

## **Minorities and Population Transfers**

The Czechoslovak National Front coalition government, formed at Košice in April 1945, issued decrees providing for the expulsion of all Sudeten Germans with the exception of those who had demonstrated loyalty to the republic. German property would be confiscated without compensation. All officials of the SdP, or the Sudeten Nazis, and all members of the Nazi Security Police would be prosecuted.

In May 1945, Czechoslovak troops took possession of the Sudetenland. A Czechoslovak administrative commission composed exclusively of Czechs was established. Sudeten Germans were subjected to restrictive measures and conscripted for compulsory labor to repair war damages. Individual acts of retaliation against Germans and precipitous expulsion under harsh conditions characterized the immediate aftermath of the occupation. On June 15, however, Beneš called Czechoslovak authorities to order. In July Czechoslovak representatives addressed the Potsdam Conference (the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union) and presented plans for a humane and orderly transfer of the Sudeten German population.

The Potsdam Agreement provided for the resettlement of Sudeten Germans in Germany under the supervision of the Allied Control Council. The transfer began in January 1946. By December 31, 1946, some 1.7 million Germans had been resettled in the American Zone and 750,000 in the Soviet Zone. Approximately 225,000 Germans remained in Czechoslovakia, of whom 50,000 emigrated or were expelled soon after.

The Potsdam Agreement pertained to Germans only. Decisions regarding the Hungarian minority reverted to the Czechoslovak government. The resettlement of about 700,000 Hungarians was envisaged at Košice and subsequently reaffirmed by the National Front. Budapest, however, opposed a unilateral transfer. In February 1946, the Hungarian government agreed that Czechoslovakia could expatriate as many Hungarians as there were Slovaks in Hungary wishing to return to Czechoslovakia. By the spring of 1948 only 160,000 Hungarians had been resettled.

Territory ceded to Poland in 1938 and restored to Slovakia after the Nazi invasion of Poland, in accordance with the terms of the German-Slovak agreement of November 21, 1939, became part of the restored Czechoslovak state in 1945. The Polish minority (100,000) enjoyed full civil liberties.

## **Communist Czechoslovakia**

### **Third Republic and the Communist Takeover**

During World War II, Czechoslovakia disappeared from the map of Europe. The re-emergence of Czechoslovakia as a sovereign state

was not only the result of Allied policies but also an indication of the strength of the Czechoslovak idea, particularly as embodied in the First Republic. But Czechoslovakia now found itself within the Soviet sphere of influence—a fact that had to be taken into account in any postwar reconstruction. Thus the political and economic organization of postwar Czechoslovakia was largely the result of negotiations between Beneš and KSĊ exiles in Moscow.

The Third Republic came into being in April 1945. Its government, installed at Košice on April 4 and moved to Prague in May, was a National Front coalition in which three socialist parties—KSĊ, Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, and Czechoslovak National Socialist Party—predominated. The Slovak Populist Party was banned as collaboratorist with the Nazis. Other conservative yet democratic parties, such as the Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants, were prevented from resuming activities in the postwar period. Certain acceptable nonsocialist parties were included in the coalition; among them were the Catholic People's Party (in Moravia) and the Slovak Democratic Party. All property belonging to Nazi collaborators was confiscated without compensation. Their land was distributed among the peasants, and their industries—amounting to 16.4 percent of all Czechoslovak industry, employing 61.2 percent of the industrial labor force—were nationalized.

Beneš had compromised with the KSĊ to avoid a postwar coup; he anticipated that the democratic process would restore a more equitable distribution of power. Beneš had negotiated the Soviet alliance, but at the same time he hoped to establish Czechoslovakia as a "bridge" between East and West, capable of maintaining contacts with both sides. KSĊ leader Klement Gottwald, however, professed commitment to a "gradualist" approach, that is, to a KSĊ assumption of power by democratic means.

The popular enthusiasm evoked by the Soviet armies of liberation benefited the KSĊ. Czechoslovaks, bitterly disappointed by the West at Munich, responded favorably to both the KSĊ and the Soviet alliance. Communists secured strong representation in the popularly elected national committees, the new organs of local administration. The KSĊ organized and centralized the trade union movement; of 120 representatives to the Central Council of Trade Unions, 94 were communists. The party worked to acquire a mass membership, including peasants and the petite bourgeoisie, as well as the proletariat. Between May 1945 and May 1946, KSĊ membership grew from 27,000 to over 1.1 million.

In the May 1946 election, the KSĊ won a plurality of 38 percent of the vote. Beneš continued as president of the republic, and

Jan Masaryk, son of the revered founding father, continued as foreign minister. Gottwald became prime minister. Most important, although the communists held only a minority of portfolios, they were able to gain control over such key ministries as information, internal trade, finance, and interior (including the police apparatus). Through these ministries, the communists were able to suppress noncommunist opposition, place party members in positions of power, and create a solid basis for a takeover attempt.

The year that followed was uneventful. The KSČ continued to proclaim its "national" and "democratic" orientation. The turning point came in the summer of 1947. In July the Czechoslovak government, with KSČ approval, accepted an Anglo-French invitation to attend preliminary discussions of the Marshall Plan. The Soviet Union responded immediately to the Czechoslovak move to continue the Western alliance. Stalin summoned Gottwald to Moscow; upon his return to Prague, the KSČ reversed its decision. In subsequent months, the party demonstrated a significant radicalization of its tactics.

The KSČ raised the specter of an impending counterrevolutionary coup as a pretext for intensified activity. Originally announced by Gottwald at the KSČ Central Committee meeting in November 1947, news of the "reactionary plot" was disseminated throughout the country by communist agents-provocateurs and by the communist press. In January 1948, the communist-controlled Ministry of Interior proceeded to purge the Czechoslovak security forces, substituting communists for noncommunists. Simultaneously, the KSČ began agitating for increased nationalization and for a new land reform limiting landholdings to fifty hectares.

A cabinet crisis precipitated the February coup. National Socialist ministers, backed by all noncommunist parties, demanded a halt to the communists' blatant use of the Ministry of Interior's police and security forces to suppress noncommunists. Prime Minister Gottwald, however, repeatedly forestalled discussion of the police issue. On February 20, National Socialists resigned from the cabinet in protest. The Catholic People's Party and the Slovak Democratic Party followed suit.

The twelve noncommunist ministers resigned, in part, to induce Beneš to call for early elections: Communist losses were anticipated owing to popular disapproval of recent KSČ tactics. A January poll indicated a 10-percent decline in communist electoral support. The Czechoslovak National Socialists made their move, however, without adequate coordination with Beneš. The democratic parties, in addition, made no effort to rally popular support.

Beneš refused to accept the cabinet resignations and did not call for elections. In the days that followed, he shunned democratic ministers to avoid accusation of collusion. The Czechoslovak army remained neutral.

In the meantime, the KSĊ garnered its forces. The communist-controlled Ministry of Interior deployed police regiments to sensitive areas and equipped a workers' militia. The communist-controlled Ministry of Information refused broadcasting time to noncommunist officials. Ministries held by democratic parties were "secured" by communist "action committees." The action committees also purged all governmental and political party organs of unreliable elements.

On February 25, Beneš, perhaps fearing Soviet intervention, capitulated. He accepted the resignations of the dissident ministers and received a new cabinet list from Gottwald, thus completing the communist takeover.

## **Stalinization**

In February 1948, Czechoslovakia became a "people's democracy"—a preliminary step toward socialism and, ultimately, communism. Bureaucratic centralism under the direction of KSĊ leadership was introduced. Dissident elements were purged from all levels of society, including the Catholic Church. The ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialist realism pervaded cultural and intellectual life. The entire education system was submitted to state control. The economy was committed to comprehensive central planning and the elimination of private ownership. Czechoslovakia became a satellite of the Soviet Union; it was a founding member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) in 1949 and of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 (see Appendix B; Appendix C). The attainment of Soviet-style "socialism" became the government's avowed policy.

A new constitution was passed by the National Assembly on May 9, 1948. Because it was prepared by a special committee in the 1945–48 period, it contained many liberal and democratic provisions. It reflected, however, the reality of Communist power through an addition that discussed the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leadership role of the Communist party. Beneš refused to sign the Ninth-of-May Constitution, as it was called, and resigned from the presidency; he was succeeded by Gottwald.

Although in theory Czechoslovakia remained a multiparty state, in actuality the Communists were in complete control. Political participation became subject to KSĊ approval. The KSĊ also prescribed percentage representation for non-Marxist parties. The

National Assembly, purged of dissidents, became a mere rubber stamp for KSCĚ programs. In 1953 an inner cabinet of the National Assembly, the Presidium, was created. Composed of KSCĚ leaders, the Presidium served to convey party policies through government channels. Regional, district, and local committees were subordinated to the Ministry of Interior. Slovak autonomy was constrained; the KSS was reunited with the KSCĚ but retained its own identity (see *The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*, ch. 4).

Gottwald died in 1953. He was succeeded by Antonín Zápotocký as president and by Antonín Novotný as head of the KSCĚ. Novotný became president in 1957 when Zápotocký died.

Czechoslovak interests were subordinated to the interests of the Soviet Union. Stalin became particularly concerned about controlling and integrating the socialist bloc in the wake of Tito's challenge to his authority. Stalin's paranoia resulted in sweeping political changes in the Soviet Union and the satellite countries. In Czechoslovakia the Stalinists accused their opponents of "conspiracy against the people's democratic order" and "high treason" in order to oust them from positions of power. Large-scale arrests of Communists with an "international" background, i.e., those with a wartime connection with the West, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, Jews, and Slovak "bourgeois nationalists," were followed by show trials. The most spectacular of these was the trial of KSCĚ first secretary Rudolf Slánský and thirteen other prominent Communist personalities in November and December 1952. Slánský was executed, and many others were sentenced to death or to forced labor in prison camps. The KSCĚ rank-and-file membership, approximately 2.5 million in March 1948, began to be subjected to careful scrutiny. By 1960 KSCĚ membership had been reduced to 1.4 million.

The Ninth-of-May Constitution provided for the nationalization of all commercial and industrial enterprises having more than fifty employees. The nonagricultural private sector was nearly eliminated. Private ownership of land was limited to fifty hectares. The remnants of private enterprise and independent farming were permitted to carry on only as a temporary concession to the petite bourgeoisie and the peasantry. The Czechoslovak economy was subjected to a succession of five-year plans (see *Economic Structure and Its Control Mechanisms*, ch. 3).

Following the Soviet example, Czechoslovakia began emphasizing the rapid development of heavy industry. The industrial sector was reorganized with an emphasis on metallurgy, heavy machinery, and coal mining. Production was concentrated in larger units; the more than 350,000 units of the prewar period were

reduced to about 1,700 units by 1958. Industrial output reportedly increased 233 percent between 1948 and 1959; employment in industry, 44 percent. The speed of industrialization was particularly accelerated in Slovakia, where production increased 347 percent and employment, 70 percent. Although Czechoslovakia's industrial growth of 170 percent between 1948 and 1957 was impressive, it was far exceeded by that of Japan (300 percent) and the Federal Republic of Germany (almost 300 percent) and more than equaled by Austria and Greece. For the 1954-59 period, Czechoslovak industrial growth was equaled by France and Italy.

Industrial growth in Czechoslovakia required substantial labor. Czechoslovaks were subjected to long hours and long workweeks to meet production quotas. Part-time, volunteer labor—students and white-collar workers—was drafted in massive numbers. Labor productivity, however, was not significantly increased, nor were production costs reduced. Czechoslovak products were characterized by poor quality.

The Ninth-of-May Constitution declared the government's intention to collectivize agriculture. In February 1949, the National Assembly adopted the Unified Agricultural Cooperatives Act. Cooperatives were to be founded on a voluntary basis; formal title to land was left vested in the original owners. The imposition of high compulsory quotas, however, forced peasants to collectivize in order to increase efficiency and facilitate mechanization. Discriminatory policies were employed to bring about the ruin of recalcitrant peasants. Collectivization was near completion by 1960. Sixteen percent of all farmland (obtained from collaborators and peasants) had been turned into state farms (see *Agriculture*, ch. 3).

Despite the elimination of poor land from cultivation and a tremendous increase in the use of fertilizers and tractors, agricultural production declined seriously. By 1959 prewar production levels still had not been met. Major causes of the decline were the diversion of labor from agriculture to industry (in 1948 an estimated 2.2 million workers were employed in agriculture; by 1960, only 1.5 million); the suppression of the "kulak," the most experienced and productive farmer; and the peasantry's opposition to collectivization, which resulted in sabotage.

The 1960 Constitution declared the victory of "socialism" and proclaimed the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The ambiguous precept of "democratic centralism"—power emanating from the people but bound by the authority of higher organs—was made a formal part of constitutional law. The president, the cabinet, the Slovak National Council, and the local governments were made responsible to the National Assembly. The National Assembly,

however, continued its rubber-stamp approval of KSČ policies. All private enterprises using hired labor were abolished. Comprehensive economic planning was reaffirmed. The Bill of Rights emphasized economic and social rights, e.g., the right to work, leisure, health care, and education. Civil rights, however, were deemphasized. The judiciary was combined with the prosecuting branch; all judges were committed to the protection of the socialist state and the education of citizens in loyalty to the cause of socialism (see Constitutional Development, ch. 4).

### **The Reform Movement**

De-Stalinization had a late start in Czechoslovakia. The KSČ leadership virtually ignored the Soviet thaw announced by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In Czechoslovakia that April, at the Second Writers' Congress, several authors criticized acts of political repression and attempted to gain control of the writers' congress. The writers' rebellion was suppressed, however, and the conservatives retained control. Students in Prague and Bratislava demonstrated on May Day of 1956, demanding freedom of speech and access to the Western press. The Novotný regime condemned these activities and introduced a policy of neo-Stalinism. The 1958 KSČ Party congress formalized the continuation of Stalinism.

In the early 1960s, the Czechoslovak economy became severely stagnated. The industrial growth rate was the lowest in Eastern Europe. Food imports strained the balance of payments. Pressures both from Moscow and from within the party precipitated a reform movement. In 1963 reform-minded Communist intellectuals produced a proliferation of critical articles. Criticism of economic planning merged with more generalized protests against KSČ bureaucratic control and ideological conformity. The KSČ leadership responded. The purge trials of 1949-54 were reviewed, for example, and some of those purged were rehabilitated. Some hardliners were removed from top levels of government and replaced by younger, more liberal communists. Jozef Lenárt replaced Prime Minister Vilam Široký. The KSČ organized committees to review economic policy.

In 1965 the party approved the New Economic Model, which had been drafted under the direction of economist and theoretician Ota Šik. The program called for a second, intensive stage of economic development, emphasizing technological and managerial improvements. Central planning would be limited to overall production and investment indexes as well as price and wage guidelines. Management personnel would be involved in decision making.



*Old Town Square, Prague  
Courtesy Eugene C. Robertson*

Production would be market oriented and geared toward profitability. Prices would respond to supply and demand. Wage differentials would be introduced.

The KSČ "Theses" of December 1965 presented the party response to the call for political reform. Democratic centralism was redefined, placing a stronger emphasis on democracy. The leading role of the KSČ was reaffirmed but limited. In consequence, the National Assembly was promised increased legislative responsibility. The Slovak executive (Board of Commissioners) and legislature (Slovak National Council) were assured that they could assist the central government in program planning and assume responsibility for program implementation in Slovakia. The regional, district, and local national committees were to be permitted a degree of autonomy. The KSČ agreed to refrain from superseding the authority of economic and social organizations. Party control in cultural policy, however, was reaffirmed.

January 1967 was the date for full implementation of the reform program. Novotný and his supporters hesitated, introducing amendments to reinforce central control. Pressure from the reformists was stepped up. Slovaks pressed for federalization. Economists called for complete enterprise autonomy and economic responsiveness to the market mechanism. The Fourth Writers' Congress



adopted a resolution calling for rehabilitation of the Czechoslovak literary tradition and the establishment of free contact with Western culture. The Novotný regime responded with repressive measures.

At the October 30-31 meeting of the KSČ Central Committee, Alexander Dubček, a moderate reformer, challenged Novotný. As university students in Prague demonstrated in support of the liberals, Novotný appealed to Moscow for assistance. On December 8, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev arrived in Prague but did not support Novotný. On January 5, 1968, the Central Committee elected Dubček to replace Novotný as first secretary of the KSČ. Novotný's fall from KSČ leadership precipitated initiatives to oust Stalinists from all levels of government, from mass associations, e.g., the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement and the Czechoslovak Union of Youth, and from local party organs. On March 22, 1968, Novotný resigned from the presidency and was succeeded by General Ludvík Svoboda.

### **The Prague Spring, 1968**

Dubček carried the reform movement a step further in the direction of liberalism. After Novotný's fall, censorship was lifted. The media—press, radio, and television—were mobilized for reformist propaganda purposes. The movement to democratize socialism in Czechoslovakia, formerly confined largely to the party intelligentsia, acquired a new, popular dynamism in the spring of 1968. In April the KSČ Presidium adopted the Action Program that had been drafted by a coalition headed by Dubček and made up of reformers, moderates, centrists, and conservatives. The program proposed a "new model of socialism," profoundly "democratic" and "national," that is, adapted to Czechoslovak conditions. The National Front and the electoral system were to be democratized, and Czechoslovakia was to be federalized. Freedom of assembly and expression would be guaranteed in constitutional law. The New Economic Model was to be implemented. The Action Program also reaffirmed the Czechoslovak alliance with the Soviet Union and other socialist states. The reform movement, which rejected Stalinism as the road to communism, remained committed to communism as a goal.

The Action Program stipulated that reform must proceed under KSČ direction. In subsequent months, however, popular pressure mounted to implement reforms forthwith. Radical elements found expression: anti-Soviet polemics appeared in the press; the Social Democrats began to form a separate party; new unaffiliated political clubs were created. Party conservatives urged the implementation of repressive measures, but Dubček counseled moderation

and reemphasized KSC leadership. In May he announced that the Fourteenth Party Congress would convene in an early session on September 9. The congress would incorporate the Action Program into the party statutes, draft a federalization law, and elect a new (presumably more liberal) Central Committee.

On June 27, Ludvík Vaculík, a lifelong communist and a candidate member of the Central Committee, published a manifesto entitled "Two Thousand Words." The manifesto expressed concern about conservative elements within the KSC and "foreign" forces as well. (Warsaw Pact maneuvers were held in Czechoslovakia in late June.) It called on the "people" to take the initiative in implementing the reform program. Dubček, the party Presidium, the National Front, and the cabinet sharply denounced the manifesto.

