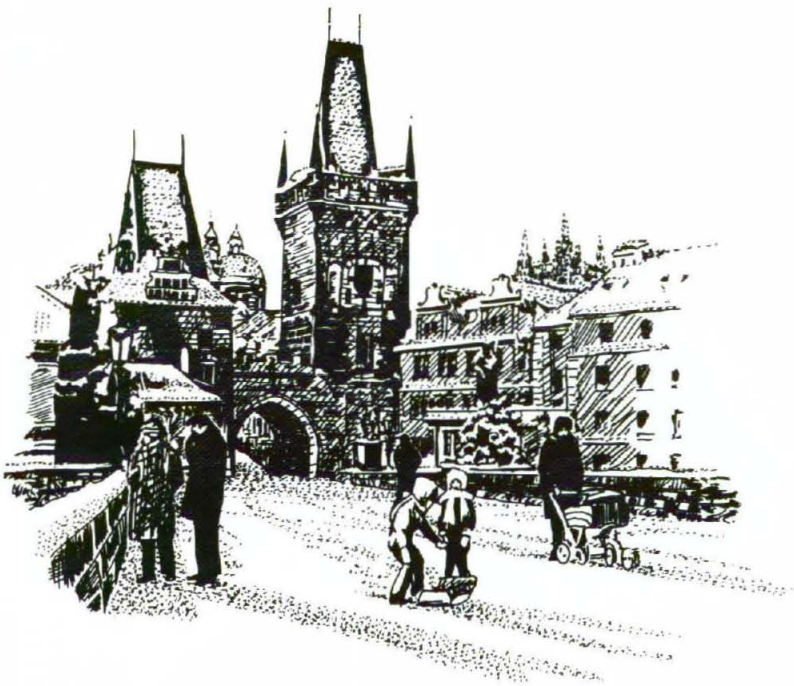


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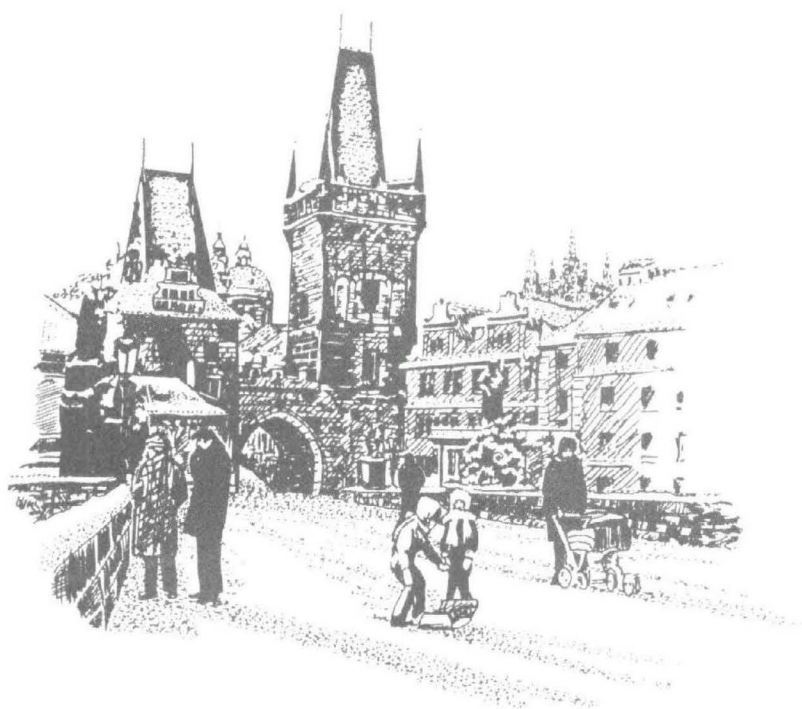
# Czechoslovakia

## a country study



# Czechoslovakia a country study

Federal Research Division  
Library of Congress  
Edited by  
Ihor Gawdiak  
Research Completed  
August 1987



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## Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books now being prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies—Area Handbook Program. The last page of this book lists the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer  
Acting Chief  
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## Preface

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: A COUNTRY STUDY replaces the edition of this work published in 1982. Several important developments took place in Czechoslovakia in the period between the two publications. The dissident movement persisted in the face of unrelenting attempts by the government to crush it, and the number of Charter 77 signatories grew steadily. There also has been a revitalization of the Roman Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. The church's rising popularity was underscored by the government's refusal to allow Pope John Paul II to participate in the festivities celebrating the 1,100th anniversary of the death of Saint Methodius. Perhaps most significant, the aging and conservative Czechoslovak leadership has been confronted in the last years with the growing challenge of *glasnost*' and *perestroika*, promoted by the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev.

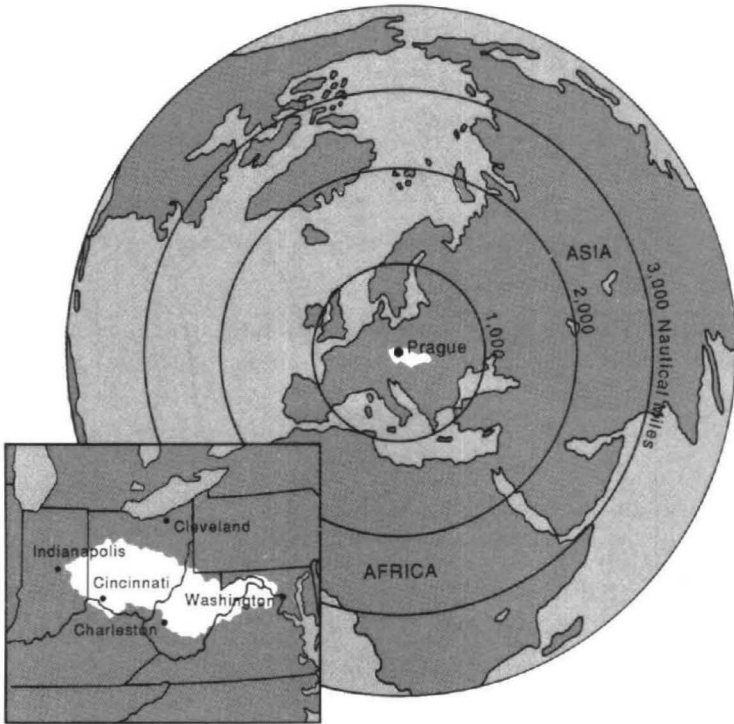
Like its predecessor, this edition attempts to deal with the dominant social, political, economic, and national security aspects of Czechoslovakia. Although the present volume incorporates considerable material from the 1982 edition, it is essentially a new book and contains statistical data and other relevant information from recently published sources. Sources of information included books and scholarly journals, official reports of governments and international organizations, foreign and domestic newspapers, and conference papers and proceedings. Chapter bibliographies appear at the end of the book, and brief comments on some of the more valuable sources recommended for further reading appear at the end of each chapter. Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided to assist readers unfamiliar with metric measurements (see table 1, Appendix A). A Glossary is also included.

The contemporary place-names used in this edition are generally those approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names. The reader will find, for example, Prague rather than Praha and Danube rather than Dunaj.

A certain amount of inconsistency seems unavoidable with respect to historical personages. The names of many of the important actors appear here in anglicized form. The reader will note the use of such English names as George, Charles, and Frederick. But the authors have decided to use Jan Hus rather than the anglicized John Huss.



## Country Profile



### Country

**Formal Name:** Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

**Short Form:** Czechoslovakia.

**Term for Citizens:** Czechoslovak(s).

**Capital:** Prague.

### Geography

**Size:** Approximately 127,905 square kilometers.

**Topography:** Generally irregular terrain. Western area, including natural basin centered on Prague, part of north-central European uplands. Eastern region made up of northern reaches of Carpathian Mountains and Danube Basin lands.



**Climate:** Predominantly continental but varies from moderate temperatures of Western Europe to more severe weather systems affecting Eastern Europe and the western Soviet Union.

## **Society**

**Population:** Estimated at 15.6 million in July 1987. Population growth rate 0.3 percent in 1987.

**Education and Literacy:** Education free at all levels and compulsory from age six to sixteen. Vast majority of population literate. Highly developed system of apprenticeship training and vocational schools supplements general secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

**Health:** Free health care available to all citizens. National health planning emphasizes preventive medicine; factory and local health-care centers supplement hospitals and other inpatient institutions. Substantial improvement in rural health care in 1960s and 1970s.

**Language:** Czech and Slovak recognized as official languages; they are mutually intelligible.

**Ethnic Groups:** In 1987 Czechs represented roughly 63 percent of population and Slovaks 31 percent. Hungarians, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, and Gypsies principal minority groups.

**Religion:** Religious freedom constitutionally guaranteed but limited in practice. Major religious organizations operate under government restrictions. Reliable information on religious affiliation during post-World War II era lacking, but principal denominations Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak National Church, Slovak Evangelical Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, and Uniate Church.

## **Economy**

**Gross National Product (GNP):** Estimated US\$135.6 billion in 1985. Per capita GNP US\$8,700. Growth moderate in first half of 1980s. In 1985 real growth rate 1.6 percent. Economy centrally planned with command links controlled by communist party, similar to Soviet Union.

**Energy and Mining:** Country energy short, relying on imported crude oil and natural gas from Soviet Union, domestic brown coal, and nuclear and hydroelectric energy. Energy constraints a major factor in 1980s. Large metallurgical industry but dependent on imports for iron and nonferrous ores.

**Industry:** Extractive and manufacturing industries dominate sector. Major branches include machinery, chemicals, food processing, metallurgy, and textiles. In 1985 production of pig iron 9.6 million tons, crude steel 15 million tons, and cement 10.3 million tons. Industry wasteful of energy, materials, and labor and slow to upgrade technology, but country source of high-quality machinery and arms for other communist countries.

**Agriculture:** Minor sector but supplied bulk of food needs. Dependent on large imports of grains (mainly for livestock feed) in years of adverse weather. In 1980s good harvests resulted in decreased reliance on imports. Meat production constrained by shortage of feed, but high per capita consumption of meat.

**Foreign Trade:** Exports estimated at US\$17.8 billion in 1985, of which 55 percent machinery, 14 percent fuels and materials, 16 percent manufactured consumer goods, 7 percent agricultural and forestry products and 8 percent other. Imports estimated at US\$17.9 billion in 1985, of which 41 percent fuels and materials, 33 percent machinery, 12 percent agricultural and forestry products, 6 percent manufactured consumer goods and 8 percent other. In 1986, about 80 percent of foreign trade with communist countries.

**Exchange Rate:** Official, or commercial, rate Kčs 5.4 per US\$1 in 1987; tourist, or noncommercial, rate Kčs 10.5 per US\$1. Neither rate reflected purchasing power.

**Fiscal Year:** Calendar year.

**Fiscal Policy:** State almost exclusive owner of means of production. Revenues from state enterprises primary source of revenues followed by turnover tax. Large budget expenditures on social programs, subsidies, and investments. Budget usually balanced or small surplus.

## **Transportation and Communications**

**Railroads:** In 1985 total of 13,141 kilometers, of which 12,883 kilometers standard gauge, 102 kilometers broad gauge, and 156 kilometers narrow gauge; 2,866 kilometers double tracked and 3,221 kilometers electrified. Track and beds suffered from inadequate maintenance.

**Roads:** In 1983 total of 74,064 kilometers, of which 60,765 kilometers paved and 13,299 kilometers graveled. Roads poorly maintained.

**Inland Waterways:** About 475 kilometers in 1985.

**Pipelines:** In 1987 about 1,448 kilometers for crude oil, 1,500 kilometers for refined products, and 8,000 kilometers for natural gas. Network linked domestic oil and gas fields to refineries. Pipelines also linked to large international lines bringing Soviet crude oil and gas to border.

**Freight:** In 1985 about 81 percent of long-distance freight carried by rail. Truck transport accounted for 13 percent, inland waterways for 5 percent, and civil aviation less than 1 percent of freight traffic.

**Ports:** No seaports; used Gdynia, Gdansk, and Szczecin in Poland; Rijeka and Koper in Yugoslavia; Hamburg in Federal Republic of Germany; and Rostock in German Democratic Republic. Czechoslovakia had own fleet and chartered vessels for international cargo. Main river ports Prague, Bratislava, Děčín, and Komárno.

**Telecommunications:** Adequate, modern, automatic system with direct dial connections with many parts of country and most European countries. In 1985 about 23.2 per 100 inhabitants. In January 1987 fifty-four AM, and fourteen FM radio stations, forty-five television stations and eleven Soviet television relays.

## **Government and Politics**

**Politics:** Monopoly on politics held by Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa—KSČ). Gustáv Husák elected first secretary of KSČ in 1969 (changed to general secretary in 1971) and president of Czechoslovakia in 1975. Other parties and organizations exist but function in subordinate roles to KSČ. All political parties, as well as numerous mass organizations, grouped under umbrella of National Front of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Human rights activists and religious activists severely repressed.

**Government:** Government functioned under 1960 Constitution, which was substantially amended in 1968 and to lesser extents in 1971, 1975, and 1978. 1968 amendments created federal government structure, although subsequent amendments greatly limited authority of Czech Socialist Republic and Slovak Socialist Republic. Power of federal administration severely limited by “shadow government” within KSČ, which made all important policy decisions.

**Foreign Relations:** Formal diplomatic relations with 135 nations in 1987. Czechoslovakia considered strong ally of Soviet Union and

closely followed Soviet lead in international affairs. Relations with United States poor in 1987.

**International Agreements and Memberships:** Active participant in Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), Warsaw Pact, United Nations and its specialized agencies, and Movement of Nonaligned Nations; signatory of conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

## **National Security**

**Armed Forces:** Czechoslovak People's Army comprised ground forces, numbering 145,000, and air forces, numbering 56,000, in 1987. Conscripts made up slightly less than 70 percent of ground forces and about 32 percent of air force.

**Military Units:** Five tank divisions and five motorized rifle divisions formed nucleus of ground forces in 1987. Combat support provided by one airborne regiment, two antitank regiments, three surface-to-surface missile brigades and two artillery brigades. Air force's 465 combat aircraft and 40 armed helicopters deployed in ground attack, interceptor, and reconnaissance squadrons. Five Soviet ground divisions stationed in Czechoslovakia; total strength about 85,000.

**Equipment:** Thriving armaments industry produced small arms, heavy weapons, armored vehicles, tanks, and jet aircraft. Some also imported from Soviet Union. Tanks produced under Soviet license; most other armaments of Czechoslovak design.

**Police:** National Security Corps included uniformed police (Public Security) and plainclothes police (State Security); both nationwide and subordinate to Ministry of Interior. Border Guard, 11,000 strong, deployed on country's frontiers trained and equipped like military force but subordinate to Ministry of Interior rather than to Ministry of National Defense.

**Paramilitary:** Part-time People's Militia (about 120,000) received some military training and participated in civil defense. Association for Cooperation with the Army (about 1 million) popularized defense training mostly through sports.

**Foreign Military Treaties:** Member of Warsaw Pact; also has bilateral defense treaty with Soviet Union.

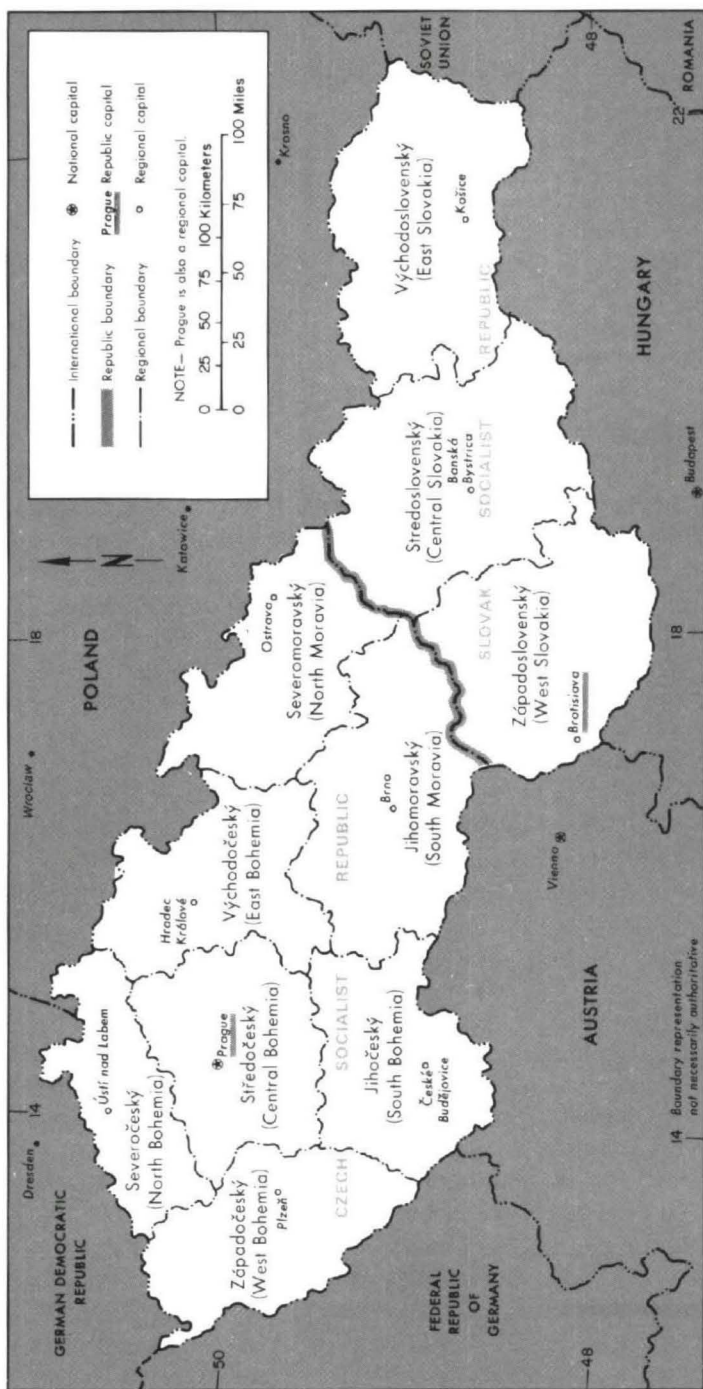


Figure 1. Administrative Divisions, 1988

## Introduction

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AS THE NAME IMPLIES, is a state uniting two separate nationalities, the Czechs and the Slovaks. Emerging as one of several multinational states in eastern and Central Europe after World War I, the Czechoslovak Republic of 1918 was the fruition of an ideal espoused by both Czech and Slovak intellectuals since the late nineteenth century. This union had the blessing of the victorious Allies, who hoped that the democratic ideals and principles for which so many lives had been sacrificed would inspire the many nationalities inhabiting that region to overcome age-old animosities. President Woodrow Wilson, in particular, viewed the newly established states as microcosms of the United States, where people of different backgrounds and creeds could live peacefully together. Of all the newly created multinational political entities, Czechoslovakia came the closest to fulfilling this dream.

