Czechoslovakia which would remain after Slovak separation, into a positive programme of building an independent Czech state. However, the discourse about Czech statehood was not only a discourse of politicians and intellectuals. It took place in a politically highly charged atmosphere and virtually all Czechs participated in it. People talked about the latest twists and turns of the negotiations between Czech and Slovak politicians, commented on the latest political developments and pronouncements, and expressed their views on the overall situation in the country at all possible times and in all possible settings: during their coffee-breaks, at parties, in pubs and shops, at bus stops, on trains or at family dinner tables. Everybody read newspapers, watched television and listened to the radio. Although television and newspapers were not the only settings for the production of texts in which particular topics were discussed, I draw on them quite extensively in the following discussion. Those who create and produce television and radio programmes and write and publish newspaper articles are of course intellectuals but their production is 'pitched to a cultural common denominator' (Herzfeld 1982: 647). By being intentionally aimed at reaching the widest possible audience and readership, they resort to the 'lowest common communication factors' (Parkin 1984: 353) and in a concise form, they thus reflect the twists and turns of orally produced everyday texts on the same topics.

The tacit assumptions of Czech culture gave shape to the discourse, both in formulating the problems which had to be addressed and in providing solutions to them. The first problem was the continuing identification of most Czechs with the Czechoslovak homeland, if not directly with the Czechoslovak state. In an interview for a Polish newspaper, Václav Havel summed up this situation in his answer to the question 'What does it mean – Czech state? What is Czech national interest? It seems that Czech politicians avoid this question and argue that there will be enough time to think about it in the future':

This relates to the fact that the Czech state emerges as a result of a certain enforcement. During the last 75 years, the Czechs identified with Czechoslovak statehood, they felt themselves to be Czechoslovak patriots, the idea of Czech statehood had no special background during the last decades because it merged with the idea of Czechoslovak statehood and hence today, when the Czech state approaches the task of establishing itself, we observe a certain embarrassment and hesitation (*Lidové noviny*, 11.9.1992)<sup>5</sup>

Communist propaganda had concentrated on building a negative image of the pre-war Czechoslovak republic as a capitalist state based on the exploitation of the working masses. What was emphasized after November 1989 was the democratic character of the pre-war Czechoslovak republic. Czech newspapers and magazines were full of articles on various aspects of the history, political system and economy of the first Czechoslovak state; the post-1989 Czechoslovakia was construed as the heir to the pre-war republic, symbolically expressed in the fact that 28 October, the day of the foundation of the Czechoslovak republic in 1918, became again celebrated as the main state holiday. A significant part of the building of the new Czech state was the emergence of a critical attitude to the pre-war republic. The main tenor of this criticism was pointing out its artificial character. I have already mentioned that the Czechs saw the founding of the Czechoslovak republic as the renewal of their historical statehood, i.e. as the continuation of the Bohemian kingdom which had existed for a millennium. However, there was a crucial difference between these two states: whilst the Bohemian kingdom could not be seen as having been founded on the basis of temporary pragmatic considerations, the Czechoslovak republic came into being as the result of precisely such considerations.

Unlike the newly created Slovak state, the Czech state is not the result of the nation's aspirations to express its identity *vis-à-vis* other nations by establishing its own state. The Czechs already had such a state in the Czechoslovak republic. An independent Czech state might thus again be seen as a deliberate creation founded on momentary pragmatic considerations. To defuse this possible construction, political rhetoric moved the naturally constituted and the consciously created beyond the simple nature/culture dichotomy. The way in which it construed the Czech state as natural in opposition to the artificially created Czechoslovak republic indicates that what can be perceived as naturally constituted need not include only cultural constructs that are seen as innate in nature but also constructs that are seen as the result of the evolution of human society and of its specific historical development. The very notion of the evolution of human society and of its specific institutions (such as, for example, the family) can be seen as 'natural', in the sense that these institutions cannot be attributed to particular human agents as their conscious or deliberate creation. Similarly, historical development is 'natural'. Although specific historical events are the result of purposeful human action, those who at any given moment 'created' history did not act alone. Historical events are the result of the interaction of a multiplicity of actors whose goals and purposes were mutually opposed and who were at the time unaware that they were making history, in the sense that they were often unaware, and certainly not in full control, of the consequences of their actions. The course of history is 'natural' in that it is not the result of human will, and although particular individuals contributed to it more than others, none could be seen as having it under their full control and shaping it according to their own design. Rather than as a dichotomy between culture and nature, the dichotomy between the consciously created and the naturally constituted can be formulated as a dichotomy between human will and nature, between processes designed and controlled by

human agents and those outside such control and design. The dichotomy is an anthropocentric dichotomy in that the naturally given or constituted does not define what can be created, designed or controlled by human will but what is, or can be, so created and controlled determines what will be classified as 'natural'.

