Brief History of Slovakia

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The Territory of Slovakia before the Arrival of the Slavs

With an area of more than 49 thousand km sq., Slovakia extends between the River Morava to the west and River Tisza to the east, the middle Danube to the south and Tatra mountains to the north. Humans have lived on this territory since the late Stone Age. So-called Neanderthal man has been discovered at the sites of the oldest settlements from the Middle Palaeolithic period in Gánovce near Poprad and šaľa on the Váh. Nomadic settlements of mammoth hunters appeared here in the Upper Palaeolithic period. The best works of European prehistoric art include the Venus of Moravany, which was found to be 22,800 years old.

During the Neolithic period there was a substantial change in prehistoric man's way of life, which is usually characterised as the Neolithic revolution. In the 6th and 5th millennia BC, the farmers of the new Neolithic civilisation, who had begun to cultivate crops and domesticate animals in addition to hunting, started to move to the Danube basin. The people of the Lengyel culture built a number of settlements with dozens of houses in south-western Slovakia in the Middle Neolithic period. These settlements often also included earth fortifications (rondelas) as centres of local administration.

The territory of Slovakia became a part of advanced European civilisation in the Bronze Age (1900–700 BC) due to trade. The rich deposits of copper ore in the central Slovak area enabled bronze implements, jewellery and weapons to be made. Important centres of trade and power were established in this period. These consisted of stone houses arranged into regular streets laid with stone cobbles (settlement in Spišský štvrtok) and in south-western Slovakia the local centre in Nitrianský Hrádok had a similar status. These centres died out after 1500 BC under the influence of the Mediterranean Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations.

Significant cultural and demographic progress was made on the territory of Slovakia in the Iron Age. Celts made their way here from their original homes around AD 400. These Celt warriors built large reinforced towns (*oppida*) in south-western Slovakia. There was even a Celt mint in the Bratislava *oppidum*.

In the last decades BC, the Romans conquered Pannonia and started to build a system of fortresses on the river Danube (*Limes Romanus*). The Germanic Quadi and Marcomanni tribes settled north of the Danube. Periods of peaceful co-existence were broken by periods when the Germans attempted to infiltrate the rich Roman provinces. The Romans perfected their system of defence on the Danube in the 2nd century and started to move their fortresses to the Danube's northern bank (Devín, Bratislava, Iža near Komárno). Germanic society, mainly its ruling class, was greatly influenced by Roman civilisation. The Germanic nobility promoted trade with the Roman provinces in times of peace.

Relations between the Romans and Germans broke down under the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180), when Roman legions managed to gain supremacy after several campaigns and penetrated far north into enemy territory. The Roman inscription in Trenčín from 179 is proof of this. The Romanisation of the Barbarian population continued in the late Roman period (181–380). Many Roman buildings appeared on the territory of south-western Slovakia (Bratislava-Dúbravka, Cífer-Pác, Veľký Kýr) in the relatively peaceful period of the 3rd and 4th centuries. These were probably residences of the pro-Roman Quadi aristocracy.

There was a significant ethnic shift in Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire. The Carpathian basin's fate was greatly influenced by the invasion of the Huns in 375, who quickly built up a powerful Hun empire. A defeat in Catalonia in 451 halted its expansion westwards. The conquered tribes took advantage of the feared Attila's death to destroy the Huns' empire.

The Arrival of the Slavs and Construction of a State

The first Slav tribes began to settle in the Middle Danube area near the end of the 5th century. They met with the remaining Germanic population on their conquered territories and the ethnic substrate of the Púchov and later Przeworski cultures in the mountain valleys. The Slav farmers mainly sought out lowland regions with quality soil, rich pasture and sufficient water. They also brought knowledge of how to find, extract and manipulate iron ore from their original homeland. Handmade Prague type ceramics are also typical of the ancient Slavs. They lived in small settlements consisting of several single room huts built into the ground. They cremated their dead on the outskirts.

The nomadic Avars led by Khagab Bajan became the hegemony of the Carpathian basin in 568. Thanks to their excellent weapons and nomadic military tactics, they quickly conquered the Slavs, moving to the Danube's northern bank and taking the lowland area of southern Slovakia at the end of the 6th century. They took advantage of the population's economic potential and were often violent towards them. This provoked a large anti-Avar rebellion around 620. In 623, the rebels chose the Frankish merchant Samo as their king, and he successfully warded off all the Avars' attempts to regain supremacy. The core of Samo's empire extended along the Danube. Besides what is now Slovakia, it also included Moravia and a part of Austria and Bohemia. The strength of Samo's empire was also shown by the conflict with the Frankish king Dagobert in 631. Samo's Slavs completely

overwhelmed the Frankish forces under the Vogastisburg castle. King Samo died in 658 and his empire was split into smaller units. The Avars used this to partially renew their hegemony in this area.