The ancestors of the Czechs and Slovaks were first noted in recorded history in the fifth century, when the ancient Czech tribes settled in Bohemia and Moravia and when Slovak tribes settled in what was to become Slovakia. In the ninth century, the two peoples were united for the first time in the Great Moravian Empire. Positioned between two great civilizations, the Germans in the West and the Byzantine Empire in the East, the Czechs and Slovaks henceforth would play a unique and important role in linking the two worlds. Although both peoples belong to the family of Slavs, they were drawn early in their history into the western European, Roman Catholic orbit (see *First Political Units*, ch. 1). The folk culture of the Czechs and Slovaks remained close to that of their fellow Slavs in the East, but their intellectual and political development was profoundly influenced by western Europe. Today, Czechoslovakia is firmly within the political and economic sphere of the Warsaw Pact alliance, but it still looks to the West for intellectual and spiritual nourishment (see *Appendix C*).

The unity of the Czech and Slovak people in the Great Moravian Empire was brief. From the beginning of the tenth century and for almost a millennium, the two peoples followed separate courses. Although no independent Czech state existed prior to 1918, the Bohemian Kingdom that emerged in the tenth century and lasted well into the sixteenth century had many of the aspects of a national state. Early in its history, the Bohemian Kingdom became part of the Holy Roman Empire, and the Czech people were subjected

to strong German and Roman Catholic influence (see *Bohemian Kingdom*, ch. 1). Nevertheless, the Czechs, first under the Holy Roman Empire and later under Hapsburg rule, experienced a considerable degree of political, cultural, and religious autonomy. By the nineteenth century, the Czechs had developed a distinct national identity and culture, as well as a differentiated society made up of a landowning nobility, an urban middle class, an intellectual elite, and workers and peasants (see *Hapsburg Rule, 1526–1867*, ch. 1).

Unlike the Czechs, the Slovaks did not attain a high level of political, economic, and cultural development prior to the nineteenth century; their Hungarian overlords proved to be far less enlightened masters than the Germans and Austrians. At the beginning of the century, the Slovaks remained, for the most part, an agrarian society, with only a small number of intellectuals. Only in the second half of the nineteenth century did Slovakia undergo large and rapid urbanization (see *Urbanization and Migration*, ch. 2). National consciousness among the Slovaks also lagged behind that of the Czechs and grew largely as a result of increased contacts with the politically and culturally more advanced Czechs.

The Czechoslovak Republic formed in 1918 contained, in addition to Czechs and Slovaks, numerous Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles. Each minority, however, was granted freedom to develop its own culture and language. The republic also served as a haven for the minorities of the neighboring states fleeing the oppression of the ruling majority (see *Czechoslovak Democracy*, ch. 1). In spite of the tolerant and libertarian policies of the Czechoslovak government toward the German and other minorities within the republic's borders, Hitler used the pretext of dissatisfied minorities to dismember Czechoslovakia in 1938 as a prelude to his attack on Poland (see *Second Republic, 1938–39*, ch. 1).

The Third Republic, which was established after World War II, differs markedly from the First Republic of the interwar period. The Czechoslovakia of the 1980s was predominantly a nation of Czechs and Slovaks; ethnic communities of Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians, Poles, Gypsies, and Jews made up only about 5 percent of the total population (see *Ethnic Groups*, ch. 2). The post-war nationalization of industry and collectivization of agriculture had also simplified the once complex and diverse Czechoslovak society. The Czechoslovak social structure in the 1980s consisted mainly of workers and collective farmers, a small class of intelligentsia, and, at the top of the hierarchy, the communist party elite (see *Social Groups*, ch. 2). In the 1980s, Czechoslovakia remained

one of the most highly industrialized and prosperous countries in Eastern Europe and had a comparatively high standard of living. Its citizens did not experience extreme poverty, nor was there a conspicuously wealthy elite. The country still possessed considerable, if dwindling, coal deposits and relatively fertile soil (see Economic Sectors, ch. 3).

According to the 1960 Constitution, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is a federative state composed of "two equal fraternal nations," the Czechs and the Slovaks. The Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic share with the federal government many of the functions and responsibilities of government; the federal government in Prague, however, has exclusive jurisdiction for the most important responsibilities of state, such as foreign affairs, defense, economic policy, and federal justice. As in all communist states, however, real power in Czechoslovakia rests with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa—KSČ). The government branches of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, as well as those of the Czech and Slovak socialist republics, simply implement the policies and decisions of the party (see The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; Government Structure; ch. 4).

The defense of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic rests with the Czechoslovak People's Army. Since 1968, however, five Soviet ground divisions have been stationed in Czechoslovakia as part of the Soviet Union's Central Group of Forces. The Ministry of National Defense, which supervises the Czechoslovak armed forces, has no control over the Soviet military presence on Czechoslovak soil. On the contrary, as part of the Warsaw Pact alliance, Czechoslovak armed forces are part of the Soviet bloc's military might. Czechoslovak soldiers are strongly influenced by fraternization with other "socialist" armies. In addition, they employ Soviet military training and political indoctrination procedures and are taught to adopt Soviet concepts of military doctrine, strategy and tactics, and command structure (see Armed Forces, ch. 5). Internal national security in Czechoslovakia is maintained by the Border Guard, which is responsible for securing the country's frontiers; the National Security Corps, made up of uniformed police and the plainclothes State Security force; and a part-time People's Militia. The internal national security forces are under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior (see Internal Security and Public Order, ch. 5).

The Third Republic was created as a result of a compromise between pre-war Czechoslovak Republic leaders and the KSČ. Following World War II, Czechoslovak nationalist leaders Eduard



Beneš and Tomáš Masaryk hoped to re-establish a republic with the liberal, democratic principles and institutions of pre-war Czechoslovakia. Their hopes were subverted by the KSČ, which at the time had considerable popular support and the backing of the Soviet Union. The KSČ steadily expanded its influence over key ministries and in 1948 delivered the final blow to Czechoslovak democracy by seizing all power (see *The Third Republic and the Communist Takeover*, ch. 1). After 1948 Czechoslovakia moved completely into the Soviet sphere of influence and was transformed into a Stalinist state. The party became the only political force in the country, the state apparatus became highly centralized, and cultural and intellectual life became pedestrian and dull in line with the tenets of socialist realism. All manifestations of dissidence, whether political, religious, or artistic, were repressed; elements within the Czechoslovak society found to be the least bit nonconformist were removed from important positions, arrested, and incarcerated; and workers and peasants, left without a voice, passively submitted to their lot. A widespread political, economic, and cultural malaise prevailed in Czechoslovakia well into the late 1960s (see *Stalinization*, ch. 1).

The Czechoslovak economy, which had been nationalized almost totally by 1952, began to stagnate in the late 1950s. The continued poor economic performance throughout the 1960s led to political instability and demands for reform (see *Economic Policy and Performance*, ch. 3). The period called the “Prague Spring” began as an attempt by party and government leaders to bolster the faltering economy and to overcome the increasingly evident constraints on economic growth. Reformers, both in the party and in the state bureaucracy, blamed in particular the central planning system and sought to replace it with a “market socialist” system. Initial calls for reforms, however, did not challenge the paramount role of the KSČ, nor did they include any proposals for liberalizing Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, even the modest proposals for reform met with strong conservative opposition. In fact, the developing political crisis was the result of a broad conflict between the liberal economic and conservative elites in the party and the government (see *The Reform Movement*, ch. 1).

In January 1968, Alexander Dubček replaced Antonín Novotný as the first secretary of the KSČ, and from that point the Prague Spring movement was transformed into a mass movement for political reform, led by a coalition of intellectuals and party officials. The KSČ itself became an agent of reform. A consensus on the need for reform seemed to have developed very quickly on the part of Czechoslovak citizens, who disagreed only on the reform’s scope

and pace. In April 1968, the KSČ Presidium adopted the Action Program, calling for a federalized Czechoslovakia and a “democratic” and “national” model of socialism. At the same time, however, the Presidium reaffirmed Czechoslovakia’s allegiance to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact (see *The Prague Spring*, 1968, ch. 1).

The pace of reforms in Czechoslovakia—and particularly the degree of penetration of all levels of the KSČ apparatus by the reformers—was a matter of increasing concern to the Soviet Union. The Soviets became especially alarmed when in June 1968 Ludvík Vaculík, a candidate member of the Central Committee of the KSČ, issued a manifesto entitled “Two Thousand Words,” calling for the immediate implementation of the reform program. The Soviet Union was confronted with the prospect of full-scale democratization and political alienation by an integral member of the Soviet bloc. The Soviet response at first consisted of a series of warnings. Warsaw Pact forces held military maneuvers on Czechoslovak soil in the summer of 1968, a letter of castigation signed by Warsaw Pact member states was sent to the KSČ, and Soviet Politburo members met with KSČ leadership in an attempt to push back the reform movement. When all these steps failed, the Warsaw Pact forces, with the exception of Romania, invaded Czechoslovakia. Remarkably, in spite of the exuberance of the spring and summer, Czechoslovak citizens heeded the call of the KSČ Presidium not to shed blood and offered only passive resistance to the invaders. The reform movement collapsed overnight without a shot being fired (see *Intervention*, ch. 1).

The refusal of Czechoslovak citizens to resist with arms the Warsaw Pact invasion of their country did not come as a total surprise. After all, Czechoslovaks had displayed similar behavior when Hitler dismantled their country in 1938 and when the communists forcibly imposed their rule in 1948. Passive resistance when confronted with overwhelming odds and pacifism in general are viewed by many observers as a long-standing Czech national characteristic. Such pacifism is exemplified, if not glorified, in the popular World War I novel *The Good Soldier Švejk* by the Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek. In the novel, the Czech soldier Švejk, a seemingly slow-witted and submissive provincial bumpkin, uses glibness and obtuseness, disguised as passive compliance, to outwit the Austrian bureaucracy and military establishment (see *Czechs*, ch. 2). A more convincing explanation for the lack of armed resistance on the part of Czechoslovak citizens in times of grave crisis is perhaps the dualistic nature of their society.

Throughout its existence, Czechoslovakia has lacked the demographic homogeneity of present-day Poland or Hungary. Despite the government's considerable success in the 1950s and 1960s in removing many of the most pronounced economic imbalances between the Czech lands and Slovakia, social and political tensions between the Czechs and the Slovaks persisted. The two peoples consistently pursued different concepts of a Czechoslovak state. The Czechs, who outnumbered the Slovaks two to one, wanted in 1968, as they had in the past, a single Czechoslovak state. The Slovaks, resentful of what they perceived as Czech domination of administrative and educational posts in Slovakia, sought a federative political system in which they would exercise greater political autonomy. Czechoslovakia lacked the kind of unifying forces that were present in Poland, for example. The Roman Catholic Church did not exert a powerful unifying influence, nor was there a strong labor union that represented the interests of all the Czechoslovak workers. The various nationalities and interest groups were united in 1968 only in their efforts to free themselves from the oppressive domination of the party and the state. The reformers themselves assumed that an essential ingredient of the reform movement was the right of the various nationalities and interest groups to pursue their own specific and different aims. These factors made Czechoslovak society ready for democracy in 1968 but incapable of standing up to a totalitarian challenge.

The process of "normalization" following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia was carried out under the leadership of Gustáv Husák, elected the new first secretary of the KSČ in April 1969. Husák had been purged in 1951 for "nationalist" tendencies and imprisoned until 1960. Rehabilitated in 1963, Husák occupied a centrist position in the debates over reforms during the Prague Spring. It was now his task to restore the country to the pre-reform period, to cleanse the party of reformist elements, and to reinstall ideological conformity.

A sense of defeat and alienation permeated Czechoslovak society in the 1970s as hopes for political and economic reforms were dashed. Materialism and consumerism became the main pursuit of most citizens. At first, the country's economy was strong enough to allow for a rise in the standard of living and to satisfy the public's aroused passion for material goods. In the mid-1970s, however, the economy took another turn for the worse, and a prolonged economic decline followed. In response, antisocial behavior became more pronounced. Criminal activity, alcoholism, and absenteeism from work increased alarmingly; labor productivity declined; and more and more Czechoslovak citizens sought escape from their bleak

lives through emigration (see *Reaction to Normalization*, ch. 4). A highly developed sense of humor, as manifested in popular political satire, served as another avenue of escape from everyday doldrums. In his book *Rowboat to Prague*, Alan Levy illustrates the cynical view of life under the socialist system by citing what the people of Czechoslovakia refer to as the “four paradoxes of applied socialism”: everybody works, but nothing gets produced; nothing gets produced, but quotas are met; production quotas are met, but stores have nothing to sell; stores have nothing to sell, but the standard of living continues to rise.

Another aspect of normalization was Czechoslovakia’s increased dependence on the Soviet Union. In the late 1960s, Moscow had initiated a process of integration to make countries like Czechoslovakia increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia, in particular, acquiesced to Soviet pressure in Eastern Europe, almost totally submitting to Soviet control. Indeed, in its desire to preserve the status quo, at times it seemed a more orthodox communist state than the Soviet Union itself. Not surprisingly, Czechoslovakia was one of the staunchest opponents of the 1980–81 reforms and the Solidarity movement in Poland. Since 1968 the ties between the armed forces of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia have been especially strong (see *Soviet Influence*, ch. 5).

The voices of dissent and reform were not completely stilled, however. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a few individuals continued to call for greater personal freedom. The most prominent of these individuals organized themselves around Charter 77, a manifesto issued in January 1977 and originally signed by 243 leading Czechoslovak intellectuals. The manifesto called upon the government to respect the civil and human rights enumerated in the 1960 Constitution and in several international agreements, in particular the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Final Act (also known as the Helsinki Accords), signed by Czechoslovakia (see *Charter 77*, ch. 4). The response of the Husák regime to the Charter 77 movement was reminiscent of the Stalinist era in Czechoslovakia. The signatories of the charter were viciously attacked in the official press, fired from their jobs, arrested, and imprisoned. Nevertheless, the Charter 77 movement continued to grow. By the mid-1980s, the number of signatories had reached 12,000 and included representatives from almost every segment of society (see *Police Repression*, ch. 5). Another manifestation of dissent in the 1980s was growing religious activism, especially among the young (see *Religion*, ch. 2).

In late 1987, Czechoslovakia once again faced the challenge of reform. Paradoxically, the winds of change were blowing, this time

not from the West but from the East, from the Soviet Union itself. *Glasnost* and *perestroika*, the cornerstones of Mikhail Gorbachev's ambitious program to invigorate the moribund Soviet economy and society, caused the KSČ considerable consternation. The KSČ was under increasing pressure from the Soviet Union to follow its example and institute reforms in Czechoslovakia. Within the KSČ, reformist elements, encouraged by the Gorbachev program and frustrated by the stagnation and inertia in their own country, also pressed for reform.

Conservative opposition to reform remained strong, however. Under the leadership of Husák, the KSČ seemed determined to avoid the excesses of the reform movement of 1968. Although in March 1987 Husák nominally committed Czechoslovakia to follow the program of *perestroika*, he nevertheless cautioned the party in October 1987 not to "hasten solutions too quickly" so as to "minimize the risks that could occur."

December 1, 1987

\* \* \*

On December 17, 1987, some two months after research and writing of this book were completed, Prague announced that Husák, who was one month away from his seventieth birthday, had resigned as head of the KSČ. He retained, however, his post of president of Czechoslovakia and his full membership on the Presidium of the KSČ. Husák's retention of these positions and the fact that the man who replaced him could hardly be called a reformer suggested to most observers that Husák's resignation was caused by failing health rather than by any fundamental shift in the KSČ policies toward reform.

Miloš Jakeš, who replaced Husák as first secretary of the KSČ, was sixty-five years of age at the time of his assumption of the most powerful post in the country. Other than the age difference and the fact that Jakeš is a Czech whereas Husák is a Slovak, there was little to distinguish the new leader from his predecessor, and most observers expected Jakeš to continue Husák's policies.

Jakeš was born August 17, 1922, in Bohemia. He joined the KSČ in 1945 and ten years later became the head of its youth organization, the Czechoslovak Union of Youth. Subsequently he spent some time in Moscow. Between 1968 and 1977, he served as the head of the KSČ's Central Control and Auditing Commission and in this capacity supervised the purge of the KSČ following the Soviet invasion of 1968. In 1977 he was elected to the party's Secretariat and assumed responsibilities for Czechoslovak agriculture. In 1981

he was made a full member of the Presidium, overseeing the party's supervision of economic policy and management. Considered a firm supporter of Husák, Jakeš was viewed as having neither strong reformist nor conservative tendencies.

In his first pronouncements as the head of the KSČ, Jakeš assured the KSČ's Central Committee that he would continue the cautious and moderate path of reform set forth by Husák. He called for a large-scale introduction of new technology as the means to "fundamentally increase the efficiency of the Czechoslovak economy." But he also warned that there would be no "retreat from the fundamental principles of socialism," adding that the party had learned well the "lesson from 1968-69 and know[s] where such a retreat leads." At the same time, Jakeš acknowledged Soviet pressure for reform by pledging to pursue economic restructuring, stating that "just as Soviet Communists, we too must observe the principle that more democracy means more socialism."

Taking the cue from its new leader, the Czechoslovak Central Committee in its plenary meeting of December 18, 1987, failed to make a decision on a very modest proposal for reform. The Czechoslovak version of *perestroika*, which had slowly taken shape during the last months of Husák's rule under the guidance of the reformist and pro-Gorbachev Czechoslovak leader Premier Lubomír Štrougal, called for a modest decentralization of state economic administration but postponed any concrete action until the end of the decade. This reform proposal had been publicly debated and was expected to be approved. The Central Committee returned it to the government for "further work," however, an action which suggesting that committee members disagreed even on this minor reform. The only positive aspect of the whole affair was an unprecedented news conference held by the Central Committee to announce its failure to act.