In accordance with this meaning imposed on the naturally constituted, political rhetoric emphasized not so much the building of a new state as its emergence as the renewal of the historical Czech state that had evolved naturally, existed for a millennium and had the same boundaries as the newly emerging state:

Our task is not to search for statehood; that has simply EXISTED FOR SEVERAL CENTURIES. Our task is nothing else than to give to this statehood the appropriate form of a democratic state which guarantees civic liberties (Pavel Šafr in *Český deník*, 29.9.1992).<sup>6</sup>

It is necessary to understand the independent Czech state, which is RENEWING itself ... as a self evident CONTINUATION of a millennium-long historical development ... It is not an easy task because our thinking is still influenced not only by the idea of Czechoslovakism, but also by the detrimental, continuous suppression of national awareness in the name of a proletarian internationalism (Milan Šimek in *Český deník*, 23.9.1992).

The fact that Slovakia is separating itself from Bohemia, does not yet mean that the CONTINUITY of Czech statehood is ending and that it is necessary again to define our state in some dramatic way ... It is not at all necessary to define again the idea of Czech statehood ... The CONTINUITY of Czech statehood was preserved in Czechoslovakia and it will go on even after the first of January 1993 (Martin Schmarz in *Český deník*, 27.10.1992).

Today, it is not the matter of the division of the state and even less so of the emergence of some new Czech state, which is an explanation which our government coalition accepted from the contemporary Slovak political representation. NO NEW CZECH STATE IS EMERGING after the first of January 1993. The Czech state HAD BEEN, is and will be here; only the organization of the state administration is changing as, of course, happened many times in the past. And also, of course, a part of the territory will be separated which we never considered to be our own in the true sense of the word; we only loved it as our own (Petr Vopěnka, the Minister of Education in the 1990-92 government at the conference on the 'Idea of Czech Statehood' held in Prague in October 1992. *Lidové noviny*, 20.11.1992).

A commentator in the daily *Český deník* (7.12.1992) summarized the political rhetoric by pointing out that

during the search for the roots and meaning of Czech statehood a long known fact has been 'discovered' that Czech statehood has LASTED WITHOUT INTERRUPTION since the Middle Ages and it DID NOT CEASE TO EXIST even in the times of the 'Habsburg oppression' (Josef Mlejnek, jr).

A tangible symbolic expression of the construction of the Czech state as natural was the 'celebration of the renewal of the Czech state' organized in October 1992 by the ruling Czech Civil Democratic Party at Vyšehrad in Prague, the first seat of Czech rulers. The demonstration, attended by some 10,000 citizens of Prague, was addressed by the Czech Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Czech National Council and Václav Havel. After the singing of the St Wenceslas's hymn<sup>7</sup> and the Czech part of the Czechoslovak anthem, the demonstration ended by the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Council laying a wreath at the grave of the first Czech king, Vratislav II who died 900 years ago.

*The metaphor of the centre*

The political discourse which preceded the actual foundation of the Czech state aimed at persuading the Czechs of the necessity of having their own state. In doing so, it played on the higher cultural value ascribed to the naturally constituted over the artificially created by emphasizing the fact that the Czech state was not being artificially created for reasons of pragmatic expediency but that it was simply assuming a new shape in its uninterrupted millennium-long natural continuity.

It also seized actively on another Czech cultural notion according to which a positive value is ascribed neither to the naturally constituted, nor to the deliberately created, but to the harmony and balance between the two poles of the dichotomy. We have already seen an example of such evaluation in the ascription of high value neither to the nation (the naturally constituted), nor the state (the artificially created), but to the homeland – a construct which mediates between these two terms. The same notion informed the newly emerged criticism of the pre-war Czechoslovak republic which pointed out its artificial character. In having joined Slovakia with the historical lands of the Czech crown, Czechoslovakia became a deliberate construction manifesting the excess of the consciously created over the naturally constituted, which was also ultimately the reason for its eventual and inevitable demise. The emphasis on the natural character of the Czech state is aimed at precluding the interpretation that its founding is again a similar victory of the consciously created over the naturally constituted. If the state is, on the one hand, something people create and, on the other hand, something that is in itself natural, a desirable balance between the naturally constituted and the deliberately created is achieved.