Slav principalities started to form along the edge of the Carpathian basin in the 8th century. The Nitra principality formed along the Danube and the Morava principality in southern Moravia. The principality took advantage of Charlemagne's defeat of the Avars and, with the help of armed forces, crushed the remains of Avar power and seized their settlements. The forefathers of prince Pribina built a walled town in Nitra lying in the middle of an important agglomeration of settlements. After destroying the Avars' power, they started to expand into their neighbours' territories. In the early 9th century, the Principality of Nitra's power had already spread north to the Small and White Carpathians, south to the Danube and east as far as the Spiš region. The prince secured the conquered territories by building fortified towns. The process of the Danube Slavs' conversion to Christianity started in the 820s. Prince Pribina demonstrated an inclination towards Christianity when he took a Christian from Bavaria as his bride and had a Christian church built at his seat in Nitra, which the Archbishop of Salzburg Adalram consecrated in 828.

Slovakia as a part of the Hungarian Kingdom

After the Magyars' victory in a battle with the Bavarians near Bratislava in 907, the union of Magyar tribes became the military hegemony in the Carpathian basin. Following the fall of Great Moravia, the territory of Slovakia had split into smaller units led by members of the local aristocracy. Many of them used the changed conditions to join the Magyars and participate in their raids on western Europe. These raids ended in 955 with the Magyars' catastrophic defeat on the river Lech. The Magyars were forced to adopt a settled way of life while taking advantage of the resident Slav population. They laid the foundations of the Hungarian state in the second half of the 10th century under the leadership of the Árpád dynasty, and prince Géza adopted Christianity. The territory of Slovakia did not lose its importance and the principality of Nitra became the seat of Géza's younger brother Michael. Géza removed Michael in 995 and replaced him with his son Stephen, who married the Bavarian princess Gisela and became a fervent missionary. He succeeded his father Géza as prince in 997. However, another member of the Árpád line, Koppany, opposed Stephen and challenged his claim. In a decisive moment the Slovak magnates Hunt, Poznan and Orzius helped Stephen and defeated Koppany with their combined forces. With this, they gained a significant influence over Stephen and became his closest confidants.

The ethnogenesis of Slovaks was not disrupted in the conditions of the 10th century. In the new situation, they became the largest ethnic group in the Carpathian basin. They preserved their language, specific culture, awareness of solidarity and Nitra remained their natural centre.

Stephen was crowned the first Hungarian king in 1000 and Hungary became an independent church province. Shortly after Stephen's coronation the Polish king Boleslaw the Great overpowered the territory of Slovakia and entrusted it to the administration of Michael's son Ladislas. This lasted even after Boleslaw's death, until 1029, when Stephen I took advantage of the Poles' weakening influence and took Slovakia for himself. He threw the younger brother of Ladislas Lysy Vazul into prison and entrusted the administration of the Nitra principality to his son Emmerich. Vazul's sons Andrew, Béla and Levente fled abroad in the face of possible reprisals. It is their descendants that became the Árpád kings.

The great pagan uprising of 1046 brought Andrew I, who had until then been held in Kiev, to the throne. He called his younger brother Béla from Poland and appointed him to administer the so-called third kingdom, consisting of Nitra (11 *comitates*) and Bihar (4 *comitates*). He had his own army, conducted foreign policy relatively independently and even minted his own coins. When Bela eventually became king, Nitra fell to his sons Géza, Ladislas and Lampert. These had to compete with their cousin king Solomon. They finally defeated him with Czech help in a battle near Mogyoród in 1074. Military squads of Nitrans were also honoured in this battle.

King Ladislas I (1077–1095), who saw to the beatification of the first Hungarian saints, was succeeded by his nephew Coloman. The Nitra principality fell to his younger brother Álmos. Álmos was not content with his status and took up arms against his brother a number of times. In 1108 king Coloman lost his patience, blinded Álmos and abolished the Nitra principality. Coloman partially redressed his decision by establishing an episcopacy in Nitra.

The settlement of Slovakia was gradually completed during the 12th century. The whole country was divided into royal *comitates* headed by *župans* appointed by the king. These secured the collection of taxes and dues in kind from the population, judged all disputes and led the *comitatus'* army. A wide network of serving settlements and royal courts secured the needs of the ruling classes of Hungarian society.

Century of Change

The prevailing royal possession of land rapidly started to come to an end in the early 13th century and the Hungarian nobility's power and status grew quickly. This process most threatened lesser royal servants, who forced king Andrew II to issue a so-called Golden Bull in 1222. This formulated the rights and obligations of the king and nobility in written form for the first time. In the first years of his reign, king Béla IV (1235–1270) realised that the break-up of royal patrimonial property could not be halted. Therefore he decided to gain new support in the privileged medieval towns which started to appear on the territory of Slovakia even before the Tartar invasion. The oldest included Trnava, Banská Štiavnica, Krupina, Zvolen, and Bratislava. Privileges were granted which gave rise to self-governing communities led by town councils elected by burghers. The burghers had the right to manage their property without restriction and could move freely. These granted privileges enabled the burghers to perform

various economic activities, mainly trade and crafts. The towns had to pay an agreed amount to the royal treasury and send a certain number of armed men to the royal army for their privileged status.