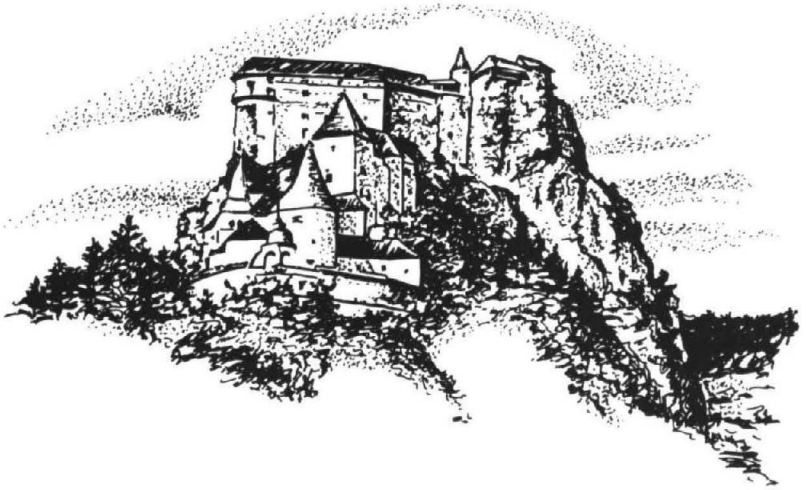
According to some Western observers, the slow pace of the Czechoslovak reform movement was an irritant to the Soviet leadership. In a congratulatory message to Jakeš, Gorbachev urged the latter to "set forth restructuring of the Czechoslovak economy and democratization of public and political life." "We are confident," Gorbachev added, that "the Central Committee under your leadership will ensure the fulfillment of extensive tasks facing the party." In late 1987, observers were reluctant to predict which course of action the KSČ would follow under its new leader.

January 18, 1988

Ihor Y. Gawdiak



## Chapter 1. Historical Setting





*Orava Castle in Slovakia, dating from the third century A.D.*

CZECHOSLOVAKIA WAS ESTABLISHED in 1918 as a national state of the Czechs and Slovaks. Although these two peoples were closely related, they had undergone different historical experiences. In the ninth century A.D., the ancestors of the Czechs and Slovaks were united in the Great Moravian Empire, but by the tenth century the Hungarians had conquered Slovakia, and for a millennium the Czechs and the Slovaks went their separate ways. The history of Czechoslovakia, therefore, is a story of two separate peoples whose fates sometimes have touched and sometimes have intertwined.

Despite their separate strands of development, both Czechs and Slovaks struggled against a powerful neighbor that threatened their very existence. Both nations showed resilience and perseverance in their search for national self-expression. The Czechs had a much richer tradition of self-rule. From the tenth to the fifteenth century, the Czech-inhabited Bohemian Kingdom was a powerful political and military entity. The immigration into Bohemia of a large number of Germans, however, created tension between Czechs and Germans.

Perhaps the greatest moment of Czech self-expression came with the Hussite movement in the fifteenth century. In 1403 the Czech reformist preacher Jan Hus challenged papal authority and precipitated a broadly based anti-German rebellion. The Hussite religious reform movement developed into a national struggle for autonomy in political and ecclesiastical affairs. For over two centuries the Czechs were able to maintain political self-rule, which was expressed by the Bohemian estates (an assembly of nobles, clergy, and townspeople representing the major social groups in the Bohemian Kingdom) and the Czech Reformed Church.

The failure to establish a native dynasty ultimately doomed the Bohemian Kingdom. In 1526 the Bohemian estates accepted a Hapsburg ruler as monarch. Soon this voluntary subordination was transformed into the hereditary rule of an alien absolutist dynasty. The Bohemian estates resisted, but their defeat by the Hapsburgs at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 had dire consequences: the entire Czech leadership was either killed or went into exile, the reformed Czech religion was gradually eliminated, and even the Czech language went into decline. As the remnants of the Bohemian Kingdom were abolished, the Czech lands were incorporated into Austria. From self-rule, the Czechs were reduced to an oppressed peasant nation.

New forces at work in the nineteenth century dramatically changed the position of the Czechs. A vigorous industrial revolution transformed a peasant nation into a differentiated society that included industrial workers, a middle class, and intellectuals. Under the influence of the Enlightenment and romanticism, the Czechs experienced a remarkable revival of Czech culture and national consciousness. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Czechs were making political demands, including the reconstitution of an autonomous Bohemian Kingdom. Because of Austria's parliamentary system, the Czechs were able to make significant cultural and political gains, but these were vigorously opposed by Bohemia's Germans, who feared losing their privileged position. On the eve of World War I, the Czech leader Tomáš Masaryk began propagating the Czechoslovak idea, i.e., the reunion of Czechs and Slovaks into one political entity.

The Slovak road to nationhood was even more difficult than that of the Czechs. After incorporation into the Kingdom of Hungary in the tenth century, the Slovaks were reduced to being serfs of their Hungarian overlords. They had no forum for political expression, but maintained their language and folk customs as an expression of their strong national consciousness. On occasion, the Slovaks were able to renew contact with the Czechs. In the fifteenth century, Czech Hussite armies had briefly occupied parts of Slovakia. In the sixteenth century, Czech Protestant literature was circulated in Slovakia, and the Czech language became the literary language of educated Slovaks.

National revival came late and more hesitantly to the Slovaks than to the Czechs. Slovakia was not industrialized until the end of the nineteenth century; therefore, the Slovaks remained primarily a rural people led by a small group of intellectuals. The Slovak leadership had first to decide on the nature of Slovak identity. Some outstanding Slovak scholars, e.g., Pavol Šafárik and Ján Kollár, viewed Slovaks as merely a long-separated part of a single Czechoslovak nation. By the 1840s, however, L'udovít Štúr emphasized the distinctiveness of the Slovak language and people; subsequently, Slovaks viewed themselves as a separate Slovak nationality. As the Slovaks attempted to establish cultural institutions and make political demands, they were blocked by the Hungarian ruling aristocracy. The Slovak national revival was severely repressed, and, on the eve of World War I, the Slovaks were struggling to preserve their newly found national identity.

After a millennium of separation, the Czechs and Slovaks were politically reunited in 1918 in the Czechoslovak Republic. As a parliamentary democracy surrounded by hostile neighbors, the

Czechoslovak Republic not only survived for twenty years but also prospered. Yet the republic was not able to withstand the combined pressure of its dissatisfied minorities and the aggressive designs of its neighbors. Tension was most acute in the German-populated Sudetenland. The rise of Hitler, who became chancellor of Germany in 1933, led to mounting German nationalism in the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia and provided a pretext for Hitler's demand for annexation of this highly industrialized area. Czechoslovakia's major allies, Britain and France, were anxious to avoid a war with Germany. To appease Hitler, they signed the Munich Agreement on September 29, 1938, ceding the Sudetenland to the Third Reich. Bowing to the inevitable, Czechoslovak President Eduard Beneš accepted the Munich decision. In March 1939, Nazi troops occupied all of Bohemia and Moravia, and the Slovaks declared independence. Czechoslovakia ceased to exist.

After World War II, Czechoslovakia was reconstituted as an independent state but again faced the threat of a powerful neighbor. President Beneš had made major concessions to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, hoping to satisfy it and the Soviet Union while, at the same time, attempting to preserve Czechoslovakia's democratic, pluralistic political system. Beneš's hopes were not realized, and the communists overthrew his coalition government in 1948. Czechoslovakia soon was placed firmly into the Soviet orbit, and Stalinization followed.

Czechoslovakia's democratic tradition had been suppressed but not destroyed. In 1968 the struggle for democracy reemerged within the party itself. While remaining loyal to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the leadership of the party under Alexander Dubček attempted to introduce within Czechoslovakia a more democratic form of socialism. The ensuing Prague Spring of 1968 was crushed by the Warsaw Pact invasion. Subsequently, the leadership of the party was purged, and Gustáv Husák, the new general secretary (the title changed from first secretary in 1971), introduced a "normalization" program. Despite Czech and Slovak dissent, as of 1987 Husák continued to enforce an anti-reformist course.

## **Early History**

### **First Political Units**

Although a Czechoslovak state did not emerge until 1918, its roots go back many centuries. The earliest records of Slavic inhabitants in present-day Czechoslovakia date from the fifth century A.D. The ancestors of the Czechs settled in present-day Bohemia and Moravia, and those of the Slovaks settled in

present-day Slovakia. The settlers developed an agricultural economy and built the characteristically circular Slavic villages, the *okrouhlice*.

The peaceful life of the Slavic tribes was shattered in the sixth century by the invasion of the Avars, a people of undetermined origin and language who established a loosely connected empire between the Labe (Elbe) and Dnieper rivers. The Avars did not conquer all the Slavic tribes in the area, but they subjugated some of them and conducted raids on others. It was in response to the Avars that Samo—a foreigner thought to be a Frankish merchant—unified some of the Slavic tribes and in A.D. 625 established the empire of Samo. Although the territorial extent of the empire is not known, it was centered in Bohemia and is considered the first coherent Slavic political unit. The empire disintegrated when Samo died in 658.

A more stable polity emerged in Moravia. The Czech tribes of Moravia helped Charlemagne destroy the Avar Empire (ca. 796) and were rewarded by receiving part of it as a fief. Although the Moravians paid tribute to Charlemagne, they did enjoy considerable independence. Early in the ninth century, Mojmir—a Slavic chief—formed the Moravian Kingdom. His two successors expanded its domains to include Bohemia, Slovakia, southern Poland, and western Hungary. The expanded kingdom became known as the Great Moravian Empire. Its importance to Czechoslovak history is that it united in a single state the ancestors of the Czechs and Slovaks.

The Great Moravian Empire was located at the crossroads of two civilizations: the German lands in the West and Byzantium in the East. From the West the Franks (a Germanic people) conducted destructive raids into Moravian territory, and German priests and monks came to spread Christianity in its Roman form among the Slavs. Mojmir and his fellow chiefs were baptized at Regensburg in modern-day Germany. Rastislav (850–70), Mojmir's successor, feared the German influence as a threat to his personal rule, however, and turned to Byzantium. At Rastislav's request, Emperor Michael of Byzantium dispatched the monks Cyril and Methodius to the Great Moravian Empire to introduce Eastern Christian rites and liturgy in the Slavic language. A new Slavonic script, the Cyrillic alphabet, was devised. Methodius was invested by the pope as archbishop of Moravia. But Svätopluk (871–94), Rastislav's successor, chose to ally himself with the German clerics. After the death of Methodius in 885, the Great Moravian Empire was drawn into the sphere of influence of the Roman Catholic Church. As a result, the Czechs and Slovaks adopted the Latin

alphabet and became further differentiated from the Eastern Slavs, who continued to use the Cyrillic alphabet and adhered to Eastern Orthodoxy.

## **Magyar Invasion**

The unification of Czech and Slovak tribes in a single state was shattered by the Magyar invasion in 907. The Magyars, who entered the region as seminomadic pastoralists, soon developed settled agricultural communities; they held the territory until the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century. With the arrival of the Magyars, the Great Moravian Empire disintegrated. The chiefs of the Czech tribes in Bohemia broke from the tribes in Moravia and swore allegiance instead to the Frankish emperor Arnulf. The political center of gravity for the Czechs shifted to Bohemia, where a new political unit, the Bohemian Kingdom, would develop. The Magyars established the Kingdom of Hungary, which included a good part of the Great Moravian Empire, primarily all of modern-day Slovakia. As it turned out, the Magyar invasion had profound long-term consequences, for it meant that the Slavic people of the Kingdom of Hungary—the ancestors of the Slovaks—would be separated politically from the western areas, inhabited by the ancestors of the Czechs for virtually a millennium. This separation was a major factor in the development of distinct Czech and Slovak nationalities.

## **Bohemian Kingdom**

### *Foundation*

When the Great Moravian Empire disintegrated, a new political entity, the Bohemian Kingdom, emerged. It would play an important role in the development of the Czech nation. The Bohemian Kingdom was a major medieval and early modern political, economic, and cultural entity and subsequently was viewed by many Czechs as one of the brightest periods of Czech history. But whatever its long-range implications for Czech history, it is important to remember that the Bohemian Kingdom was a medieval state in which ethnic or national questions were far overshadowed by dynastic politics.

The Bohemian Kingdom emerged in the tenth century when the Přemyslid chiefs—members of the Čechové, a tribe from which the Czechs derive their name—unified neighboring Czech tribes and established a form of centralized rule. Cut off from Byzantium by the Hungarian presence, the Bohemian Kingdom existed in the shadow of the Holy Roman Empire. In 950 the powerful emperor



Source: Based on information from William R. Shepherd, *Shepherd's Historical Atlas*, New York, 1980, and J. F. N. Bradley, *Czechoslovakia: A Short History*, Edinburgh, 1971.

*Figure 2. Central Europe circa 1097*

Otto I, a Saxon, led an expedition to Bohemia demanding tribute; the Bohemian Kingdom thus became a fief of the Holy Roman Empire and its king one of the seven electors of the emperor. The German emperors continued the practice of using the Roman Catholic clergy to extend German influence into Czech territory. Significantly, the bishopric of Prague, founded in 973 during the reign of Boleslav II (967–99), was subordinated to the German archbishopric of Mainz. Thus, at the same time that Přemyslid rulers utilized the German alliance to consolidate their rule against a perpetually rebellious regional nobility, they struggled to retain their autonomy in relation to the empire.

After a struggle with Poland and Hungary, the Bohemian Kingdom acquired Moravia in 1029. Moravia, however, continued to be a separate margravate, usually ruled by a younger son of the Bohemian king. Because of complex dynastic arrangements, Moravia's link with the Bohemian Kingdom between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries was occasionally severed; during such interludes Moravia was subordinated directly to the Holy Roman Empire or to Hungary (see fig. 2). Although Moravia's fate was intertwined with Bohemia's, in general it did not participate in

Bohemia's civil and religious struggles. The main course of Czech history evolved in Bohemia proper.

### **Growth**

The thirteenth century was the most dynamic period of Přemyslid reign over Bohemia. Emperor Frederick II's preoccupation with Mediterranean affairs and the dynastic struggles known as the Great Interregnum (1254–73) weakened imperial authority in Central Europe, thus providing opportunities for Přemyslid assertiveness. At the same time, the Mongol invasions (1220–42) absorbed the attention of the Bohemian Kingdom's eastern neighbors, the Hungarians and the Poles.

In 1212 King Přemysl Otakar I (1198–1230) extracted a Golden Bull (a formal edict) from the emperor confirming the royal title for Otakar and his descendants. The imperial prerogative to ratify each Bohemian king and to appoint the bishop of Prague was revoked. The king's successor, Přemysl Otakar II (1253–78), married a German princess, Margaret of Babenberg, and became duke of Austria, thereby acquiring upper and lower Austria and part of Styria. He conquered the rest of Styria, most of Carinthia, and parts of Carniola. From 1273, however, Hapsburg emperor Rudolf began to reassert imperial authority. All of Přemysl Otakar's German possessions were lost in 1276, and in 1278 Přemysl Otakar II died in battle against Rudolf.

The thirteenth century was also a period of large-scale German immigration, often encouraged by Přemyslid kings hoping to weaken the influence of their own Czech nobility. The Germans populated towns and mining districts on the Bohemian periphery and in some cases formed German colonies in the interior of the Czech lands. Střibro, Kutná Hora, Německý Brod (present-day Havlíčkův Brod) and Jihlava were important German settlements. The Germans brought their own code of law—the *jus teutonicum*—which formed the basis of the later commercial law of Bohemia and Moravia. Marriages between Germans and Czech nobles soon became commonplace.

### **Golden Age**

The fourteenth century, particularly the reign of Charles IV (1342–78), is considered the Golden Age of Czech history. By that time the Přemyslid line had died out, and, after a series of dynastic wars, a new Luxemburg dynasty captured the Bohemian crown. Charles, the second Luxemburg king, was raised at the French court and was cosmopolitan in attitude. He strengthened the power and prestige of the Bohemian Kingdom. In 1344 Charles elevated the



bishopric of Prague, making it an archbishopric and freeing it from the jurisdiction of Mainz and the Holy Roman Empire. The archbishop was given the right to crown Bohemian kings. Charles curbed the Czech nobility, rationalized the provincial administration of Bohemia and Moravia, and made Brandenburg, Lusatia, and Silesia into fiefs of the Czech crown (see fig. 3). In 1355 Charles was crowned Holy Roman Emperor. In 1356 he issued a Golden Bull defining and systematizing the process of election to the imperial throne and making the Czech king foremost among the seven electors. The Bohemian Kingdom ceased to be a fief of the emperor.

Charles made Prague into an imperial city. Extensive building projects undertaken by the king included the founding of the New Town southeast of the old city. The royal castle, Hradčany, was rebuilt. Of particular significance was the founding of Charles University in Prague in 1348. Charles's intention was to make Prague into an international center of learning, and the university was divided into Czech, Polish, Saxon, and Bavarian "nations," each with one controlling vote. Charles University, however, would become the nucleus of intense Czech particularism. Charles died in 1378, and the Bohemian crown went to his son, Wenceslas IV.

### **Hussite Movement**

The Hussite movement was a national, as well as a religious, manifestation. As a religious reform movement, it represented a challenge to papal authority and an assertion of national autonomy in ecclesiastical affairs. As a Czech national movement, it acquired anti-imperial and anti-German implications and thus can be considered a manifestation of a long-term Czech-German conflict. The Hussite movement is also viewed by many Czechs as a precursor to the Protestant Reformation.