The Soviet leadership was alarmed. In mid-July a Warsaw Pact conference was held without Czechoslovak participation. The Warsaw Pact nations drafted a letter to the KSC leadership referring to the manifesto as an "organizational and political platform of counterrevolution." Pact members demanded the reimposition of censorship, the banning of new political parties and clubs, and the repression of "rightist" forces within the party. The Warsaw Pact nations declared the defense of Czechoslovakia's socialist gains to be not only the task of Czechoslovakia but also the mutual task of all Warsaw Pact countries. The KSC rejected the Warsaw Pact ultimatum, and Dubček requested bilateral talks with the Soviet Union.

## **Intervention**

Soviet leader Brezhnev hesitated to intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia. Dubček's Action Program proposed a "new model of socialism"—"democratic" and "national." Significantly, however, Dubček did not challenge Czechoslovak commitment to the Warsaw Pact. In the early spring of 1968, the Soviet leadership adopted a wait-and-see attitude. By midsummer, however, two camps had formed: advocates and opponents of military intervention.

The pro-interventionist coalition viewed the situation in Czechoslovakia as "counterrevolutionary" and favored the defeat of Dubček and his supporters. This coalition was headed by the Ukrainian party leader Pyotr Shelest and included communist bureaucrats from Belorussia and from the non-Russian national republics of the western part of the Soviet Union (the Baltic republics). The coalition members feared the awakening of nationalism within their respective republics and the influence of the Ukrainian

minority in Czechoslovakia on Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. Bureaucrats responsible for political stability in Soviet cities and for the ideological supervision of the intellectual community also favored a military solution. Within the Warsaw Pact, only the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and Poland were strongly interventionist. Walter Ulbricht and Wladyslaw Gomulka—party leaders of East Germany and Poland, respectively—viewed liberalism as threatening to their own positions.

The Soviet Union agreed to bilateral talks with Czechoslovakia to be held in July at Čierna nad Tisou, Slovakia. At the meeting, Dubček defended the program of the reformist wing of the KSC while pledging commitment to the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. The KSC leadership, however, was divided. Vigorous reformers—Josef Smrkovský, Oldřich Černík, and František Kriegel—supported Dubček. Conservatives—Vasil Bil'ak, Drahomír Kolder, and Oldřich Švestka—adopted an anti-reformist stance. Brezhnev decided on compromise. The KSC delegates reaffirmed their loyalty to the Warsaw Pact and promised to curb “antisocialist” tendencies, prevent the revival of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, and control the press more effectively. The Soviets agreed to withdraw their troops (stationed in Czechoslovakia since the June maneuvers) and permit the September 9 party congress.

On August 3, representatives from the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia met in Bratislava and signed the Bratislava Declaration. The declaration affirmed unshakable fidelity to Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism and declared an implacable struggle against “bourgeois” ideology and all “antisocialist” forces. The Soviet Union expressed its intention to intervene in a Warsaw Pact country if a “bourgeois” system—a pluralist system of several political parties—was ever established. After the Bratislava conference, Soviet troops left Czechoslovak territory but remained along Czechoslovak borders. Dubček made no attempt to mobilize the Czechoslovak army to resist an invasion.

The KSC party congress remained scheduled for September 9. In the week following the Bratislava conference, it became an open secret in Prague that most of Dubček's opponents would be removed from the Central Committee. The Prague municipal party organization prepared and circulated a blacklist. The anti-reformist coalition could hope to stay in power only with Soviet assistance.

KSC anti-reformists, therefore, made efforts to convince the Soviets that the danger of political instability and “counterrevolution” did indeed exist. They used the Kašpar Report, prepared by the Central Committee's Information Department, headed by

Jan Kašpar, to achieve this end. The report provided an extensive review of the general political situation in Czechoslovakia as it might relate to the forthcoming party congress. It predicted that a stable Central Committee and a firm leadership could not necessarily be expected as the outcome of the congress. The report was received by the party Presidium on August 12. Two Presidium members, Kolder and Alois Indra, were instructed to evaluate the report for the August 20 meeting of the Presidium.

Kolder and Indra viewed the Kašpar Report with alarm and, some observers think, communicated their conclusions to the Soviet ambassador, Stepan V. Chervonenko. These actions are thought to have precipitated the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. As the KSČ Presidium convened on August 20, the anti-reformists planned to make a bid for power, pointing to the imminent danger of counterrevolution. Kolder and Indra presented a resolution declaring a state of emergency and calling for "fraternal assistance." The resolution was never voted on: Warsaw Pact troops entered Czechoslovakia that same day.

KSČ conservatives had misinformed Moscow regarding the strength of the reform movement. The KSČ Presidium met during the night of August 20-21; it rejected the option of armed resistance but condemned the invasion. Two-thirds of the KSČ Central Committee opposed the Soviet intervention. A KSČ party congress, convened secretly on August 22, passed a resolution affirming its loyalty to Dubček's Action Program and denouncing the Soviet aggression. President Svoboda repeatedly resisted Soviet pressure to form a new government under Indra. The Czechoslovak population was virtually unanimous in its repudiation of the Soviet action. In compliance with Svoboda's caution against acts that might provoke violence, they avoided mass demonstrations and strikes but observed a symbolic one-hour general work stoppage on August 23. Popular opposition was expressed in numerous spontaneous acts of nonviolent resistance. In Prague and other cities throughout the republic, Czechs and Slovaks greeted Warsaw Pact soldiers with arguments and reproaches. Every form of assistance, including the provision of food and water, was denied the invaders. Signs, placards, and graffiti drawn on walls and pavements denounced the invaders, the Soviet leaders, and suspected collaborators. Pictures of Dubček and Svoboda appeared everywhere.

The generalized resistance caused the Soviet Union to abandon its original plan to oust Dubček. The KSČ leader, who had been arrested on the night of August 20, was taken to Moscow for negotiations. The outcome was the Brezhnev Doctrine of limited sovereignty, which provided for the strengthening of the KSČ, strict

party control of the media, and the suppression of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party. It was agreed that Dubček would remain in office and that a program of moderate reform would continue.

### **Normalization**

Dubček remained in office only until April 1969. Anti-Soviet demonstrations, following Czechoslovakia's victory over the Soviet team in the World Ice Hockey Championships in March, precipitated Soviet pressures for a KSČ Presidium reorganization. Gustáv Husák (a centrist) was named first secretary (title changed to general secretary in 1971). Only centrists and the conservatives led by Bil'ak continued in the Presidium. A program of "normalization"—the restoration of continuity with the pre-reform period—was initiated. Normalization entailed thoroughgoing political repression and the return to ideological conformity. A new purge cleansed the Czechoslovak leadership of all reformist elements. Of the 115 members of the KSČ Central Committee, 54 were replaced.

Reformists were removed from regional, district, and local party branches in the Czech lands and, to a lesser extent, in Slovakia. KSČ party membership, which had been close to 1.7 million in January 1968, was reduced by about 500,000. Top levels of government and the leadership of social organizations were purged. Publishing houses and film studios were placed under new direction. Censorship was strictly imposed, and a campaign of militant atheism was organized.

Czechoslovakia had been federalized under the Constitutional Law of Federation of October 27, 1968. The newly created Federal Assembly, which replaced the National Assembly, was to work in close cooperation with the Czech National Council and the Slovak National Council. The Husák regime amended the law in January 1971. Although federalism was retained in form, central authority was effectively restored (see *Constitutional Development*, ch. 4).

In May 1970, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which incorporated the principle of limited sovereignty. Soviet troops remained stationed in Czechoslovakia, and the Czechoslovak armed forces worked in close cooperation with the Warsaw Pact command (see *Soviet Influence*, ch. 5). Soviet advisers supervised the functioning of the Ministry of Interior and the security apparatus (see *Interior Security and Public Order*, ch. 5). Czechoslovak leaders and propagandists, led by Bil'ak, became the most ardent advocates of proletarian internationalism.

The purges of the first half of 1970 eliminated the reformists

within the party organization. In the fall of 1970, the ex-communist intelligentsia organized the Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Citizens, a protest movement dedicated to the goals of 1968. Forty-seven leaders of the movement were arrested and tried in the summer of 1972. Organized protest was effectively stilled.

### **Preserving the Status Quo**

In May 1971, party chief Husák announced at the official Fourteenth Party Congress—the 1968 Fourteenth Party Congress had been abrogated—that “normalization” had been completed and that all that remained was for the party to consolidate its gains. Husák’s policy was to maintain a rigid status quo; for the next fifteen years key personnel of the party and government remained the same. In 1975 Husák added the position of president to his post as party chief. He and other party leaders faced the task of rebuilding general party membership after the purges of 1969–71. By 1983 membership had returned to 1.6 million, about the same as in 1960.

In preserving the status quo, the Husák regime required conformity and obedience in all aspects of life. Culture suffered greatly from this straitjacket on independent thought, as did the humanities, social sciences, and ultimately the pure sciences. Art had to adhere to a rigid socialist realist formula. Soviet examples were held up for emulation. During the 1970s and 1980s, many of Czechoslovakia’s most creative individuals were silenced, imprisoned, or sent into exile. Some found expression for their art through samizdat (see Glossary; Dissent and Independent Activity, this ch.). Those artists, poets, and writers who were officially sanctioned were, for the most part, undistinguished. The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1984 to Jaroslav Seifert—a poet identified with reformism and not favored by the Husák regime—was a bright spot in an otherwise bleak cultural scene.

In addition to applying repression, Husák also tried to obtain acquiescence to his rule by providing an improved standard of living. He returned Czechoslovakia to an orthodox command economy with a heavy emphasis on central planning and continued to extend industrialization. For a while the policy seemed successful because, despite the lack of investment in new technologies, there was an increase in industrial output. The government encouraged consumerism and materialism and took a tolerant attitude toward a slack work ethic and a growing black-market second economy. In the early 1970s, there was a steady increase in the standard of living; it seemed that the improved economy might mitigate political and cultural oppression and give the government a modicum of legitimacy.

By the mid-1970s, consumerism failed as a palliative for political oppression. The government could not sustain an indefinite expansion without coming to grips with limitations inherent in a command economy. The oil crisis of 1973-74 further exacerbated the economic decline. Materialism, encouraged by a corrupt regime, also produced cynicism, greed, nepotism, corruption, and a lack of work discipline. Whatever elements of a social contract the government tried to establish with Czechoslovak society crumbled with the decline in living standards of the mid-1970s. Czechoslovakia was to have neither freedom nor prosperity.

Another feature of Husák's rule was a continued dependence on the Soviet Union. As of the mid-1980s, Husák had not yet achieved a balance between what could be perceived as Czechoslovak national interest and Soviet dictate. In foreign policy, Czechoslovakia parroted every utterance of the Soviet position. Frequent contacts between the Soviet and Czechoslovak communist parties and governments made certain that the Soviet position on any issue was both understood and followed. The Soviets continued to exert control over Czechoslovak internal affairs, including oversight of the police and security apparatus. Five Soviet ground divisions and two air divisions had become a permanent fixture, while the Czechoslovak military was further integrated into the Warsaw Pact. In the 1980s, approximately 50 percent of Czechoslovakia's foreign trade was with the Soviet Union, and almost 80 percent was with communist countries. There were constant exhortations about further cooperation and integration between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in industry, science, technology, consumer goods, and agriculture. Deriving its legitimacy from Moscow, the Husák regime remained a slavish imitator of political, cultural, and economic trends emanating from Moscow.

### **Dissent and Independent Activity**

Through the 1970s and 1980s, the regime's emphasis on obedience, conformity, and the preservation of the status quo was challenged by individuals and organized groups aspiring to independent thinking and activity. Although only a few such activities could be deemed political by Western standards, the regime viewed any independent action, no matter how innocuous, as a defiance of the party's control over all aspects of Czechoslovak life. The regime's response to such activity was harassment, persecution, and, in some instances, imprisonment.

The first organized opposition emerged under the umbrella of Charter 77. On January 6, 1977, a manifesto called Charter 77 appeared in West German newspapers. The document was

immediately translated and reprinted throughout the world (see Appendix D). The original manifesto reportedly was signed by 243 persons; among them were artists, former public officials, and other prominent figures, such as Zdeněk Mlynář, secretary of the KSČ Central Committee in 1968; Václav Slavík, a Central Committee member in 1968; and Vaculík, author of "Two Thousand Words." Charter 77 defined itself as "a loose, informal, and open community of people" concerned with the protection of civil and human rights. It denied oppositional intent and based its defense of rights on legally binding international documents signed by the Czechoslovak government and on guarantees of civil rights contained in the Czechoslovak Constitution.

In the context of international détente, Czechoslovakia had signed the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1968. In 1975 these were ratified by the Federal Assembly, which, according to the Constitution of 1960, is the highest legislative organization. The Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe's Final Act (also known as the Helsinki Accords), signed by Czechoslovakia in 1975, also included guarantees of human rights (see *Popular Political Expression*, ch. 4).

The Charter 77 group declared its objectives to be the following: to draw attention to individual cases of human rights infringements; to suggest remedies; to make general proposals to strengthen rights and freedoms and the mechanisms designed to protect them; and to act as intermediary in situations of conflict. The Charter had over 800 signatures by the end of 1977, including workers and youth; by 1985 nearly 1,200 Czechoslovaks had signed the Charter.

The Husák regime, which claimed that all rights derive from the state and that international covenants are subject to the internal jurisdiction of the state, responded with fury to the Charter. The text was never published in the official media. Signatories were arrested and interrogated; dismissal from employment often followed. The Czechoslovak press launched vicious attacks against the Charter. The public was mobilized to sign either individual condemnations or various forms of "anti-Charters."

Closely associated with Charter 77, the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted (Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných—VONS) was formed in 1978 with the specific goal of documenting individual cases of government persecution and human rights violations. Between 1978 and 1984, VONS issued 409 communiqués concerning individuals persecuted or harassed.

On a larger scale, independent activity was expressed through underground writing and publishing. Because of the decentralized



nature of underground writing, it is difficult to estimate its extent or impact. Some observers state that hundreds of books, journals, essays, and short stories were published and distributed. In the mid-1980s, several samizdat publishing houses were in operation. The best known was Edice petlice (Padlock Editions), which had published more than 250 volumes. There were a number of clandestine religious publishing houses that published journals in photocopy or printed form.

The production and distribution of underground literature was difficult. In most cases, manuscripts had to be typed and retyped without the aid of modern publishing equipment. Publication and distribution were also dangerous. Mere possession of samizdat materials could be the basis for harassment, loss of employment, and arrest and imprisonment.

Independent activity also extended to music. The regime was particularly concerned about the impact of Western popular music on Czechoslovak youth. The persecution of rock musicians and their fans led a number of musicians to sign Charter 77. In the forefront of the struggle for independent music was the Jazz Section of the Union of Musicians. Initially organized to promote jazz, in the late 1970s it became a protector of various kinds of nonconformist music. The widely popular Jazz Section had a membership of approximately 7,000 and received no official funds. It published music and promoted concerts and festivals. The regime condemned the Jazz Section for spreading "unacceptable views" among the youth and moved against its leadership. In March 1985, the Jazz Section was dissolved under a 1968 statute banning "counterrevolutionary activities." The Jazz Section continued to operate, however, and in 1986 the government arrested the members of its steering committee.

Because religion offered possibilities for thought and activities independent of the state, it too was severely restricted and controlled. Clergymen were required to be licensed. In attempting to manipulate the number and kind of clergy, the state even sponsored a pro-regime organization of Catholic priests, the Czechoslovak Association of Catholic Clergy (more commonly known as *Pacem in Terris*). Nevertheless, there was religious opposition, including a lively Catholic samizdat. In the 1980s, František Cardinal Tomášek, Czechoslovakia's primate, adopted a more independent stand. In 1984 he invited the pope to come to Czechoslovakia for the 1,100th anniversary of the death of Methodius, the missionary to the Slavs. The pope accepted, but the trip was blocked by the government. The cardinal's invitation and the pope's acceptance were widely circulated in samizdat. A petition requesting the

government to permit the papal visit had 17,000 signatories. The Catholic Church did have a massive commemoration of the 1,100th anniversary in 1985. At Velehrad (the site of Methodius's tomb) more than 150,000 pilgrims attended a commemorative mass, and another 100,000 came to a ceremony at Levoča (in eastern Slovakia).

Unlike in Poland, dissent, opposition to the government, and independent activity were limited in Czechoslovakia to a fairly small segment of the populace. Even the dissenters saw scant prospect for fundamental reforms. In this sense, the Husák regime was successful in preserving the status quo in "normalized" Czechoslovakia.

The selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on March 11, 1985, presented the Husák regime with a new and unexpected challenge to the status quo. Soon after assuming office, Gorbachev began a policy of "restructuring" (*perestroika*) the Soviet economy and advocated "openness" (*glasnost*) in the discussion of economic, social, and, to some extent, political questions. Up to this time, the Husák regime had dutifully adopted the programs and slogans that had emanated from Moscow. But, for a government wholly dedicated to the preservation of the status quo, subjects such as "openness," economic "restructuring," and "reform" had been taboo. Czechoslovakia's future course would depend, to a large extent, on the Husák regime's response to the Gorbachev program (see *A Climate of Orthodoxy*, ch. 4).

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Concise and readable accounts of the history of the Czech and Slovak lands through World War I may be found in Kamil Krofta's *A Short History of Czechoslovakia*, Harrison S. Thomson's *Czechoslovakia in European History*, and J.F.N. Bradley's *Czechoslovakia: A Short History. A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1948*, edited by Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, is a collection of excellent essays treating the First Republic, Munich, and the German occupation. The Sudeten German minority problem is more fully discussed by Radomír Luža in *The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans*. The Slovaks are discussed by Jozef Lettrich in *History of Modern Slovakia*, Eugen Steiner in *The Slovak Dilemma*, and Owen V. Johnson in *Slovakia, 1918-1938*. The Ruthenians (Ukrainians) are covered by Paul R. Magocsi in *The Shaping of a National Identity*. The history of the KSČ up to the February 1948 coup is elaborated in Paul E. Zinner's *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia*,

1918-48. In *Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960*, Edward Taborsky discusses political and economic integration into the Soviet system. H. Gordon Skilling's *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* and Galia Golan's *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement* offer expansive analysis of the Prague Spring, which is also treated with understandable passion in Zdeněk Mlynář's *Nightfrost in Prague*. The reform movement of the late 1950s and the 1960s and the Soviet intervention are also amply treated in Golan's and Mlynář's studies. Vladimir V. Kusin's *From Dubček to Charter 77* sets the scene for contemporary Czechoslovakia. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

## Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment





**THE CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST REPUBLIC** of the 1980s provided any number of contrasts with the Czechoslovak Republic (the First Republic), the multinational Central European state formed in 1918 from the dismantled Austro-Hungarian Empire. Large communities of ethnic minorities, some with strong irredentist leanings (like the Sudeten Germans), were a major force in the First Republic's social and political life. As a result of the expulsion of most of the Germans after World War II and the ceding of Carpatho-Ukraine to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia had become predominantly a nation of Czechs and Slovaks, with small minorities of Germans, Hungarians, Poles, and Ukrainians. Even though Czechoslovakia's ethnic makeup was simplified, the division between Czechs and Slovaks remained a potent social and political force. During the 1950s and 1960s, planners made intensive efforts to redress the economic imbalance between the Czech lands and Slovakia. Although many of the glaring economic disparities between the two were gone by the 1970s, social and political differences persisted.