This promising process of establishing towns was halted by the unexpected invasion of the Tartars in 1241/1242. On 11th April 1241 they defeated the royal army near the river Slaná and then ravaged the whole country for more than a year. The territory of Slovakia, especially its mountainous areas, was mostly spared. Well fortified towns and castles (Trenčín, Bratislava, Nitra, Komárno, Fiľakovo) also resisted the Tartars. In the summer of 1242, the Tartar forces unexpectedly pulled back. After his restoration, king Béla IV decided to invite foreign settlers, who came here mainly from the German lands, to the depopulated areas. The Germans settled in both the newly forming towns and rural settlements.

Under the reign of the last kings of the House of Árpád Ladislas IV (1272–1290) and Andrew III (1290–1301) the Hungarian nobility's power grew exceptionally. Particularly during Ladislas IV's youth, members of the most powerful noble families started to build large domains with stone castles. Of these, the Csák line gained a dominant position on the territory of western Slovakia and Omodeus from the Amadei line in eastern Slovakia. The noble oligarchs stopped respecting the royal power. Matthew Csák of Trenčín created his own dominion, which consisted of 50 castles. At his seat in Trenčín he behaved like a small king and commanded his own army.

The Anjou Period

The disruption in the country was only halted by Charles Robert of Anjou, who defeated the Amadei forces in a battle near Košice in 1312 and also took over Matthew Csák's domains following his death in 1321. He renewed royal supremacy and consolidated conditions in the country through economic reforms. He introduced coin reform and started to mint gold pieces in addition to silver coins in Kremnica. Thanks to the introduction of landowners' freedom to mine, intensive mining also began on the nobility's properties. The valley and mountain areas of central and northern Slovakia were settled on purchase or German rights, which were more advantageous for the new settlers than the older customary rights. New towns were added to the older privileged towns from the 13th century and small towns belonging to landowners (*oppida*) also appeared in individual regions as trade and industrial centres of local importance. During the 14th century, Slovakia became one of the most urbanised parts of Hungary. The German minority gained a dominant position in the majority of towns. There was a gradual Slovakisation in many towns in the second half of the 14th century and Slovaks started to sit on town councils.

There was a significant cultural development of the territory of Slovakia during the 14th century. The gothic centres of medieval towns appeared with tall local and monastery churches with rich outer and inner decoration. Artistic and architectonic monuments from this period (Levoča, Kežmarok, Košice, Bardejov, Prešov) are admired even today.

Charles Robert was succeeded by his son Louis I (1342–1382). Right at the beginning of his reign he became involved in costly battles for the Neapolitan succession. In 1351, the king rewarded the fighting nobility by issuing a law which enshrined the inalienability of the nobles' property and declared the formal equality of all members of the nobility. In 1370 after the death of his relation Kazimír I, Louis I was also named Polish king, creating the Hungarian-Polish personal union. As Louis I did not father male successors, he took pains to secure rights of succession for his daughters Hedviga and Mary towards the end of his reign.

The Late Middle Ages

After the death of Louis I, his daughter Mary and her husband Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437) started to reign in Hungary. King Sigismund was not liked by the Hungarian aristocracy and he therefore tried to gain their favour with lavish donations. By the end of the 14th century he had given away two thirds of his royal castle estates. In 1401 the highest representatives of the Hungarian nobility even imprisoned the king and started to search for a more advantageous replacement. The king's trusted magnate of Polish origin Stibor of Ścibórzyc and Beckov rescued him from this difficult situation. The rebellion against King Sigismund was repeated again in 1403. With Stibor's help, the king quickly dealt with the rebels and conditions in the country stabilised. At this time, Sigismund decided to pull towns into internal policy and in 1405 issued a so-called *decretum minus* (small decree) through which town representatives gained the right to participate in sessions of the class diet. In 1408 the king reconciled with the Hungarian nobility and started to intervene very actively into European politics, especially after being named Holy Roman Emperor in 1410.

After the death of his brother Václav IV, he was also crowned king of Bohemia in 1420. But the Hussites refused to recognise him and Sigismund entered into a long struggle with them, which he never won. From 1428 the Hussites switched to an anti-offensive, organising annual military campaigns on the territory of Slovakia and also left permanent garrisons here. The situation calmed down partially after 1434, when the Hussites gradually pulled out of Slovakia.

After Sigismund, his son-in-law Albrecht Habsburg reigned for a short time. His unexpected death led to feudal anarchy and a struggle for succession. The widowed queen Elizabeth attempted to keep the crown for her underage son Ladislas Posthumous. The Hungarian Diet, however, voted for Wladislaw Jagiello (1440–1444), from whom they expected active defence of the southern borders threatened by the Ottoman Empire. Queen Elizabeth hired captain Jan Jiskra of Brandýs, who gradually occupied key locations on the territory of Slovakia at the head of an around 5 thousand strong force. The majority of his soldiers were former Hussite fighters. They often left their leader and lived by robbing the surrounding areas. They built fortified camps for defence and called themselves brethren.