Hussitism began during the long reign of Wenceslas IV (1378-1419), a period of papal schism and concomitant anarchy in the Holy Roman Empire, and was precipitated by a controversy at Charles University. In 1403 Jan Hus became rector of the university. A reformist preacher, Hus espoused the antipapal and anti-hierarchical teachings of John Wyclif of England, often referred to as the "Morning Star of the Reformation." Hussitism—as Hus's teaching became known—was distinguished by its rejection of the wealth, corruption, and hierarchical tendencies of the Roman Catholic Church. It advocated the Wycliffite doctrine of clerical purity and poverty and insisted on communion under both kinds, bread and wine, for the laity. (The Roman Catholic Church reserved the cup—wine—for the clergy.) The more moderate followers of Hus, the Utraquists, took their name from the Latin

*sub utraque specie*, meaning “under each kind.” A more radical sect soon formed—the Taborite sect. The Taborites, who took their name from the city of Táb<sup>o</sup>r, their stronghold in southern Bohemia, rejected church doctrine and upheld the Bible as the sole authority in all matters of belief.

Soon after Hus assumed office, German professors of theology demanded the condemnation of Wyclif’s writings. Hus protested and received the support of the Czech element at the university. Having only one vote in policy decisions against three for the Germans, the Czechs were outvoted, and the orthodox position was maintained. In subsequent years the Czechs demanded a revision of the university charter, granting more adequate representation to the native, i.e., Czech, faculty.

The university controversy was intensified by the vacillating position of the Bohemian king. His insistence at first on favoring Germans in appointments to councillor and other administrative positions had aroused the national sentiments of the Czech nobility and rallied them to Hus’s defense. The German faculties had the support of Archbishop Zbyněk of Prague and the German clergy. Wenceslas, for political reasons, switched his support from the Germans to Hus and allied with the reformers. On January 18, 1409, Wenceslas issued the Kutná Hora Decree: the Czechs would have three votes; the foreigners, a single vote. Germans were expelled from administrative positions at the university, and Czechs were appointed. In consequence, Germans left Charles University en masse.

Hus’s victory was short lived, however. He preached against the sale of indulgences, which lost him the support of the king, who received a percentage of the sales. In 1412 Hus and his followers were suspended from the university and expelled from Prague. For two years the reformers served as itinerant preachers throughout Bohemia. In 1414 Hus was summoned to the Council of Constance to defend his views. The council condemned him as a heretic and burned him at the stake in 1415.

Hus’s death sparked decades of religious warfare. Sigismund, the pro-papal king of Hungary and successor to the Bohemian throne after the death of Wenceslas in 1419, failed repeatedly in attempts to gain control of the kingdom despite aid by Hungarian and German armies. Riots broke out in Prague. Led by a Czech yeoman, Jan Žižka, the Taborites streamed into the capital. Religious strife pervaded the entire kingdom and was particularly intense in the German-dominated towns. Czech burghers turned against the Roman Catholic Germans; many were massacred, and most survivors fled to the Holy Roman Empire. In the

*Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*



Source: Based on information from William R. Shepherd, *Shepherd's Historical Atlas*, New York, 1980, and A. H. Hermann, *A History of the Czechs*, London, 1975.

*Figure 3. The Bohemian Kingdom and Its Extensions, 1378*



*Old Town Hall, Žižka Square, Tábor*

countryside Žižka's armies stormed monasteries, churches, and villages, expelling the Catholic clergy and expropriating ecclesiastical lands.

During the struggle against Sigismund, Taborite armies penetrated into Slovakia as well. Czech refugees from the religious wars in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia settled there, and from 1438 to 1453 a Czech noble, Jan Jiskra of Brandýs, controlled most of southern Slovakia from the centers of Zvolen and Košice. Thus Hussite doctrine and the Czech Bible were disseminated among the Slovaks, providing the basis for a future link between the Czechs and their Slovak neighbors.

When Sigismund died in 1437, the Bohemian estates elected Albert of Austria as his successor. Albert died, however, and his son, Ladislav the Posthumous—so called because he was born after his father's death—was acknowledged as king. During Ladislav's minority, Bohemia was ruled by a regency composed of moderate reform nobles who were Utraquists. Internal dissension among the Czechs provided the primary challenge to the regency. A part of the Czech nobility remained Catholic and loyal to the pope. A Utraquist delegation to the Council of Basel in 1433 had negotiated a seeming reconciliation with the Catholic Church. The Council's Compact of Basel accepted the basic tenets of Hussitism expressed in the Four Articles of Prague: communion under both kinds; free preaching of the Gospels; expropriation of church land; and

exposure and punishment of public sinners. The pope, however, rejected the compact, thus preventing the reconciliation of Czech Catholics with the Utraquists.

George of Poděbrady, later to become the “national” king of Bohemia, emerged as leader of the Utraquist regency. George installed a Utraquist, John of Rokycany, as archbishop of Prague and succeeded in uniting the more radical Taborites with the Czech Reformed Church. The Catholic party was driven out of Prague. Ladislav died of the plague in 1457, and in 1458 the Bohemian estates elected George of Poděbrady king of Bohemia. The pope, however, refused to recognize the election. Czech Catholic nobles, joined in the League of Zelená Hora, continued to challenge the authority of George of Poděbrady until his death in 1471.

Upon the death of the Hussite king, the Bohemian estates elected a Polish prince, Vladislav II, as king. In 1490 Vladislav also became king of Hungary, and the Polish Jagellonian line ruled both Bohemia and Hungary. The Jagellonians governed Bohemia as absentee monarchs; their influence in the kingdom was minimal, and effective government fell to the regional nobility. Czech Catholics accepted the Compact of Basel in 1485 and were reconciled with the Utraquists.

In 1526 Vladislav’s son, King Louis, was decisively defeated by the Ottomans at Mohács and subsequently died. As a result, the Turks conquered part of the Kingdom of Hungary; the rest (including Slovakia) came under Hapsburg rule. The Bohemian estates elected Archduke Ferdinand, younger brother of Emperor Charles V, to succeed Louis as king of Bohemia. Thus began almost three centuries of Hapsburg rule for both Bohemia and Slovakia.

In several instances, the Bohemian Kingdom had the possibility of becoming a Czech national monarchy. The failure to establish a native dynasty, however, prevented such an outcome and left the fate of the Bohemian Kingdom to dynastic politics and foreign rulers. Although the Bohemian Kingdom evolved neither into a national monarchy nor into a Czech nation-state, the memory of it served as a source of inspiration and pride for modern Czech nationalists.

## **Hapsburg Rule, 1526–1867**

### **The Hapsburgs and the Czechoslovak Lands**

Although the Bohemian Kingdom, the Margravate of Moravia, and Slovakia were all under Hapsburg rule, they followed different paths of development. The defeat at Mohács in 1526 meant that most of Hungary proper was taken by the Turks; until Hungary’s reconquest by the Hapsburgs in the second half of the

seventeenth century, Slovakia became the center of Hungarian political, cultural, and economic life. The Hapsburg kings of Hungary were crowned in Bratislava, the present-day capital of Slovakia, and the Hungarian estates met there. Slovakia's importance in Hungarian life proved of no benefit, however, to the Slovaks. In essence, the Hungarian political nation consisted of an association of estates (primarily the nobility). Because Slovaks were primarily serfs, they were not considered members of a political nation and had no influence on politics in their own land. The Slovak peasant had only to perform duties: work for a landlord, pay taxes, and provide recruits for military service. Even under such hostile conditions, there were a few positive developments. The Protestant Reformation brought to Slovakia literature written in Czech, and Czech replaced Latin as the literary language of a small, educated Slovak elite. But on the whole, the Slovaks languished for centuries in a state of political, economic, and cultural deprivation.

Moravia had accepted the hereditary right of the Austrian Hapsburgs to rule it and thus escaped the intense struggle between native estates and the Hapsburg monarchy that was to characterize Bohemian history. The Moravians had a poorly developed historical or national consciousness, made few demands on the Hapsburgs, and were permitted to live in tranquillity. Late in the eighteenth century, the Margravate of Moravia was abolished and merged with Austrian Silesia.

In contrast to Moravia, the Bohemian Kingdom had entrenched estates that were ready to defend what they considered their rights and liberties. Because the Hapsburgs pursued a policy of centralization, conflict was inevitable. The conflict was further complicated by ethnic and religious issues and was subsequently seen by some as a struggle for the preservation of Czech institutions and the Czech nation.

## **Hapsburg Absolutism and the Bohemian Estates**

### *Initial Clash*

Hapsburg rule brought two centuries of conflict between the Bohemian estates and the monarchy. As a result of this struggle, the Czechs lost a major portion of their native aristocracy, their particular form of religion, and even the widespread use of the Czech language. The Hapsburg policy of centralization began with its first ruler, King Ferdinand (1526-64). His efforts to eliminate the influence of the Bohemian estates were met with stubborn resistance. But the Bohemian estates were themselves divided, primarily on religious lines. By several adroit political maneuvers,

Ferdinand was able to establish hereditary succession to the Bohemian crown for the Hapsburgs. The estates' inability to establish the principle of electing or even confirming a monarch made their position considerably weaker.

The conflict in Bohemia was complicated further by the Reformation and the subsequent wars of religion in Central Europe. Adherents of the Czech Reformed Church (the Hussites) opposed the Roman Catholic Hapsburgs, who were in turn supported by the Czech and German Catholics. The Lutheran Reformation of 1517 introduced an added dimension to the struggle: much of the German burgher population of Bohemia adopted the Reformed Creed (both Lutheran and Calvinist); the Hussites split, and one faction allied with the German Protestants. In 1537 Ferdinand conceded to the Czechs, recognized the Compact of Basel, and accepted moderate Utraquism. The reconciliation, however, was of brief duration.

In 1546 German Protestants united in the Schmalkaldic League to wage war against the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Whereas Ferdinand wanted to aid his brother, the Hussite and pro-Protestant Czech nobility sympathized with the German Protestant princes. Armed conflict between Ferdinand and the Bohemian estates broke out in 1547. But the Bohemians were not unified; victory went to Ferdinand, and reprisals against the Czech rebels followed. The property of Czech Utraquist nobility was confiscated and their privileges abrogated. Four rebels (two lesser nobles and two burghers) were executed in the square before the royal palace. Members of the Unity of Czech Brethren, a Hussite sect that had figured prominently in the rebellion, were bitterly persecuted. Their leader, Bishop John Augusta, was sentenced to sixteen years' imprisonment. Ferdinand, now Holy Roman Emperor (1556-64), attempted to extend the influence of Catholicism in Bohemia by forming the Jesuit Academy in Prague and by bringing Jesuit missionaries into Bohemia.

### ***Decisive Battle***

Discord between Hapsburgs and Czechs and between Catholics and the followers of the reformed creeds erupted again into an open clash in the early seventeenth century. At that time, the Czechs were able to take advantage of the struggle between two contenders to the imperial throne, and in 1609 they extracted a Letter of Majesty from Emperor Rudolf II (1576-1612) that promised toleration of the Czech Reformed Church, gave control of Charles University to the Czech estates, and made other concessions. Rudolf's successor, Matthias (1612-17), proved to be

an ardent Catholic and quickly moved against the estates. Violation of promises contained in the Letter of Majesty regarding royal and church domains and Matthias's reliance on a council composed of ardent Catholics further increased tensions.

In 1618 two Catholic imperial councillors were thrown out of a window of a Prague castle, signaling an open revolt by the Bohemian estates against the Hapsburgs. The Bohemian estates decided to levy an army, decreed the expulsion of the Jesuits, and proclaimed the Bohemian throne to be elective. They elected a Calvinist, Frederick of the Palatinate, to the Bohemian throne. The Bohemian troops confronted the imperial forces. On November 8, 1620, the Czech estates were decisively defeated at the famous Battle of White Mountain.

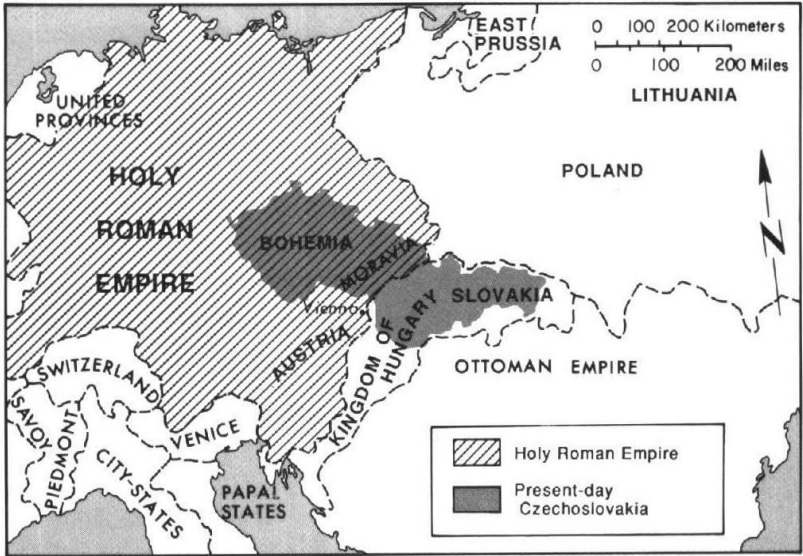
### *Consequences of Czech Defeat*

The Czech defeat at the Battle of White Mountain was followed by measures that effectively secured Hapsburg authority and the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. Many Czech nobles were executed; most others were forced to flee the kingdom. An estimated five-sixths of the Czech nobility went into exile soon after the Battle of White Mountain, and their properties were confiscated. Large numbers of Czech and German Protestant burghers emigrated. In 1622 Charles University was merged with the Jesuit Academy, and the entire education system of the Bohemian Kingdom was placed under Jesuit control. In 1624 all non-Catholic priests were expelled by royal decree.

The Revised Ordinance of the Land (1627) established a legal basis for Hapsburg absolutism. All Czech lands were declared hereditary property of the Hapsburg family. The legislative function of the diets of both Bohemia and Moravia was revoked; all subsequent legislation was to be by royal decree, receiving only formal approval from the diets. The highest officials of the kingdom, to be chosen from among the local nobility, would be strictly subordinate to the king. Thus, little remained of an autonomous and distinct Bohemian Kingdom.

Hapsburg rule was further buttressed by the large-scale immigration into Bohemia of Catholic Germans from south German territories. The Germans received most of the land confiscated from Czech owners and came to constitute the new Bohemian nobility. The remaining Czech Catholic nobles gradually abandoned Czech particularism and became loyal servants of the imperial system. German Catholic immigrants took over commerce and industry as well.





Source: Based on information from "European Diplomacy and Wars (c. 1500-1914)," *Britannica*, VI, 1975, 1091.

*Figure 4. Central Europe, 1648*

The religious wars continued after the Czech defeat. The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) of the German Protestant princes against the Holy Roman Emperor involved foreign powers and extended beyond German territory. Czechs fought on all sides: most of the rebellious Czech generals joined Protestant armies; Albrecht of Wallenstein was the most prominent Czech defector to the imperial cause. Bohemia served as a battlefield throughout the war. Prince Bethlen Gábor's Hungarian forces, reinforced by Turkish mercenaries, fought against the emperor and periodically devastated Slovakia and Moravia. Protestant German armies and, later, Danish and Swedish armies, laid waste the Czech provinces. Cities, villages, and castle fortresses were destroyed. Lusatia was incorporated into Saxony in 1635.

The Thirty Years' War ended during the reign of Ferdinand III (1637-56). In 1648 the Treaty of Westphalia confirmed the incorporation of the Bohemian Kingdom into the Hapsburg imperial system, which established its seat in Vienna (see fig. 4). Leopold I (1656-1705) defeated the Turks and paved the way for the restoration of the Kingdom of Hungary to its previous territorial dimensions. The brief reign of Joseph I (1705-11) was followed

by that of Charles VI (1711–40). Between 1720 and 1725, Charles concluded a series of treaties by which the various estates of the Hapsburg lands recognized the unity of the territory under Hapsburg rule and accepted hereditary Hapsburg succession, including the female line.

The struggle between the Bohemian estates and Hapsburg absolutism resulted in the complete subordination of the Bohemian estates to Hapsburg interests. In the aftermath of the defeat at White Mountain, the Czechs lost their native noble class, their reformed religion, and a vibrant Czech Protestant culture. With the influx of foreigners, primarily Germans, the German language became more prominent in government and polite society. It seemed that Bohemia was destined to become a mere province of the Hapsburg realm.

### **Enlightened Absolutism**

The reigns of Maria-Theresa (1740–80) and her son Joseph II (1780–90), Holy Roman Emperor and coregent from 1765, were characterized by enlightened rule. Influenced by the ideas of eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers, Maria-Theresa and Joseph worked toward rational and efficient administration of the Bohemian Kingdom. In this respect, they opposed regional privilege and the rights of the estates and preferred to rule through a centrally controlled imperial bureaucracy. At the same time, they instituted reforms to eliminate the repressive features of the Counter-Reformation and to permit secular social progress.

Maria-Theresa's accession to the Hapsburg lands was challenged by the territorial aspirations of the increasingly powerful Hohenzollern dynasty. The Prussian king, Frederick II, joined by the dukes of Bavaria and Saxony, invaded the Bohemian Kingdom in 1741. The duke of Bavaria, Charles Albert, was proclaimed king by the Czech nobility. Although Maria-Theresa regained most of the Bohemian Kingdom and was crowned queen in Prague in 1743, all of the highly industrialized territory of Silesia except for Těšín, Opava, and Krnov was ceded to Prussia.

In attempting to make administration more rational, Maria-Theresa embarked on a policy of centralization and bureaucratization. What remained of the Bohemian Kingdom was now merged into the Austrian provinces of the Hapsburg realm. The two separate chancelleries were abolished and replaced by a joint Austro-Bohemian chancellery. The Czech estates were stripped of the last remnants of their political power, and their functions were assumed by imperial civil servants appointed by the queen. The provinces of the Czech and Austrian territories were subdivided into administrative districts. German became the official language.

Further reforms introduced by Maria-Theresa and Joseph II reflected such Enlightenment principles as the dissolution of feudal social structures and the curtailment of power of the Catholic Church. Maria-Theresa nationalized and Germanized the education system, eliminated Jesuit control, and shifted educational emphasis from theology to the sciences. Serfdom was modified: *robot* (forced labor on the lord's land) was reduced, and serfs could marry and change domiciles without the lord's consent. Joseph II abolished serfdom altogether. In 1781 Joseph's Edict of Toleration extended freedom of worship to Lutherans and Calvinists.