All these arguments are built on the cultural notion which does not accentuate the positive or negative evaluation of either the naturally constituted or the consciously created but the negative evaluation of the excess of one pole of the dichotomy over the other. This notion is expressed in a number of common sayings: *‘Všeho moc škodí’* (‘Too much of everything is harmful’), *‘Čeho je moc, toho je příliš’* (‘Too much of anything is excessive’), *‘Všeho s mírou’* (‘Everything in good measure’). The movement from one extreme to another is bad: it lacks direction, it is an oscillation between extremes without a movement forward (*‘ode zdi ke zdi’* [‘from a wall to a wall’]). The root metaphor of Czech culture is the ‘centre’.

Czechoslovakia is seen as part of neither Western nor Eastern Europe but as part of Central Europe. Although the Czech pro-government political commentators argue that the Czech republic is unique among post-communist states by having elected a right-wing coalition government in 1992, thus signalling to the world that ‘we belong to the West’ (Jan Patočka in *Český deník* 27.10.1992), many Czechs do not share this view. They talk about the journey to Austria, Germany, France or Britain as a journey to the West. They talk about ‘Western cars’, ‘Western goods’, ‘Western films’, ‘Western technology’, ‘Western influences in Czech culture’, or ‘penetration of Western capital into Czech industry’. They talk in similar terms about the ‘East’ – Russia, Rumania and other countries of the former socialist bloc. They see themselves as belonging neither

to the East nor to the West; they stand in between. Their country lies on the crossroads between East and West and it often saw the solution to its political predicament by thinking of itself as a 'bridge' between the two. The image of a bridge expresses again metaphorically the positive value ascribed to centrality: a structure that stands in the middle between two banks and at the same time binds them together. Czech national identity has been built on this metaphor since the beginning of the formation of Czech national awareness during the national revival of the last century. In the introduction to his *History of the Czech nation in Bohemia and Moravia*, published between 1836 and 1851, the Czech historian Palacký mentions that the historical task of the Czech nation was to 'serve as a bridge between Germanhood and Slavhood, between East and West in Europe'. This idea of the bridge was actively invoked after the second world war by Czech intellectuals and politicians in their effort to prevent the total incorporation of Czechoslovakia into the East and its complete removal from any Western influences. The metaphor of the bridge lends to Czech identity the meaning of a mediator between two distinct European cultures and value systems and of a creator of their eventual synthesis (Macura 1992).

Another core symbol of a desirable mediation between the naturally given and the consciously designed is 'reason'. Nationalism has negative connotations because it is a manifestation of emotions (the naturally given) insufficiently controlled by reason. The Czech-Slovak conflict is occasionally seen as a conflict of reason and emotions (Petr Nováček in *Mladá fronta dnes*, 27.10.1992). Nationalism is an emphasis on nation as the highest cultural value. As a nation is a naturally constituted entity, nationalism is a manifestation of an undesirable excess: it disturbs the culturally valued balance between the naturally constituted and the consciously created in human existence.

Reason curbs not only emotions but also ideological dogmatism as an extreme expression of the free reign of unmitigated human intention. One commentator characterized the controversial dam on the Danube at Gabčíkovo as 'a perfect monument of the grand victory of idea over reason' (Jaroslav Veis in *Literární noviny* 30.10.1992). When the Czechs talk about reason, they talk either about common sense (*prostý rozum*), or more specifically about 'healthy farmer's reason' (*zdravý selský rozum*). By invoking explicitly the image of a farmer, this particular type of reason aptly expresses the creation of value through cultivation – the transformation of the naturally constituted through conscious human effort. Although it is not its only connotation,<sup>8</sup> the expression 'healthy farmer's reason' hence suggests the metaphor of cultivation as another metaphor for the culturally valued harmonious balance between the naturally constituted and the consciously created.