The anarchy in Hungary ended after Mathias Corvinus' succession as king in 1458. The young lord soon shook off his guardians and started to build a centralised monarchy. Thanks to a tax reform, he gained the finance needed to maintain a strong army. The first university—Accademia Istropolitana—was established in Bratislava upon his initiative in 1465. At the instigation of the Roman Curia, Mathias Corvinus entered into war with the Czech king George of Podi brady and the Moravian classes named him Czech king. Towards the end of his reign, he waged war on the Austrian lands and moved his seat to Vienna.

The end of the middle ages was signified by the weak reigns of Wladislaw II Jagiello (1490–1516) and his son Louis II (1516–1526), who gradually lost control over events in the country. Neither did the unruly Hungarian classes manage to pull the country from anarchy. The Ottomans took advantage of Hungary's weakness and launched an open attack against the once powerful monarchy in 1526.

Between Two Civilisations

The Hungarian army's defeat by the Ottomans at the end of August 1526 and end of the Jagiello dynasty symbolically meant the end of the medieval Hungarian state. In the second half of the century, the territory of Slovakia became the centre of European attention and essentially the main centre of the Hungarian monarchy. Meanwhile the border of two civilisations—Christian and Muslim—was built here. The rising Habsburg dynasty integrated this part of Europe more strongly into the continent's developments. The border with the Ottoman empire, which represented another world, culture and religion, endured to the south of Slovakia for almost 150 years. The constant alternation of military conflicts with periods of peace did not create space for the more peaceful economic and social development of this region. The fact that the centre of the Hungarian monarchy also became an arena of constant armed conflicts between the Hungarian nobility and royal court, which were waged with religious, class or other battle cries, added to the disruptive momentum.

The Hungarian army's defeat and death of king Louis II at Mohacs led to fear all over Europe. Ferdinand Habsburg and Transylvanian Duke John Zapolya laid claim to the throne. Both were crowned as king and civil war broke out. The Turks used the armed conflict between the two kings to intervene militarily. The civil war ended with a peace treaty on 24.2.1538, through which both actors were recognised as legitimate rulers. In 1541 the sultan intervened in favour of John Zapolya's son John Sigismund, who was born two months after his father's death. The Turks settled Buda in August 1541, which became the centre of the new Ottoman province and base for the century and a half of attacks on the territory controlled by the Habsburgs. And so Bratislava became the capital and coronation city of the Hungarian kingdom. The Esztergom archbishop and chapter was moved to Trnava.

The defeat of Hassan the pasha in 1593 on the Croatian border was an excuse to declare war, which became known as the Fifteen Years War. Military operations took place with alternating success. In the summer of 1603, a new war was started with Persia and the Ottoman Empire was forced to find a way to conclude peace. On 11th November 1606, representatives of the fighting sides concluded the Peace of Žitava, which lasted until 1663. The conclusion of peace in 1606 did not prevent border beys from undertaking raids on the territory of Slovakia.

In March 1663, the Grand Vizier Ahmed Küprülü pushed into Hungary with his army. On 17th August 1663 the Ottomans besieged one of the most powerful anti-Turk fortresses—Nové Zámky. The defenders of Nové Zámky capitulated on 25th September 1663. Nitra, Levice and Novohrad fell to the Turks at the same time. Nové Zámky became the centre of an Ottoman province with around 750 villages. On 1st August 1664, the Turks' advance was stopped near St. Gotthard. Peace was signed in Vasvár soon after the battle, which confirmed the Turkish conquests. To replace Nové Zámky, a new fortress, Leopoldov, was built on the right bank of the Váh. On 31st March 1683 the Ottoman army stirred with the aim of conquering Vienna. On 12th September, after two months of besiegement, the Ottoman army defeated the allied forces. A period of liberating Hungary ensued. Charles of Lorraine defeated Nové Zámky on 19th August 1685. Less than two weeks later Buda—the centre of Ottoman power, fell. And so Slovakia finally shook off its unpleasant neighbour.

In January 1604, the Emperor's General Barbiano Belgiojoso seized protestants in the Košice cathedral. This event became a spark igniting discontent among the Protestant nobility, which armed itself and defended its privileges from this point and all through the 17th century. The discontent nobility protested and when Emperor Rudolph II ignored their complaints, Stephen Bocskay used the Protestant classes' discontent to launch an armed action against the monarch. After 15 years of war with the Turks, the royal court also concluded a peace treaty with the rebels on 23rd June 1606 in Vienna, which confirmed religious freedom.

The Protestants used this confirmation of religious freedom in the Diet to build their own church organisation in 1608. In 1610, under the protection of Palatine George Thurzo, they convoked a synod in Žilina and established a new superintendence. The counter-reformation's success was linked with the name of the archbishop Peter Pázmány, who founded a university in Trnava and converted a significant part of the Hungarian nobility back to the Catholic faith.

