

Czechoslovakia 1990

František Tomášek was a Roman Catholic Cardinal, and the archbishop of Prague from 1977 to 1991. He helped to lead the public through the fall of Communism with a cautious but strong willed opposition. In 1949, he was arrested and held in a labour camp shortly after being a consecrated auxiliary bishop during a time of harsh Catholic repression.. He was held there until 1954 when he was released to serve as a parish priest in a small town. This was done to help placate Catholic worshippers. In 1962, he was chosen to serve as a representative to the Second Vatican Council, where he helped to advocate for spiritual renewal and for Christians separated from Rome to reconvene. When the archbishop of Prague was forbidden to return from Rome, Tomášek was appointed apostolic administrator of Prague. In 1976, he was secretly promoted to cardinal and was publicly announced as archbishop of Prague in December 1977. He supported the Prague Spring, speaking out about government sponsored Catholic movements, but afterwards remained outwardly fairly neutral to maintain his relationship with the government. The Communist government saw Tomášek's prominence in the Catholic Church as an opportunity to increase the Church's dependency on the government. Tomášek was a key part in negotiations regarding the relationship between the Catholic church and Czechoslovak communism. He was censored by the government, but he continued to grow public appeal due to his views on poverty and ecumenism. In 1978, Pope John Paul II encouraged him to take a more active role in the pro-democratic movement. Before he became archbishop, he was also encouraged by his friend, Padre Pio, who supposedly had the gift of stigmata and could see the future, who told him that he would survive to see peace in Czechoslovakia. After the fall of communism, he openly proclaimed the peacefulness of the event and a more democratic government.¹

The Velvet Revolution was an integral event in Czechoslovak history and sparked changes for years to come. Mikhail Gorbachev, a newly elected Soviet president, introduced more relaxed form of communism which included more transparency and a restructured government.² Although the Czechoslovak public supported this movement, the communist party disagreed with these reforms and attempted to not have them implemented at home. The party promoted harsh political censorship and inflicted brutal treatment on all political activists.³The

¹ "František Tomášek." Information Centre Studénka. Accessed November 09, 2016. <http://www.ic.mesto-studenka.cz/en/history/notable-citizens-of-studenka/35-František-Tomášek>.
"Frantisek Tomasek." Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Accessed November 10, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frantisek-Tomasek>.

² "The Velvet Revolution: A Peaceful End to Communism in Czechoslovakia." Tavaana. Accessed November 09, 2016. <https://tavaana.org/en/content/velvet-revolution-peaceful-end-communism-czechoslovakia-0>.

³ "Czech Republic Slovakia: Velvet Revolution at 25." BBC News. November 17, 2014. Accessed November 09, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30059011>.

Velvet Revolution began a week after the Berlin Wall fell, when the Czechoslovak riot police suppressed a student-led, pro-democracy rally using intense violence. This caused mass outrage among the population and resulted in 75% of the Czechoslovaks participating in the protests. Leading to the Communist party stepping down from power and a non-communist government being instated shortly thereafter.⁴ This event was the result of culminating tensions to the government and opposition to Communist ruling. Almost thirty years earlier, Czechoslovakia first attempted to instate a more democratic government and lessen their ties with Moscow.⁵ The Prague Spring was a movement led by a more progressive faction of the Communist party, headed by newly elected Alexander Dubcek. The Prague Spring was the result of a failing economy, a lack of freedom, and the Soviet refusal of Soviet aide. He instituted a series of reforms including freedom of public and press expression and public debate. The movement was popular among Czechoslovak citizens which threatened the Soviet government. The Czechoslovak government strongly assured the Soviet government that they were not trying to break free of the Soviet sphere of influence, but this reassurance was not successful, resulting in members of the Warsaw pact invading Czechoslovakia and reinstating a tightly controlled, highly restricted communist state with Alexander Dubcek pushed from his leadership position.⁶ Czechoslovakia returned to strong Communist control under the Brezhnev Doctrine with a large Soviet military presence. This created citizen upset and a deep lack of trust within the newly instated government.⁷ This event showed citizens the freedom they would gain under a democratic government and paved the way for future uprisings. The Velvet Revolution was also a tumultuous time for Czechoslovakia as it created a great divide between Czechs and Slovaks. Post Velvet Revolution, the Slovaks were looking to develop their nation and their sense of nationhood, and the Czechs wanted to improve their economy and felt as though the Slovaks

⁴ Lynch, Dennis. "What Is the Velvet Revolution? The Peaceful Movement That Overthrew Communist Czechoslovakia Lives On 25 Years Later." International Business Times. November 17, 2014. Accessed November 09, 2016.
<http://www.ibtimes.com/what-velvet-revolution-peaceful-movement-overthrew-communist-czechoslovakia-lives-25-1724963>.