The idea of balance embodied in the metaphors of centre, bridge and cultivation (the last itself a metaphor for the right kind of reason that mediates between the naturally constituted and the wilfully created) appears as the guiding idea of Czech culture. It is recognized that the ideal state of affairs obtains when a desirable balance has been achieved. In various contexts, different oppositions, like those between freedom and responsibility or private and public interest (Jaroslav Veis in *Literární noviny* 30.10.1992) can be invoked. However, the desirable state of affairs is always a balance between them:

Freedom has its inevitable counterpart in personal responsibility without which it is impossible to achieve in society that much needed BALANCE and HARMONY (Václav Klaus in *Český deník*, 15.9.1992).

The excess of deliberate constructions is as undesirable as excess of emotions:

In the history of states, it does not happen that often that people wanted to die for the republic as they did in 1938. We should think about that as well. To remember and to realise that should be our highest goal. Such a goal is not the matter of a RATIONAL ENGINEERING PLAN (M. Uhde, Chairman of the Czech National Council in an interview about the new Czech state. *Český deník* 30.10.1992)

... the Communist Party had a slightly different opinion about building the prosperity of the state in the framework of the 'world socialist system'. However, this opinion did not agree with what is logical and NATURAL (*Metropolitní telegraf* 30.10.1992).

By disturbing the desirable balance between the naturally constituted and the consciously created, the excess of wilful engineering is against nature (*proti přírodě*) or against reason (*proti rozumu*) and can eventually become something that is existentially alien (*bytostně cizí*). Ultimately, the rejection of socialism as a system alien to Czech culture derives alternatively from its excess of deliberate social engineering and planning or from its lack of cultivation, which leads to the excess of the animal-like side of human nature.

The excess of deliberate social engineering and planning is emphasized by contemporary Czech critics of socialism as its most characteristic feature, not only in the context of a socialist-planned economy (Holy 1992), but in a number of various other specific contexts:

[The government of one party] overturned the NATURAL course of affairs. Specifically, in Prague it started to build hideous concrete boxes and it allowed that which at one time breathed with life to die ... Prague thus turned into some kind of open-air museum and life moved into lifeless boxes ... (Another) Czech interest thus must be to defend at all costs the NATURAL course of affairs and not to consent to a government by one party (Vladimír Hefner in *Český deník* 26.9.1992).

The numerous criticisms of socialism which point out the moral devastation which it brought about, stem from the recognition of its opposite excess manifested in its lack of cultivation of human nature:

Notice just the conduct of many old-new bureaucrats in many old-new offices. Notice just the attitude to customers of some fast produced entrepreneurs. Even these are examples of the omnipresent heritage of the JUNGLE into which not only words, but also values and relations became degraded ... Anybody who wants to be successful and to influence the course of events, has to perceive and to heed the NATURAL trends, norms and constraints ... Let us avoid occupying EXTREME positions. ON THE ONE HAND, it is a negative identification in relation to a real or illusory enemy, ON THE OTHER HAND worshipping of new idols (Petr Havlík in *Český deník* 16.10.1992).

A perpetual striving for balance between the naturally constituted and the consciously created does not mean that the excess of either needs to be negatively valued under all circumstances. In the same way in which the basic premisses of Czech culture make possible and shape the ongoing discourses, they also give meaning to the observable changes of Czech culture and of its long-term development. Such development is a process of counter-balancing of periods of an unrestrained reign of the deliberately created (like the socialist system) by periods of the free reign of the naturally constituted (like the period of aroused emotions, euphoria and the distinct re-emergence of national

sentiment following the velvet revolution of 1989). Similarly, the indisputable incorporation of Czechoslovakia into the Eastern bloc has now been replaced by emphasizing its Western orientation and its belonging to the West (cf. Jan Patočka in *Český deník*, 27.10.1992).

The discourse about the Czech state contains disagreements about specific issues and about solutions to particular problems under discussion. The disagreements stem from the fact that one text may be focused on the opposition between the various positively or negatively valued terms, such as the opposition between the positively valued natural and the negatively valued artificial, or the opposition between the West and the East, whereas another text may focus on the opposition between any of these two negatively valued extremes and their positively valued reconciliation. For example, the disagreement about whether the Czech lands are, or should be, part of the West stems from the invocation of these two different oppositions. However, the disagreements reflect the tacitly accepted agreement on the basic premisses of Czech culture. It is this agreement that enables the production of particular texts within the discourse and defines the issues which are the subject of either agreement or disagreement among the authors of the texts.