The nobility which won the Catholics back to their side enabled the Habsburgs to constantly break the conditions of the Vienna peace. The Transylvanian prince Gabriel Bethlen expressed his discontent with an armed uprising in 1619, when the Czech class rebellion started to escalate into a European conflict—the Thirty Years War. On 25th August 1620, he let himself be named Hungarian king by the Diet in Banská Bystrica, but not crowned. After the defeat of the Czech rebellion peace negotiations started, which ended with the signing of a peace treaty in Mikulov. Another element in the Thirty Years War was the rebellion by the Transylvanian prince George I Rákoczi, an ally of the Swedes who started military operations in Slovakia in 1644, which

ended with the conclusion of a peace treaty in Linz. Religious freedom was confirmed for all Protestants, even serfs.

In the years following the Peace of Vasvár, the Hungarian nobility began to oppose the Viennese court openly. Its programmes included political, class and constitutional as well as religious demands

The movement known as Wesselenyi's conspiracy is one of the best known. When the rebel leaders' plans were disclosed, they were executed and two hundred noblemen were tried at the Bratislava court in 1671. The royal court used the Protestants' participation in the conspiracy to introduce new re-Catholicisation measures. In autumn 1673, trials of Protestant pastors and teachers accused of incitement to rebellion began. In March 1675, 41 pastors were condemned and sent to the galleys. In 1677, the discontent nobility in emigration launched an invasion on eastern Slovakia from Poland. Emerich Tököli placed himself at the rebels' head. Emperor Leopold I promised the Protestants freedom of religion at the Diet in Sopron in 1681. They were allowed to build so-called articular churches in their sees. Following the Turks' defeat near Vienna Tököli's supporters liquidated a court tribunal in Prešov (so-called Prešov massacre) in 1687.

The last anti-Habsburg uprising broke out in 1703, when the war for the Spanish succession started. Francis II Rákoczi led the rebels. The discontent nobility's conflict, with its lengthy military operations and bad economic situation, culminated at the rebel Diet in Ónod in 1707, when they killed one of the Turiec county envoys. The Diet deposed the Habsburgs. On 30th April 1711, both sides concluded a compromise peace in Szatmár.

Culture underwent sophisticated development in the modern era. Humanist and renaissance ideas came here through students from the minor nobility and bourgeoisie, who studied at Italian universities until the mid-16th century. The main intellectual flow was seen among the nobility and bourgeoisie. New religious reformation ideology, which arrived on our territory in various modifications (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Zwinglianism, Anabaptism) were spread along with humanism. In the second half of the 16th century, a Lutheran style moderate reformation based on the Augsburg Confession of 1530 gained prevalence.

The humanism, reformation and counter-reformation of the 16th century focused attention on the importance of education. Not just towns, but also the nobility and churches, established schools. Printing also stimulated the development of education in the 1570s. Renaissance ideas had a positive influence on the development of literature. Besides the Latin work of humanist poets, historical songs describing events from battles against the Turks also assumed an important place. Love poems were also a favourite in the 16th century. There was a boom in spiritual songs in the national language as a result of the reformation. Renaissance elements prevailed in architecture at the beginning of the 16th century. Italian architects, who helped to build the anti-Turk fortresses of Komárno and Nové Zámky influenced the change in architecture and fine art. A new type of renaissance mansion started to be built as a result of the Turkish threat. Many town halls were build in the renaissance style. Town towers that stood alone were a special trademark of our architecture.

The political and religious struggles of the 17th century had an important effect on the development of education. On 12th May 1635, archbishop Peter Pázmány issued a document establishing a Jesuit *studium generale*—university—in Trnava with a faculty of theology and arts. A faculty of law was added in 1667–1668. On 26th February 1657 a *studium generale* was also established in Kosice. Piarists, Benedictines and Minorites were also active in the field of education during the counter-reformation. On 18th October 1667, a Protestant *collegium* was opened in Prešov. The Trnava and Košice universities became centres of academic life. The most famous professor at Trnava university was Martin Szentiványi. The first atlas of the Hungarian Empire was published there in 1689 and Samuel Timon's first topographic work on Hungarian towns also originated there. At the Evangelical *collegium* in Prešov professor Izák Caban proved the existence of atoms in his dissertation. Levoča and Trnava were the main publishing centres. During the 17th century, literary work was a reflection of the social and political situation. Baroque prevailed in spiritual songs and homilies. The historical songs of the baroque period told of Turkish raids, counter-reformation battles and class uprisings. At the end of the century, prose, mainly memoirs and travelogues, became more widespread. The Jesuits organised the most theatre performances, producing more than 10 thousand school plays between 1601 and 1773.