The enlightened rule of Maria-Theresa and Joseph II played a leading role in the development of a modern Czech nation, but one that was full of contradictions. On the one hand, the policy of centralization whittled down further any vestiges of a separate Bohemian Kingdom and resulted in the Germanization of the imperial administration and nobility. On the other hand, by removing the worst features of the Counter-Reformation and by introducing social and educational reforms, these rulers provided the basis for economic progress and the opportunity for social mobility. The consequences for Bohemia were of widespread significance. The nobility turned its attention to industrial enterprise. Many of the nobles sublet their lands and invested their profits in the development of textile, coal, and glass manufacture. Czech peasants, free to leave the land, moved to cities and manufacturing centers. Urban areas, formerly populated by Germans, became increasingly Czech in character. The sons of Czech peasants were sent to school; some attended the university, and a new Czech intellectual elite emerged. During this same period the population of Bohemia nearly quadrupled, and a similar increase occurred in Moravia.

But in response to pressures from the nobility, Joseph's successor, Leopold II (1790-92), abrogated many of Joseph's edicts and restored certain feudal obligations. (Serfdom was not completely abolished until 1848.) Under Francis II (1792-1835), the aristocratic and clerical reaction gathered strength. The war against revolutionary France and the subsequent Napoleonic wars caused a temporary interruption of the reactionary movement. In 1804 Francis II transferred his imperial title to the Austrian domains (Austria, Bohemian Kingdom, Hungary, Galicia, and parts of Italy), and two years later the Holy Roman Empire was formally dissolved. The Austrian Empire came into existence and was to play a leading role in the newly established German Confederation (see fig. 5). From 1815, after the conclusive defeat of Napoleon, the policy of reaction devised by Austria's foreign minister, Prince Metternich, dominated European affairs.

Enlightened rule destroyed the few remaining vestiges of the Bohemian Kingdom. The dismantling of Bohemian institutions and the dominance of the German language seemed to threaten the very existence of the Czech nation. Yet, enlightened rule also provided new educational and economic opportunities for the Czech people. Inadvertently, the enlightened monarchs helped set the stage for a Czech national revival.

## **National Revival**

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of national awakening in Central Europe. German nationalism—sparked by confrontation with the armies of the French revolutionaries—and Napoleonic expansionism inspired corresponding efforts toward national revival among the subject Slavic peoples. The concept of the “nation,” defined as a people united by linguistic and cultural affinities, produced an intellectual revival that laid the foundation for a subsequent struggle for political autonomy.

In Bohemia, where the nobility was largely German or Germanized, the leaders of the Czech revival were members of the new intelligentsia, which had its origin in peasant stock. Only a small part of the nobility lent the revival support.

The earliest phase of the national movement was philological. Scholars attempted to record and codify native languages. A chair for Czech language and literature was established at Charles-Ferdinand University in 1791. The Czech language, however, had survived only as a peasant patois. The tasks of molding the Czech language into a literary medium and introducing the study of Czech in state schools were accomplished by Josef Dobrovský and Josef Jungmann. Their efforts were rewarded by an efflorescence of Czech literature and the growth of a Czech reading public. Prominent among the original Czech literary elite were poets Ján Kollár (a Slovak), F.L. Čelakovský, Karel J. Erben, and Karel H. Mácha; dramatists V.K. Klicpera and J.K. Tyl; and journalist-politicians F.A. Brauner and Karel Havlíček-Borovský.

The Czech revival acquired an institutional foundation with the establishment of the Museum of the Bohemian Kingdom (1818) as a center for Czech scholarship. In 1827 the museum began publication of a journal that became the first continuous voice of Czech nationalism. In 1830 the museum absorbed the *Matice česká*, a society of Czech intellectuals devoted to the publication of scholarly and popular books. The museum membership, composed of patriotic scholars and nobles, worked to establish contacts with other Slavic peoples and to make Prague the intellectual and scholarly capital of the Slavs.



Source: Based on information from William R. Shepherd, *Shepherd's Historical Atlas*, New York, 1980, 157.

*Figure 5. Central Europe, 1815*

The major figure of the Czech revival was František Palacký. Of Moravian Protestant descent and attracted by the nationalist spirit of the Hussite tradition, Palacký became the great historian of the Czech nation. His monumental, five-volume *History of the Czech People* focused on the struggle of the Czech nation for political freedom and became one of the pillars of modern Czech life and thought. Palacký—who fancied himself the heir and successor to the great educator and leader of the Unity of Czech Brethren, Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius)—became the political leader of the Czech nation during the revolutionary struggles of 1848. In the tradition of Komenský, Palacký developed a political platform based on cultural renaissance.

The Slovaks experienced an analogous national revival. The Kingdom of Hungary, restored to its original territorial dimensions in 1711, was ruled by a Hungarian aristocracy that was experiencing its own national awakening. In 1792 Hungarian replaced Latin as the official state language. In contrast to the more secular Czech nation, among the subject peoples of Hungary both the Catholic and the Protestant religions retained a solid hold. The Slovak clergy constituted the intellectual elite of the predominantly peasant Slovaks, and the Slovak revival occurred under its leadership.

The initial attempt to develop a Slovak literary language was made by a Jesuit priest, Anton Bernolák. The language he developed in the 1780s was subsequently called *berňolákovčina* and was based primarily on western Slovak dialects. The language was adopted by the Catholic clergy and disseminated in religious literature. Bernolák and his followers, however, remained loyal to the Kingdom of Hungary, and their movement never developed nationalist political implications.

The Protestant revival was more limited in scope, confined largely to the Slovak minority settled in urban centers. Slovak Protestantism was characterized by an attachment to Czech culture. The artificial and archaic language of the Czech Bible, known as *bibličtina*, had served as the literary vehicle of the Protestant clergy since the sixteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, two German-educated Protestant theologians, the poet Ján Kollár and Pavol Šafárik, endeavored to create a literary language that would combine Czech with elements of the central Slovak dialect. They published a reader, *Čítanka*, in 1825, and beginning in the 1830s they gained a following among the younger generation of students at Protestant secondary schools.

At this time, the Slovak national awakening split into two factions. Kollár and Šafárik were adherents of pan-Slavic concepts that stressed the unity of all Slavic peoples. They continued to view Czechs and Slovaks as members of a single nation, and they attempted to draw the languages closer together. Other Slovaks broke with the Czechs and proclaimed the separate identity of the Slovak nation. L'udovít Štúr, a student at the Bratislava secondary school, developed *štúrovčina*, which was based on the central Slovak dialect. In 1843 Štúr advocated that *štúrovčina* be made the Slovak literary language, and it spread rapidly in the Protestant community and beyond. Beginning in the 1840s, Slovak literary development took a separate path from that followed by Czech literature.

### Revolutions of 1848

The Paris revolution of February 1848 precipitated a succession of liberal and national revolts against autocratic governments. Revolutionary disturbances pervaded the territories of the Austrian Empire, and Emperor Ferdinand I (1835–48) promised to reorganize the empire on a constitutional, parliamentary basis.

In the Bohemian Kingdom, a national committee was formed that included Germans and Czechs. But Bohemian Germans favored creating a Greater Germany out of various German-speaking territories. The Bohemian Germans soon withdrew from the committee, signaling the Czech-German conflict that would

characterize subsequent history. Palacký proposed Austro-Slavism as the creed of the Czech national movement. He advocated the preservation of the Austrian Empire as a buffer against both German and Russian expansionism. He also proposed the federalization of the empire on an ethnographic basis to unite the Bohemian Germans with Austria in one province and Czechs and Slovaks in another. Palacký further suggested that the various Slavic peoples of the empire, together constituting a majority, should form a political unit to defend their common interests. In June 1848 the Czechs convened the first Slavic Congress to discuss the possibility of political consolidation of Austrian Slavs, including Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ruthenians (Ukrainians), Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs.

In the Kingdom of Hungary, the 1848 revolution temporarily toppled Hapsburg absolutism, and there was an attempt at establishing a liberal constitutional government. Conflict soon ensued between the Hungarians and several other nationalities as to how Hungary was to be restructured. Hungarian liberals like Louis Kossuth, who favored the overthrow of the Hapsburgs and an independent Hungary, were at the same time opposed to the aspirations of the non-Hungarian nationalities. The liberals sought to create a national state solely for the Hungarians.

It was within this struggle that the Slovak National Council, under Štúr's leadership, drafted the "Demands of the Slovak Nation." These included the establishment of separate national legislative assemblies and the right of each national group to employ its own language in the Hungarian Diet, in administration, and in the education system. The petition was presented to the Hungarian Diet in May 1848. When it was rejected, armed conflict broke out, and the Slovaks were crushed by Hungarian troops. Disappointed by the Hungarians and hoping to take advantage of the conflict between the imperial government and the Hungarians, Slovak patriots turned to the imperial government, requesting recognition of Slovakia as an independent crown land within the Austrian Empire. But after the Hungarian revolt was suppressed with the aid of Russian troops, Vienna lost interest in the demands of the Slovak and other non-Hungarian nationalities.

National revival for both Czechs and Slovaks had been begun by small groups of intellectuals. At first, the national movements were confined to discussion of language, literature, and culture. But during the revolutions of 1848, the Czechs and Slovaks made bold political demands. The revolutions of 1848 also revealed that the German and Hungarian liberals, who were opposed to Hapsburg absolutism, were equally hostile to Czech and Slovak



*Charles Bridge, Prague*

aspirations. It had become clear that the Czech and Slovak national movements had to contend not only with Hapsburg absolutism but also with increasingly virulent German and Hungarian nationalism.

## **The Dual Monarchy, 1867–1918**

### **Formation of the Dual System**

After the revolutions of 1848, Francis Joseph attempted to rule as an absolute monarch, keeping all the nationalities in check. But the Hapsburgs suffered a series of defeats. In 1859 they were driven out of Italy, and in 1866 they were defeated by Prussia and expelled from the German Confederation. To strengthen his position, Francis Joseph was ready to improve his relations with the Hungarians. At first it seemed that some concessions would be made to Bohemia, but in the end the crown effected a compromise with the Hungarian gentry. The Compromise of 1867 established the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary (also known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire). The two parts of the empire were united by a common ruler, by a joint foreign policy, and, to some extent, by shared finances. Otherwise, Austria and Hungary were virtually independent states, each having its own parliament, government, administration, and judicial system.

Despite a series of crises, this dual system survived until 1918. It made permanent the dominant position of the Hungarians in



Hungary and of the Germans in the Austrian parts of the monarchy. While Czechs, Poles, and other nationalities had some influence in government, they were never permitted to share political power. This inability to come to terms with its nationalities contributed to the ultimate collapse of the Dual Monarchy.

As a result of the dual system, the Czechs and Slovaks continued to go their separate ways. The Slovaks chafed under the Hungarians, and the Czechs were ruled by Vienna. The Austrian and Hungarian parts of the empire had different political systems. Austria had a parliamentary government, and a gradual enlargement of the franchise culminated in universal male suffrage in 1907. The Czechs, therefore, were able to take a greater and greater part in the political life of Austria. In Hungary the franchise continued to be fairly restricted and pretty much controlled by the Hungarian aristocracy. Because of this, very few Slovaks gained positions of importance in Hungary.

### **Austria and the Czechs**

In Austria, German liberals held political power in parliament from 1867 to 1879. They were determined to maintain German dominance in the Austrian part of the empire. The Czech leaders, subsequently labeled Old Czechs, favored alliance with the conservative and largely Germanized Bohemian nobility and advocated the restoration of traditional Bohemian autonomy. In essence, they wanted a reconstituted Bohemian Kingdom (including Moravia and Silesia) with a constitutional arrangement similar to Hungary's. In 1871 the Old Czechs seemed successful, for the government agreed to the Fundamental Articles, which would have reinstated the historic rights of the Bohemian Kingdom. Violent protest from both German and Hungarian liberals ensued, however, and the articles were never adopted.

Objecting to an increase of Slavs in the empire, the German liberals opposed the 1878 Austrian occupation of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The emperor, stung by the rejection of his foreign policy, dismissed the liberal government and turned to Count Eduard Taaffe's conservative "Iron Ring" cabinet (1879-83). The Taaffe government took the Slavic element into greater account than the liberals had and, in turn, was supported by the Old Czechs. Czechs made appreciable gains. A language decree promulgated in 1880 put Czech on an equal footing with German in Bohemian administration and law. In 1882 Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague was divided into two separate institutions: one Czech and the other German. These concessions, however, seemed insufficient to a newly developing Czech commercial and industrial bourgeoisie. Intense conflict

ensued as Czechs and Germans attempted to control administration and education. When some of the Old Czechs attempted to work out a compromise with the Bohemian Germans in 1890, they were denounced by a younger and more radical intelligentsia. The next year the Old Czechs were soundly defeated by the Young Czechs, ending a period of attempted compromises.

While relations between Czechs and Germans worsened in Bohemia, they remained relatively tranquil in Moravia. Although the separate administrative status of Moravia had been abolished in the eighteenth century, the area was reconstituted as a separate crown land in 1849. In Moravia, unlike in Bohemia, a compromise was reached, in 1905, between the Czech majority and the German minority. Although the German language retained a slight predominance, the preservation of Czech language and culture was legally guaranteed. The compromise seemed to work reasonably well until the end of Hapsburg rule in 1918.

During the final decade of the empire, obstructionism by both Czechs and Germans rendered parliamentary politics ineffectual, and governments rose and fell with great frequency. The importance of the Young Czech Party waned as Czech politics changed orientation. Political parties advocating democracy and socialism emerged. In 1900 Tomáš Masaryk, a university professor and former Young Czech deputy who was to become president of the Czechoslovak Republic, founded the Czech Progressive Party. Basing its struggle for national autonomy on the principle of popular sovereignty, the Czech Progressive Party supported parliamentary politics, advocated universal suffrage, and rejected radicalism.

## **Hungary and the Slovaks**

In Hungary the government gave full sway to Hungarian nationalism. Only a year after the Compromise of 1867, the Nationalities Act established Hungarian as the exclusive official language. Slovak was relegated to private use and was regarded by the authorities as a peasant dialect. Franchise laws restricted the right to vote to large property holders (approximately 6 percent of the total population), thus favoring the Hungarian aristocracy. As a result, Slovaks rarely elected parliamentary representatives. The Slovaks, nevertheless, formed the Slovak National Party. Supported by Catholics and Protestants, the Slovak National Party was conservative and pan-Slavic in orientation and looked to autocratic Russia for national liberation. It remained the center of Slovak national life until the twentieth century.

Fearing the evolution of a full-fledged Slovak national movement, the Hungarian government attempted to do away with various

aspects of organized Slovak life. In the 1860s, the Slovaks had founded a private cultural foundation, the *Matica slovenská*, which fostered education and encouraged literature and the arts. At its founding, even the Austrian emperor donated 1,000 florins for the *Matica slovenská*. In 1875 the Hungarian government dissolved the *Matica slovenská* and confiscated its assets. Similar attacks were made against Slovak education. In 1874 all three Slovak secondary schools were closed, and in 1879 a law made Hungarian mandatory even in church-sponsored village schools. The Hungarian government attempted to prevent the formation of an educated, nationally conscious, Slovak elite.

It is remarkable that the Slovak national movement was able to survive. Most Slovaks continued to live as peasants or industrial laborers. Poverty prevailed, and on the eve of World War I about 20 percent of the population of Slovakia had emigrated to other lands. This emigration aided the national movement, for it received both moral and financial support from Slovaks living abroad, particularly in the United States. The Slovak national movement was aided also by the example of other nationalities struggling against the Hungarians (particularly the Romanians) and by contacts with the Czechs.

### **The Czechoslovak Idea**

At the turn of the century, the idea of a "Czechoslovak" entity began to be advocated by some Czech and Slovak leaders. The concept that Czechs and Slovaks shared a common heritage was hardly new. But as the two nations developed, the Slovaks had been intent on demonstrating the legitimacy of Slovak as a language separate from Czech. In the 1890s, contacts between Czech and Slovak intellectuals intensified. The Czech leader Masaryk was a keen advocate of Czech-Slovak cooperation. Some of his students formed the Czechoslovak Union and in 1898 published the journal *Hlas* (The Voice). In Slovakia, young Slovak intellectuals began to challenge the old Slovak National Party. But although the Czech and Slovak national movements began drawing closer together, their ultimate goals remained unclear. At least until World War I, the Czech and Slovak national movements struggled for autonomy within Austria and Hungary, respectively. Only during the war did the idea of an independent Czechoslovakia emerge.