⁵ "The Prague Spring of 1968." History Learning Site. May 9, 2015. Accessed November 09, 2016.
<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/modern-world-history-1918-to-1980/the-cold-war/the-prague-spring-of-1968/>.

⁶ Evans, C. T. "1968 Czech Invasion." HIS 135-History of the Contemporary World- Professor Charles Evans. December 27, 2011. Accessed November 9, 2016.
<https://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/HIS135/Events/Czech68.htm>.

⁷ "The Prague Spring - a Summary." History in an Hour. January 18, 2014. Accessed November 09, 2016.
<http://www.historyinanhour.com/2013/01/18/the-prague-spring-summary/>.

"Events in Czechoslovakia 1968." BBC - GCSE Bitesize. Accessed November 9, 2016.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/ir2/czechoslovakia1968rev1.shtml>.

impeded that goal.⁸ The Czechoslovaks' inability to create a shared history resulted in an uncertain future as they had no reason to attempt to salvage their relationship which had been damaged in the war.⁹ The fall of communism was beneficial to Czechoslovakia as it helped to restore economic prosperity, and to restore freedom of speech and expression. In addition, the divide between the Czech and Slovaks was due to their inability to create a shared history and their lack of governmental alignment.

The fall of Communism was the end of a long period of harsh repression and poverty. To begin, many Czechoslovakians were upset with the economical failings of their country. Their economy was controlled by the government and had serious structural failings. In accordance with this, producer goods were much more popular than consumer goods, causing the consumer goods to lack quantity and quality; this resulted in shortages and a lack of economic growth.¹⁰ Therefore, the economy's shortcomings were attributed to the government which heightened public discord. The economy was planned without alteration to existing flaws which resulted in a lack of growth. One of the major flaws in the economic system was that companies were given a target for production which was based off the previous year, and gave no incentive for improvement. This decreased the national income and created a depression which showed a need for an improved economy.¹¹ To establish Czechoslovakia as a powerful country, the economy must grow; this will also help to disassociate with the Soviet Union and decrease our dependency. Czechoslovakia's relationship with the Soviet Union has been characterized by the Soviet's constant hold of superiority. Therefore, creating a powerful economy will help us to regain power and decrease dependency.¹² Additionally, the censorship of both the public and the media was a driving force in the move to democracy. Tomášek was heartbroken and appalled by the fact that he was forced to hide his religion because the communists felt threatened by it and he was used as their puppet to win public appeal. In the new democratic Czechoslovakia, he no longer must tailor his speech to fit the constraints of the communist government. The government could not destroy the rules of his religion and that threatened them. They murdered

⁸ "Czechs and Slovaks: The Failure to Find a Decent Past." Cultural Survival. Accessed November 09, 2016. <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/czech-republic/czechs-and-slovaks-failure-find-decent-past>.

⁹ Pehe, Jiri. "The Split of Czechoslovakia: A Defeat or a Victory?" Jiří Pehe. Accessed November 10, 2016. <http://www.pehe.cz/prednasky/2004/the-split-of-czechoslovakia-a-defeat-or-a-victory>.

¹⁰ McCulloch, James. "Analysis of Centrally Planned Economics in Czechoslovakia until 1968." Ok Economics. Accessed November 09, 2016. http://econc10.bu.edu/economic_systems/Economics/Command_Econ/planning/comec_plan_czechosl.htm.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Kramer, Mark. "Stalin, Soviet Policy, and The Consolidation of a Communist Bloc In Eastern Europe, 1944-1953." Stanford University - Freeman Spagli Institute for International Studies. Accessed November 9, 2016. https://fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/evnts/media/Stalin_and_Eastern_Europe.pdf.

his priestly brothers but he will not be silenced because "Thou shalt not murder".¹³ The Communist government defied the very commandments that Tomášek lives by. They tried to eliminate Catholicism but were unable to without causing a public upheaval. Therefore, they let a select few who were popular and they thought they could control, continue to preach.¹⁴ This was taken advantage of, as Tomášek's episcopal motto said, "Let the network spread".¹⁵ Sadly, the other citizens in Czechoslovakia did not have this same benefit. They were censored and killed when they did not comply to the rules. The media was heavily censored and constantly pushed communist propaganda across all platforms. Many people who protested through arts and other forms were jailed.¹⁶ This repression cannot continue and the new democratic government must allow freedoms of speech and expression. Lastly, the divide between the Czechs and Slovaks that is occurring is due to their inability to create a shared history. Post Velvet Revolution, there was a lack of attention placed on the ever growing divide between the two nationalities due to the restructuring of the government and reforming of the country. The Czech and Slovak republics each had their own governmental party with their own demands and neither party was willing to compromise.¹⁷ There were also past tensions between the countries due to politics during the war, when Slovakia formed its own state under Nazi protection whilst the Czechs were invaded. We cannot create a history for the Czechs and the Slovaks or erase the history between them, however, it is a possibility to try and find a new solution diplomatically to prevent a divide.