Interwar society in Czechoslovakia was a complex amalgam of large landholders, farmers, tenants, landless laborers, and specialists (herders, smiths, teachers, clerics, and local officials) in the countryside and of many major entrepreneurs, a large industrial proletariat, hundreds of thousands of small-scale manufacturers, a diverse intelligentsia, shopkeepers, tradesmen, and craftsmen in the city. Nevertheless, extremes of wealth and poverty then typical in so much of Eastern Europe were largely absent.

Because of the post-World War II nationalization of industry (affecting not only large enterprises but nearly half a million handicraft and small-scale industries as well) and collectivization of agriculture, private ownership virtually became a thing of the past in communist Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia's much-simplified contemporary social spectrum is made up of collective farmers, workers, the intelligentsia, the communist party elite, and a few private farmers and tradesmen.

The reform movement of the late 1960s, popularly dubbed the "Prague Spring," was an effort mainly by the Czechs (with some Slovak support) to restructure Marxist-Leninist socialism in a way more suitable to their respective historical, cultural, and economic circumstances. "Normalization," the official label for the government's efforts to stamp out the remnants of this

“counterrevolutionary” movement, was essentially a series of carrot-and-stick measures: far-reaching purges of those who might have been active in the reform era or remotely dissident in the 1970s, coupled with a concerted effort to placate the majority of the populace with relative material prosperity. In the 1980s, the emphasis remained on stifling dissent while trying to prevent further economic deterioration.

## **Geography and Environment**

### **Topography and Drainage**

The country's 127,905 square kilometers divide topographically as well as historically into three major areas: Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. Bohemia consists of the five western political divisions, or *kraje* (sing., *kraj*): Západočeský (West Bohemia), Severočeský (North Bohemia), Jihočeský (South Bohemia), Východočeský (East Bohemia), and Středočeský (Central Bohemia). Moravia consists of the two central political divisions: Severomoravský (North Moravia) and Jihomoravský (South Moravia). Slovakia consists of the three eastern political divisions: Západoslovenský (West Slovakia), Stredoslovenský (Central Slovakia), and Východoslovenský (East Slovakia). The three Slovak *kraje* constitute the Slovak Socialist Republic; the other seven *kraje* constitute the Czech Socialist Republic. *Kraje* are further subdivided into *okresy* (sing., *okres*), roughly equivalent to counties in the United States.

The areas of western Bohemia and eastern Slovakia belong to different mountain and drainage systems. All but a minute fraction of the Bohemian region drains into the North Sea by way of the Vltava (Moldau) and Labe (Elbe) rivers. The hills and low mountains that encircle this area are part of the north-central European uplands that extend from southern Belgium, through the central German lands, and into Moravia. These uplands, which are distinct from the Alps to the south and the Carpathian Mountains to the east, are known geologically as the Hercynian Massif. Most of Slovakia drains into the Danube (Dunaj) River, and its mountains are part of the Carpathians, which continue eastward and southward into Romania.

The uplands of Moravia are a transition between the Hercynian Massif and the Carpathians and are in contrast with them by having more nearly north-south ridge lines. Most of Moravia drains southward to the Danube, but the Odra (Oder) River rises in the northeast and drains a sizable portion of the northern region (see fig. 9).

## **Bohemia**

Bohemia's topography has fostered local solidarity and a common set of economic interests. The area is ringed with low mountains or high hills that effectively serve as a watershed along most of its periphery (although they do not lie along the border to the south and southeast). Streams flow from all directions through the Bohemian Basin toward Prague (Praha).

In the northwest, the Krušné hory (Ore Mountains) border on the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and are known to the Germans as the Erzgebirge; the Sudeten Mountains in the northeast border on Poland in an area that was part of Germany before World War II. The Český les, bordering on the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and the Šumava Mountains, bordering on West Germany and Austria, are mountain ranges that form the western and southwestern portions of the ring around the Bohemian Basin. Both are approximately as high as the Krušné hory. Bohemia's mountainous areas differ greatly in population. The northern regions are densely populated, whereas the less hospitable Český les and Šumava Mountains are among the most sparsely populated areas in the country.

The central lands of the Bohemian Basin are lower in elevation, but their features vary widely. There are small lakes in the central southern region and in the Vltava Basin north of Prague. Some of the western grain lands are gently rolling, while other places have deep gorges cut by streams (such as the Vltava River). A large area southwest of Prague has a broken relief pattern that is typical of several other areas.

## **Moravia**

Moravia is a topographic borderland situated between Bohemia and Slovakia. Its southwest-to-northeast ridge lines and lower elevations made it useful as a route for communications and commerce from Vienna to the north and northeast during the period of Austrian domination of Central Europe.

The central and southern Moravian lowlands are part of the Danube Basin and are similar to the lowlands they adjoin in southern Slovakia. The upland areas are smaller and more broken than those of Bohemia and Slovakia. The northwest hills are soft sandstone and are cut by deep gorges. South of them, but north of Brno, is a karst limestone area with underground streams and caves. These and the other uplands west of the Morava River are associated with the Hercynian Massif. The land to the east of the Morava is called Carpathian Moravia.



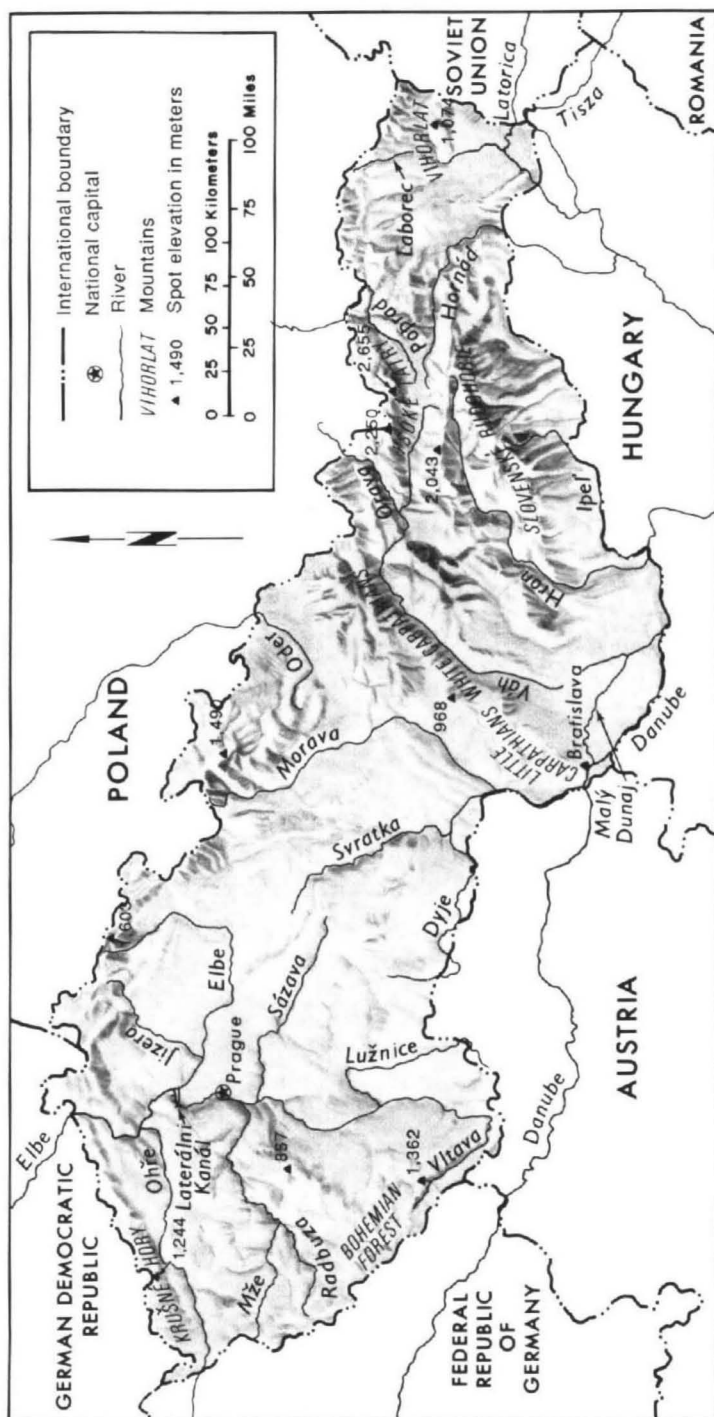


Figure 9. Topography and Drainage

## **Slovakia**

Slovakia's landforms do not make it as distinctive a geographic unit as Bohemia. Its mountain ranges generally run east-west and tend to segregate groups of people; population clusters are most dense in river valleys. The highest elevations are rugged, have the most severe weather, and are the most sparsely settled. Some of the flatlands in southwestern Slovakia are poorly drained and support only a few people.

The main mountain ranges are the Vysoké Tatry (High Tatras) and the Slovenské rudohorie (Slovak Ore Mountains), both of which are part of the Carpathians. The Vysoké Tatry extend in a narrow ridge along the Polish border and are attractive as both a summer and a winter resort area. The highest peak in the country, Gerlachovský štít (also known as Gerlachovka), with an elevation of about 2,655 meters, is in this ridge. Snow persists at the higher elevations well into the summer months and all year long in some sheltered pockets. The tree line is at about 1,500 meters. An ice cap extended into this area during glacial times, leaving pockets that became mountain lakes.

The Slovak lowlands in the south and southeast, bordering on Hungary, are part of the greater Danube Basin. From a point slightly south of the Slovak capital of Bratislava, the main channel of the Danube River demarcates the border between Czechoslovakia and Hungary for about 175 kilometers. As it leaves Bratislava, the Danube divides into two channels: the main channel is the Danube proper, and the northern channel is the Little Danube (Malý Dunaj). The Little Danube flows eastward into the Váh River, which converges with the main Danube at Komárno. The land between the Little Danube and the Danube is known as the Žitný ostrov (Rye Island), a marshland maintained for centuries as a hunting preserve for the nobility. Dikes and artificial drainage have made it possible to cultivate the land for grain production, but it is still sparsely settled.

## **Climate**

Czechoslovakia's central European location influences its climate. Although the continental weather systems that dominate Eastern Europe prevail throughout the country, western regions are frequently influenced by the maritime weather prevalent in Western Europe. When the systems to the north are weak, Mediterranean weather may occasionally brush southern parts of the country.

Winters are fairly cold, cloudy, and humid, although high humidity and cloud cover tend to be more prevalent in valleys and

lower areas. Light rain or snow is frequent. The mountains are covered with snow from early November through April, and accumulations are deep in some places. Lower elevations rarely have more than fifteen centimeters of snow cover at a time.

Summers are usually pleasant. There is heavy rainfall, but it comes in sporadic showers, making for many warm, dry days with scattered cumulus clouds. Prevailing winds are westerly; they are usually light in summer (except during thunderstorms) and somewhat stronger in winter.

Average temperatures in Prague, which is representative of lowland cities in Bohemia and Moravia, range between about 1°C in January and about 19°C in July. Winters are chilly; summers have warm afternoons and cool evenings. In the eastern parts of the country, the temperature extremes are greater. Higher elevations, especially those with western exposures, usually have a narrower temperature range but on the average are considerably cooler. December, January, and February are the coldest months; June, July, and August are the warmest. Spring tends to start late, and autumn may come abruptly in middle or late September. At lower elevations, frosts are rare between the end of April and the beginning of October.

Rainfall varies widely between the plains and the upland areas. Parts of western Bohemia receive only forty centimeters of rainfall per year; some areas in the Vysoké Tatry average two meters. The average rainfall in the vicinity of Prague is forty-eight centimeters. Precipitation varies more than in other areas of Europe, which are often dominated by maritime weather systems; consequently, droughts and floods sometimes occur.

Despite the greater frequency of precipitation during the winter, more than twice as much precipitation, or about 38 percent, falls in the summer. The spring and autumn figures are about equal.

## **Demography**

### **Population**

Data published by the Czechoslovak government in 1986 showed a January 1, 1986, population of 15,520,839 and a 1985 population growth rate of 0.3 percent a year. The annual rate of growth in the Czech Socialist Republic, which contained about two-thirds of the population, was 0.05 percent, and in the Slovak Socialist Republic, 0.73 percent. In 1984 life expectancy was sixty-seven years for men and seventy-four years for women. About 26 percent of the population was under the age of 15, and 17 percent

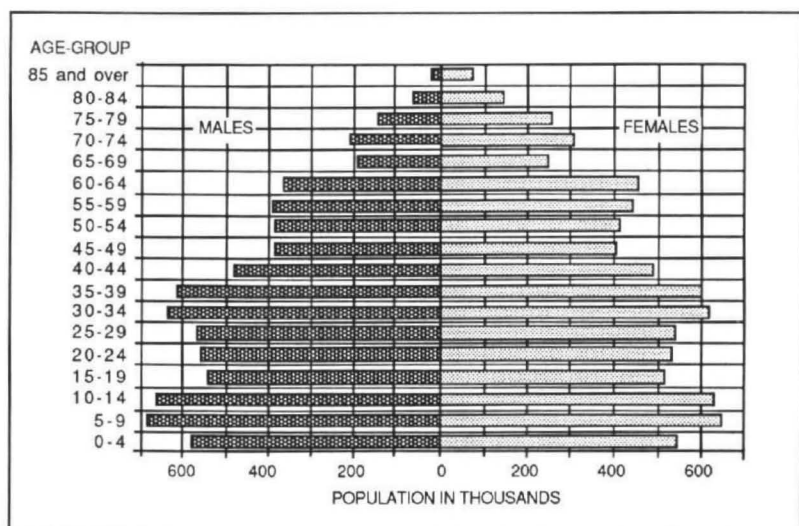
was over the age of 60. There were 104 females for each 100 males among the population as a whole (see fig. 10).

At the start of 1986, the population density was approximately 121 persons per square kilometer. The most densely settled geographic region was Moravia, which had about 154 persons per square kilometer. The figure for Bohemia was about 120, and for Slovakia, about 106 (see fig. 11). The major cities and their estimated populations in January 1986 were as follows: Prague, 1.2 million; Bratislava, 417,103; Brno, 385,684; Ostrava, 327,791; Košice, 222,175; and Plzeň, 175,244 (see table 2, Appendix A). Czechoslovakia remains essentially a society of small cities and towns, in which about 65 percent of the population are classified as urban dwellers.

### **Urbanization and Migration**

The urban tradition in the Czech lands dates from approximately the ninth century A.D., and the growth of towns centered on princely castles and bishops' seats. Artisan and trading activities were a subsidiary part of these urban settlements. Trading, in fact, defined the spread of secondary towns across the countryside, each roughly a day's journey from the next along major trade routes. Prague grew up around Hradčany Castle, having the dual advantage of being both bishopric and princely seat from about the ninth century. By the fourteenth century, it was a major continental city with 40,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, a university (Charles University, one of Europe's first), and an administrative seat of the Holy Roman Empire. After the defeat of the Bohemian nobles in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, Prague and the other cities of the Czech lands languished until the nineteenth century. Slovakia, as a result of its agrarian nature and Hungarian rule, remained a region of small towns scattered amid farming villages and Hungarian estates.

During the nineteenth century, there was a surge of migration and urbanization in both the Czech lands and Slovakia. Much of this was linked to nineteenth-century Europe's tremendous population increase and the spread of the railroads. Czech and Slovak urbanization proceeded apace; the proportion of the population living in towns of more than 2,000 grew from 18 percent to 45 percent between 1843 and 1910. The rate of increase in major industrial centers was spectacular: between 1828 and 1910, Prague's population grew by a factor of nearly seven, Plzeň's by over thirteen. In 1910 Ostrava had 167 times the population it had a century before. This pattern of urbanization persisted through the First Republic, although at a lower rate.



Source: Based on information from *Statistická ročenka*, Prague, 1986, 96.

Figure 10. Age-Sex Distribution, 1985

Urbanization and migration patterns have altered significantly in the socialist era. A desire to balance population and industrial distribution dictated urban policy from the 1950s through the 1980s. Since World War II, such historically predominant urban centers as Prague and Brno have not been the official, preferred choices for continued growth. Despite consistent efforts to relocate citybound workers away from the traditional destinations of rural emigrants, in the 1980s the six largest cities (all major urban centers in the early twentieth century) nevertheless accounted for over 40 percent of the population living in cities of over 20,000. Beyond this, however, there was relatively little concentration; 50 percent of the population lived in settlements of fewer than 10,000. The landscape was one of small, dispersed settlements, small cities, scattered towns, and cooperative farm centers (see table 3, Appendix A).

Rural-urban migration decreased in the 1970s, apparently less because of balanced population distribution than because commuting matched workers with industrial employment. Excluding intracity commuting, between one-third and one-half of all workers commuted during the 1980s. A substantial portion of these were long-distance, weekly, or monthly commuters. In the planner's view, commuting had replaced migration; it had the considerable advantage of lessening the burdens of expanding industrialization

on urban services. From the worker's perspective, however, commuting was most often a matter of involuntarily deferred migration. Scarce urban housing was the principal constraint on the potential migrant, though one year's rural commuter could still become the next year's city dweller. Commuting has placed heavy demands on the commuter's time and on public transit, which has meant a substantial outlay for both railroad and roadway passenger service. One can gauge the effect of commuting on the working populace by considering that most Czechoslovak factories begin operation at 6:00 A.M. and most offices between 7:00 and 8:00 A.M.

