

From Velvet Revolution to Velvet Divorce

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Communist regime in Czechoslovakia

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



Second half of the 1980s

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



November 1989



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

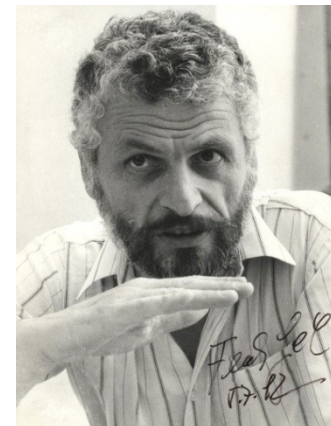
Public Against Violence

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



Public Against Violence

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Reconstruction of government(s)

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

Change of tactics in 1990

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

Crisis of VPN in 1990

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



5 VEREJNOSŤ PROTI NÁSILIU



ĽALFA



BILAN



DUBČEK



MÍŘINSKÝ



KNÁŽKO



ČÍČ



KOSTA



NINDEŠTÁ

KANDIDÁTI
SPOLUPRÁCE
A DÔVERY



PONICKÁ



ZASZLÓS



KOVÁČ



MEČIAR



ONDROŠ



STRAČAR



KOVÁČ



SNOPKO

Slovak party system after 1989

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

Fate of KSC and KSS

- **What happened to them?**



a) changed the name and transformed to social democracy

b) changed the name and remained the same

c) kept the same name and ideology

d) lived long and prospered



Rivals of 1989



- **Communists (KSS):**
 - Cooperation with KSC until elections 1990
 - Transformation to social democracy → 1991 – **Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)**
 - Leader – Peter Weiss
- **VPN:**
 - Originally right-winged and liberal
 - Dissent movement

Historical parties

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

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



New parties

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

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



- **Hungarian parties:**

- Smaller parties
- Support by ethnic Hungarians
- Mutual cooperation



Elections 1990

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

Government after elections

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

Party system in 1990 - 1992

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

Birth of a new star



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

Let's move on to Czechoslovakia



Czechoslovakia after 1989

- November 1989 opened discussions about the character of the state
- Different ideas about:
 - The nature of the position of federation and both republics
 - The speed and shape of the economic reform
- 31.12.1992 – end of the game

Two isolated party systems

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

The hyphen war (spring 1990)

- Can you find a hyphen here?
- *The definitions of hyphen vary. Typically it is a punctuation mark used to join words. In Central Europe it is also a reason to start a war between Czechs and Slovaks. It looks like this -*

The hyphen war (spring 1990)

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

Slovak parties and Czechoslovakia

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



Discussions about the CSFR

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

Last federal election (1992)

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

End of the federation



- **Declaration of Independence of the Slovak Nation:**
 - July 1992 (after the elections)
 - Appointed by the Slovak parliament
 - Proclamation of sovereignty of Slovakia
- **Constitution of the Slovak Republic:**
 - September 1992
- Both KDH and the Hungarian parties voted against or did not vote at all

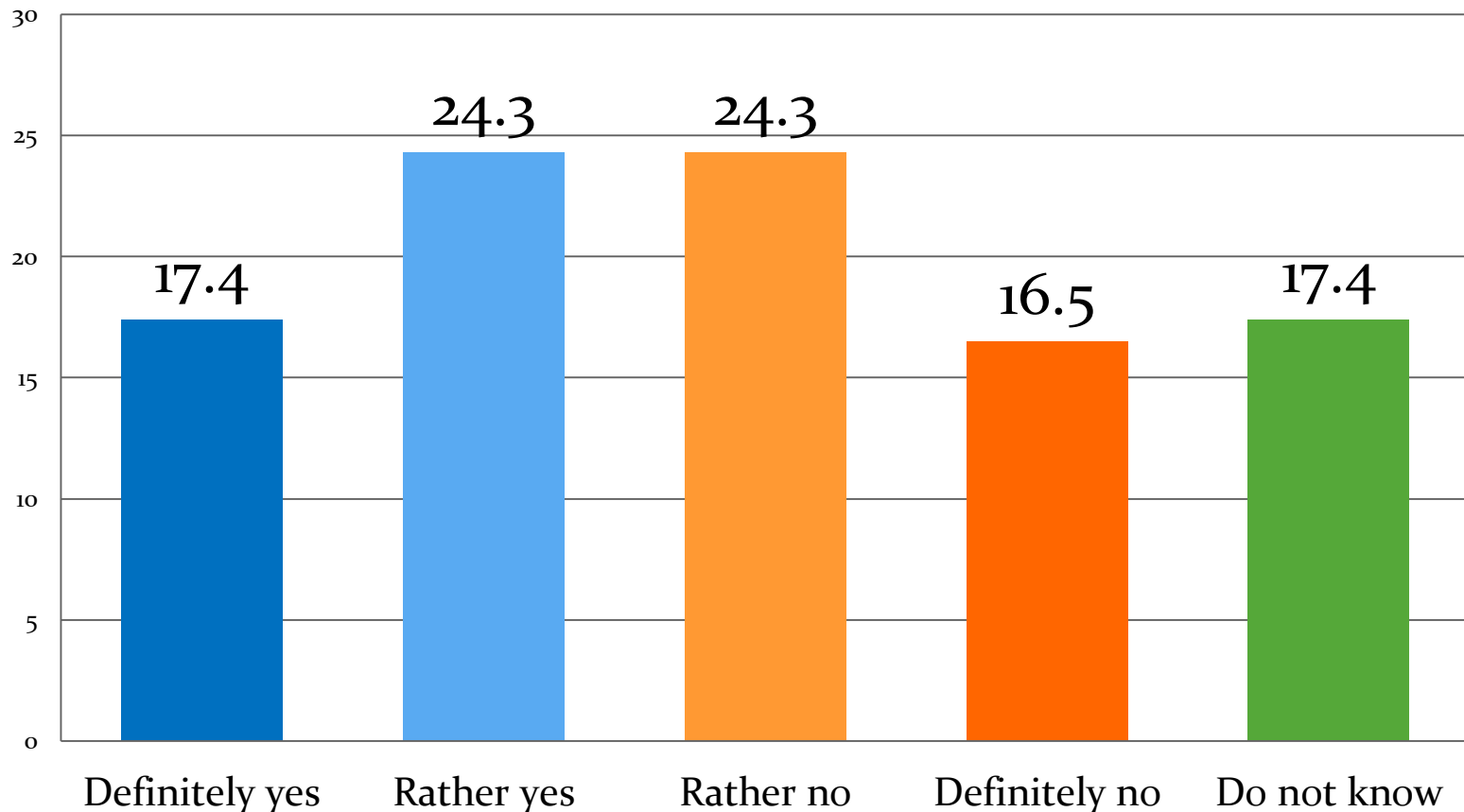
End of the federation

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

The People's choice?

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

- Survey in Slovakia in 2007 about the restoration of a common state with the Czechs:



What has changed?

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

And now...



Legacy of 1989 - 1992

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