The Prague Spring was an attempt at creating a more democratic government, however, this first attempt failed as the Communist government in the U.S.S.R was still very strong and fought back with violence. This resulted in very strict consequences for the Czechoslovaks.¹⁸ Attempts to better the economy also failed as they still relied on a government controlled, planned economy that lacked in consumer goods. The government attempted to improve the economy by redistributing labour forces and capital allowances. Much of this was allocated to the industrial sector which did increase income, but this did not fix the inefficiencies in the

¹³ Burns, Tracey A. "Life during the Communist Era in Czechoslovakia." Private Prague Guide. Accessed November 9, 2016. <https://www.private-prague-guide.com/article/life-during-the-communist-era-in-czechoslovakia/>.

¹⁴ "František Tomášek."

¹⁵ "Osobnosti Víry - František Kardinál Tomášek." Diecéze Ostravsko-Opavská. July 18, 2013. Accessed November 9, 2016. <http://www.doo.cz/96-zpravy/rok-viry/1425-osobnosti-viry-František-kardinal-Tomášek-general-bez-vojska.html>.

¹⁶ Burns, Tracey A. "Life during the Communist Era in Czechoslovakia."

¹⁷ Hilde, Paal Sigurd. "Slovak Nationalism and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia." <http://www.jstor.org/stable/153565>. June 1999. Accessed November 9, 2016. http://moduly.outly.cz/posycze1/Hilde_Paul_1999.PDF.

¹⁸ Puhl, Jan. "First Tanks, Then Silence: The Tragic Failure of the Prague Spring." SPIEGEL ONLINE. Accessed November 09, 2016. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/first-tanks-then-silence-the-tragic-failure-of-the-prague-spring-a-563951.html>.

system and did not aid in the relieving the need for consumer goods.¹⁹ The other issues however, are more complicated to fix, censorship is currently legally binding and although it was struck down at one point in the past, it was quickly reinstated, undoing any progression. There have not been attempts to repair the Czechoslovak relationships as it is a continually changing issue.

The Catholic church hopes to achieve a more peaceful government and country, along with religious freedom for its citizens. The economic state can be improved by putting more focus on consumer goods, and putting temporary limitations on producer goods in order to create a more balanced and functional government. This will allow consumer industries to develop and improve their quality. In addition, those who were forced out of business to allow for government control should be reinstated or should choose a successor. This will help to rebuild the formerly strong economy. The Czechs should also aide the Slovaks in rebuilding their economy where possible, as they were hit harder by reforms in the post communist period which has created political waves. This will aide in the reparation of the Czech and Slovak relationship. Moreover, censorship must be immediately put to rest so that our citizens may rejoice in their new freedom and so that religion may be practiced country wide without fear. To do this, we must strike down all laws supporting censorship and dissolve any organizations monitoring censoring. In addition, surveillance operations on innocent citizens must be stopped.²⁰ To protect the Catholic religion, we must reinstate any banned churches to ensure ease in practicing religion.²¹ There should be mandatory religion classes in schools as while under communist rules, parents were banned from teaching religion and children were banned from attending services. As Tomášek always said, religion starts with the children and he would be more than willing to help with this.²² This will benefit the country as the citizens because it will be a return to normalcy and they will be able to live without fear. Lastly, the Czech and Slovak divide has a number of issues at play and due to their history, it will be hard to get them to agree to mutual terms. Therefore, although it breaks my heart to say this, perhaps we must dissolve Czechoslovakia and create a new order where they are each allowed to practice their own forms of a democratic government, as this is already occurring just with more animosity towards each other. This will help to repair the Czech and Slovak relationship as they will each have their own country to govern.

It is of the utmost important to Tomášek that peace is found in this troubled time, that the citizens of Czechoslovakia no longer have to live in fear, and that the Catholic religion is no longer pushed away and censored. My set of solutions allows us to resolve our differences peacefully and regain our freedoms. All Czechoslovak leaders must work together to solve this,

¹⁹ McCulloch, James. "Analysis of Centrally Planned Economics in Czechoslovakia until 1968."

²⁰ Burns, Tracey A. "Life during the Communist Era in Czechoslovakia."

²¹ "František Tomášek." Wikipedia. July 18, 2016. Accessed November 9, 2016.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/František_Tomášek.

²² "Osobnosti Víry - František Kardinál Tomášek."

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so that Czechoslovakia does not fall back into a rule where the citizens do not feel heard or respected.

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