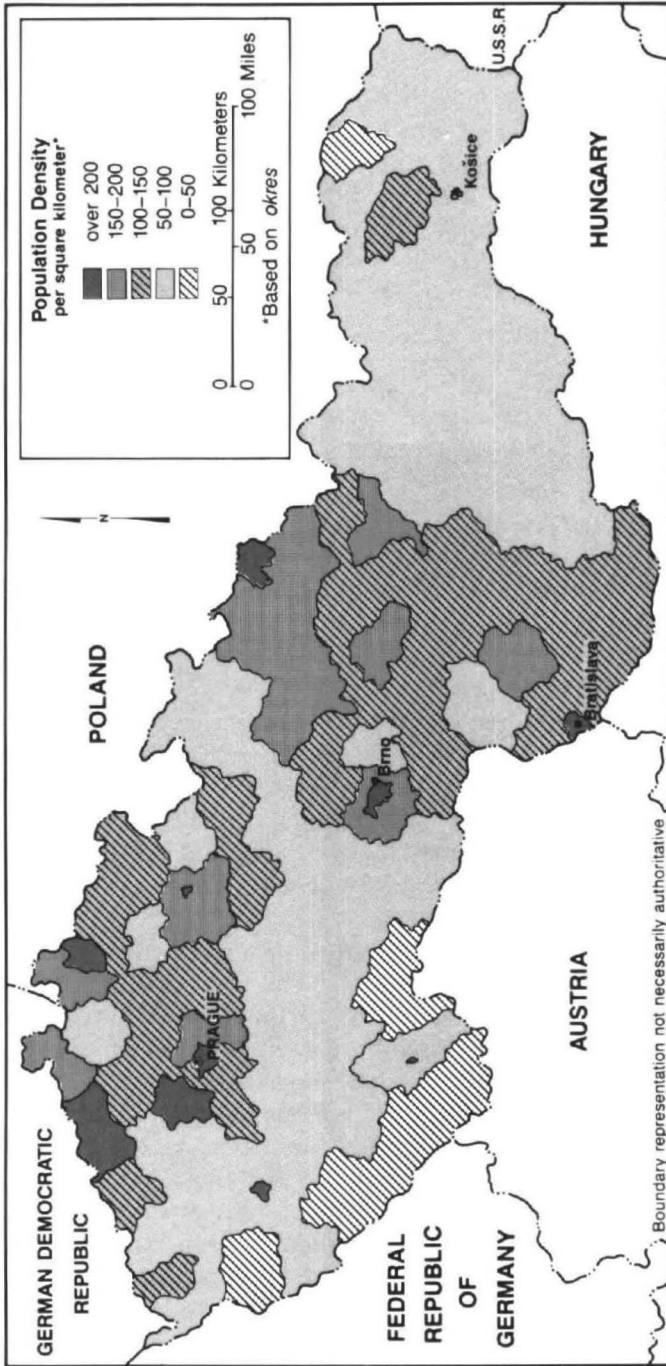
## **Housing**

Planners continued to make efforts to remedy the longstanding housing shortage in rural and urban regions alike. Since statistics did not always provide a comparison between the numbers of households and existing housing units, the housing deficit remained difficult to gauge. A comparison of the number of marriages annually and construction of new housing units between 1960 and 1975 shows that construction exceeded marriages only in 1975. The deficit was most acute in the 1960s, when an average of 7 housing units was built for every 10 marriages; in 1985 the ratio rose to an average of 8.8 units per 10 marriages.

This approximation underestimated the housing deficit: it ignored divorces, the number of extended families living together who would have preferred separate housing, and the decay of old housing (see *The Family*, this ch.). Even waiting lists underestimated how inadequate housing was in the 1980s. Separate housing for single adults had such a low priority with planners that single adults found it difficult even to get on a housing list.

One of the factors contributing to the housing shortage was the low construction rate of rental housing. Major reasons for this were high inflation, high construction costs, and low (heavily subsidized) rents. In 1985 the average building cost for apartments rose to Kčs2,523 per square meter, and the average monthly rent—for the seventh consecutive year—was Kčs358 (for value of the koruna—see Glossary). Construction of individual homes peaked in 1977 at 40,107 and decreased to 29,608 in 1985. Building a home privately was possible, but acquiring labor and materials was difficult and sometimes risky; it often meant borrowing machinery illegally or paying bribes for materials.

Despite substantial gains in the 1970s, Czechoslovakia entered the 1980s with a housing shortage that was likely to take years to remedy. In 1986 the government announced a slight cutback in



Source: Based on information from *Statistická ročenka*, Prague, 1986, 74.

Figure 11. Population Density, 1986

new housing construction for the 1986-90 housing plan, further aggravating the situation.

## **Emigration**

Historically, emigration has always been an option for Czechs and Slovaks dissatisfied with the situation at home. Each wave of emigration had its own impetus. In the nineteenth century, the reasons were primarily economic. In the twentieth century, emigration has largely been prompted by political turmoil, though economic factors still play a role. The first major wave of emigration in this century came after the communists came to power, and the next wave began after the Prague Spring movement was crushed.

In the 1980s the most popular way to emigrate to the West was to travel to Yugoslavia by automobile and, once there, take a detour to Greece, Austria, or Italy (Yugoslav border restrictions were not as strict as those of the Warsaw Pact nations). Only a small percentage of those who applied to emigrate legally could do so. The exact details of the process have never been published, but a reasonably clear picture can be gleaned from those who have succeeded. It is a lengthy and costly process. Those applicants allowed to even consider emigration have been required to repay the state for their education, depending on their level of education and salary, at a rate ranging from Kčs4,000 to Kčs10,000. (The average yearly wage was about Kčs33,600 in 1984.) The applicant was likely to lose his job and be socially ostracized. Technically, at least, such émigrés would be allowed to return for visits. Those who had been politically active, such as Charter 77 signatories found it somewhat easier to emigrate, but they have not been allowed to return and reportedly have had to pay the state exorbitant fees—Kčs23,000 to as much as Kčs80,000—if they had graduated from a university (see *Popular Political Expression*, ch. 4).

Old-age pensioners had no problem visiting or emigrating to the West. The reasons for this were purely economic; if they decided to stay in the West, the state no longer had to pay their pension.

Official statistics for the early 1980s show that, on the average, 3,500 people emigrated legally each year. From 1965 to 1983, a total of 33,000 people emigrated legally. This figure undoubtedly included a large number of ethnic Germans resettled in East Germany. The largest émigré communities are located in Austria, West Germany, the United States, Canada, and Australia.

## **Ethnic Groups**

Czechoslovakia's ethnic composition in 1987 offered a stark contrast to that of the First Republic. No large secessionist German



community troubled the society, and Carpatho-Ukraine (poor and overwhelmingly Ukrainian and Hungarian) had been ceded to the Soviet Union following World War II. Czechs and Slovaks, about two-thirds of the First Republic's populace in 1930, represented about 94 percent of the population by 1950. The aspirations of ethnic minorities had been the pivot on which the First Republic's politics turned. This was no longer the case in the 1980s. Nevertheless, ethnicity continued to be a pervasive issue and an integral part of Czechoslovak life. Although the country's ethnic composition had been simplified, the division between Czechs and Slovaks remained; each group had a distinct history and divergent aspirations.

From 1950 through 1983, the Slovak share of the total population increased steadily. The Czech population as a portion of the total declined by about 4 percent, while the Slovak population increased by slightly more than that. The actual numbers were hardly such as to imperil a Czech majority; in 1983 there were still more than two Czechs for every Slovak. In the mid-1980s, the respective fertility rates were fairly close, but the Slovak fertility rate was declining more slowly.

## **Czechs**

A glance at a map of Central Europe provides one key to understanding Czech culture: the Czech lands—Bohemia and Moravia—are surrounded by Germanic peoples on three sides. The fear of being engulfed by expansionist Germanic hordes remains a traditional and deep-seated one among the Czechs. The Germans prompted Czech concern for their cultural and political survival long before the Munich Agreement of 1938, when Czechoslovakia lost the Sudetenland, and World War II. Czech-German relations were the backdrop against which the controversies of the Hussite period were played out. The Hussite movement focused on German hegemony in university and ecclesiastical offices as much as theological doctrine (see Hussite Movement, ch. 1). The linguistic border between Czechs and Germans in the mountains surrounding Bohemia tells something of the determination with which Czechs have resisted German expansion; since the ninth century, that boundary has remained fixed within fifty kilometers of its present location, irrespective of the political fortunes of the two groups.

The Czechs have been part of the major intellectual and artistic traditions of western Europe since the Middle Ages. Czech influence has been formative in movements as diverse as Renaissance music, the Protestant Reformation, structural linguistics, and



*Hus Memorial and Kinsky Palace in Old Town Square, Prague*

twentieth-century European literature. A cultural tradition clearly rationalistic, secular, and anticlerical permeates Czech life; this is partly a consequence of the Hussite period and subsequent Austrian efforts to force Roman Catholicism on a reluctant populace. Part of Czech self-identity focuses on maintaining the unique blend of Slavic and Western elements that make up the Czech heritage.

Czechs seem to possess a predilection for political pluralism and a distinctly antiauthoritarian bent. Czechoslovakia was the one eastern European country to maintain a functioning democracy for the entire interwar period and the only one in which the communist party was never outlawed. In the party's analysis of the errors of the 1960s' "counterrevolution," party ideologues especially decried the prevalence of "social democraticism," which despite more than twenty years of socialist development remained deeply rooted in Czech society.

Austrian rule was relatively benign toward the Czechs. The Hapsburg Empire was more cosmopolitan than aggressively German, consisting of a hodgepodge of central and eastern European ethnic groups. German was the lingua franca, but beyond that, German speakers were not necessarily the only beneficiaries of Hapsburg policies. If, as Tomáš Masaryk put it, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a "prison of nations," it was equally clear that some parts of the prison were distinctly better than others (see *Hapsburg Rule, 1526-1867*, ch. 1).

In comparison with Slovakia and Carpatho-Ukraine, both under Hungarian domination for centuries, the Czech lands were remarkably favored. The Austrians lacked the overweening chauvinism of their Hungarian counterparts. On the eve of World War I, German was mandatory neither as the language of instruction nor as a second language. Censorship of the Czech press was limited. Czech associations (the basis of the political parties of the First Republic) flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cultural organizations, newspapers, and theaters were all commonplace parts of Czech life (see Associations, this ch.).

Czechs were overwhelmingly literate; in 1930 some 97 percent of the population over 10 years of age could read and write. There was a substantial middle class that was highly educated and well trained. Czechs had extensive experience in the Austrian bureaucracy and the legislative processes. Their wealth of experience in government contrasted starkly with that of the Slovaks, whom Czechs found backward. A certain degree of animosity has always persisted and continues to persist between the Czechs and Slovaks today (see Slovaks, this ch.).

The Czech region was economically favored as well. The Treaty of Versailles gave the Czechs substantial arable land and two-thirds of the former empire's industry. In the late 1930s, after other powers had spent a decade of frenzied effort developing heavy industry for rearmament, the Czech lands still produced half of Central Europe's pig iron and steel. The Czech consumer goods industry was also well developed. However, Bohemia's economic advantages proved to be a two-edged sword. Much industry was owned by a substantial German minority of dubious loyalty, and this figured in Nazi Germany's designs on the republic (see The Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-38, ch. 1). Nonetheless, the Czech lands emerged from World War II as virtually the only European region with a reasonably developed industrial structure unscathed by the conflict.

One characterization of the Czech national character is that it is *Švejkian*, a term based on the Czech protagonist in Jaroslav Hašek's famous (and still popular) World War I novel, *The Good Soldier Švejk*. Švejk's adventures in the Great War begin with his arrest by the Austrian police in connection with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne. In the conflict between the staid Austrian bureaucracy and the military establishment, on the one hand, and the seemingly slow-witted, literal-minded, provincial Švejk, on the other, the Czech consistently gets the better.

In terms of Czech values and behavior, the term *Švejkian* suggests passive acquiescence to whatever regime holds power and recommends a sort of pervasive obtuseness as the safest strategy for political survival. The *Švejkian* means of dealing with those in power, whether Austrian bureaucrats, Czechoslovak communist officials, or Warsaw Pact forces, is the antithesis of armed resistance (see *Popular Political Expression*, ch. 4). In the midst of massive labor unrest in Poland in late 1980, the Soviets hesitated to use armed intervention. Polish workers indicated their readiness to resist in terms unmistakable to an East European: "We are not the Czechs." The Czechs are often criticized for their reluctance to go to the barricades, but the *Švejkian* strategy is less a matter of capitulation than a peculiarly Czech mix of resistance and survival. Hitler is reputed to have said that he never trusted the Czechs less than when they were making concessions.

The principal elements of the Czech ethos were played out in the Czech reaction to events of the Prague Spring of 1968 (see *Intervention*, ch. 1). Both the Czechs' orientation to the West and their *Švejkism* were apparent, in different ways, during the Prague Spring and the Soviet intervention and its aftermath. The late-1960s reform movement had begun as an attempt to remedy the economy's rather dismal performance with as little change as possible but grew into a full-fledged effort to restructure Marxist socialism. The call to redress the wrongs of the Stalinist era led to a full-scale reevaluation of the appropriateness of that model in Czechoslovakia. Czechs called for some measure of political pluralism, for greater autonomy for the myriad associations and unions formerly central to Czech society and now under control of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa—KSČ), and for genuine freedom of expression—"socialism with a human face."

It was clear that for a people with a pronounced egalitarian bent, Russian socialism was less than congenial. An anonymous Czech KSČ official related an incident that illustrates the gulf between the Soviets and the Czechs. During the 1968 invasion, a Soviet military commander asked a Czech official to tell him who had ordered the road signs and street names removed (to slow the advance of the invading troops). The official explained that the people themselves had done it without instructions from anyone. It was an explanation the Soviet officer simply could not understand: independent action by the citizenry without orders from someone in authority was beyond his experience.

Czech reformers sought explicitly political changes: greater scope for democratic processes, freedom of expression, and more representative organizations. The Soviet response is, of course, a matter

of history. Because 1968 was, after all, a *Prague Spring*, normalization took a greater toll among Czechs than Slovaks. KSC membership purges, changes in the managerial personnel of factories, and retributions against writers and artists all fell more heavily on the Czechs.

## **Slovaks**

While Bohemia and Moravia were among the more favored nations in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovakia's position was far less enviable. Hungarian rule systematically excluded Slovaks from the political arena. They were consistently gerrymandered out of parliamentary seats and administrative posts, even in local government. In 1910, when Czechs could be found throughout the Austrian bureaucracy, Slovaks held only 5 percent of the judicial offices and 3 percent of the civil service positions in Slovakia. Electoral laws reinforced this inequity: Austrian-dominated lands had universal adult male suffrage, while lands under Hungarian rule had limited suffrage and significant educational and age restrictions. Hungarians were far more aggressively assimilationist than their Austrian counterparts following the establishment of the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary (also known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire) in 1867 (see *The Dual Monarchy, 1867-1918*, ch. 1). Whereas Czech institutions and fraternal associations thrived under the relatively benign tolerance of Austrian rule, the Hungarians closed Slovak secondary schools, repressed Slovak cultural organizations, made Hungarian the official language in 1868, and pursued a course of thoroughgoing Magyarization.

The contrast between the economy of the Czech lands and that of Slovakia was as dramatic as their differing political heritages. Slovakia was agrarian, while the Czech lands were among the most industrialized regions in Europe. But the contrast went beyond that: Czech farmers represented a relatively prosperous, literate, and politically articulate group of middle-income agriculturalists; Slovak farmers were peasant farmers in tenancy on Hungarian estates.

Whereas Czechs wished to create a Czechoslovak nation, Slovaks sought a federation. The First Republic, with its predominantly Czech administrative apparatus, hardly responded to Slovak aspirations for autonomy. In the Slovak view, Czech domination had simply replaced Hungarian, since Czechs who were unable to find positions in Bohemia or Moravia took over local administrative and educational posts in Slovakia.

Linguistic similarity and geographic proximity proved to be an inadequate basis for a nation-state. A Lutheran minority of Slovaks (educated and influential in government) was generally sympathetic

*Michalská Tower,  
Bratislava*



to the republic, but the Slovak Catholic clergy, the rural bourgeoisie, and the peasantry wanted autonomy. The Slovak Republic (1939–45) was, among other things, the culmination of Slovak discontent with Czech hegemony in the country's affairs (see Slovak Republic, ch. 1). Perhaps one measure of how profoundly important ethnicity and autonomy are to Slovaks was a Slovak writer's 1968 call for a more positive reappraisal of the Slovak Republic. Although as a Marxist he found Monsignor Jozef Tiso's "clerico-fascist state" politically abhorrent, he acknowledged that "the Slovak Republic existed as the national state of the Slovaks, the only one in our history. . . ." Comparable sentiments surfaced periodically throughout the 1970s in letters to Bratislava's *Pravda*, even though the newspaper's editors tried to inculcate in their readership a "class and concretely historical approach" to the nationality question.

The division between Czechs and Slovaks persisted as a key element in the reform movement of the 1960s and the retrenchment of the 1970s, a decade that dealt harshly with the aspirations of both Czechs and Slovaks. Ethnicity still remains integral to the social, political, and economic affairs of the country. It is not merely a matter of individual identity, folklore, or tradition.

The post-1948 government has put a high priority on redressing the socioeconomic imbalance between the highly industrialized Czech lands and underdeveloped Slovakia. Slovakia made major

gains in industrial production in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1970s, its industrial production was near parity with that of the Czech lands. Although Slovak planners were quick to note that capital investment continued to lag, it was clear that Slovakia's share of industrial production had grown tremendously. Slovakia's portion of per capita national income rose from slightly more than 60 percent of that of Bohemia and Moravia in 1948 to nearly 80 percent in 1968, and Slovak per capita earning power equaled that of the Czechs in 1971.

A general improvement in services, especially in health and education, accompanied Slovakia's industrial growth. In the mid-1980s, the number of physicians per capita slightly exceeded that for the Czech lands, whereas in 1948 it had been two-thirds the Czech figure. From 1948 to 1983, the number of students in higher education in Slovakia per 1,000 inhabitants increased from 47 percent of the Czech figure to 119 percent (see *Health and Social Welfare*, this ch.).

Postwar political developments affected Slovaks less favorably. Party rule in Czechoslovakia took a turn that quashed Slovak hopes for federation and national autonomy. In the 1950s purges, prominent Slovak communists who had played major roles in the 1944 Slovak National Uprising were tried and sentenced as "bourgeois nationalists" (see *Stalinization*, ch. 1). Eventually, Czechs also fell victim to the purges, but Slovaks remained convinced that Prague Stalinists were responsible for the trials. Neither the 1948 nor the 1960 constitution offered much scope for Slovak autonomy. In the 1960s, Laco (Ladislav) Novomeský echoed the feelings and frustrations of many Slovaks when he commented that they had become "a tolerated race of vice-chairmen and deputy ministers, a second-class minority generously accorded a one-third quota in everything. . . ."

The regime of Antonín Novotný (first secretary of the KSČ from 1953 to 1968) was frequently less than enlightened in its treatment of Slovakia. Novotný himself demanded "intolerant struggle against any nationalism" and suggested that the real solution to Czech-Slovak relations would be mass intermarriage between the two groups. The Slovaks found this recommendation—to deal with ethnic differences by eliminating them—all too typical of Prague's attitude toward them.