### *The national principle of the Czech state*

The main disagreement within the discourse about the Czech state is the disagreement about the principles on which the Czech state should be built. One of such principles is the civil principle which strives towards the balance between the naturally constituted and the deliberately created in curbing the undue emphasis on the naturally constituted nation and the excess of emotions characteristic of nationalism:

[The new Czech state] can in no case be the state of the Czech nation as some people wrongly imagine. The state has to be built on a strictly civil principle so as not to repeat the mistakes Czechoslovakia committed in relation to minorities after 1918 (Jan Rychlík, a historian, *Lidové noviny* 29.10.1992).

Although much of the political rhetoric similarly emphasized that the new state had to be built on the civil principle and the principle of market economy, equally strong were the views which stressed that it could not be built on these principles alone. In his interview for a Polish newspaper, Václav Havel expressed this in the following way:

I am of the opinion that market economy is an essential condition, an unavoidable component and a necessary part of the building of this state. But at the same time, I also think that on its own it would not be enough. Market economy is the programme of many countries from Bohemia to Hong Kong and it is hardly possible to found a state on this idea alone, for a question could then emerge why could we not become the seventeenth land of the Federal Republic of Germany, why have an independent state because of something which is a universal programme. I think that it is necessary to seek other dimensions of Czech political traditions and the Czech statehood (*Lidové noviny*, 11.9.1992).

One of these 'other dimensions' has been the growing emphasis on the national principle of the new Czech state. This principle is consistent with the positive value ascribed to the nation as a naturally constituted entity and the negative value ascribed to the state as a deliberate creation. The emphasis on the pursuit of specifically Czech interests in the process of the building of the

new state has been expressed in relation to issues associated with the dismantling of the Czechoslovak federation, which include the division of federal property, the problem of the structure of local government, and international relations.

The discourse about the Czech state emphasized that the pre-war Czechoslovak republic – to which the post-1989 Czechoslovak federation declared itself to be an heir – was an unnatural creation because it was not a nation state, a form which balances and harmoniously combines the naturally constituted (the nation) with the deliberately created (the state).

The positive value ascribed to the naturally constituted Czech nation was invoked as a necessary principle which would enable the identification of the citizens with the state which was being consciously constructed. In his speech in October 1992, the liberal and market-oriented Czech Prime Minister emphasized the necessity of solidarity among those who would together build the new Czech state and clearly defined that solidarity as ‘the solidarity between us Czechs’ (*Metropolitní telegraf*, 26.10.1992). When stressing the necessity of the feeling of togetherness which would facilitate the finding of new possibilities in the existing political disagreements and a ‘common road’, he stated:

[To achieve the desirable togetherness] one has to know that there exists a community which subsumes every democratic differentiation and lends it a certain meaning. That community is the CZECH NATION (*Český deník*, 26.10.1992).

An editorial comment in the right-wing *Český deník* stated the position bluntly:

There is no point in philosophising about the creation of the Czech state. Its meaning is given by the existence of the CZECH NATION (6.10.1992).

The invocation of national principle is not only the prerogative of right-wing politicians. The left wing opposition also invokes national interests, albeit for reasons of an effective defence against the power of the state. In explaining the programme of his party, the Chairman of the reformed Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia stated:

I consider the consistent defence of NATIONAL INTERESTS and an offer of social self defence against profiteering, speculation and asocial behaviour of state bureaucracy to be the main pillars (of such a programme) (*Rudé právo*, 11.11.1992).

The different reasons for emphasizing national solidarity and the pursuit of national interests as desirable stem, nevertheless, from the shared cultural premisses in which the nation is construed as naturally constituted and the state as consciously created, each of them thus standing on different poles of the dichotomy which needs to be brought into balance and harmony.

### *Referendum on the Czech state: reason and emotions*

The Czech cultural premisses were also invoked by the ruling coalition in the Czech lands to justify the specific political means by which it pursued the disintegration of the federation and the creation of the new Czech state.

As I have already mentioned, according to opinion surveys, most people in the Czech lands favoured the preservation of the Czechoslovak republic, or if they accepted the inevitability of its split into two independent states, they regretted it. The main argument of the opposition against the ruling coalition’s



policy was that the Civic Democratic Party which emerged victorious from the 1992 elections did not have the creation of an independent Czech state in its election programme and hence the government coalition which it formed had no mandate for dismantling Czechoslovakia. Whether the Czechoslovak federation should be preserved or split into two independent states should be decided in a popular referendum. According to the opinion poll conducted in September 1992, this view was shared by more than 80 per cent. of the population (*Lidové noviny*, 30.9.1992).