The Road to National Emancipation

The Szatmár peace treaty of 1711 ended the period of civil wars in the Hungarian Empire. The Hungarian Diets reconciled with the Habsburg dynasty (they accepted the so-called Pragmatic Sanction, which secured the succession of the line) and this enabled them to strengthen their influence over internal developments. This was not only reflected in the reinforcement of the monarchy's power and assertion of absolutism, but also cleared the way for the introduction of measures necessary for the development of the whole society. People from the upper classes, who had often been inspired by the flow of ideas of the time—enlightenment—were best aware of their necessity and possibilities. Thanks to their initiative, various reforms gradually started to be implemented from the reign of Maria Theresa (1740–1780) and especially her sons Joseph II (1780–1790) and Leopold II (1790–1792). The reforms concerned all areas of life: the economy (the introduction of an urbarial law regulating feudal relations in 1767), judiciary (criminal law reforms), healthcare (organisation of public healthcare), education (1777 school reform). Their aim was to stimulate social and economic development and create state citizens from a population differing in social status (class), culture and confession (the 1781 Edict of Tolerance accepted the civic assertion of non-Catholics).

However, despite the efforts of Joseph II, the reforms did not reach the core of the economic system, feudal relations and privileged status of the nobility (they made up 5% of the Hungarian Empire's population) during the 18th century. Dissatisfaction that the reforms did not go far enough was expressed in the form of the so-called Jakobin movement (1792–1794). After the end of the war with France in the 1820s–30s, the Hungarian Diet also prepared reforms, but Metternich's repressive regime and the

conservatism of a significant part of the social elite prevented their realisation. Social tension and discontent over the position of the Hungarian Empire within the Habsburg monarchy led to the 1848 revolution, which ended with serfdom. Another important result was the tabling of civil rights; suffrage, freedom of the press, etc.

Slovaks also articulated their demands during the revolution, expressing their right to be recognised as a nation of Hungary with equal rights. They demanded the right to use their language in local official contact, representation in the Hungarian parliament and the development of their own education system and cultural institutions.

However, the concept of the formation of the Slovak ethnic group in the form of a modern nation clashed with the idea of the Hungarian political nation, which defined all of the state's inhabitants as one nation. Their attribute should be Hungarian, not just in the position of an official language, but also as a direct symbol of their culture and identity. The failure to address the problems of Hungary's non-Magyar nations, including Slovaks, contributed towards a split in revolutionary forces (Slovaks fought on the Austrian side against the Hungarian revolutionary guard) and eventually the revolution's defeat.

The confessional split within the Slovak ethnic group had a direct impact on the process of forming a modern nation. Its basic attribute—a codified written language—developed through the parallel use of two types of cultural language: in the Evangelicals' case this was the Czech used in the 16th century Kralice Bible (so-called Bible). In the 18th century it had become an almost canonising symbol of the Lutheran teaching's unity and stability. Its sphere of use was mainly lithurgy and theologians' books. In the circle of Catholic intellectuals, the spoken language was cultivated during the 17th and 18th centuries, which led to the codification of the so-called western Slovak cultural language by Anton Bernolák (so-called Bernolák) in 1787.

Through the dominant type of written language, Slovak intellectuals at the same time adopted historical traditions and formed an awareness of kinship with the other Slav ethnic groups. The Evangelicals formulated and cultivated a confessional affinity with the tradition of the "Czech reformation", which became a spiritual support for them in resisting re-Catholicisation and a source of pride and responsibility to help the reviving Evangelical church in the Czech lands after 1781. The concept of a Czecho-Slovak tribe (nation) as a strong part of the wider Slav nation grew from this. Its 18th century supporters were Matej Bel, Ladislav Bartholomeides, and later Pavol Jozef šafárik and Ján Kollár.

The cultivation of Bernolák as an attribute of the Catholic intelligentsia (Juraj Fándly, Juraj Palkovič, Ján Hollý) corresponded to the need to establish Slovaks as an independent nation with its own written language and specific past, which should participate in public life within the Hungarian Empire and could resist assimilation and its assertion by force (Magyarisation). This trend led to the adoption of a written language in 1843. The author of the grammar of written Slovak was Ľudovít Štúr, who based it on the central Slovak dialect—the "purest" language of the masses, who he regarded as the authentic bearer of the idea of the nation.

The language programme was only one of the accompanying features of the nationalist movement. The politicisation and formation of public life also played an important part. In the 1830s, associations supporting the publication of literature and culture (reader, theatre), but also focused on economic and social aims (farmers' societies, temperance societies) appeared. This politicisation was manifested in the form of defending Slovaks' rights as a nation within Hungary (petition in 1842) and abroad (publication of national defences), publishing political newspapers (1 Aug. 1845), and declaring Slovaks' demands in the Hungarian Diet (Ľudovít Štúr in 1847). This culminated in the 1848 revolution, during which the national political manifesto was formulated in the Demands of the Slovak Nation (11.5.1848 in Liptovský Mikuláš). It defined Slovakia as an autonomous territorial unit with political representation, and the Slovak nation was to receive the right to establish its own education system up to university level and use its own flag and symbol. The leaders of the Slovaks' revolutionary movement (Ľudovít Štúr, Jozef M. Hurban, Michal M. Hodža) did not only create nationalist demands: they also supported the introduction of suffrage for all men, the abolition of censorship, the right to assembly, and the abolition of serfdom without repurchase (forfeit for landlords). They established a Slovak National Council (16 Sep. 1848 in Vienna) to put forward their aims, which also started to organise an armed uprising. This culminated in the formation of a volunteer force, which participated in military operations at the Viennese government's side from autumn 1848 until summer 1849. They expected this to lead to the fulfilment of at least some demands, but this also meant fighting against the forces of the Hungarian revolutionary government. Their expectations from the alliance were not fulfilled and very little of the national manifesto was realised (ban on Magyarisation, limited use of Slovak in official contact).