Political developments in the late 1960s and 1970s provided a portrait of Czech and Slovak differences. Slovak demands for reform in the 1960s reflected dissatisfaction with Czech hegemony in government and policy making. Whereas Czechs wanted some measure of political pluralism, the Slovak rallying cry was "No

democratization without federation.” It was less a difference in emphasis than a study in contrasts, and the Slovak focus was institutional change—“federalizing” the government apparatus with largely autonomous Czech and Slovak structures. Slovaks called for the full rehabilitation of the “bourgeois nationalists” and a reappraisal of the 1944 uprising (see *Slovak Resistance*, ch. 1).

Even economic demands split along ethnic lines, although there was considerable variation within both republics in response to calls for economic reform. Czech KSĊ planners called for implementing the New Economic Model, an integrated economic system allowing substantial autonomy for individual enterprises and intended to promote a general increase in efficiency (see *The Reform Movement*, ch. 1). Slovaks wished economic reform to be adapted to their particular needs. Rather than a single, integrated economic system, they had in mind parallel Czech and Slovak national economic organizations.

Czech reaction to these concerns annoyed Slovaks further. In the Czech view, their own focus on the rehumanization of Marxism was universalistic, whereas the Slovak preoccupation with national autonomy was provincial and anachronistic—certainly too trivial for those whose concern was “socialism with a human face.”

The Constitutional Law of Federation of October 27, 1968, responded to the Slovak desire for autonomy. Significantly, however, the KSĊ remained strongly centralized. Developments in the 1970s further weakened the two republics’ newly established government structures. KSĊ efforts, although not necessarily motivated by anti-Slovak feelings, were heavily weighted in favor of centralization (see *Political Setting*, ch. 4). A thoroughgoing adherence to Soviet dictates undermined autonomy as effectively as any overtly anti-Slovak sentiment might have.

Whatever the ultimate fate of federalization, its prominence as an issue among Slovaks—the general populace as well as party members—gave an indication of how important the Czech-Slovak division remained. A 1960s survey found that 73 percent of Slovak respondents supported federalism; 94 percent wished that Czech-Slovak relations might be restructured. A subsequent survey in the mid-1970s, when the new federal structures were in place, found that Slovaks thought the new government organization, in contrast to much of their historical experience, treated Czechs and Slovaks equally.

## **Others**

The roughly 6 percent of the population who are neither Czech nor Slovak have had an uneven history in the postwar era (see



fig. 12). The highly centralized rule of the KSČ undermined the political leverage that the First Republic's multiparty politics had permitted to ethnic minorities. Beyond this, however, the sheer decrease in the German and Ukrainian populations of Czechoslovakia would have limited their influence in any event.

The events of the late 1960s brought calls for reform from ethnic minorities. The government's response was Constitutional Act No. 144 (October 1968), which defined the status of ethnic groups in Czechoslovakia and acknowledged the full political and cultural rights of legally recognized minorities. Minorities were granted the right, with state approval, to their own cultural organizations. The emphasis has been on cultural activities; minority organizations have had no right to represent their members in political affairs.

In the 1980s, Hungarians were the largest enumerated minority ethnic group. In 1984 approximately 590,000 Hungarians (concentrated in southern Slovakia) made up 11 percent of Slovakia's population. Despite significant anti-Hungarian sentiment in Slovakia, the postwar exchange of Slovaks in Hungary for Hungarians in Slovakia met with only limited success; the proportion of Hungarians in the population has changed little since 1930 (see table 4, Appendix A).

Although Hungarians were a distinct minority of the total population, they were highly visible in the border regions of Slovakia. There, Hungarians constituted nearly half the population of some districts. Furthermore, 20 percent lived in exclusively Hungarian settlements. Given Hungary's long domination of Slovakia, Hungarian-Slovak relations have not been easy; the two groups are separated by substantial linguistic and cultural differences. In 1968 some Hungarians in Slovakia called for reincorporation into Hungary. This was apparently a minority view; Hungarian Warsaw Pact troops entering Czechoslovakia in 1968 encountered as much hostility from Hungarians in Slovakia as they did from the rest of the population.

Before their relocation in 1945, Germans outnumbered Czechs in both the Krušné hory and the Sudeten Mountains. Over 3 million Germans were included in the First Republic, constituting the largest German community in a non-German state. They were intensely pan-German and aggressively nationalistic. Their inclusion in the First Republic precipitated massive protests. Throughout the interwar period, Sudeten Germans were acutely aware of their minority status within Czechoslovakia; they found the contrast with their former preeminence galling.

The large, often unabashedly secessionist German minority ultimately proved to be the undoing of the First Republic (see

Munich, ch. 1). With their expulsion, Czechoslovakia lost over one-fifth of its population. Some 165,000 Germans escaped deportation and remained scattered along the country's western border in the former Sudetenland. Through the mid-1970s, Germans represented a declining proportion of the population; younger Germans increasingly were assimilated into Czech society or emigrated to the West. Even those Germans who were not expelled after World War II were not permitted to hold Czechoslovak citizenship until 1953.

In 1968-69 Germans demanded more German-language publications and mandatory German-language instruction in areas having a substantial German minority. The 1968 Constitutional Act No. 144 recognized the Germans' legal status as an ethnic minority for the first time since World War II.

Poles (approximately 71,000 in 1984) were concentrated in the Ostrava mining region on the northern border. In addition to a large community of resident Poles, a substantial number commuted across the border from Poland to work or to take advantage of the relative abundance of Czechoslovak consumer goods. Official policies toward the Poles (resident or not) have attempted to limit their influence both in and out of the workplace. In 1969, for example, a Czech journal reported that a primarily Polish-speaking district in the Ostrava area had been gerrymandered to create two districts, each with a Czech majority.

Czechoslovak officialdom considered Polish influence in the workplace an insidious danger. The "seepage" from more liberal Polish regimes has concerned Czechoslovak communists since the 1950s, when Poles led the way in resisting increased work demands. The 1980-81 unrest in Poland exacerbated the situation (see *Relations with Communist Nations*, ch. 4). There were reports of strikes among the workers in the Ostrava area in late 1980.

Before World War II, Gypsies in Czechoslovakia were considered Czechoslovak citizens of Gypsy nationality. After the war, since they did not possess the properties of a nationality according to communist criteria, they were regarded by the communist regime as merely a special ethnic group. Based on this, the regime approached the matter not as a question of nationality but as a social and political question.

Eastern Slovakia had a sizable Gypsy minority. About 66 percent of the country's Gypsies lived in Slovakia in the 1980s, where they constituted about 4 percent of the population. Estimates of their exact numbers vary, but observers agree that their postwar birthrate has been phenomenal. In the early 1970s, there were

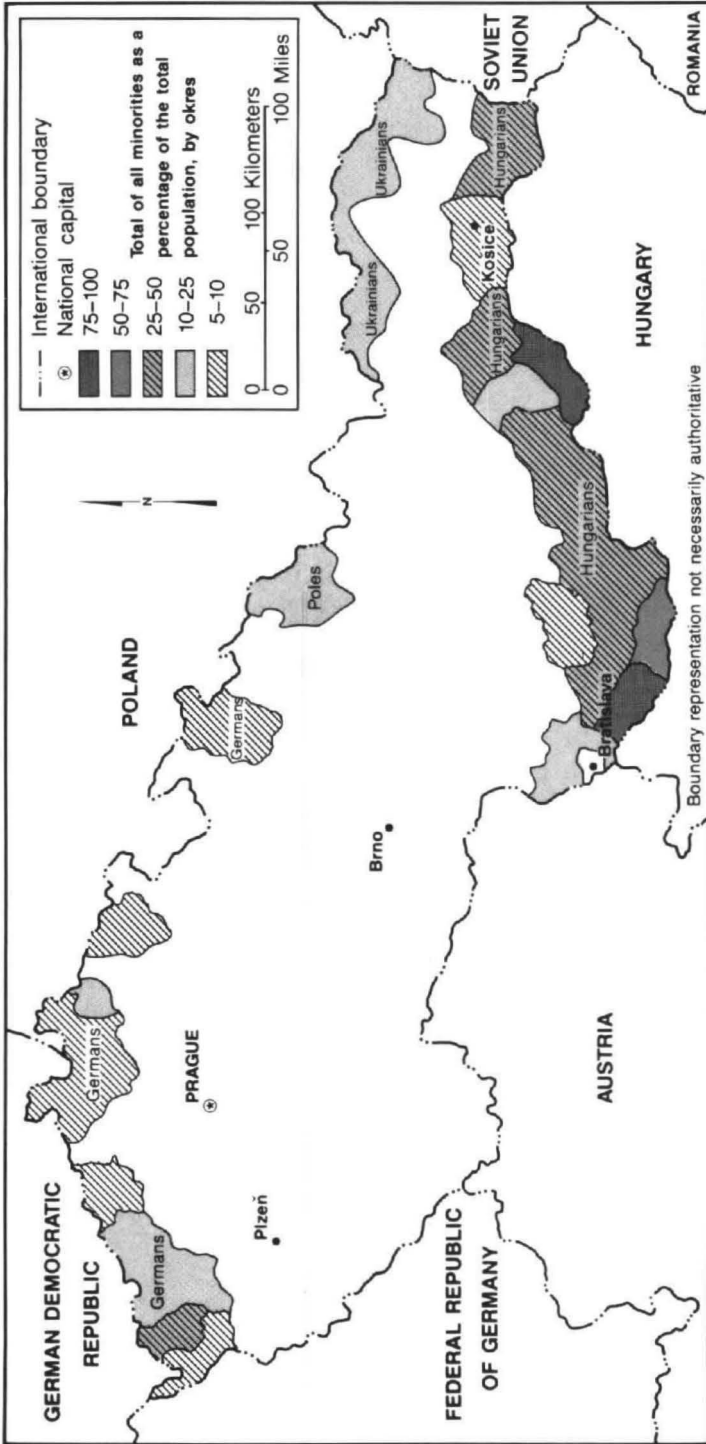


Figure 12. Ethnic Minorities in Czechoslovakia

approximately 200,000 to 300,000 Gypsies in the country. In 1980 estimates ranged from 250,000 to 400,000.

Gypsy intelligentsia agitated unsuccessfully for inclusion of Gypsies in the 1968 Constitutional Act No. 144, and they remained the largest unrecognized minority in Czechoslovakia. Policy makers have found them a conundrum. The Gypsy population combines continued high rates of crime and illiteracy with a cultural system that places low value on regular employment. According to *Czechoslovak Life*, in 1986, "the customs and thinking of the Gypsy population are somewhat different." A 1979 article in Bratislava's *Pravda* asserted that the crime rate among Gypsies was four times the national average. The author went on to call for "the incorporation of all Gypsy citizens of productive age to [sic] the working process" and to decry the number of Gypsies "who constantly refuse to work." A large number of Gypsies were involved in the black market.

Official policy has vacillated between forced assimilation and enforced isolation in carefully controlled settlements. The nomadic wandering integral to Gypsy culture has been illegal since 1958. Laws passed in 1965 and 1969 provided for "dispersion" of Gypsies, i.e., transferring them from areas where they were concentrated to other areas. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, assimilationist policies held clear sway. There were efforts to increase the participation of Gypsy children in preschool, kindergarten, secondary school, apprenticeship programs, and summer recreational and educational camps. There were also concerted government attempts to integrate Gypsies into the national labor force; in the early 1980s, some 90 percent of adult Gypsy males below retirement age were employed. In 1979 about 50 percent of working-age Gypsy women were employed; by 1981 this figure had risen to 74 percent.

Critics have contended that government policies verge on "genocide." They have charged that the government was taking children away from Gypsy parents and pressuring Gypsy women to undergo sterilization. The Gypsy birthrate was reportedly two and one-half to three times the national average; in the mid-1980s, it was 2.6 percent per year as opposed to 0.7 percent per year for the population as a whole.

Czechoslovakia lost most of its Ukrainian population when Carpatho-Ukraine was ceded to the Soviet Union after World War II. This had been the First Republic's poorest region, and, if Slovakia had fared badly under Hungarian domination, Carpatho-Ukraine's situation had been far worse. In the words of one historian, in 1914 the region was "little more than a Magyar deer

park." Its people were wretchedly poor, having for centuries supplemented the meager living the mountainous area afforded with seasonal agricultural labor and service in the Hungarian infantry. Because of its strong cultural and linguistic links with the Ukrainians of the Soviet Union and interwar Poland, the region was a hotbed of secessionist sentiment throughout the interwar period. There were also calls for Ukrainian autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic (see Problems of Dissatisfied Nationalities, ch. 1).

In 1983 the remaining 48,000 or so Ukrainians were clustered in northeastern Slovakia. They remained overwhelmingly agricultural; often they were private farmers scattered on small, impoverished holdings in mountainous terrain. They were generally Uniates and suffered in the 1950s and 1960s from the government's repression of that group in favor of the Orthodox Church (see Religion, this ch.).

A very small fraction of Czechoslovakia's pre-World War II Jewish community remained in the 1980s. Estimates of both the prewar and the postwar Jewish population are imprecise. Calculations based on either religious preference or the number of Yiddish speakers ignored the large numbers of assimilated Jews in Bohemia and Slovakia. Most estimates put the pre-World War II population in the neighborhood of 250,000. In 1975 Malcom Browne stated that there were some 5,000 practicing Jews remaining in Czechoslovakia, including about 1,200 in Prague, which once had a large, vibrant Jewish community dating back to the Middle Ages.

In the Czech lands, Nazi efforts to encourage anti-Semitic legislation had met with limited success until the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (see Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, ch. 1). Bohemian Jews had been prominent members of the Czech elite, and anti-Semitism in the Czech lands had more often been directed toward Jews of the Sudetenland, who were condemned both as Germans and as "capitalist exploiters." Reinhard Heydrich, named Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia in 1941, vowed to make the region *judenrein* (free of Jews) within two months. Heydrich pursued the deportation and extermination of the Jewish population with a passion rare even among those most dedicated to the "final solution." On June 6, 1943, Hitler declared Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate to be *judenrein*. Most Czech Jews perished, along with sizable numbers of Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria, and Slovakia.

In Slovakia many Jews were Hungarian speakers; they identified and were identified with Hungarian domination. It mattered little that Slovak Catholic and nationalistic anti-Semitism had social and intellectual roots different from Nazi racism. Monsignor

*The Old Jewish  
Cemetery in Prague  
(State Jewish Museum)*



Tiso's government complied with Nazi deportation orders with little reluctance; even baptized Jews were not exempt. Eventually, in 1943, the Vatican intervened, informing Tiso in no uncertain terms that deporting Jews meant sending them to their deaths. After the Slovak National Uprising in 1944 and the Nazi occupation of Slovakia, more Jews were deported. At the time of the Soviet "liberation" of Bratislava, only about 20,000 survived.

Some anti-Jewish sentiment still existed in the 1980s. The government's vehemently anti-Israeli stance, coupled with a persistent failure to distinguish between Israelis and Jews, gave anti-Semitic attitudes continued prominence. Official denunciations of dissidents having purportedly Jewish names added a distinctly anti-Semitic flavor. One Charter 77 signer was condemned as "an international adventurer" and another, more pointedly, as "a foreigner without a fatherland, who was never integrated into the Czech community"—notorious euphemisms long used in anti-Jewish rhetoric. Officials alleged that the signers were under orders from "anticommunist and Zionist centers."

## **Language**

The correct American English adjective for the language, people, and culture of Slovakia is *Slovak*; Slovak belongs to the *Slavic* group of languages. British usage employs *Slovakian* for the American *Slovak* and uses *Slavonic* where the American usage is *Slavic*.

The adjective for the Czech people, language, and culture is *Czech*. The form *Czechoslovak* is used when referring to the government or a person's or thing's official function, e.g., Czechoslovak citizenship.

Czech and Slovak, the two official languages of Czechoslovakia (as of 1918), are similar but separate languages. They are actually so close as to be mutually intelligible, and Czechoslovak media use both languages, knowing that they will be understood by both Czechs and Slovaks. Czech is spoken by approximately 10 million people, primarily in the Czech Socialist Republic (Bohemia and Moravia); about 5 million people, primarily in Slovakia, speak Slovak. Both are West Slavic languages and are closely related to Polish (also a West Slavic language). Czech and Slovak are more distantly related to Russian (an East Slavic language), with which they share a number of features, although they are not mutually intelligible. Despite the similarities between Czech and Slovak, their literary languages emerged at different times. Both languages use the Roman alphabet, but the alphabets differ slightly.

In addition to the two literary languages, a number of dialects are spoken throughout the country. Everyday speech among villagers (especially older people), for example, will usually be in dialect, whereas in urban areas the dialects are losing their foothold, especially among the educated.

The Slovak literary language as it is known today was not established until the nineteenth century, although Slovak in its different dialects had been spoken for many centuries. At various times, Latin (the official language of Hungary for a time), Hungarian, and Czech had been used as the literary language of the Slovaks. As with Czech, it was the mid-nineteenth century surge of nationalism that finally saw the widespread adoption (earlier efforts had limited success) of what is today's literary language, based on the central dialects.

Change in Slovak, as in all other languages, is an ongoing process. Words, phrases, and idioms fall out of use, while others come in to replace them. Some of today's new words are formed from Slovak elements, but many are borrowed, primarily from English and Russian. The Russian words are part and parcel of the political and economic systems and serve to reinforce connections between the two government systems. English words come into the language mostly in the fields of science and technology (*display* for a computer display), but also in everyday speech (*sexbomba* for sex symbol). These are most often words for which there are no terms in Slovak. What worries some purists is that foreign words

are replacing some perfectly good Slovak words, e.g., *generácia* (generation) for *pokolenie*.

The oldest written records of the Czech language are found in eleventh-century texts. After the tumultuous historical events of the early seventeenth century and the resulting Counter-Reformation, German took precedence over Czech as Prague became a provincial capital. It was only with the upsurge of nationalism throughout Europe in the nineteenth century that Czech came back into its own.

It is often said that the "best" Czech is spoken in Moravia. Various dialects exist, but the most prestigious is that of Prague. As is the case with German in German-speaking countries, there are actually several versions of Czech. This presents difficulties for foreigners wishing to learn to speak Czech. The standard written literary language, *spisovná čeština*, carries the greatest prestige. It is based on the Czech spoken in fourteenth-century Prague during the days of the Czech Golden Age. Today, the written language is the language used in education, the government, the press, most literature, television and radio, industry, and science. It is also the language that foreigners learn. However, outside of university lectures, television and radio, and official meetings, no one really speaks it. Most people, even those who are highly educated, speak a colloquial version of Czech among themselves known variously as *obecná*, *hovorová*, or *běžně mluvená čeština*. Although local dialects produce variations from place to place, this living language is characterized by certain simplifications of the archaic, written literary language. Many modern writers have experimented with it in their writings, and not only in dialogue. Some members of the KSČ have proposed dropping the established literary form of the language in favor of a simplified written version of the spoken language, as it is "the language of the masses." But this idea has met with strong opposition, especially in academia. One peculiarity of the spoken language is that it often retains German words that have been purged from the written language.