The government coalition opposed the referendum. It argued that a referendum as an element of direct democracy negated the principle of representative democracy and that it was unnecessary in a well-functioning democratic system in which the political will of the people was expressed by their duly elected parliamentary representatives. According to the government's view, the opposition insisted on the referendum, motivated not by its concern to preserve the federal state, but by its efforts to change the result of the elections. Since the opinion polls conducted in September 1992 showed that only 36 per cent. in the Czech republic and 37 per cent. in the Slovak republic would vote for the end of the federation in a referendum (44 per cent. in the Czech republic and 43 per cent. in Slovakia said that they would vote against the division of the federation), the opposition hoped that the referendum would show people's distrust in the government coalition for its inability to preserve the Czechoslovak federation. It thus tried to use the referendum as a means of defeating the government.

The government coalition also used another argument against the referendum, which again stemmed directly from the premisses of Czech culture in which emotions stand in opposition to reason. Emotions can be provoked or possibly controlled, but they cannot be created or designed by human will, and in terms of the dichotomy between the naturally given and the deliberately created, they stand at the natural end of the pole.

The Czech language makes a semantic distinction between *city*, which I gloss as 'feelings' (such as love, hate, joy, sorrow, grief, etc.), and *emoce*, which I gloss as 'emotions'. Certain feelings can, of course, be inappropriate for certain situations but when used in ordinary speech, the word *city* is value free, whereas the word *emoce* always has negative connotations. When used in ordinary speech, *emoce* does not connote any particular feeling but rather 'an unsuitable or inappropriate expression of feelings; unsuitable in the sense of their expression through inappropriate means', as one of my informants formulated it. 'Emotion is an inappropriate expression of feeling or opinion, that is, an expression which is not sufficiently guided by reason', as another informant expressed it.

Politicians, political commentators, as well as ordinary people commenting on political events and decisions, condemn as irresponsible the appeal to emotions by extremist politicians, whether ultra left or ultra right, and they negatively evaluate 'emotional solutions to problems' and 'emotional answers to complex questions'. In line with this evaluation, the government coalition argued that the voters who lacked the full knowledge of the complexities of the problem of either preserving or dividing the federation would base their

decision on their feelings, sentiments and emotions and it accused the opposition, which was aware that most Czechs identified emotionally with Czechoslovakia, of raising these emotions. The referendum would be nothing other than an attempt at an emotional solution of a complex problem which should be resolved in non-emotional ways:

The overwhelming majority of citizens is simply not sufficiently informed. The MPs are no wiser than ordinary citizens; they only have a larger amount of information at their disposal. On the basis of this information, they see a little bit further than the citizens. They are more acutely aware of the inevitable consequences of the prolonged agony of the state. They are better informed about the economic and political consequences. They have facts and figures at their disposal. They can evaluate better whether we shall pay more for the division of the state or for stubbornly keeping it alive in the atmosphere of permanent instability

... An EMOTIONAL opinion of the uninformed majority should not win over the opinion of the informed minority in the decision about the future of the state (Pavel Černocký in *Metropolitní telegraf*, 24.10.1992).

Should there be a referendum about maintaining or abolishing the federation, many people in Bohemia would vote for the federation because their SENTIMENTAL attachment to the idea of Czechoslovakia prevents them from taking into consideration what are or are not the wishes of the Slovaks. A similar problem in orientation in all the twists of the constitutional question exists also in Slovakia and many people demand a common state and the independence of Slovakia at the same time (Václav Klaus, the Czech Prime Minister, in *Český deník*, 18.9.1992).

These two quotations suggest that a decision taken on the basis of emotions would be an expression of nature uncontrolled by reason. The sense in which nature has been invoked in these particular texts is just one of many senses in which it has been employed in the discourse about the Czech state. Different texts in the discourse use the metaphor of nature in different contexts, drawing variously on the opposition between the naturally constituted nation and the artificially created state, the opposition between the natural character of the Czech state and the artificial character of the Czechoslovak republic, or the opposition between naturally given emotions and deliberate social engineering. Nature was invoked in yet a different sense in the discussion surrounding the referendum. One commentator argued that to ask people in a referendum whether they wished the Czechoslovak federation to be preserved was like asking them whether they wished never to have toothache again. This rhetorical device construes the disintegration of Czechoslovakia itself as a natural process, which it would of course be folly to oppose. And it would be an equal folly to oppose the creation of a Czech state once the Czech state has been construed as a naturally given entity rather than as something created by human design.