### **World War I**

At the outbreak of World War I, the Czechs and Slovaks showed little enthusiasm for fighting for their respective enemies, the Germans and the Hungarians, against fellow Slavs, the Russians and

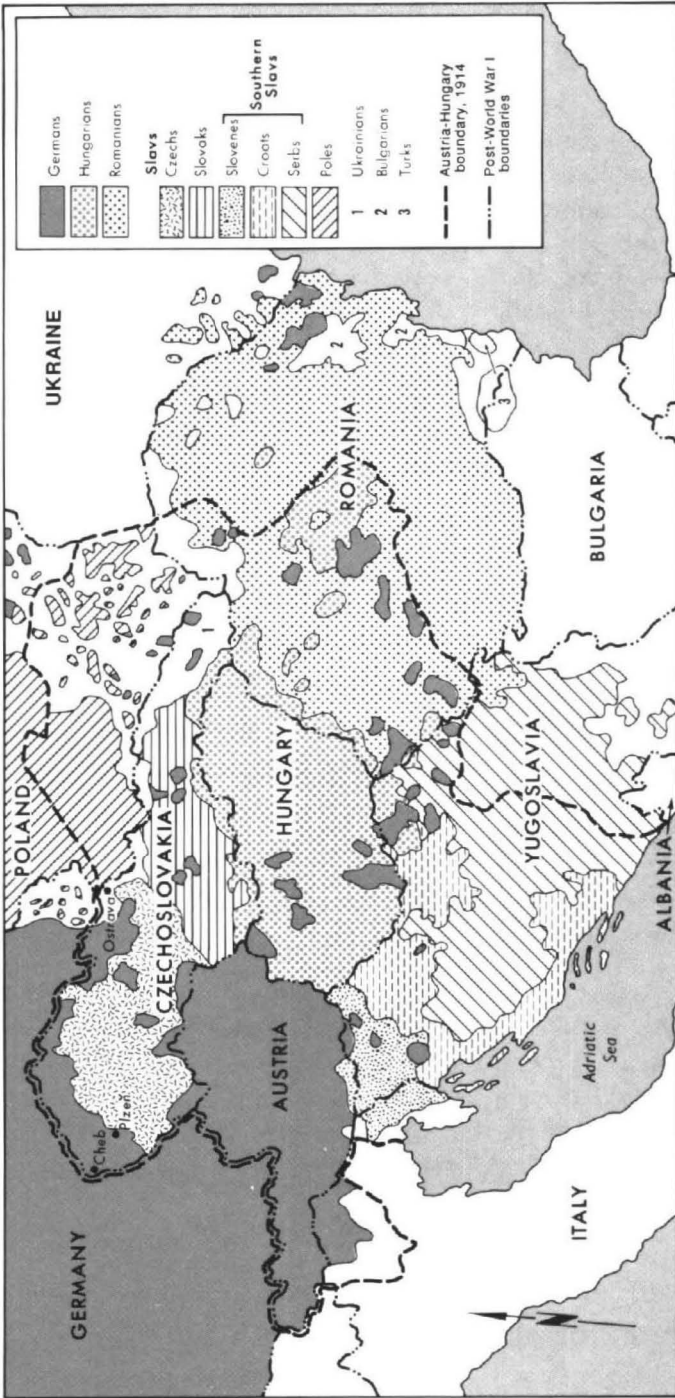
the Serbs. Large numbers of Czechs and Slovaks defected on the Russian front and formed the Czechoslovak Legion. Masaryk went to western Europe and began propagating the idea that the Austro-Hungarian Empire should be dismembered and that Czechoslovakia should be an independent state. In 1916, together with Eduard Beneš and Milan Štefánik (a Slovak war hero), Masaryk created the Czechoslovak National Council. Masaryk in the United States and Beneš in France and Britain worked tirelessly to gain Allied recognition. When secret talks between the Allies and Austrian emperor Charles I (1916–18) collapsed, the Allies recognized, in the summer of 1918, the Czechoslovak National Council as the supreme organ of a future Czechoslovak government.

In early October 1918, Germany and Austria proposed peace negotiations. On October 18, while in the United States, Masaryk issued a declaration of Czechoslovak independence. Masaryk insisted that the new Czechoslovak state include the historic Bohemian Kingdom, containing the German-populated Sudetenland. On October 21, however, German deputies from the Sudetenland joined other German and Austrian deputies in the Austrian parliament in declaring an independent German-Austrian state. Following the abdication of Emperor Charles on November 11, Czech troops occupied the Sudetenland.

Hungary withdrew from the Hapsburg Empire on November 1. The new liberal-democratic government of Hungary under Count Michael Károlyi attempted to retain Slovakia. With Allied approval, the Czechs occupied Slovakia, and the Hungarians were forced to withdraw. The Czechs and Allies agreed on the Danube and Ipel' rivers as the boundary between Hungary and Slovakia; a large Hungarian minority, occupying the fertile plain of the Danube, would be included in the new state (see fig. 6).

### **The Emergence of Subcarpathian Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine)**

The Ruthenians (from the Ukrainian *Rusyn*—a name used for Ukrainians in the Hapsburg monarchy) were Ukrainian-speaking mountain people who lived in the deep, narrow valleys of the Carpathian Mountains. In the eleventh century, Ruthenia (also known as Subcarpathian Ruthenia) came under the Hungarian crown. Poor peasants, grazers, and lumbermen, the Ruthenians were vassals and serfs of the Hungarian magnates dominating the plains of the Tisza River. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Ruthenia lay within the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, most Ruthenians were converted from Eastern Orthodoxy to the Uniate Church (see Glossary). Combining spiritual allegiance to Rome with Orthodox



Source: Based on information from A. H. Hermann, *A History of the Czechs*, London, 1975.

Figure 6. Disintegration of Austria-Hungary, 1918

rites, the Uniate Church enabled the Hungarian clergy to win the loyalty of their Eastern-oriented subjects.

The Ruthenians remained a poor, agrarian, and politically inert people. Ruthenian delegates did, however, attend the Slavic Congress in 1848 and later appealed to Vienna for autonomy and the right of cultural development. The great awakener of Subcarpathian Ruthenia was Oleksander Dukhnovych, a Uniate priest, who through his pedagogical, literary, and publishing activities attempted to save the Ruthenians from Hungarianization. The Ruthenian revival was fueled further by a vigorous movement in Galicia (under Austrian administration). But the Compromise of 1867 virtually eliminated the possibility of educational progress; Hungarianization affected all secondary schools and most elementary schools in Ruthenia. Many Ruthenians emigrated (over 50,000 before World War I). Russian pan-Slavic propaganda had an impact beginning in the late nineteenth century, and many Ruthenians became converts to Eastern Orthodoxy.

Political activity on behalf of Ruthenia during World War I was conducted by Ruthenian emigrants in the United States. They formed groups with varying political objectives: semiautonomy within Hungary, complete independence, federation in a Ukrainian state, inclusion in a Soviet federation, or union with the Czechs. The American Ruthenian leader, Gregory Źatkovič, negotiated with Masaryk to make Subcarpathian Ruthenia part of the Czechoslovak Republic. This decision received international sanction in the Treaty of Saint-Germain (September 10, 1919), which guaranteed Subcarpathian Ruthenia autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic.

## **The Czechoslovak Republic, 1918–39**

### **Features of the New State**

The independence of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed on October 28, 1918, by the Czechoslovak National Council in Prague. Only several years before, an independent Czechoslovakia had been a dream of a small number of intellectuals. The transformation of the dream into reality was a formidable task. While the creation of Czechoslovakia was based on certain historical precedents, it was, nevertheless, a new country carved out of disparate parts of the old Hapsburg Empire. Several ethnic groups and territories with different historical, political, and economic traditions had to be blended into a new state structure. In the face of such obstacles, the creation of Czechoslovak democracy was indeed a triumph. But the Czechoslovak Republic (which also came to be known as

the First Republic) suffered internal constrictions, which, when coupled with foreign aggression, destroyed it.

Initial authority within Czechoslovakia was assumed by the newly created National Assembly on November 14, 1918. Because territorial demarcations were uncertain and elections impossible, the provisional National Assembly was constituted on the basis of the 1911 elections to the Austrian parliament with the addition of fifty-four representatives from Slovakia. National minorities were not represented; Sudeten Germans harbored secessionist aspirations, and Hungarians remained loyal to Hungary. The National Assembly elected Masaryk as its first president, chose a provisional government headed by Karel Kramář, and drafted a provisional constitution.

The Paris Peace Conference convened in January 1919. The Czech delegation was led by Kramář and Beneš, premier and foreign minister respectively, of the Czechoslovak provisional government. The conference approved the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, to encompass the historic Bohemian Kingdom (including Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia), Slovakia, and Ruthenia. The Czechs requested the inclusion of Ruthenia to provide a common frontier with Romania. Těšín, an industrial area also claimed by Poland, was divided between Czechoslovakia (Český Těšín) and Poland (Cieszyn). The Czech claim to Lusatia, which had been part of the Bohemian Kingdom until the Thirty Years' War, was rejected. On September 10, 1919, Czechoslovakia signed a "minorities" treaty, placing its ethnic minorities under the protection of the League of Nations (see fig. 7).

The new nation had a population of over 13.5 million. It had inherited 70 to 80 percent of all the industry of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including the china and glass industries and the sugar refineries; more than 40 percent of all its distilleries and breweries; the Škoda works of Plzeň (Pilsen), which produced armaments, locomotives, automobiles, and machinery; and the chemical industry of northern Bohemia. The 17 percent of all Hungarian industry that had developed in Slovakia during the late nineteenth century also fell to the republic. Czechoslovakia was one of the world's ten most industrialized states.

The Czech lands were far more industrialized than Slovakia. In Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, 39 percent of the population was employed in industry and 31 percent in agriculture and forestry. Most light and heavy industry was located in the Sudetenland and was owned by Germans and controlled by German-owned banks. Czechs controlled only 20 to 30 percent of all industry. In Slovakia 17.1 percent of the population was employed in industry, and 60.4

percent worked in agriculture and forestry. Only 5 percent of all industry in Slovakia was in Slovak hands. Subcarpathian Ruthenia was essentially without industry.

In the agricultural sector, a program of reform introduced soon after the establishment of the republic was intended to rectify the unequal distribution of land. One-third of all agricultural land and forests belonged to a few aristocratic landowners—mostly Germans and Hungarians—and the Roman Catholic Church. Half of all holdings were under two hectares. The Land Control Act of April 1919 called for the expropriation of all estates exceeding 150 hectares of arable land or 250 hectares of land in general (500 hectares to be the absolute maximum). Redistribution was to proceed on a gradual basis; owners would continue in possession in the interim, and compensation was offered.

## **Czechoslovak Democracy**

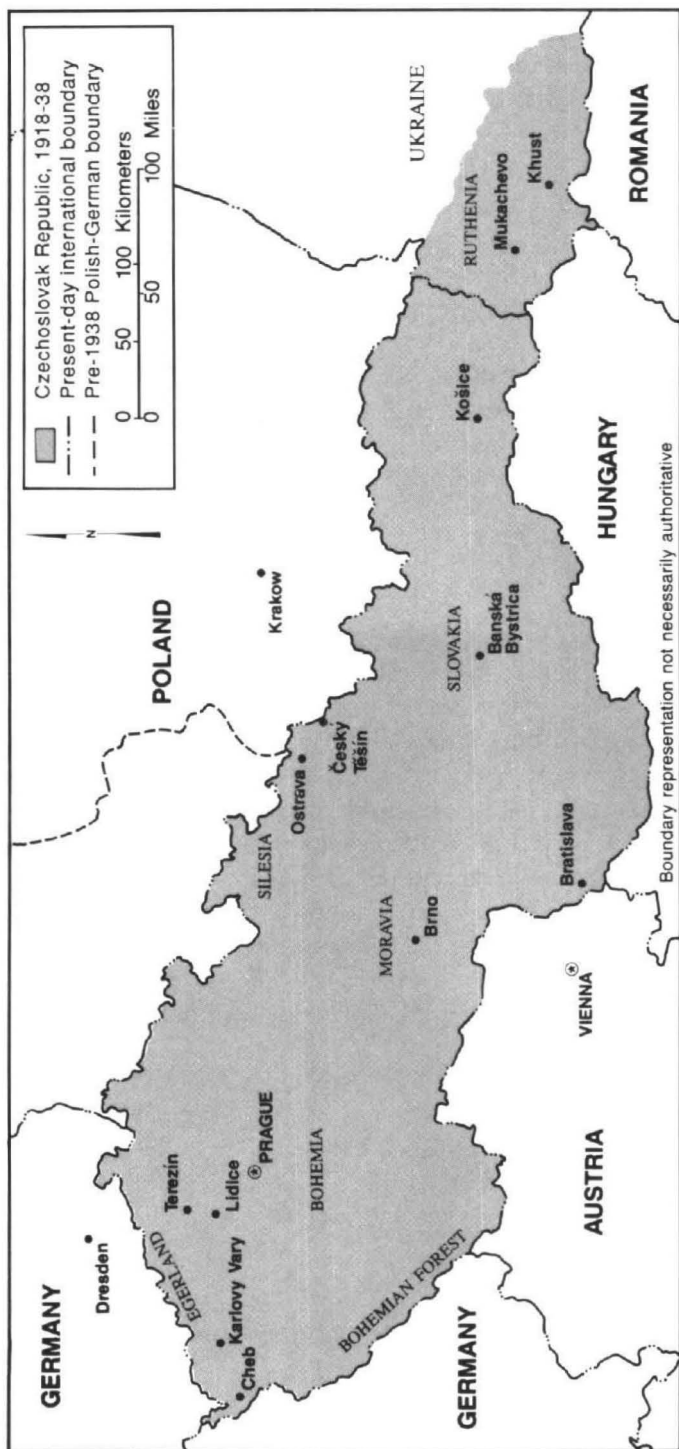
### *The Constitution of 1920*

The constitution of 1920 approved the provisional constitution in its basic features. The Czechoslovak state was conceived as a parliamentary democracy, guided primarily by the National Assembly, consisting of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, whose members were to be elected on the basis of universal suffrage. The National Assembly was responsible for legislative initiative and was given supervisory control over the executive and judiciary as well. Every seven years it elected the president and confirmed the cabinet appointed by him. Executive power was to be shared by the president and the cabinet; the latter, responsible to the National Assembly, was to prevail. The reality differed somewhat from this ideal, however, during the strong presidencies of Masaryk and his successor, Beneš.

To a large extent, Czechoslovak democracy was held together by the country's first president, Masaryk. As the principal founding father of the republic, Masaryk was regarded in the same way that George Washington is regarded in the United States. Such universal respect enabled Masaryk to overcome seemingly irresolvable political problems. Even to this day, Masaryk is regarded as the symbol of Czechoslovak democracy.

The constitution of 1920 provided for the central government to have a high degree of control over local government. Czechoslovakia was divided into *zeme* (lands), such as Czechia, Moravia, and Ruthenia. Although in 1927 assemblies were provided for Czechia, Slovakia, and Ruthenia, their jurisdiction was limited to





Source: Based on information from 'Die Entwicklung in der Tschechoslowakei seit 1945,' *Staatsbürgerliche Informationen*, Bonn, 1960, 10-11.

Figure 7. *The Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-38*

adjusting laws and regulations of the central government to local needs. The central government appointed one-third of the members of these assemblies. Centralization prevailed on the next two levels (*župa* and *okres*). Only on the lowest levels, in local communities (*mesto* and *obec*) was government completely in the hands of and elected by the local population.

The constitution identified the "Czechoslovak nation" as the creator and principal constituent of the Czechoslovak state and established Czech and Slovak as official languages. National minorities, however, were assured special protection; in districts where they constituted 20 percent of the population, members of minority groups were granted full freedom to use their language in everyday life, in schools, and in dealings with authorities.

### ***Political Parties***

The operation of the new Czechoslovak government was distinguished by stability. Largely responsible for this were the well-organized political parties that emerged as the real centers of power. Excluding the period from March 1926 to November 1929, when the coalition did not hold, a coalition of five Czechoslovak parties constituted the backbone of the government: Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants, Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, Czechoslovak Populist Party, and Czechoslovak National Democratic Party. The leaders of these parties became known as the Petka (The Five). The Petka was headed by Antonín Švehla, who held the office of prime minister for most of the 1920s and designed a pattern of coalition politics that survived to 1938. The coalition's policy was expressed in the slogan "We have agreed that we will agree." German parties participated in the government beginning in 1926. Hungarian parties, influenced by irredentist propaganda from Hungary, never joined the Czechoslovak government but were not openly hostile.

The Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants was formed in 1922 from a merger of the Czech Agrarian Party and the Slovak Agrarian Party. Led by Švehla, the new party became the principal voice for the agrarian population, representing mainly peasants with small and medium-sized farms. Švehla combined support for progressive social legislation with a democratic outlook. His party was the core of all government coalitions between 1922 and 1938.

The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party was considerably weakened when the communists seceded in 1921 to form the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, but by 1929 it had begun to regain its strength. A party of moderation, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party declared in favor of parliamentary democracy

in 1930. Antonín Hampl was chairman of the party, and Ivan Dérer was the leader of its Slovak branch. The Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (called the Czech Socialist Party until 1926) was created before World War I when the socialists split from the Social Democratic Party. It rejected class struggle and promoted nationalism. Led by Václav Klobáček, its membership derived primarily from the lower middle class, civil servants, and the intelligentsia (including Beneš).

The Czechoslovak Populist Party—a fusion of several Catholic parties, groups, and labor unions—developed separately in Bohemia in 1918 and in the more strongly Catholic Moravia in 1919. In 1922 a common executive committee was formed, headed by Jan Šrámek. The Czechoslovak Populists espoused Christian moral principles and the social encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII.

The Czechoslovak National Democratic Party developed from a post-World War I merger of the Young Czech Party with other right and center parties. Ideologically, it was characterized by national radicalism and economic liberalism. Led by Kramář and Alois Rašín, the National Democrats became the party of big business, banking, and industry. The party declined in influence after 1920, however.

## **Problem of Dissatisfied Nationalities**

### ***Slovak Autonomy***

Czechoslovakia's centralized political structure might have been well suited to a single-nation state, but it proved inadequate for a multinational state. Constitutional protection of minority languages and culture notwithstanding, the major non-Czech nationalities demanded broader political autonomy. Political autonomy was a particularly grave issue for the Czechs' partners, the Slovaks. In 1918 Masaryk signed an agreement with American Slovaks and Czechs in Pittsburgh, promising Slovak autonomy. The provisional National Assembly, however, agreed on the temporary need for centralized government to secure the stability of the new state. The Hlasists, centered on the journal *Hlas*, continued to favor the drawing together of Czechs and Slovaks. Although the Hlasists did not form a separate political party, they dominated Slovak politics in the early stages of the republic. The Hlasists' support of Prague's centralization policy was bitterly challenged by the Slovak Populist Party. The party had been founded by a Catholic priest, Andrej Hlinka, in December 1918. Hlinka argued for Slovak autonomy both in the National Assembly and at the Paris Peace Conference. He made Slovak autonomy the cornerstone of his policy until his death in August 1938.

*The Roland Fountain,  
Bratislava  
Courtesy Helen Fedor*



The Slovak Populist Party was Catholic in orientation and found its support among Slovak Catholics, many of whom objected to the secularist tendencies of the Czechs. Religious differences compounded secular problems. The Slovak peasantry had suffered hardships during the period of economic readjustment after the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire. Moreover, the supposed lack of qualified Slovaks had led to the importation of Czechs into Slovakia to fill jobs (formerly held by Hungarians) in administration, education, and the judiciary. Nevertheless, at the height of its popularity in 1925, the Slovak Populist Party polled only 32 percent of the Slovak vote, although Catholics constituted approximately 80 percent of the population. Then, in 1927, a modest concession by Prague granted Slovakia the status of a separate province, and Slovak Populists joined the central government. Monsignor Jozef Tiso and Marek Gažík from Slovakia were appointed to the cabinet.