Today, because of close ties with the Soviet Union, Russian has become the major influence on modern Czech. Many English words have also made headway, including *vikend* (weekend), *kempink* (camping, campground), and *diskžokej* (disc jockey). Articles occasionally appear in the press criticizing such "foreignisms." In an attempt to avoid foreign vocabulary, many old Czech words have been revived or new Czech words formed from old roots.

## **Social Groups**

Czechoslovakia, of all the East European countries, entered the postwar era with a relatively balanced social structure and



an equitable distribution of resources. Despite some poverty, overall it was a country of relatively well-off workers, small-scale producers, farmers, and a substantial middle class. Nearly half the populace was in the middle-income bracket. Ironically, perhaps, it was balanced and relatively prosperous Czechoslovakia that carried nationalization and income redistribution further than any other East European country. By the mid-1960s, the complaint was that leveling had gone too far. The lowest-paid 40 percent of the population accounted for 60 percent of national income. Earning differentials between blue-collar and white-collar workers were lower than in any other country in Eastern Europe. Further, equitable income distribution was combined in the late 1970s with relative prosperity. Along with East Germany and Hungary, Czechoslovakia enjoyed one of the highest standards of living of any of the Warsaw Pact countries through the 1980s.

The matter of social groups and the differences among them has been a delicate one for those in power in Czechoslovakia. In the Marxist scheme, classes are defined in terms of their relation to the means of production. Industrial production has demanded a more differentiated labor force than the Marxist notion of "one class owning and working the means of production" foresaw. "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" proved an inadequate principle for distributing socialist wealth. Even in Czechoslovakia, where the party's pursuit of socialist equality was thorough, the "classless" society turned out to be highly diverse.

In the mid-1980s, Czechoslovak censuses divided the population into several occupational groups: workers, other employees, members of various cooperatives (principally agricultural cooperatives), small farmers, self-employed tradesmen and professionals, and capitalists (see table 5, Appendix A). Of these categories, "other employees" was the most diverse, encompassing everyone from low-level clerical workers to cabinet ministers. "Workers" were those whose jobs were primarily manual and industrial. There was the time-hallowed distinction between workers (manual or low-level clerical employees), agricultural employees, and the intelligentsia (whose work is primarily mental and requires more education).

## **Workers**

In 1984 workers made up about one-half of the economically active population and were beneficiaries of policies geared toward maintaining the people's standard of living. According to many observers, Czechoslovakia's internal stability rested on an unspoken bargain between workers and the ruling KSČ: relative material

security in return for acquiescence to continued Soviet domination. Given the persistent economic problems the regime faced, it was a delicate balance. Much of working-class life reflected the regime's efforts to increase labor productivity without precipitating major labor unrest.

Virtually full employment did not make the task easier. In 1984 nearly half the population worked. Some 85 percent of working-age women were employed (not including those on maternity leave), and there were almost 141,000 full-time university students. Working age for women was from fifteen through fifty-four, and for men it was from fifteen through fifty-nine. The proportion of pensioners who had returned to work rose from 12 percent in 1966 to 23 percent in 1983. By the end of the 1970s, the labor shortage was extreme enough for officials to call for greater efforts to employ "internal reserves" of labor, i.e., the partially disabled (of whom nearly one-third were already employed), full-time students, and farmers (during agricultural off-seasons). "Voluntary" brigades of students and apprentices supplied agricultural (harvest) and other labor during summer months.

In Czechoslovakia, as in other socialist countries, virtually full employment often disguises underemployment. Large numbers of people work in positions below their qualifications. This is the result of different factors: some people are reluctant to move to other parts of the country to find work; politically and ideologically "objectionable" people must often turn to menial work; and politically "correct" people hold jobs for which they are not fully qualified. At many enterprises, instead of streamlining operations and dismissing employees whose job performance is unsatisfactory, managers merely shift workers to other positions or juggle employment statistics.

The party's compulsion to avoid labor unrest, enterprise managers' need to meet (or at least approach) production quotas, and a pervasive shortage of labor define the social dynamics of the workplace. Workers have relatively secure employment and income but lack sufficient consumer goods to absorb their income (the rate of saving is extremely high). Nor do workers have a substantive role in organizing work; Ota Šik, noted economic reformer during the 1960s, characterized the Czechoslovak worker as "alienated from the production process, from the fruits of labor, and from the management of industrial enterprises."

Workers' complaints have changed over the years as labor has become more scarce. In the 1950s real wages declined, resulting in periodic work stoppages. The 1953 currency reform sparked protests and demonstrations in major industrial centers that were

little short of riots. Throughout the decade, party leaders complained about workers' "trade unionist" and "anarcho-syndicalist" attitudes and their "take what you can" mentality. Those arrested in the 1953 demonstrations were denounced as "bourgeois elements dressed up in overalls." During the Prague Spring, workers organized to support demands for political liberalization and more representative trade unions.

By the late 1970s, forced overtime had become the workers' most insistent complaint, followed by poor working conditions. These complaints were coupled with steadfast opposition to linking wages with gains in productivity. Workers most frequently called for compliance with the labor code, which limited compulsory overtime (the maximum workweek was supposed to be forty-six hours) and provided for work safety regulations.

One solution to the labor shortage was foreign manpower. For a long time, Poles provided the largest percentage of foreign manpower. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the proportion of Vietnamese workers grew rapidly. By the end of 1982, there were approximately 26,000 Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia, about 0.3 percent of the total manual work force, including apprentices. Reasons given for the rapid expansion of the Vietnamese contingent ranged from the Czechoslovak government's interest in training qualified labor for a friendly socialist country, to repayment of Vietnamese war debt, to the labor surplus in Vietnam. Problems arose as the number of Vietnamese increased drastically and as a program of merely hard work replaced what was to have been a program for training the Vietnamese in work skills.

Other foreigners who worked in Czechoslovakia came from Cuba, Laos, the Mongolian People's Republic, and Hungary. Poles and Hungarians generally worked in their respective border areas.

Most women in Czechoslovakia work, a reflection in part of the labor shortage and in part of the socialist belief that employment for women is the answer to inequality between the sexes. Although women in Czechoslovakia have had a long history of employment (they were over one-third of the labor force in 1930), the postwar surge in female employment has been truly dramatic. Four-fifths of the workers who entered the labor force from 1948 through 1975 were women. By the end of 1976, about 87 percent of working-age women had jobs; in 1984 about 90 percent of women in their reproductive years were in the labor force.

In 1983 women remained concentrated in the traditional fields of female employment. In retail sales they represented 75 percent of all employees; in mass communications, 65 percent; in health care, 80 percent; and in social work, 87 percent. These differences

persisted despite concerted efforts to improve women's educational status and in spite of the wide range of protective legislation covering women workers (see Health and Social Welfare, this ch.).

Women's salaries have lagged behind those of men throughout the socialist era. As late as 1986, women's earnings averaged two-thirds of those of men. In December 1986, one-fifth of all employed mothers earned less than Kčs1,500 per month, while the average salary for all workers at that time was given as Kčs2,800 per month. Only 6 to 7 percent of middle and upper management positions were held by women.

A number of factors account for this continuing inequality. Traditional sexual stereotypes have persisted, socialist rhetoric notwithstanding. Women faced handicaps in the workplace because of their traditional role in child rearing (what regime apologists have dubbed "woman's triple role" of mother-worker-citizen). Czechoslovakia offered ample maternity leave, and women did not lose job seniority by taking it. Nonetheless, employers anticipated that women not only would be absent from work to have children but also would bear the primary responsibility for child care within their families. (In contrast, officialdom has made no mention of man's triple role of father-worker-citizen.) Women's anticipated but unpredictable absence from the workplace influenced employers' allocation of jobs. Women themselves frequently complained about the dual demands of home and work forced upon them. Czechoslovakia's underdeveloped service sector, the general lack of convenience items, limited child-care facilities, and the traditional division of labor within the family all complicated working women's lives in the 1980s. (Men maintained the traditional view that housework and child rearing are "women's work" and often refused to help.) Employed women spent four to eight hours each day on household duties, above and beyond their time at work.

### **Agricultural Workers**

Rural society in the 1980s was a combination of cooperatives (approximately 73 percent of the agricultural labor force), state farms (18 percent), and private farms (9 percent). This represented a dramatic change from the First Republic with its politically active middle-sized farmers, small landholders, and differentiated labor force. Collectivized agriculture has not lacked occupational specialists, but there is no doubt that the socialist regime has streamlined rural society. Differences have persisted, but a dramatic leveling has taken place. Workers on state farms were salaried. Cooperative members' earnings reflected their cooperatives' production, and they supplemented these with sales from small

family garden plots. Private farmers, a declining portion of the agricultural population, augmented their limited agricultural earnings with off-farm employment. The dichotomy between relatively prosperous Bohemia and Moravia and less-developed Slovakia has added to the complexity of contemporary rural society.

Collectivization began in 1949 with the Unified Agricultural Cooperatives Act. The KSČ pushed collectivization efforts early in the 1950s and again later in the decade. Large landholders unwilling to join cooperatives and unwise enough to demur were condemned as "kulaks" (see Glossary) and evicted without compensation. Subsequent criticism was muted. By 1960, when collectivization was essentially complete, 90 percent of all agricultural land was in the state sector—a proportion that slowly increased to 95 percent in 1985. During the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, the number of cooperatives declined. Land was not returned to private cultivation, but rather the cooperative enterprises themselves were consolidated.

Farmers suffered through the 1950s: compulsory collectivization took their property, and the 1953 currency reform eradicated their savings. By the early 1960s, farm laborers worked longer than their nonagricultural counterparts and earned an average of 15 percent less. Not surprisingly, those who had other alternatives took them. Young men found work in the expanding industrial sector; women and the elderly remained. The proportion of the agricultural labor force over 60 years of age rose from 14 percent in 1955 to 20 percent in 1969 and then fell to 11 percent in 1983. By 1960 women accounted for nearly 60 percent of agricultural labor; that figure declined to 42 percent in 1983, many women having found work in industry or the service sector.

During the late 1960s and 1970s, agricultural earnings rose rapidly. Since the mid-1970s, the incomes of cooperative farm members and industrial workers have been comparable. So dramatic was the improvement that in a 1968 poll more than two-thirds of cooperative farm members preferred collectivized agricultural production to private farming. Their consensus was that cooperative farming reduced not only the work burden but also the risks that small to medium-sized landholders faced. Farmers' grievances during the reform era focused on the injustices suffered during collectivization. They wanted those who had been victimized during the 1950s to be rehabilitated and compensated.

The disparity between urban and rural living conditions narrowed in the 1970s. Government planners focused on improving rural day-care facilities; bringing cooperative and state-farm pensions to parity with those of other workers; and increasing the



*Slovak National Theater on Hviezdoslav Square, Bratislava  
Courtesy Helen Fedor*

medical, educational, and shopping facilities available to rural dwellers. There was significant construction and renovation of rural housing. The number of new housing units available to cooperative members rose dramatically in the 1960s and then leveled off, although the number fluctuated from year to year. The general improvement in the amenities did not benefit agricultural workers alone; in the early 1970s, over 40 percent of all industrial workers lived in the countryside (see *Urbanization and Migration*, this ch.).

One result of increased incomes and improved rural living conditions was a rise in the educational level of the agricultural labor force. The percentage of cooperative members with a secondary-school education increased eleven fold from 1960 to the end of 1978, and that of members with a university degree increased thirteen fold.

### **Intelligentsia**

By convention, Marxist theorists subdivide the intelligentsia into the creative (writers, artists, and journalists), the professional (lawyers, educators, physicians, civil servants, and party bureaucrats), and the technical (engineers). Insofar as one might speak of the intelligentsia as an elite, they are the group that has undergone the most drastic change since 1945. Capitalist entrepreneurs and the clergy were obvious and early victims of shifts in the political spectrum. Although their individual fates varied, party

membership was a prerequisite for civil servants, the police, military officers, and educators who wished to continue in their chosen fields.

The typical professional career under party rule has turned out to be anything but secure. The year 1948 saw a turnover in civil service personnel (especially the police) and a substantial influx of workers into political and managerial positions. The 1950s purges struck hardest at the party faithful, i.e., the most direct beneficiaries of the 1948 takeover. The upheaval of nationalization and collectivization efforts that went further than anywhere else in Eastern Europe, coupled with two currency reforms, signaled a flux in economic fortunes during the first decade of communist rule. A Czech, for example, who was a chief executive in industry in 1948, worked as a carpenter for several years thereafter, served a number of years in prison, and then retrained for a career in law was not exceptional.

Change continued to be a defining characteristic of many professional occupations through the 1970s: in 1968 about 60 percent of all army officers under thirty years of age had resigned; by 1971 half of all school supervisors had been replaced; and by 1972 approximately 40 percent of all journalists had been purged. The magnitudes involved were simply staggering, the more so because the victims of the 1970s purges were overwhelmingly Czech (see *Ethnic Groups*, this ch.). During normalization, over 25,000 government and trade union officials were replaced. All told, perhaps 150,000 professionals were unable to work in their fields by the end of the decade. The purges included technical and managerial personnel, as well as writers, artists, and KSC members active in the reform movement. Estimates at the high end suggested that, from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, some 400,000 members of the intelligentsia joined the ranks of manual laborers.

In the mid-1980s, the technical intelligentsia—directors and deputy directors of socialist enterprises, chairmen of agricultural cooperatives, and managers of retail shops, hotels, restaurants, services, and housing—occupied an ambiguous position in the decision-making hierarchy. On the one hand, their jobs often demanded considerable technical expertise; on the other hand, decision making in all sectors had a political component under communist rule. The technical intelligentsia had to reconcile the requirements of technical efficiency with those of political orthodoxy. From the KSC's perspective, the problem was to ensure a politically reliable corps of technical experts. Throughout the 1970s, those selected for political compliance (versus training or expertise) predominated among the technical intelligentsia. When a party functionary was unable to meet the demands of his or her

position, the custom was to call in a technical expert (even if not a party member) for assistance. KSCĚ hard-liners consistently blocked efforts to reinstate reformist managers deposed after 1968.

Calls for more efficient management and periodic “reassessments” of managerial personnel accompanied changes in the ranks of the technical intelligentsia. In 1980 Federal Finance Minister Leopold Ler suggested that failure to meet production goals would be reflected in bonuses given to management and went so far as to intimate that managers might be dismissed for ineptitude. There was a concerted effort on the part of officialdom to make clear to managers that simple political compliance—adequate to ensure one’s employment in the early 1970s—would have to be accompanied by efficiency in production in the 1980s.

Czechoslovak party officials have had a long history of suspicion of higher education, blaming it for ills as diverse as labor unrest and youth’s lack of socialist idealism. Research scientists, to judge from the remarks of D.R. Procházka, director of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in the early 1970s (“I would purge even Einstein if he were a reformist”), have not fared much better.

### *Writers and Artists*

The country’s creative intelligentsia played a pivotal role in the nationalist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; their manifestos spoke for the aspirations of Czechs and Slovaks within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Their opposition to foreign domination was almost a defining feature of the literature of the period, just as Soviet hegemony and the paralyzing rigidity of party rule have fueled a growing body of dissident literature in recent times.

Intellectual and artistic endeavor flourished during the First Republic. There was, of course, *The Good Soldier Švejk*, published at the end of World War I. The presence of Czech Karel Čapek, Slovak Laco Novomeský, and German Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Edmund Husserl, to name only the most prominent writers, gives some sense of how prolific the era was. Sigmund Freud came from the Czech lands, as did Gustav Mahler. Ernst Mach and Albert Einstein taught at Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague.

The KSCĚ takeover ushered in the era of Stalinist socialist realism in Czechoslovakia’s arts. It was a movement with strong overtones of Russian chauvinism and a deep anti-Western bias evident in a readiness to denounce anything remotely cosmopolitan as bourgeois, decadent, or both. One suspects that the country that had given world literature Švejk was particularly unpromising ground



for Socialist Realism. A blind optimism coupled with revolutionary fervor are the key components of this aesthetic, portraying life as it should be according to Marxist theory, rather than as it actually is.

Soon after taking power, the the KSČ at its Ninth Party Congress issued “directives for new socialist culture.” The congress declared that “literary and artistic production is an important agent of the ideological and cultural rebirth in our country, and it is destined to play a great role in the socialist education of the masses.” Some arts maintained their tradition of excellence throughout the era. Theater productions relied on the classics for their repertoire. Czech filmmakers relied on anti-Nazi, World War II plots to produce works of world renown in the 1960s. This was and has continued to be a safe topic. But writers were a perennial source of consternation for the authorities. Officials of the Novotný regime periodically denounced them for “unprincipled liberalism.” Those placed under interdict wrote, as the phrase went, “for the drawer”; some, like Novomeský, were sentenced to long prison terms.

In the 1970s, the regime’s policies toward the creative intelligentsia were characterized by a compulsion to control creative activity, coupled with an active paranoia. These policies continued into the 1980s. What motivated censors in ferreting out antisocialist sentiments was sometimes difficult to fathom. Karel Gott, a popular male singer, recorded a song portraying a conversation between a casual lover and his sweetheart that was banned from radio and television. Officialdom found the lyrics “I’ll flip a coin when you ask if I’m sincere or not when I say I love you” to be insulting to Czechoslovak currency.

Artists and writers belonged to their own professional organizations. Nonmembers could practice their art as long as they were loyal to the regime, although earning a living outside the major organizations was easier in some fields than others. Actors, as long as they did not aspire to major roles, did not need to join. Artists who were nonmembers effectively limited themselves to ornamental or industrial art. Musicians and singers faced further constraints. In particular, the regime found the personal habits of many members of popular musical groups too divergent from socialist ideals and subjected them to considerable harassment. In fact, it was the arrest and trial of The Plastic People of the Universe, a group active in the musical underground in the 1970s, that precipitated the drafting and signing of Charter 77 (see *Popular Political Expression*, ch. 4).