### *Conclusion*

A specific kind of understanding of politics is obviously in the interest of politicians, and they shape the discourse to achieve that kind of understanding. That the Czech government largely succeeded in communicating its policies concerning the creation of an independent Czech state without holding a referendum is attested to by the results of opinion polls. Whereas in September 1992, more than 80 per cent. of the respondents favoured a referendum, in November only 41 per cent. of the population of the Czech lands (and 49 per

cent. of the population of Slovakia) considered a referendum to be the best way of terminating the common state. While in September 1992, only 7 per cent. of the population in the Czech lands considered a referendum as unacceptable, their number increased to 21 per cent. in November (*Český deník*, 27.11.1992). In the end, when the independent Czech republic was officially declared on the 1 January 1993, although the event was greeted without any particular joy, it did not trigger any opposition.

This considerable shift in public opinion clearly suggests that the Czechs found the discourse about the disintegration of the federation and the creation of an independent Czech state persuasive. By construing the Czech state not as an artificial creation but as a natural entity, the discourse made sense of, and therefore made manageable, ideas and actions which most Czechs found disturbing and initially wholly undesirable.

In this article, I have tried to reconcile what Crocker calls 'the "performative" and the "structuralist" approaches to rhetoric' (1977: 65). The first one concentrates on ways in which rhetoric or discourse 'persuades actors of the character of situations', the other one concentrates, among other things, on the 'logical structures ... which might underlie the surface flux of contextual motivation' (Crocker 1977: 65) and which I would call 'culture'. When doing so, I pursued an analytical perspective which Crocker dismisses as 'misleading and ultimately false' (1977: 66). It is a perspective which treats 'the recurrent figurative images used by a society as deriving from some transcendental sphere of values which prefigure but never fully reflect or express the peculiarly social conditions of action', and it does so by focusing 'on some central trope, or series of "key metaphors"' (Crocker 1977: 66). Unlike Crocker, I believe that the concept of 'key metaphors' can be dismissed only at the expense of eliminating any possibility of the second approach and of exclusively privileging the first one. Retaining the notion of shared meanings as expressed in key cultural metaphors seems to me particularly important in studying the process of post-socialist transformation. It prevents us from falling into the trap of 'sociological universalism' (Kapferer 1988: 3) which treats Eastern Europe as a politically, economically, and to some extent, even culturally undifferentiated whole and as undergoing the same kind of transformation from a totalitarian political system to democratic pluralism and from a centrally planned to market economy. Although, undoubtedly, this process has many common features (Verdery 1991) which it is useful to bear in mind, it also shows remarkable differences from one country to another. The Czech example, discussed in this article, is a specific case in that it combines the problem of legitimating a post-socialist state with that of legitimating a new one to its subjects. However, legitimation of a new post-socialist order and of the gradually emerging post-socialist states is a process which all former socialist countries have to face in one way or another. The attention paid in this process to the invocation of shared cultural meanings, and to the key metaphors and symbols through which they are expressed, can link specifically anthropological concerns with those of political science, economics and sociology as the disciplines which have so far dominated the study of the major social change currently taking place in post-socialist countries.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The most important political organization to emerge from the 'velvet revolution' was the Civic Forum. It operated in the Czech lands and its Slovak counterpart was the movement called 'The Public Against Violence'. The newly established political parties, as well as the political parties which subsequently emerged from the Civic Forum and The Public Against Violence, were either Czech or Slovak political parties. The Civic Democratic Party was the only party which attempted, without much success, to present itself to the voters as a truly 'federal' one.

<sup>2</sup> The opinion polls, to which I refer at different points in the text, were conducted by various Czech agencies specializing in public opinion research, of which the most important ones are IVVM or *Institut pro výzkum veřejného mínění* (Institute for public opinion research), STEM or *Středisko empirických výzkumů* (Centre for empirical research) and AISA or *Skupina pro nezávislou sociální analýzu* (Agency for independent social analysis). The results of their findings are widely reported in the Czech daily and weekly press.