Although Hlinka's objective was Slovak autonomy within a democratic Czechoslovak state, his party contained a more radical wing, led by Vojtech Tuka. From the early 1920s, Tuka maintained secret contacts with Austria, Hungary, and Hitler's National Socialists (Nazis). He set up the Rodobrana (semimilitary units) and published subversive literature. Tuka gained the support of the younger members of the Slovak Populist Party, who called themselves *Nástupists*, after the journal *Nástup*.

Tuka's arrest and trial in 1929 precipitated the reorientation of Hlinka's party in a totalitarian direction. The Nástupists gained control of the party; Slovak Populists resigned from the government. In subsequent years the party's popularity dropped slightly. In 1935 it polled 30 percent of the vote and again refused to join the government. In 1936 Slovak Populists demanded a Czechoslovak alliance with Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. In September 1938, the Slovak Populist Party received instructions from Hitler to press its demands for Slovak autonomy.

### ***Conflict in Subcarpathian Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine)***

During World War I, émigré Ruthenian leaders had reached an agreement with Masaryk to include an autonomous Ruthenia in a future Czechoslovak state (see *The Emergence of Subcarpathian Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine)*, this ch.). The agreement received international sanction in the 1919 Treaty of Saint-Germain. The Paris Peace Conference had also stipulated earlier that year that Subcarpathian Ruthenia be granted full autonomy and promised the territory a diet having legislative power in all matters of local administration. But the constitution of 1920 limited the provision on autonomy, making reference to the requirements of the unity of the state. All Ruthenian legislation was made subject to approval by the president of the republic, and the governor of Ruthenia was to be nominated by the president. As a result, even the constitutional provision for Ruthenian autonomy was never implemented; the Ruthenian diet was never convened. The issue of autonomy became a major source of discontent. Other grievances included the placement of the western boundary—which left 150,000 Ruthenians in Slovakia—and the large numbers of Czechs brought to Ruthenia as administrators and educators.

Post-World War I Ruthenia was characterized by a proliferation of political parties and a diversity of cultural tendencies. All Czechoslovak political parties were represented, and a number of indigenous parties emerged as well. Of particular significance were the Ukrainophiles, Russophiles, Hungarians, and communists.

Ukrainophile and Russophile tendencies were strengthened by the large influx of émigrés following the war. The Ukrainophiles were largely Uniates and espoused autonomy within Czechoslovakia. Some favored union with Ukraine. The Ukrainophiles were represented by the Ruthenian National Christian Party led by Augustin Vološin (see *Second Republic, 1938-39*, this ch.). Russophile Ruthenians were largely Orthodox and also espoused Ruthenian autonomy. They were organized politically in the Agricultural Federation, led by Andrej Bródy, and the fascist-style Fencik Party.

Hungarians populated a compact area in southern Ruthenia. They were represented by the Unified Magyar Party, which consistently received 10 percent of the vote in Subcarpathian Ruthenia and was in permanent opposition to the government.

The communists, strong in backward Ruthenia, attempted to appeal to the Ukrainian element by espousing union with the Soviet Ukraine. In 1935 the communists polled 25 percent of the Ruthenian vote. The elections of 1935 gave only 37 percent of the Ruthenian vote to political parties supporting the Czechoslovak government. The communists, Unified Magyars, and autonomist groups polled 63 percent.

### *Sudetenland*

The most intractable nationality problem in the interwar period—one that played a major role in the destruction of democratic Czechoslovakia—was that of the Sudeten Germans. The Sudetenland was inhabited by over 3 million Germans, comprising about 23 percent of the population of the republic. It possessed huge chemical works and lignite mines, as well as textile, china, and glass factories. To the west, a solid German triangle surrounded Čeb (Eger) and included the highly nationalistic Egerland. The Český les (Bohemian Forest) extended along the Bavarian frontier to the poor agricultural areas of southern Bohemia.

Moravia contained patches of “locked” German territory to the north and south. More characteristic were the German “language islands”—towns inhabited by important German minorities and surrounded by Czechs. Extreme German nationalism was never typical of this area. The German nationalism of the coal-mining region of southern Silesia, 40.5 percent German, was restrained by fear of competition from industry in Germany. Early policies of the Czechoslovak government, intended to correct social injustice and effect a moderate redistribution of wealth, had fallen more heavily on the German population than on other citizens. In 1919 the government confiscated one-fifth of each individual’s holdings in paper currency. Germans, constituting the wealthiest element in the Czech lands, were most affected. The Land Control Act brought the expropriation of vast estates belonging to Germans. Land was allotted primarily to Czech peasants, often landless, who constituted the majority of the agricultural population. Only 4.5 percent of all land allotted by January 1937 was received by Sudeten Germans, whose protests were expressed in countless petitions.

According to the 1920 constitution, German minority rights were carefully protected; their educational and cultural institutions were preserved in proportion to the population. Local hostilities were

engendered, however, by policies intended to protect the security of the Czechoslovak state and the rights of Czechs. Border for-estland, considered the most ancient Sudeten German national territory, was expropriated for security reasons. The Czechoslovak government settled Czechs in areas of German concentration in an effort to mitigate German nationalism; the policy, however, often produced the opposite effect. Minority laws were most often applied to create new Czech schools in German districts. Sudeten Germans, in possession of a large number of subsidized local theaters, were required to put these at the disposal of the Czech minority one night a week.

Sudeten German industry, highly dependent on foreign trade and having close financial links with Germany, suffered badly during the depression, particularly when banks in Germany failed in 1931. Czechs, whose industry was concentrated on the production of essential domestic items, suffered less. Tensions between the two groups resulted. Relations between Czechs and Germans were further envenomed when Sudeten Germans were forced to turn to the Czechoslovak government and the Central Bank (*Živnostenská banka*) for assistance. These authorities often made the hiring of Czechs in proportion to their numbers in the population a condition for aid. Czech workmen, dispatched by the government to engage in public works projects in Sudeten German territories, were also resented.

Sudeten German nationalist sentiment ran high during the early years of the republic. The constitution of 1920 was drafted without Sudeten German representation, and the group declined to participate in the election of the president. Sudeten German political parties pursued an "obstructionist," or negativist, policy in parliament. In 1926, however, Chancellor Gustav Stresemann of Germany, adopting a policy of rapprochement with the West, advised Sudeten Germans to cooperate actively with the Czechoslovak government. In consequence, most Sudeten German parties (including the German Agrarian Party, the German Social Democratic Party, and the German Christian Socialist Party) changed from negativism to activism, and Sudeten Germans accepted cabinet posts.

By 1929 only a small number of Sudeten German deputies—most of them members of the German National Party (propertied classes) and the Sudeten Nazi Party (*Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei*)—remained in opposition. Nationalist sentiment flourished, however, among Sudeten German youth, who belonged to a variety of organizations. These included the older *Turnverband* and *Schutzvereine*, the newly formed *Kameradschaftsbund*, the Nazi *Volkssport* (1929), and the *Bereitschaft*.

Sudeten German nationalists, particularly the Nazis, expanded their activities during the depression years. On January 30, 1933, Hitler was elected chancellor of Germany. The Czechoslovak government prepared to suppress the Sudeten Nazi Party. In the fall of 1933 the Sudeten Nazis dissolved their organization, and the German Nationals were pressured to do likewise. German Nationals and Sudeten Nazis were expelled from local government positions. The Sudeten German population was indignant, especially in nationalist strongholds like Egerland.

On October 1, 1933, Konrad Henlein, aided by other members of the Kameradschaftsbund, a youth organization of romantic mystical orientation, created a new political organization. The Sudeten German Home Front (Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront) professed loyalty to the Czechoslovak state but championed decentralization. It absorbed most former German Nationals and Sudeten Nazis. In 1935 the Sudeten German Home Front became the Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei—SdP) and embarked on an active propaganda campaign. In the May election the SdP won more than 60 percent of the Sudeten German vote. The German Agrarians, Christian Socialists, and Social Democrats each lost approximately one-half of their following. The SdP became the fulcrum of German nationalist forces. The party represented itself as striving for a just settlement of Sudeten German claims within the framework of Czechoslovak democracy. Henlein, however, maintained secret contact with Nazi Germany and received material aid from Berlin. The SdP endorsed the idea of a führer and mimicked Nazi methods with banners, slogans, and uniformed troops. Concessions offered by the Czechoslovak government, including the transfer of Sudeten German officials to Sudeten German areas and possible participation of the SdP in the cabinet, were rejected. By 1937 most SdP leaders supported Hitler's pan-German objectives.

On March 13, 1938, Austria was annexed by the Third Reich, a union known as Anschluss. Immediately thereafter almost the entire Sudeten German bourgeois activist movement threw its support to Henlein. On March 22, the German Agrarian Party, led by Gustav Hacker, fused with the SdP. German Christian Socialists suspended their activities on March 24; their deputies and senators entered the SdP parliamentary club. Only the Social Democrats continued to champion democratic freedom. The masses, however, gave overwhelming support to the SdP.

### **Beneš's Foreign Policy**

Eduard Beneš, Czechoslovak foreign minister from 1918 to 1935, created the system of alliances that determined the republic's



international stance in 1938. A democratic statesman of Western orientation, Beneš relied heavily on the League of Nations as guarantor of the postwar status quo and the security of newly formed states. He negotiated the Little Entente (an alliance with Yugoslavia and Romania) in 1921 to counter Hungarian revanchism and Hapsburg restoration. He attempted further to negotiate treaties with Britain and France, seeking their promises of assistance in the event of aggression against the small, democratic Czechoslovak Republic. Britain remained intransigent in its isolationist policy, and in 1924 Beneš concluded a separate alliance with France.

Beneš's Western policy received a serious blow as early as 1925. The Locarno Pact, which paved the way for Germany's admission to the League of Nations, guaranteed Germany's western border. French troops were thus left immobilized on the Rhine, making French assistance to Czechoslovakia difficult. In addition, the treaty stipulated that Germany's eastern frontier would remain subject to negotiation.

When Hitler secured power in 1933, fear of German aggression became generalized in eastern Central Europe. Beneš ignored the possibility of a stronger Central European alliance system, remaining faithful to his Western policy. He did, however, seek the participation of the Soviet Union in an alliance to include France. (Beneš's earlier attitude toward the Soviet regime had been one of caution.) In 1935 the Soviet Union signed treaties with France and Czechoslovakia. In essence, the treaties provided that the Soviet Union would come to Czechoslovakia's aid only if French assistance came first.

In 1935 Beneš succeeded Masaryk as president, and Prime Minister Milan Hodža took over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hodža's efforts to strengthen alliances in Central Europe came too late. In February 1936 the foreign ministry came under the direction of Kamil Krofta, an adherent of Beneš's line.

## **Munich**

After the Austrian Anschluss, Czechoslovakia was to become Hitler's next target. Hitler's strategy was to exploit the existing Sudeten German minority problem as a pretext for German penetration into eastern Central Europe. Sudeten German leader Henlein offered the SdP as the agent for Hitler's campaign. Henlein met with Hitler in Berlin on March 28, 1938, and was instructed to raise demands unacceptable to the Czechoslovak government. In the Carlsbad Decrees, issued on April 24, the SdP demanded complete autonomy for the Sudetenland and freedom to profess Nazi ideology. If Henlein's demands were granted, the Sudetenland would be in a position to align itself with Nazi Germany.

In 1938 neither Britain nor France desired war. France, not wanting to face Germany alone, subordinated itself to Britain. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain became the major spokesman for the West. Chamberlain believed that Sudeten German grievances were just and Hitler's intention limited. Both Britain and France advised Czechoslovakia to concede. Beneš, however, resisted pressure to move toward autonomy or federalism for the Sudetenland. On May 20, Czechoslovakia initiated a partial mobilization in response to rumors of German troop movements. On May 30, Hitler signed a secret directive for war against Czechoslovakia to begin no later than October 1. The British government demanded that Beneš request a mediator. Not wishing to sever his ties with the West, Beneš reluctantly accepted mediation. The British appointed Walter Runciman as mediator and instructed him to force a solution on Beneš that would be acceptable to the Sudeten Germans. On September 2, Beneš submitted the Fourth Plan, which granted nearly all the demands of the Carlsbad Decrees. Intent on obstructing conciliation, the SdP held a demonstration that provoked police action at the town of Ostrava on September 7. On September 13, the Sudeten Germans broke off negotiations. Violence and disruption ensued. Czechoslovak troops attempted to restore order. Henlein flew to Germany and on September 15 issued a proclamation demanding the return of the Sudetenland to Germany.

On September 15, Hitler met with Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden and demanded the swift return of the Sudetenland to the Third Reich under threat of war. Czechoslovakia, Hitler claimed, was slaughtering the Sudeten Germans. Chamberlain referred the demand to the British and French governments; both accepted. The Czechoslovak government resisted, arguing that Hitler's proposal would ruin the nation's economy and lead ultimately to German control of all of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France issued an ultimatum, making the French commitment to Czechoslovakia contingent upon acceptance. On September 21, Czechoslovakia capitulated. The next day, however, Hitler added new demands, insisting that the claims of Poland and Hungary for their minorities also be satisfied.

The Czechoslovak capitulation precipitated an outburst of national indignation. In demonstrations and rallies, there were calls for a strong military government to defend the integrity of the state. A new cabinet, under General Jan Syrový, was installed, and on September 23 a decree of general mobilization was issued. The Czechoslovak army, highly modernized and possessing an excellent system of frontier fortifications, was prepared to fight. The

Soviet Union announced its willingness to come to Czechoslovakia's assistance. Beneš, however, refused to go to war without the support of the Western powers. War, he believed, would come soon enough.

On September 28, Chamberlain appealed to Hitler for a conference. Hitler met the next day, at Munich, with the chiefs of government of France, Italy, and Britain. The Czechoslovak government was neither invited nor consulted. On September 29, the Munich Agreement was signed by Germany, Italy, France, and Britain. The Czechoslovak government capitulated September 30 and agreed to abide by the agreement.

The Munich Agreement stipulated that Czechoslovakia must cede Sudeten territory to Germany. German occupation of the Sudetenland would be completed by October 10. An international commission (representing Germany, Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia) would supervise a plebiscite to determine the final frontier. Britain and France promised to join in an international guarantee of the new frontiers against unprovoked aggression. Germany and Italy, however, would not join in the guarantee until the Polish and Hungarian minority problems were settled.

After Munich, Bohemia and Moravia lost about 38 percent of their combined area, as well as about 2.8 million Germans and approximately 750,000 Czechs to Germany. Hungary received 11,882 square kilometers in southern Slovakia and southern Ruthenia; only 53 percent of the population in this territory was Hungarian. Poland acquired Těšín and two minor border areas in northern Slovakia (see fig. 8).

### **The Second Republic, 1938-39**

As a result of the Munich Agreement, the greatly weakened Czechoslovak Republic was forced to grant major concessions to the non-Czechs. The executive committee of the Slovak Populist Party met at Žilina on October 5, 1938, and with the acquiescence of all Slovak parties except the Social Democrats formed an autonomous Slovak government under Tiso. Similarly, the two major factions in Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the Russophiles and Ukrainophiles, agreed on the establishment of an autonomous government, which was constituted on October 8, 1938. Reflecting the spread of modern Ukrainian national consciousness, the pro-Ukrainian faction, led by Vološin, gained control of the local government, and Subcarpathian Ruthenia was renamed Carpatho-Ukraine (see *Problems of Dissatisfied Nationalities*, this ch.).

In November 1938, Emil Hácha, succeeding Beneš, was elected president of the federated Second Republic (now called

Czecho-Slovakia), consisting of three parts: Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia, and Carpatho-Ukraine. Lacking its natural frontier and having lost its costly system of border fortification, the new state was militarily indefensible. In January 1939, negotiations between Germany and Poland broke down. Hitler, intent on war against Poland, needed to eliminate Czecho-Slovakia first. He scheduled a German invasion of Bohemia and Moravia for the morning of March 15. In the interim, he negotiated with Slovak Populists and with Hungary to prepare the dismemberment of the republic before the invasion. On March 14, the Slovak Diet convened and unanimously declared Slovak independence. Carpatho-Ukraine also declared independence, but Hungarian troops occupied it and eastern Slovakia. Hitler summoned President Hácha to Berlin.

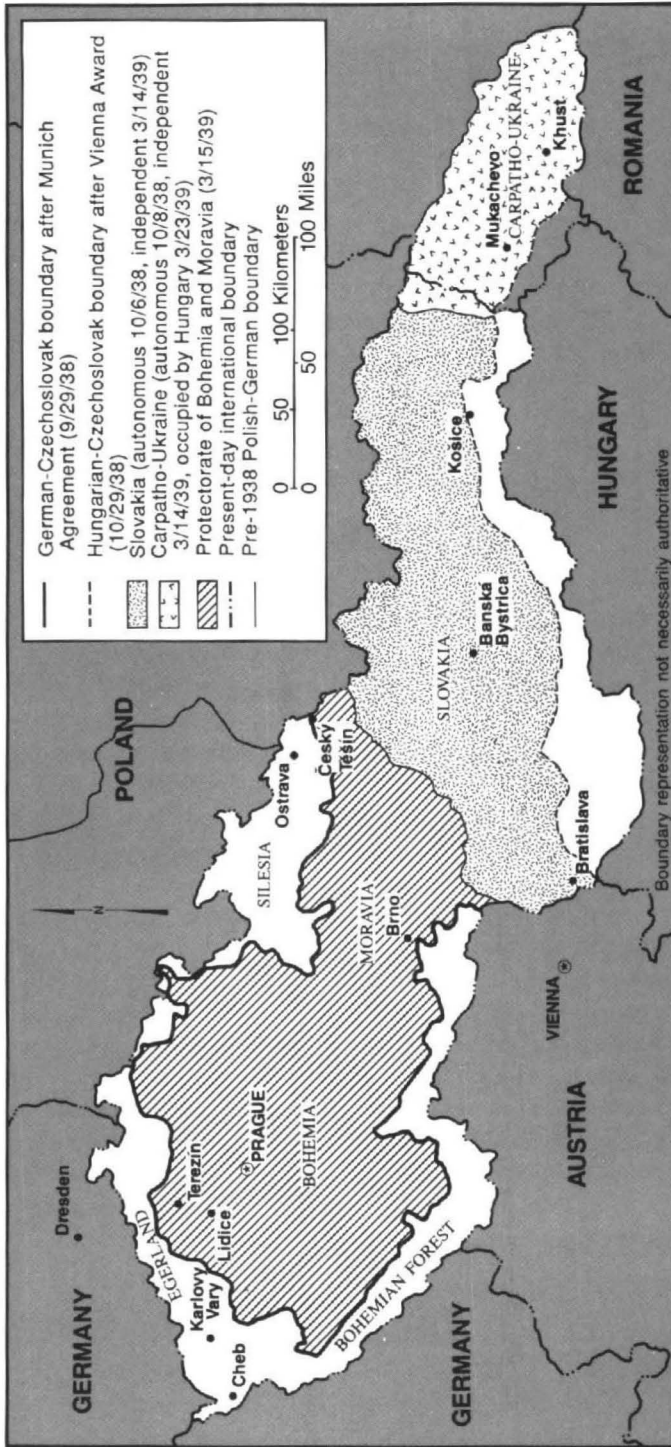
During the early hours of March 15, Hitler informed Hácha of the imminent German invasion. Threatening a Luftwaffe attack on Prague, Hitler persuaded Hácha to order the capitulation of the Czechoslovak army. On the morning of March 15, German troops entered Bohemia and Moravia, meeting no resistance. The Hungarian invasion of Carpatho-Ukraine did encounter resistance, but the Hungarian army quickly crushed it. On March 16, Hitler went to Czecho-Slovakia and from Prague's Hradčany Castle proclaimed Bohemia and Moravia a German protectorate.