In State Political Transformation until 1918

The introduction of a neo-absolutist regime in the monarchy in the 50s led to the repression of the Slovak emancipation movement. The ruling power did not permit political and public activity, which fundamentally determined the creation of institutional conditions for the formation of a civic society and development of national culture. The reform of the constitutional system in 1860 and 1861 did not take into account the interests and needs of non-Magyar nations in the Hungarian Empire. Therefore the Slovak National Assembly in Martin adopted the Memorandum of the Slovak Nation on 6–7th June 1861. This document expressed their basic legal and political demands: that Slovaks were recognised by constitutional actors as a distinct state-forming nation. They demanded the creation of a national self-government (autonomy) on the territory they historically inhabited, so that the Slovak language could be used in all spheres of public life. This act was led by Ján Francisci, štefan Marko Daxner and Jozef Miloslav Hurban, members of the Štúr generation.

The Hungarian Diet only functioned for a short time in 1861 and did not make any decisions on the organisation of relations between nations. The Hungarian political powers which dominated the parliament refused to address the status of non-Magyar

nations on the democratic principles of equal rights. Their strategic aim was to transform the multination Hungarian Empire into a national Magyar state. Emperor Francis Joseph I, to whom the deputation turned in December 1861 under the leadership of bishop štefan Moyses with a request to issue a constitutional act establishing a national self-governing formation for Slovaks on the ethnic-territorial principle, delegated the issue of the legal organisation of national relations to the Hungarian legislative body, which renewed its activity in 1865.

The Slovak attempts at emancipation were displayed in the establishment of the cultural association Matica slovenská in 1863 and three gymnazia, where Slovak was the language of instruction. Thus, basic conditions were created for organised activity in individual areas of national culture and education.

The Austro-Hungarian Ausgleich of 1867 had a negative impact on politico-social conditions and national relations in Hungary. The Nationality Law adopted by the Hungarian Diet in 1868 prevented non-Magyar nations from becoming state-forming entities. The Magyar political elite more intensively asserted their assimilation aims and in practice systematically applied the concept of state ethnic and linguistic homogeneity.

The realisation of this state doctrine resulted in steps taken by the ruling power which led to the abolition of Matica slovenská and the Slovak gymnazia in 1874–1875. Slovaks were left without opportunities for higher education in their mother tongue and an institution whose mission was to promote cultural activity, education and scientific learning.

The Slovak National Party was established in 1871 on the basis of the Memorandum of the Slovak Nation. Its first chairman was Viliam Pauliny-Tóth, then Pavol Mudroň (1877–1914) and Matúš Dula (from 1914). After unsuccessful attempts in elections to gain a mandate, it decided on a tactic of electoral passivity in 1884. Through this approach, it protested against the nationalistic policy and electoral system in the state, because the government used illegal methods to prevent Slovak politicians from functioning in parliament. The emancipation struggle was therefore centred on the area of culture, journalism and literature, which most clearly reflected Slovak society's historical traditions and formed a platform for maintaining awareness of national independence by using Slovak.

In the 1890s, there were significant changes in Slovak society related to the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and adaptation of the population's social structures. The political representation renewed its activities and gradually focused on forms of organised action with the aim of gaining wide public support. At the same time, co-operation was deepened with Romanian and Serbian national representatives in the interest of a common approach in the assertion of national rights. The 1895 congress of political representatives in Budapest demonstrated the Slovaks', Romanians' and Serbs' demands that their position be resolved on the basis of autonomy and federalism to create real conditions for the assertion of their national identities in the state's constitutional and political system.

From the turn of the century, Slovak policy was activated in all spheres of social life. From 1901 onwards, MPs for the Slovak National Party were voted into the Hungarian Diet and they not only worked to ensure that provisions of the Nationality Law of 1868 were fully applied in relation to non-Magyar nations, but also attained further legislation aimed at democratising public life, the political system and civil rights and freedoms.