Writers endured the greatest repression. For the purged, with limited exceptions, official publishing outlets were closed. In the

*Slovak folk art  
painting on glass.  
Courtesy  
Czechoslovak Life*



meantime, the three writers' unions (Czechoslovak, Czech, and Slovak), and especially the Czech Writers' Union, set about grooming a younger generation of writers who, if not overwhelmingly devoted to socialism, were at least assiduously apolitical. In the middle to late 1970s, there was a semithaw: the authorities permitted purged writers to recant and, after a proper measure of self-criticism, publish again. For those who did not avail themselves of this chance, options were indeed limited. By the end of the decade, the government had stepped up efforts to keep Czechoslovak authors from publishing abroad. Those writers who wished to publish successfully at home kept to safe territory—science fiction, World War II novels, fantasy, and children's literature—all non-controversial, basically apolitical genres that dominated literary output in the 1980s.

A complicated bureaucratic apparatus governed censorship at home. The most critical variable was whether a writer had been expelled from the KSĈ or simply dropped from its membership lists (see *The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*, ch. 4). There were various kinds and degrees of interdiction: some writers could translate but not write, others could write plays but nothing else, and so forth. Banned writers could sometimes publish their work if a "cover person" assumed authorship. The author might lose from one-third to one-half of the contract fee for the work and might have to permit the cover person to make substantial (and often

unacceptable) changes in the work. The cover person faced stiff penalties if discovered by the authorities. Because normalization was characteristically milder in Slovakia, writers were sometimes able to publish works in Bratislava that the Prague censors found unacceptable. This was also partly due to the fact that the Slovak minister of culture was himself a writer.

### **Associations**

In 1948 there were 6,000 to 7,000 clubs and societies in Czechoslovakia; these had long been integral to social life and national aspirations. The right to form associations was first won in 1848, although the Hapsburgs, realizing that they had opened a Pandora's box in their ethnically diverse empire, revoked it soon thereafter. The Czech lands regained this freedom in 1867. *Sokol* clubs (gymnastic organizations), cultural groups, savings and loan cooperatives, and a host of other clubs proliferated in the Czech lands and anywhere Czech emigrants clustered. Turn-of-the-century Vienna (with more than 100,000 Czechs) had Czech theaters, clubs, newspapers, and banks. The Hungarians, however, offered more concerted opposition to Slovak efforts to organize. Slovak émigrés formed organizations wherever they went, and these associations agitated for Slovakia's inclusion in the First Republic.

A 1951 law gave the Ministry of Interior jurisdiction over associations, and in the 1960s there were only a few hundred societies still in existence. The right to form associations was limited, and the associations themselves were under strict KSC control. Cultural organizations operated under official auspices. Friendship leagues were particularly encouraged: Bulgarian-, Polish-, or Hungarian-Czechoslovak friendship societies could easily receive official approval. The regime particularly favored the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship League, though its rank-and-file membership declined as a result of a surge of anti-Soviet sentiment after the 1968 invasion. There was official sponsorship for "Circles of Creativity" and "Houses of Enlightenment." Cultural societies for German or Hungarian minorities were acceptable, but religious organizations faced significantly greater restrictions. Any association that might play a role in politics or the economy (that could however remotely or tenuously be construed to threaten KSC domination) was out of the question.

The Prague Spring reinforced this mania for control over associations. The reform movement's potential was nowhere more threatening to the hegemony of the party than in the population's persistent demands for more truly representative organizations in every area of life. That the KSC membership was underrepresented

in the popularly elected leadership of such organizations confirmed the conservatives' worst suspicions: this was a reform movement whose popular manifestations would prove difficult to control. The regime's response was to restrict associations still more.

### **The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia**

According to Marxist-Leninist theory, the communist party represents the working class—the revolutionary proletariat—whose interests it champions against those of the capitalist bourgeoisie. The period between the fall of a bourgeois state and the attainment of communism is a subject on which Marx was reticent, believing that the state would “wither away” once the workers took power. Lenin, facing a real revolution and the possibility that the communist party might be able to seize power, put theoretical subtleties to the side. He suggested that the fall of the bourgeois state (a label of questionable accuracy when applied to tsarist Russia) would be followed by a transitional state characterized by socialism and communist party rule—the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” In practice, the transition from this phase to true communism has proved to be a good deal lengthier than Lenin anticipated. His suggestion that the “dictatorship of the proletariat” should last until 1923 in the Soviet Union serves as a general commentary on the disparity between theory and practice. Once in power, the communist party has behaved very much like other entrenched bureaucracies, and its revolutionary mandate has been lost in the tendency of those in power to wish to remain so.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovak (Komunistická strana Československa—KSČ), which was founded in 1921, came to power in 1948 (see *Communist Czechoslovakia*, ch. 1). Because of the KSČ's mandate to be the workers' party, questions about the social background of party members took on a particular salience. The KSČ was often reticent with precise details about its members, and the question of how many in the party actually belonged to the revolutionary proletariat became a delicate one. Official statements appeared to overstate the percentage of workers within the party's ranks. Nonetheless, a number of trends were clear. The proportion of workers in the KSČ was at its highest (approximately 60 percent of the total membership) after World War II but before the party took power in 1948. After that time, the percentage of workers in the party fell steadily to a low of an estimated one-quarter of the membership in 1970. In the early 1970s, the official media decried the “grave imbalance,” noting that “the present class and social structure of the party membership is not in conformity with the party's role as the vanguard of the working class.” In highly

industrialized central Bohemia, to cite one example, only one in every thirty-five workers was a party member, while one in every five administrators was. In 1976, after intensive efforts to recruit workers, the number of workers rose to one-third of the KSC membership, i.e., approximately its 1962 level. In the 1980s, driven by the need for intensive economic development, the party relaxed its rigid rule about young workers' priority in admissions and allowed district and regional committees to be flexible in their recruitment policy, as long as the overall proportion of workers did not decrease.

The average age of party members has shown a comparable trend. In the late 1960s, fewer than 30 percent of party members were under thirty-five years of age, nearly 20 percent were over sixty, and roughly half were forty-six or older. The quip in 1971, a half-century after the party's founding in Czechoslovakia, was "After fifty years, a party of fifty-year-olds." There was a determined effort to attract younger members to the party in the middle to late 1970s; one strategy was to recruit children of parents who were KSC members. The party sent letters to the youngsters' schools and their parents' employers, encouraging the children to join. By early 1980 approximately one-third of KSC members were thirty-five years of age or younger. In 1983 the average age of the "leading cadre" was still estimated at fifty.

Whatever the social composition of the party, it effectively functions as a ruling elite—a group not known for self-abnegation. As an elite, it allows the talented and/or politically agile significant mobility. Workers might have made up a minority of the party's membership, but many members (estimates vary from one-half to two-thirds) began their careers as workers. Although they tend to exaggerate their humble origins, many functionaries have clearly come from the working class.

Several policies have increased the social mobility of party members. Foremost was doubtless the process of nationalization, started after World War II, when scores of politically active workers assumed managerial-level positions. Periodic purges have played a role as well, permitting the politically compliant to replace those less so (see *Intelligentsia*, this ch.). The numerous education programs offered by the KSC for its members also represented a significant avenue of mobility, as did policies of preferential admissions to secondary schools and universities; these policies favored the children of workers and agricultural cooperative members especially (see *Education*, this ch.).

It is hardly surprising that the KSC membership has guarded its perquisites. Aside from special shops, hotels, hospitals, and better

housing for members, KSC members stood a better chance of obtaining visas for study or travel abroad (especially to the West). Nonmembers realized that their possibilities for advancement in the workplace were severely limited. For anyone in a professional position, KSC membership was a sine qua non for promotion. Part of the decline in workers as a proportion of total membership resulted from the rapid increase in the number of intelligentsia joining the party soon after the communists took power. In the 1980s most economic managers, executives in public administration, and university professors were KSC members.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the official media have denounced party members' lack of devotion to the pursuit of KSC policies and goals. Complaints have ranged from members' refusal to display flags from their apartment windows on festive occasions to their failure to show up for party work brigades, attend meetings, or pay dues; a significant minority of members have tended to underreport their incomes (the basis for assessing dues). In 1970, after a purge of approximately one-third of the membership, an average of less than one-half the remaining members attended meetings. Perhaps one-third of the members were consistently recalcitrant in participating in KSC activities. In 1983 one primary party branch in the Prague-West district was so unmoved by admonishments that it had to be disbanded and its members dispersed among other organizations. In part, this was a measure of disaffection with Czechoslovakia's thoroughgoing subservience to Soviet hegemony, a *Švejkian* response to the lack of political economic autonomy. It was also a reflection of the purge's targets. Those expelled were often the ideologically motivated, the ones for whom developing socialism with a human face represented a significant goal; those who were simply opportunistic survived the purges more easily.

### **Trade Unions**

In the 1980s, trade unions were the largest of all the organizations. A single large federation, the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, represented most wage earners (80 percent in 1983); to deny someone trade union membership was to imply extreme censure. The role of trade unions under communism is distinctly different from the role they play in Western society. Under capitalism, unions represent the interests of workers against their employers. When the state owns the means of production, there is, theoretically, no such conflict; the unions serve as a "school of socialism" for the membership, the goal being to mobilize workers in pursuit of socialist production goals.

During the reform era before 1968, party reformers and workers alike criticized the Revolutionary Trade Movement as a bureaucratically unwieldy organization that was dominated by conservative party functionaries and served as a "conveyor belt" for official labor policy. Workers typically wanted smaller, more representative unions and a variety of economic benefits. More disturbing to the authorities was workers' propensity to vote party members out of union office and to demand a range of reforms. These reforms were not calculated to allay the fears of those who thought that the KSČ's leading role was critical to socialist development. Among the demands were the elimination of party and police files on workers (workers often achieved this end by simply burning the files) and the right of union and management representatives (not party officials) to decide personnel matters.

Even more disturbing to the authorities was the tendency for workers' demands to be explicitly and unequivocally political. In major industrial centers, workers called for political pluralism, organized committees to defend freedom of the press, and voiced their support for the "Two Thousand Words" manifesto (see *The Prague Spring, 1968*, ch. 1). The Writers' Union went so far as to suggest that they would field a slate of candidates for the National Assembly elections. It was not a turn of events congenial to those who preferred Soviet-style socialism. Not surprisingly, the unions were an early target of normalization efforts. An estimated 20 to 50 percent of the leadership was purged, and by the early 1970s the status quo had been effectively restored.

### **Youth Organizations**

Because the creation of the "new socialist man" is an important part of communist ideology, youth organizations have always played an important role in communist regimes. After the 1948 takeover, the KSČ formed two Soviet-style youth organizations: the Pioneers (for youngsters eight to fifteen years old) and the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (ages fifteen to twenty-five). Both organizations were geared toward grooming their members (or a fortunate fraction of them) for KSČ membership.

By the late 1960s, some 70 percent of all those eligible were members of the Pioneers; the reform movement revealed, however, a number of points of dissatisfaction. Czechoslovak adherence to the Soviet model extended to uniform dress (white shirts and red kerchiefs) and salutes, neither of which was popular among Czechs and Slovaks. In addition, Pioneers leadership was often less than devoted. In 1968, when the organization became voluntary, the number of leaders dropped precipitously; the resulting shortage persisted through the 1980s.

The Czechoslovak Union of Youth had a tumultuous history during the late 1960s and 1970s. As a feeder organization for the KSČ, it faced many of the same problems the party faced in recruiting members. In the mid-1960s, less than half of all fifteen to twenty-five year olds were members; in the mid-1970s, fewer than one-third had joined. As in the case of the KSČ, those who joined tended to do so with their future careers in mind; secondary school and university students were overrepresented, while only a fraction of the eligible industrial and agricultural workers belonged. Furthermore, a single, centralized organization was simply an inadequate vehicle for the interests of such a diverse group. During the reform era, the Czechoslovak Union of Youth split into a number of independent associations, including the Union of High School Students and Apprentices, the Union of Working Youth, and the Union of University Students. It was not a development the party found suitable, and beginning in 1969 party leaders set about reconstituting a unified movement. During the same era, the 1968 invasion spawned a number of dissident youth organizations. In the early 1970s, these were all infiltrated and repressed by the KSČ, a policy that has continued through the 1980s.

In 1970 the party organized the Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth, and by mid-decade the skewed recruitment pattern of its predecessor, the Czechoslovak Union of Youth, which had recruited more students than workers, had reappeared. The recruitment effort had been more intense than ever. "I know of only two types of students at this institution," commented one teacher, "those who will not graduate and those who are members of the Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth." The nets had been cast so widely that, not surprisingly, some members were unenthusiastic. Throughout the 1970s, there were complaints about the organization's propensity to take any and all joiners (even "beatniks," one writer complained), the association's apolitical and recreational focus, and a membership bent more on securing admission to a university than learning "the principles of socialist patriotism."

In 1983 the Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth had a total membership of over 1.5 million. Twenty-five percent of the members were listed as workers, 3 percent as agricultural workers, and 72 percent as "others."

## **The Family**

In the mid-1980s, the family remained a significant force in Czechoslovak society, despite more than thirty-five years of KSČ rule. Families played a pivotal role, according to many observers, in transmitting just those characteristic Czech and Slovak values



that have often been criticized by the regime, e. g., the Czech penchant for political pluralism and the Slovak devotion to Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, socialism has had a distinctive if often unpredictable effect on family life. The employment of the vast majority of married women of child-bearing age has favored three-generation extended families, in which grandparents (especially grandmothers) have helped women deal with the often conflicting demands of work and child rearing (see *Workers*, this ch.). Family cooperation remained important because child-care centers could not accommodate all children of working mothers, nor would the centers accept children who were ill.

Extended families in which a relative played a significant role in child rearing were more common in households where women had a secondary school or university education. Presumably the presence of a grandparent permitted these women to continue an education or assume work responsibilities that might have been precluded if they bore the major share of child care. Among urban households in which the woman had completed only elementary school or vocational training, relatives rarely played a role in child rearing (in less than 5 percent of those households surveyed, according to a 1970s report). In agricultural regions, where women often worked at home on family garden plots or worked only seasonally, the role of the extended family has been even more limited.

Another factor encouraging extended family households has been Czechoslovakia's endemic housing shortage. Although the government's pronatalist policies favored married couples (especially those with children) in housing allocation, many young families (perhaps one-third) waited up to five years for their first separate apartment. Most of these families shared an apartment with a mother or mother-in-law. Divorced couples sometimes continued living together simply for want of other housing alternatives. For the elderly, who were expected to trade their apartments for smaller ones as spouses died and children left home, the situation was often difficult.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the number of marriages in Czechoslovakia declined while the number of divorces increased. Although marriages began to increase in 1982, the rate of divorce continued to climb; it rose from 14 percent in 1970 to 32 percent in 1985.

## **Religion**

Czechoslovakia entered the socialist era with a varied religious heritage. There were nine major creeds listed in its censuses:

*Old church in  
outdoor museum  
in Rožnov pod  
Radhoštěm, Moravia*



Roman Catholic, Uniate (see Glossary), the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Lutheran, Calvinist, Orthodox, the Czech Reformed Church (the Hussites), the Old Catholic Church, and Judaism. Nearly 6 percent of the population was without religious preference. At the time of the communist takeover, two of every three citizens were Roman Catholics, but within each major ethnic group there was a sizable minority of Protestants: Czech Brethren in the Czech lands, Lutherans in Slovakia, and Calvinists among the Hungarians.

In Bohemia and Moravia, the Roman Catholics' numerical preponderance was further tempered by a tradition of religious dissent and tolerance dating from the Hussite era. The Old Catholics split with Rome over the issue of papal infallibility in 1870, and the Czechoslovak National Church (an explicitly antipapal, nationalistic sect with Hussite and Unitarian overtones) followed suit in 1919–20. As the Vatican was amply aware, Czechoslovakia was hardly Rome's docile follower, and relations between the Vatican and the First Republic were often stormy. Twice, in 1925 and 1933, the papal nuncio left in protest over what he perceived to be antipapal manifestations on the part of high-ranking government officials. Czechs had associated Roman Catholicism with foreign domination since the forcible suppression of the Hussite movement. They viewed Catholicism as pro-Hapsburg and pro-German.

As of 1987, there had been no reliable national figures on religious affiliation since before World War II. Estimates based on limited surveys indicated that Roman Catholics continued to predominate, accounting for nearly one-half the total population. Not surprisingly, those who did not profess a religious faith increased dramatically in the socialist era. The most provocative information on religious sentiments came from a series of surveys during the 1960s. In northern Moravia, survey results showed that 30 percent of the respondents were atheists, another 30 percent were religious believers, and 40 percent were undecided. Presumably, there were fewer believers in more secular Bohemia and a greater number of believers in traditionally devout Slovakia. A late-1960s survey in Slovakia found that "scientific atheism" had not caught on quite as much as the KSC might have hoped after twenty years of party rule. Only 14 percent were atheists and 15 percent undecided; atheism was highest among people between the ages of 25 and 39. Religious sentiment reflected social background: nine-tenths of all farmers were believers, as were three-fourths of all blue-collar workers and slightly more than one-half of all white-collar employees (see *Social Groups*, this ch.). Perhaps most disconcerting for the party was the realization that after two decades of denouncing clerics and clerical meddling in politics ("clerico-fascism"), 28 percent of those surveyed thought the clergy should have a public and political role.

The relationship between the advocates of scientific atheism and various religious groups has been uneasy at best. The Czechoslovak Constitution permits freedom of religion and expression, but in the 1980s citizens were well advised not to take these guarantees too literally. Government-controlled organizations existed for most religious creeds except Jehovah's Witnesses, who were prohibited. The most prominent was the Roman Catholic Church. There were also a variety of Protestant sects, including the Czechoslovak Baptist Church, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the Slovak Evangelical Church, the Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Methodist Church of Czechoslovakia. Also represented were the Czechoslovak National Church, the Uniate Church, and Jewish communities. In 1981 a number of church dignitaries stood before the Czechoslovak minister of culture to take a vow of loyalty to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

Official policy toward religious groups in the 1980s was consistent with that of the early socialist era, when a series of measures sought to bring organized religion to heel. The state exercised substantial control over clerical appointments, religious instruction, preaching, and proselytization. Roman Catholics and Uniates were

the major targets. The government closed convents and monasteries and strictly limited admissions to the two remaining seminaries. During the Stalinist trials of the 1950s, more than 6,000 religious people (some old and sick) received prison sentences averaging more than five years apiece. Between 1948 and 1968, the number of priests declined by half, and half the remaining clergy were over sixty years of age. The Catholic Church had already lost a substantial number of clergy with the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans; it faced significant problems with understaffed parishes and an aging clergy. Protestant sects, less dependent on a centralized hierarchy in the running of ecclesiastical affairs and less prominent because of their minority status, fared better.