Independent Czecho-Slovakia collapsed in the wake of foreign aggression and internal tensions. Subsequently, interwar Czechoslovakia has been idealized by its proponents as the only bastion of democracy surrounded by authoritarian and fascist regimes. It has also been condemned by its detractors as an artificial and unworkable creation of intellectuals supported by the great powers. Both views have some validity. Interwar Czechoslovakia was comprised of lands and peoples that were far from being integrated into a modern nation-state. Moreover, the dominant Czechs, who had suffered political discrimination under the Hapsburgs, were not able to cope with the demands of other nationalities. In fairness to the Czechs, it should be acknowledged that some of the minority demands served as mere pretexts to justify intervention by Nazi Germany. That Czechoslovakia was able under such circumstances to maintain a viable economy and a democratic political system was indeed a remarkable achievement of the interwar period.

## **The War Years, 1939–45**

### **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**

For the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, German occupation was a period of brutal oppression, made even more painful by the memory of independence and democracy. Legally, Bohemia and



Source: Based on information from "Die Entwicklung in der Tschechoslowakei seit 1945," *Staatsbürgerliche Informationen*, Bonn, 1960, 10-11

Figure 8. Partitioning of Czechoslovakia, 1938-39

Moravia were declared a protectorate of the Third Reich and were placed under the supervision of the Reich protector, Baron Konstantin von Neurath. German officials manned departments analogous to cabinet ministries. Small German control offices were established locally. The Gestapo assumed police authority. Jews were dismissed from the civil service and placed in an extralegal position. Communism was banned, and many Czech communists fled.

The population of the protectorate was mobilized for labor that would aid the German war effort, and special offices were organized to supervise the management of industries important to that effort. Czechs were drafted to work in coal mines, the iron and steel industry, and armaments production; some were sent to Germany. Consumer goods production, much diminished, was largely directed toward supplying the German armed forces. The protectorate's population was subjected to strict rationing.

German rule was moderate during the first months of the occupation. The Czech government and political system, reorganized by Hácha, continued in existence. Gestapo activities were directed mainly against Czech politicians and the intelligentsia. Nevertheless, the Czechs demonstrated against the occupation on October 28, the anniversary of Czechoslovak independence. The death on November 15 of a medical student, Jan Opletal, who had been wounded in the October violence, precipitated widespread student demonstrations, and the Reich retaliated. Politicians were arrested en masse, as were an estimated 1,800 students and teachers. On November 17, all universities and colleges in the protectorate were closed, and students were sent to work.

In the fall of 1941, the Reich adopted a more radical policy in the protectorate. Reinhard Heydrich was appointed Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia. Under his authority Prime Minister Alois Eliáš was arrested, the Czech government was reorganized, and all Czech cultural organizations were closed. The Gestapo indulged in arrests and executions. The deportation of Jews to concentration camps was organized, and the fortress town of Terezín was made into a ghetto way station for Jewish families. On June 4, 1942, Heydrich died after being wounded by an assassin. Heydrich's successor, Colonel-General Kurt Daluege, ordered mass arrests and executions and the destruction of the village of Lidice. In 1943 the German war effort was accelerated. Under the authority of Karl Hermann Frank, German minister of state for Bohemia and Moravia, some 30,000 Czech laborers were dispatched to the Reich. Within the protectorate, all non-war-related industry was

prohibited. The Czech population obeyed quiescently up until the final months preceding the liberation.

Czech losses resulting from political persecution and deaths in concentration camps totaled between 36,000 and 55,000, relatively minor losses compared with those of other nations. But the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia (118,000 according to the 1930 census) was virtually annihilated. Many Jews emigrated after 1939; more than 70,000 were killed; 8,000 survived at Terezín. Several thousand Jews managed to live in freedom or in hiding throughout the occupation.

### **Government-in-Exile**

Beneš had resigned as president of the Czechoslovak Republic on October 5, 1938. In London he and other Czechoslovak exiles organized a Czechoslovak government-in-exile and negotiated to obtain international recognition for the government and a renunciation of the Munich Agreement and its consequences. Beneš hoped for a restoration of the Czechoslovak state in its pre-Munich form after the anticipated Allied victory. In the summer of 1941, the Allies recognized the exiled government. In 1942 Allied repudiation of the Munich Agreement established the political and legal continuity of the First Republic and Beneš's presidency.

The Munich Agreement had been precipitated by the subversive activities of the Sudeten Germans. During the latter years of the war, Beneš worked toward resolving the German minority problem and received consent from the Allies for a solution based on a postwar transfer of the Sudeten German population.

The First Republic had been committed to a Western policy in foreign affairs. The Munich Agreement was the outcome. Beneš determined to strengthen Czechoslovak security against future German aggression through alliances with Poland and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, however, objected to a tripartite Czechoslovak-Polish-Soviet commitment. In December 1943, Beneš's government concluded a treaty with the Soviets.

Beneš's interest in maintaining friendly relations with the Soviet Union was motivated also by his desire to avoid Soviet encouragement of a postwar communist coup in Czechoslovakia. Beneš worked to bring Czechoslovak communist exiles in Britain into active cooperation with his government, offering far-reaching concessions, including nationalization of heavy industry and the creation of local people's committees at the war's end. In March 1945, he gave key cabinet positions to Czechoslovak communist exiles in Moscow.

## Czech Resistance

In exile, Beneš organized a resistance network. Hácha, Prime Minister Eliáš, and the Czech resistance acknowledged Beneš's leadership. Active collaboration between London and the Czechoslovak home front was maintained throughout the war years. The Czech resistance comprised four main groups. The army command coordinated with a multitude of spontaneous groupings to form the Defense of the Nation (Obrana národa—ON) with branches in Britain and France. Beneš's collaborators, led by Prokop Drtina, created the Political Center (Politické ústředí—PÚ). The PÚ was nearly destroyed by arrests in November 1939, after which younger politicians took control. Social democrats and leftist intellectuals, in association with such groups as trade-unions and educational institutions, constituted the Committee of the Petition We Remain Faithful (Petiční výbor Věrní zůstaňme—PVVZ).

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa—KSČ) was the fourth resistance group. The KSČ had been one of over twenty political parties in the democratic First Republic, but it had never gained sufficient votes to unsettle the democratic government. After the Munich Agreement the leadership of the KSČ moved to Moscow and the party went underground. Until 1943, however, KSČ resistance was weak. The Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact in 1939 had left the KSČ in disarray. But ever faithful to the Soviet line, the KSČ began a more active struggle against the Nazis after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 (see The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, ch. 4).

The democratic groups—ON, PÚ, and PVVZ—united in early 1940 and formed the Central Committee of the Home Resistance (Ústřední výbor odboje domácího—ÚVOD). Involved primarily in intelligence gathering, the ÚVOD cooperated with a Soviet intelligence organization in Prague. Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the democratic groups attempted to create a united front that would include the KSČ. Heydrich's appointment in the fall thwarted these efforts. By mid-1942 the Nazis had succeeded in exterminating the most experienced elements of the Czech resistance forces.

Czech forces regrouped in 1942 and 1943. The Council of the Three (R3), in which the communist underground was strongly represented, emerged as the focal point of the resistance. The R3 prepared to assist the liberating armies of the United States and the Soviet Union. In cooperation with Red Army partisan units, the R3 developed a guerrilla structure.



Guerrilla activity intensified after the formation of a provisional Czechoslovak government in Košice on April 4, 1945. "National committees" took over the administration of towns as the Germans were expelled. Under the supervision of the Red Army, more than 4,850 such committees were formed between 1944 and the end of the war. On May 5 a national uprising began spontaneously in Prague, and the newly formed Czech National Council (Česká národní rada) almost immediately assumed leadership of the revolt. Over 1,600 barricades were erected throughout the city, and some 30,000 Czech men and women battled for three days against 37,000 to 40,000 German troops backed by tanks and artillery. On May 8 the German Wehrmacht capitulated; Soviet troops arrived on May 9.

### **Slovak Republic**

On March 14, 1939, Slovakia declared its independence, calling itself the Slovak Republic. Monsignor Tiso was elected president of this new republic. A clerical nationalist, Tiso opposed the Nazification of Slovak society and hoped instead to establish Slovakia as a nationalist, Christian, corporative state. His plan conflicted with that of Slovak radicals who were organized into the paramilitary Hlinka Guards. The latter cooperated closely with the Nazi-oriented German minority led by Franz Karasin. Radicals dominated the Slovak government. Vojtech Tuka, recently released from prison, became prime minister; his associate, Ferdinand Ďurčanský, was named foreign minister. Alexander Mach, head of the Hlinka Guards, was propaganda minister. German "advisory missions" were appointed to all Slovak ministries, and German troops were stationed in Slovakia beginning March 15, 1939.

The conflict between Tiso and the radicals resulted in the Salzburg Compromise, concluded between Slovakia and the Reich in July 1940. The compromise called for dual command by the Slovak Populist Party and the Hlinka Guards. The Reich appointed storm trooper leader Manfred von Killinger as the German representative in Slovakia. While Tiso successfully restructured the Slovak Populist Party in harmony with Christian corporative principles, Tuka and Mach radicalized Slovak policy toward the Jews (130,000 in the 1930 census). In September 1941, the Slovak government enacted a "Jewish code," providing a legal foundation for property expropriation, internment, and deportation. In 1942 the Slovak government reached an agreement with Germany on the deportation of Jews. The same year, when most of the deportations occurred, approximately 68,000 Slovak Jews were sent out of Slovakia to German-run concentration camps. Many Jews

escaped deportation under a provision that allowed Tiso to exempt Jews whose services were considered an economic necessity.

Tiso's power was strengthened in October 1942, when the Slovak Diet proclaimed him leader of the state and Slovak Populist Party, giving him rights of intervention in all affairs of state. The Hlinka Guards were effectively subordinated to party control. The new German representative, Hans Elard Ludin, concentrated his energies on war production. German banks acquired a controlling interest in all Slovak industries. With the aid of German investments and technical advice, Slovakia experienced a considerable economic boom, especially in the armaments industry, which had been controlled by the German government since December 1939. To some extent, Slovakia served as a showcase for Hitler's new order.

### **Slovak Resistance**

In the aftermath of Munich, Slovak politicians from the democratic parties (Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants, Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, and Czechoslovak National Socialist Party) organized a resistance movement. Individual underground cells sprang up in towns and villages throughout Slovakia. A campaign of "whispering" propaganda was initiated to alert the acquiescent Slovak population to the true nature of the Tiso regime. The goal of the democratic resistance was the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic, but with greater participation for Slovakia. In the spring of 1939, the "Zeta" headquarters was established in Bratislava to coordinate with the Czech resistance and to transmit intelligence information to the liberation movement abroad. Communists remaining in Slovakia formed the underground Communist Party of Slovakia (Komunistická strana Slovenska—KSS) and until 1943 favored the creation of an independent "Soviet Slovakia."

The shortage of qualified personnel enabled resistance members to infiltrate all levels of the Tiso administration, where they promoted economic sabotage. Mutiny within the Slovak army (marshaled by the Axis powers for combat against Poland and, later, the Soviet Union) was encouraged and became commonplace. At Kremnica, on September 15, 1939, approximately 3,500 Slovak soldiers abandoned their transport train and marched into the city. Members of the underground Slovak Revolutionary Youth set fire to machinery in factories, emptied the fuel tanks of locomotives, and exploded munitions in warehouses. Slovak youth turned increasingly against the Tiso regime.

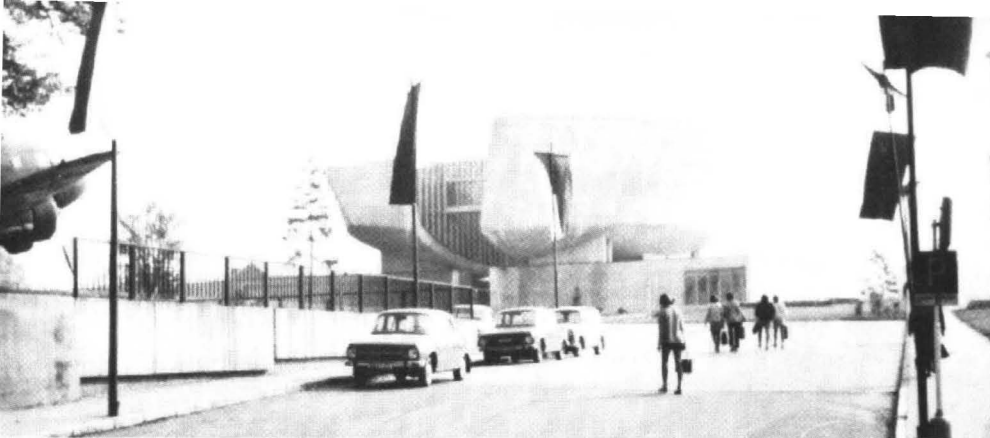
In his Christmas broadcast of 1942, Beneš called for resistance groups in Slovakia to increase their activity in preparation for a

seizure of power. The groups worked to unify their efforts. The following November, negotiations between democratic and communist resistance leaders culminated in the signing of the Christmas Agreement of 1943. The agreement called for the creation of the Slovak National Council to represent the political will of the Slovak nation. The Slovak National Council would act in concert with the Czechoslovak government and liberation movement abroad. The postwar Czechoslovak state would be democratic and organized on the basis of national equality. The Christmas Agreement provided also for a close association with the Soviet Union in foreign policy and military affairs. Beneš endorsed the agreement on March 27, 1944.

The Allied powers agreed that Slovakia would be liberated by Soviet armies. In March 1944, with Beneš's approval, the Slovak National Council authorized Lieutenant-Colonel Ján Golian to prepare for a national coup to be coordinated with the arrival of Soviet troops. Golian organized a secret military center at Banská Bystrica and created Slovak partisan units composed of escaped prisoners of war and army deserters. The Slovak National Uprising of August 29, however, was premature. The Soviet government, regarding the Slovak resistance as politically suspect, failed to inform the Slovaks of a change in Soviet strategy. Despite American efforts to assist the uprising, the German Wehrmacht occupied Slovakia, and Banská Bystrica fell on October 27. Nonetheless, local partisan warfare continued up to the liberation.

### **Soviet Annexation of Carpatho-Ukraine (Subcarpathian Ruthenia)**

On May 8, 1944, Beneš signed an agreement with Soviet leaders stipulating that Czechoslovak territory liberated by Soviet armies would be placed under Czechoslovak civilian control. Subcarpathian Ruthenia had been reconstituted into the autonomous Carpatho-Ukraine during the Second Republic. When the Second Republic collapsed, Carpatho-Ukraine declared its independence but was occupied by the Hungarians (see Second Republic, 1938-39, this ch.). In October 1944, Carpatho-Ukraine was taken by the Soviets. A Czechoslovak delegation under František Němec was dispatched to the area. The delegation was to mobilize the liberated local population to form a Czechoslovak army and to prepare for elections in cooperation with recently established national committees. Loyalty to a Czechoslovak state was tenuous in Carpatho-Ukraine. Beneš's proclamation of April 1944 excluded former collaborationist Hungarians, Germans, and the Russophile Ruthenian followers of Andrej Bródy and the Fencik Party (who had collaborated with the Hungarians) from political participation. This amounted to



*Slovak National Uprising Memorial, Banská Bystrica  
Courtesy Helen Fedor*

approximately one-third of the population. Another one-third was communist, leaving one-third of the population presumably sympathetic to the Czechoslovak Republic.

Upon arrival in Carpatho-Ukraine, the Czechoslovak delegation set up headquarters in Khust and on October 30 issued a mobilization proclamation. Soviet military forces prevented both the printing and the posting of the Czechoslovak proclamation and proceeded instead to organize the local population. Protests from Beneš's government went unheeded. Soviet activities led much of the local population to believe that Soviet annexation was imminent.

The Czechoslovak delegation was also prevented from establishing a cooperative relationship with the local national committees promoted by the Soviets. On November 19, the communists, meeting in Mukachevo, issued a resolution requesting separation of Carpatho-Ukraine from Czechoslovakia and incorporation into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. On November 26, the Congress of National Committees unanimously accepted the resolution of the communists. The congress elected the National Council and instructed that a delegation be sent to Moscow to discuss union. The Czechoslovak delegation was asked to leave Carpatho-Ukraine.

Negotiations between the Czechoslovak government and Moscow ensued. Both Czech and Slovak communists encouraged Beneš to cede Carpatho-Ukraine. The Soviet Union agreed to postpone annexation until the postwar period to avoid compromising Beneš's policy based on the pre-Munich frontiers. The treaty ceding Carpatho-Ukraine to the Soviet Union was signed in June 1945. Czechs and Slovaks living in Carpatho-Ukraine and Ukrainians (Ruthenians) living in Czechoslovakia were given the choice of Czechoslovak or Soviet citizenship.