<sup>3</sup> National identity, like any other identity, is always constructed in opposition to those who are perceived as the Other. During their 'national revival' of the nineteenth century, the Czechs constructed their identity in conscious opposition to the Germans, with whom they shared the same geographical, political and economic space within the Austro-Hungarian empire. The Czechs' striving for their national sovereignty and for the renewal of their own state culminated in 1918 with the creation of Czechoslovakia as one of the successors of the defeated Austro-Hungarian empire. Although established on the principle of every nation's right to self-determination, Czechoslovakia was, in fact, a multi-national state. Most importantly, it had a sizeable German minority against which the Czech element could barely assert itself. Hence the new state was conceived as a state of the Czechs, who until then had been part of Austria, and the Slovaks, who until then had been an ethnic minority in Hungary. The inclusion of Czechs and Slovaks in a common state was seen to be to the advantage of both. To the Slovaks it meant the preservation of their national identity. This had been under constant and ever-increasing threat when they were administered from Budapest, and they felt it would be equally threatened if they remained an ethnic minority in Hungary. To the Czechs it meant that, together with the Slovaks, they had an indisputable majority as a political Czechoslovak nation in the polyethnic state.

<sup>4</sup> According to an opinion poll conducted in September 1992, the first opinion was expressed mainly by those who agreed with the division of the common state, the second one mainly by those who opposed it (*Mladá fronta dnes*, 30.9.1992). The perception in Slovakia was different. The Slovaks wanted a different kind of co-existence with the Czechs in a common state which would truly reflect the equality of both republics, either in the form of a co-federation, or some other kind of union. In Slovakia, the disintegration of Czechoslovakia was mainly perceived as the result of the intransigence of the Czech politicians. By arguing that the goal of the Slovak politicians was the creation of 'independent Slovakia with the Czech insurance company', they presented the Slovaks with an ultimatum: either a 'workable' federation (which the Slovaks saw as the maintenance of the old unitary state in which they felt discriminated against and which was widely perceived as having never served Slovak interests) or a full separation. As any version of a unitary state was no longer acceptable to Slovak people, the separation, forced upon the Slovaks by the intransigent Czechs, became the only solution. According to the September 1992 opinion poll, 41 per cent. of the Slovaks agreed (in October it was only 37 per cent.) and 46 per cent. did not agree with the division of Czechoslovakia. Those who agreed with the division saw the main reason for it mainly in the *pragocentrism* (the rule of Slovakia from Prague) and in the discrimination against Slovakia within the federal structure. Those who did not agree, like their Czech counterparts, saw the main

reason for the division in the inability of the Czech and Slovak politicians to reach mutually acceptable agreements about the form of the common state.

<sup>5</sup> The translations of all quotations are mine.

<sup>6</sup> I emphasize by capital letters the key words or expressions in the quotations.

<sup>7</sup> St Wenceslas, a Bohemian knight murdered in 929 by his brother, is seen in popular history as the founder of the Czech state. He is the patron saint of Bohemia.

<sup>8</sup> The expression primarily connotes a down-to-earth, no-nonsense practicality.

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## **Les métaphores du naturel et de l'artificiel dans le discours politique tchèque**

### *Résumé*

Une part importante du processus de transformation que connaissent les anciens pays socialistes est liée à la légitimation du nouvel ordre post-socialiste et des états qui le composent. L'article traite plus particulièrement d'un aspect de ce processus tel qu'il se développe à l'heure actuelle dans la République Tchèque, à savoir, la légitimation de la création d'un état tchèque indépendant, et de la voie par laquelle il a été créé. La méthode d'analyse retenue est l'analyse de discours, particulièrement celle du discours sur l'état tchèque qui a surgi peu de temps après la chute du régime communiste en 1989, et qui a gagné de l'importance après les élections de 1992. Si l'idée d'un état tchèque a acquis une telle force de persuasion, c'est qu'elle découle de certaines prémisses bien enracinées dans la culture tchèque, comme, par exemple, la dichotomie conceptuelle entre ce qui est 'naturellement constitué' et ce qui est 'créé artificiellement'. Cette attention toute particulière pour l'évocation de signifiants culturels partagés, pour les métaphores centrales du discours et les symboles qui les expriment, est le propre de l'anthropologie, dont la démarche et les intérêts complètent ceux des autres sciences sociales, elles aussi engagées dans l'étude des grands changements sociaux dans les anciens pays socialistes.

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