Uniates had close historic ties to both the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches. The communist regime sought to Russify whatever it could and followed a longstanding Russian policy of opposing the Uniate Church. Soon after coming to power, the party forcibly repressed the Uniate Church (following the earlier example of the Soviet Union) in favor of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox had been a distinct minority in Czechoslovakia, but Orthodox priests took over parishes as the Uniate clergy were imprisoned or sent to work on farms in the Czech lands. The shortage of priests was so extreme that the party gave a crash course in Orthodox doctrine to "politically mature" teachers in the region and sent them into Uniate churches as replacements. Uniates responded with various forms of resistance, ranging from simply leaving church whenever an Orthodox priest arrived to holding services among themselves.

The situation for the churches brightened only briefly during the Prague Spring. The regime of Alexander Dubček allowed the most closely controlled of the government-sponsored religious organizations (the Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy and its Protestant counterpart) to lapse into inactivity. In 1968 the government also promised a prompt and humane solution to the Uniates' predicament (induced in part by the Uniates seizing "Orthodox" churches and demanding their own clergy and rites) and officially recognized the Uniate Church.

This was an ephemeral thaw in the party's hard-line approach to religion. In the 1970s, the situation of religious groups in Czechoslovakia again deteriorated. The Roman Catholic Church, under the spiritual leadership of František Cardinal Tomášek, archbishop of Prague, was once more the principal target. Throughout the 1970s, the regime arrested clergy and lay people for distributing religious samizdat literature. Protestant and Jewish groups were also harassed, but the Orthodox churches and the

Czechoslovak National Church were generally spared. In an effort to ensure a group of compliant and loyal clergy, the regime of Gustáv Husák organized a number of state-controlled associations, including the Ecumenical Council of the Churches of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Czechoslovak Association of Catholic Clergy (more commonly known as *Pacem in Terris*), with Czech and Slovak branches.

The regime showed a willingness to permit religious groups to practice their creeds as long as the clergy and the faithful did not bring religion into public life. The complication was that the regime counted almost anything as public life and so, for example, disallowed sermons on the high divorce rate or neglected children. Because the state licensed all clergy, it could weed out anyone deemed unresponsive to state requirements. Thus the clergy, who needed state approval to minister at all, were in a vulnerable position. By mid-1986 the regime had prohibited some 400 (of an approximate 3,200) Roman Catholic priests from ministering.

Theology departments continued to operate under strict admission quotas, and staffing problems grew throughout the decade. Chief Rabbi Richard Feder died in 1970, leaving the Czech Jewish communities without rabbinical direction until 1984. (Slovakia's rabbi was Samuel Grossman.) The new chief rabbi for the country, Daniel Mayer, studied for the rabbinate in Budapest. In 1972 the death of three Roman Catholic bishops and the revocation of state approval of a fourth exacerbated the already acute shortage of Roman Catholic leaders. Talks between the Vatican and the regime were sporadic through the 1970s and produced few material gains for Czechoslovak Roman Catholics. The perennial conflict remained: the appointment of regime loyalists in opposition to choices for parish and diocesan posts. In 1986, out of thirteen church offices, nine bishoprics were vacant and two archbishoprics (Olomouc and Trnava) had only bishops holding office.

In late 1980, there were signs of worsening church-state relations. In October a number of students at the Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Divinity in Bratislava began a hunger strike in protest against *Pacem in Terris*. The state-controlled movement, they said, tried to undermine unity between priests and bishops. In an apparent reply to the incident, Bratislava's *Pravda* took the opportunity to denounce the resurgence of "clerico-fascist ideology," which, given the growth of socialism (commentators were quick to note), lacked a constituency in Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, clericalism acted on "instructions of the church and clerical centers in the capitalist world." The official media were particularly critical of the "secret church," which the Vatican described as "not only

the secretly ordained priests and bishops, secret convents and secret printing establishments in the country, but also the existing Catholic organizations and spiritual underground movements, as well as all priests and believers who are working illegally in the sphere of the church." These, however, were not organized into a single network. The underground church was believed to be particularly strong in Slovakia.

If normalization after 1968 took a higher toll on the Czechs, the Slovaks have more recently borne the brunt of religious persecution. Slovakia's traditional adherence to religion and an upsurge in belief and practices in the mid-1980s brought on sustained harassment and atheistic propaganda in Slovakia to a greater degree than in the Czech lands. Although methods differed, religious persecution in Slovakia equaled that suffered by the Charter 77 human rights activists and proscribed writers in the Czech lands (see *Popular Political Expression*, ch. 4).

A development that was particularly distressing to the authorities was the growing interest in religion on the part of young people in Czechoslovakia. Of the more than 100,000 people who took part in celebrations relating to the 1,100th anniversary of the death of Saint Methodius, Cardinal Tomášek noted that "two-thirds of the pilgrims were young people. . . ." One culprit was seen to be the education system, which did not sufficiently stress a scientific-atheistic education (see *Education*, this ch.).

A number of policies were aimed at curtailing public religious observance. Known adherence to a religious sect meant limited opportunity for advancement in the workplace. Parents had the right to religious instruction for their primary-school children, but to ask for it was to seriously hamper a child's chances for admission to secondary school and the university. The Ministry of Education issued a series of directives for teachers elaborating the errors of religion (among which were idealism and an inadequate set of ethical directives) and calling it an ideological weapon of the bourgeoisie.

## **Health and Social Welfare**

In the 1980s, Czechoslovakia had a comprehensive and universal system of social security under which everyone was entitled to free medical care and medicine, in theory at least. National health planning emphasized preventive medicine. Factory and local health care centers, first aid stations, and a variety of medical clinics supplemented hospitals and other inpatient institutions. The ratio of physicians to inhabitants has improved steadily, climbing from 1 per 745 in 1954 to 1 per 278 in 1985, although there were

shortages of doctors in rural areas. The shift in the distribution of health resources in the 1960s and 1970s was dramatic; facilities were improved, and the number of health care personnel in Slovakia and rural areas increased in general. Despite the improvements, there still remained serious problems in the health-care sector. About 40 percent of all the medical equipment was obsolete, facilities were outdated and in short supply, the bureaucracy was excessive, bribery was widespread (if not the rule), and many urgently needed medications were available only on the black market.

Spas in Czechoslovakia were part of the health care system. In 1985 more than 460,000 people (5 percent of whom were children) stayed at the 35 spas in the Czech lands and 23 spas in Slovakia. Many spas had been in existence for centuries, such as Bardejov (since the thirteenth century) in Slovakia and Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) in the Czech lands. Many of them specialized in the care and treatment of particular kinds of ailments. All had either mineral or hot springs, and some also offered mud treatments. In bygone days, the spas were frequented by European royalty and the wealthy, but now they are open to all, including foreign tourists (who made up 10 percent of the patients in 1985). A number of people visited spas on vouchers provided by their trade unions.

In 1984 life expectancy in Czechoslovakia was sixty-seven years for men and seventy-five years for women. In 1950 women's life expectancy was approximately 4.6 years longer than men's; by 1983 this difference had increased to nearly 7.5 years. Infant mortality stood at 10.5 per 1,000 live births in 1984, down from 15.6 per 1,000 in 1975. As with medical care, the gap in life expectancy between the Czech lands and Slovakia was narrowed during this period.

In 1985 slightly more than one-quarter of the Czechoslovak population received some kind of pension; the elderly, the disabled, widows, and orphans were all entitled to assistance. Social security benefits (primarily retirement and disability) were equal for all wage earners. The average pension was less than Kčs1,000 per month (workers received an average pension of about Kčs 1,130, cooperative farmers about Kčs880, and independent farmers about Kčs720); this put pensioners among the lowest income earners. A substantial minority of the retired (23 percent) again took up employment to supplement their pensions.

Women workers had a full complement of maternity and child-care benefits. Maternity leave (at 90 percent of full pay) was twenty-six weeks in the 1980s; an additional nine weeks were available for single mothers or for months having multiple births. Employers could not deny a woman's request for an additional year of



*Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad)*  
*Courtesy Eugene C. Robertson*

unpaid leave for child rearing (without loss of job seniority). A system of child allowances and maternity grants also assisted women who took unpaid leave. Women were allowed three days of annual leave in case of illness within the family. There were substantial family allowances, in addition to direct grants, to single parents or families with handicapped children. An unmarried mother, widow, or divorced mother could not be fired if she had a child under three years of age; if she had children between three and fifteen years of age, her employer had to find her another job before dismissing her.

Nursery facilities for younger children were in very short supply; in 1984 they could accommodate less than 10 percent of children under five years of age. Beyond the sheer lack of space, nurseries were poorly distributed and were often concentrated in older centers rather than in new housing developments where young families were likely to reside. Kindergartens were in better supply, and a much higher percentage of children between the ages of three and six years attended these schools. High employment of women and inadequate services contributed to the decline in Czechoslovakia's birthrate in the 1960s. Live births during the decade averaged 16 per 1,000 inhabitants, a significant drop from the 1950s. By 1968 the fertility rate was 2 percent (in comparison with 3 percent in the 1950s); at this rate the population would not



replace itself. In the Czech lands, the population growth rate stood at its 1930s low; in Catholic Slovakia, it was the lowest on record.

The government adopted a variety of explicitly pronatalist policies in the 1970s. Family allowances increased, especially for second and third children. By 1973 a family with three children received roughly one-third the average worker's salary in allowances. Birth grants doubled so that they were the equivalent of two to four weeks of family income. Low-interest loans to newlyweds were designed so that a portion of the principal was canceled with the birth of each child (Kčs1,000 for the first and Kčs4,000 for each subsequent child). All told, the financial incentives were substantial. In addition, couples with children had priority on apartment waiting lists and were entitled to larger living quarters, no small inducement in the face of Czechoslovakia's chronic housing shortage.

Pronatalist policies appear to have had a strong influence on population growth during the 1970s. The birthrate climbed from its 1968 low (14.9 per 1,000 inhabitants) to a peak of 19.9 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1974—one of the highest rates among industrial nations. Perhaps a quarter of this increase reflected the increase in the number of women of child-bearing age in the 1970s. After 1974, however, the birthrate steadily declined, falling to 14.5 by 1985. Figures indicated that a trend toward one-child families was emerging. The message seemed to be that after one decade the government's aid program was ineffective.

A major factor influencing the birthrate was the abortion rate. The number of abortions fluctuated between the 1950s and 1980s, dropping in the early 1960s and the early 1970s. In 1985 there were reportedly 144,712 abortions, or 39 abortions per 100 pregnancies (33.5 per 100 in the Slovak Socialist Republic and 42.1 per 100 in the Czech Socialist Republic). It has been suggested that abortion has remained one of the most favored means of birth control, despite the risks involved. A 1986 change in the abortion law (eliminating the panel needed to approve a request for an abortion) suggested that the regime was giving up in its efforts to reverse at least this aspect of the adverse demographic trends.

## **Education**

Czechoslovakia has a tradition of academic and scholarly endeavor in the mainstream of European thought and a history of higher education dating from the Middle Ages. Charles University was founded in Prague in 1348, and the Academia Istropolitana was founded in Bratislava in 1465. In the First Republic, education was the chief instrument for dealing with ethnic diversity. Perhaps in no other aspect of public life did Czechoslovakia more

effectively address the disparities among Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Ukrainians, and Germans. Eight years of compulsory education in the native language of each ethnic minority did much to raise literacy rates, particularly among Slovaks and Ukrainians. An expanded program of vocational education increased the technical skills of the country's growing industrial labor force. Some disparities remained, however. Germans and Czechs predominated disproportionately in secondary schools and universities. In the Czech lands compulsory education, even in rural areas, had begun nearly half a century before the advent of the republic. Prosperous farmers and even cottagers and tenants had a long history of boarding their children in towns or cities for secondary, vocational, and higher education. Despite regional and ethnic imbalances, Czechoslovakia entered the socialist era with a literate, even highly educated, populace.

Education under KŠČ rule has a history of periodic reforms (often attempting to fit the Soviet model) and efforts to maintain ideological purity within schools. At the same time, higher education has been a reward for political compliance. By the mid-1970s, the historical disparity in educational resources between the Czech lands and Slovakia had been largely redressed. A certain equity in educational opportunity was achieved, partly through the concerted efforts of policy makers and partly through the vicissitudes of normalization.

The Czechoslovak education system has four basic levels: nursery and kindergarten; a compulsory, nine-year primary cycle; various kinds of secondary schools; and a variety of institutions of higher education. Education is compulsory between the ages of six and sixteen. In 1974-75 planners began an education reform, shortening the primary cycle from nine to eight years and standardizing curricula within the secondary-school system. The state financed education, and all textbooks and instructional material below the university level were free.

Secondary schools included gymnasiums, stressing general education and preparation for higher education, and vocational schools, which emphasized technical training; both were four-year programs. A highly developed apprenticeship program and a system of secondary vocational/professional programs were attached to specific industries or industrial plants. In both secondary and higher education, provision was made for workers to attend evening study in combination with work-release time.

In 1985 there were 36 universities or university-level institutions of higher education, comprising 110 faculties; 23 were located in the Czech Socialist Republic, and 13 were located in the Slovak

Socialist Republic. The mid-1970s reform shortened the course of study in most fields from five to four years. A 1980 law on higher education increased the control of the Czech and Slovak ministries of education over universities and technical colleges. Postgraduate study involved three to six years of study. Faculties could exist within a university system or as independent entities (as in the case of the six theological faculties under the direction of both republics' ministries of culture, or educational faculties sometimes administered directly by the republics' ministries of education).

Educational enrollment and admissions have been delicate matters during the socialist era. Virtually everyone attended primary school, and a majority of those of secondary-school age attended some kind of specialized training or a gymnasium (see table 6, Appendix A). Beyond this, however, the questions surrounding university admissions (and who attends secondary schools and who becomes an apprentice) took on political overtones. In the 1950s the children of political prisoners, well-to-do farmers, or known adherents of one or another religion were victims of the party's discriminatory admissions policies.

Youngsters of working-class or peasant background ostensibly had preference over those of other socioeconomic groups. However, a look at students' backgrounds during the 1950s and 1960s reveals that in no year did children of workers or peasants constitute a majority of those in institutions of higher education. Precise estimates vary, but through the mid-1960s workers' families gained an average of one-third of the admission slots, peasants a mere 10 percent, and "others" nearly 60 percent. The proletariat fared better in Slovakia, where nearly half of those with secondary school or university degrees came from workers' or peasants' families.

The regime made intensive efforts to improve the educational status of women in the 1970s. The number of women who completed a course of higher education jumped by 93 percent between 1970 and 1980 (for men the increase was 48 percent). Although women continued to cluster in such traditionally female areas of employment as health and teaching, their enrollment in many secondary schools outstripped that of men. Women have accounted for 40 percent of university enrollment since the mid-1960s. In the 1985-86 school year, this figure was 43 percent.

In 1971 the regime announced that "The selection of applicants must clearly be political in character. . . . We make no secret of the fact that we want to do this at the schools in a manner that will guarantee that future graduates will be supporters of socialism and that they will place their knowledge at the service of socialist society." This was the "principled class approach," a complex set

of criteria that purportedly reflected a student's "talent, interest in the chosen field, class origins, civic and moral considerations, social and political activism of the parents, and the result of the admission examination." In practice, class background and parents' political activities outweighed all other factors. Children of dissidents, of those in political disfavor, or of open adherents of a religious sect were denied admission to higher education in favor of children whose parents were party members or who were of proletarian origin.

Amnesty International reported in 1980 that institutions ranked applicants according to the following criteria: students whose parents were both KSC members, children of farmers or workers, and those with one parent a KSC member. Students who failed to meet any of these conditions were considered last. Children of dissidents were effectively disqualified. The system allowed for some manipulation; a member of the intelligentsia without a political blot on his or her record might have taken a job as a worker temporarily to permit his child a claim to proletarian status. There were charges as well of bribes and corruption surrounding university admissions. Whatever the mechanism involved, the social composition of the student body shifted in the mid-1970s; roughly half of all students in higher education were from workers' or farmers' families.

Charter 77 protested discrimination in educational admissions based on parents' political activity; there was some indication by the late 1970s that, if parental sins could still be visited on the children, at least questions concerning their parents' past and present political affiliations would be less blatant. Whether or not politicizing university admissions ensured that graduates would be "supporters of socialism" could be debated. However, it is evident that in controlling university admissions the regime knew how to ensure acquiescence on the part of most Czechoslovak citizens. If a moderately secure livelihood and a reasonable standard of living were the regime's "carrots," excluding children of dissidents from higher education was one of its more formidable "sticks."

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English-language material on contemporary Czechoslovak society is limited. The Czechoslovak government periodically publishes the *Statistical Survey of Czechoslovakia*, a summary of the annual *Statistická ročenka ČSSR*, which contains a wide variety of statistical information. It also publishes a glossy monthly, *Czechoslovak Life*, available in several languages, which offers a view of life in the republic, albeit through rose-colored glasses.

## *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*

Roy E.H. Mellor's *Eastern Europe* provides good background information, as does Joseph Rothschild's *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*. Robert W. Dean's *Nationalism and Political Change in Eastern Europe* and Stanislav J. Kirschbaum's "Slovak Nationalism in Socialist Czechoslovakia" both provide insight into Czech-Slovak relations in the 1970s. Jaroslav Krejčí's *Social Change and Stratification in Postwar Czechoslovakia* assesses socioeconomic relations between the two republics from early in the post-World War II era until the mid-1970s.

The eventful late 1960s and the 1970s are reviewed by Vladimír V. Kusin in *Political Groupings in the Czechoslovak Reform Movement, From Dubček to Charter 77*, and "Challenge to Normalcy: Political Opposition in Czechoslovakia, 1968-77," and also by Otto Ulč, in *Politics in Czechoslovakia* and "Some Aspects of Czechoslovak Society since 1968." Ota Šik's *Czechoslovakia: The Bureaucratic Economy* and Radoslav Selucký's *Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe: Political Background and Economic Significance*, both works by former Czechoslovak officials purged during normalization, offer analyses of the problems that gave impetus to the reform movement. *Women under Communism*, by Barbara Wolfe Jancar, "Women in East European Socialist Countries" by Jarmila L.A. Horna, and "Women's Labour Participation in Czechoslovakia since World War II" by Alena Heitlinger describe the role of women in Czechoslovak society.

Developments affecting Czechoslovakia's dissidents in the late 1970s and early 1980s are reviewed by O. Sojka in "The Bounds of Silence," H. Gordon Skilling in "Charter 77 and the Musical Underground," and Charles Sawyer in "Writing on the Party's Terms." Jiří Otava's "Religious Freedom in Czechoslovakia" and Peter A. Toma and Milan J. Reban's "Church-State Schism in Czechoslovakia," review church-state relations and detail some of the difficulties that believers face in communist Czechoslovakia. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)