The nature of Slovak politics was determined by its internal differences, but the realisation of the concept of national autonomy remained the strategic aim of all ideologies. Within the Slovak National Party, there was a group around its leadership in Martin which based it orientation on the continuity and traditions of the Memorandum of 1861. The most striking figure of the party's liberal wing was Vavro šrobár; Milan Hodža represented its agrarian aspect. The Slovak People's Party was created from the Catholic popular aspect in 1913 under the leadership of Andrej Hlinka. The social democrats with Emanuel Lehocký were also profiled as a separate entity from the start. Besides their specific interests, they were all based on a common fundamental national emancipation platform, consisting of the idea of Slovaks' national independence and systematically oriented on the assertion of national rights on the democratic principles of parliamentarianism and civic and national equality.

Limited voting rights excluded the majority of the population from participating in the state's administration and public affairs, which in the constitutional conditions of Hungary mainly discriminated against members of non-Magyar nations. Magyar political powers halted demands for the legalisation of universal suffrage to prevent an increase in non-Magyar nations' influence over institutions of political power and public administration. They saw this as a threat to their long-asserted Magyar national interests within the Habsburg monarchy and their position in Hungary.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the area of education became a subject of concentrated pressure from the state power, and Slovak was completely eliminated as a language of instruction in primary schools. The liquidation of Slovak education continued under the school laws of 1907 (Lex Apponyi), which provoked strong protest even abroad. The tragic events in the village of Černová in October 1907, where lives were lost at the consecration of the church due to the intervention of an armed force, received an unusually large response on a European scale. The nationalistic policy and Magyarisation process in Hungary became a subject of criticism and condemnation in western Europe and the USA. The public there became aware of the real state of attitudes in Hungary, which evoked concern in Hungarian political circles, because Hungarian politicians' propaganda about consolidating national relations were shown to be groundless. Persecution from the power and court apparatus afflicted many organisers and activists of the national emancipation movement. The ruling regime considered the Slovak population objectionable because of their national and civil self-realisation.

The Slovak National Party officially approached the Hungarian government in June 1911 with a special Memorandum requesting that, in line with the Nationality Law, Slovak be used in primary schools, they be allowed to establish secondary schools and Matica slovenská's activity be permitted once more. The government did not respond to this initiative and so confirmed that no correction of the political line regarding Slovaks could be expected from its side.

Austro-Hungary's power-political aims and power blocs' spheres of strategic interest were followed very carefully in Slovak political circles. They counted on a possible military conflict, which could change the global constellation of the central European area and conditions for the arrangement of nationalist conditions. The need to concentrate Slovak political forces on a unified approach in the defense of national emancipation interests in case of state changes was therefore presented. From the beginning of the century, there were intensive mutual ties and co-operation between Slovak and Czech cultural and economic circles. So the background of the Slovak struggle for emancipation was reinforced outside Hungary, because the idea of co-operation gradually gained a political dimension, which was important for gaining strategic allied support on both the Slovak and Czech side.

The aim of creating a Slovak National Council in spring 1914 as a representative body containing members of every Slovak political grouping was not realised due to the outbreak of military conflict. Its establishment only became reality in the closing phase of the World War I.

Political and public life was also paralysed in Slovakia as a result of wartime conditions. However, even in the hostile atmosphere and under persecution, Slovak political circles prepared in isolation for the eventuality of changes in the state political system after the war. In September 1914 in America, the Slovak League issued a memorandum, which contained the demand of the right to self-determination for Slovaks. In connection with the submitted victory Treaty, the line of political entities of the Czecho-Slovak rebellion that the new organisation on the territory of the former Habsburg monarchy should reflect the concept of the creation of an independent state for Czechs and Slovaks started to be systematically asserted abroad. Representatives of the Slovak League and Czech National Committee signed an agreement in this spirit in October 1915 in Cleveland, USA, demanding the creation of a common independent state on the basis of a federative union of two nations.

The Czechoslovak National Council was created in Paris in 1916 as the central authority of foreign rebellion. It was led by T. G. Masaryk and its deputy chairman became Milan Rastislav štefánik. With the support of its Slovak and Czech compatriots, the council organised armed units—the Czechoslovak Legion—in France, Italy and Russia, which fought on the allied powers' side against Austro-Hungary and Germany. An agreement signed by Slovak and Czech representatives in 1918 in Pittsburgh enshrined autonomous administration for Slovakia in the future common state.

In May 1918, the Slovak political representation adopted a decision in line with the aims of the foreign rebellion to unite Slovaks and Czechs in a common state. The Slovak National Council headed by Matúš Dula was constituted and adopted its Declaration of the Slovak Nation on 30 October 1918. On the basis of the right to self-determination, it rejected Slovaks' inactivity within Hungary and stated that the Slovak nation wanted to resolve the issue of its future position on the platform of a new state created by uniting the Czech lands and Slovakia in one unit. The declaration was in line with the announcement of the creation of the Czechoslovak state on 28.10.1918 in Prague. The Slovak National Council, which declared itself Slovaks' only political representation, thereby confirmed that Slovaks were full actors in the domestic and foreign rebellion and assumed a state-forming position in the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Slovakia in the Czechoslovak Republic

The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918 was one of the decisive breakthroughs in the history of the Slovak nation. On 30 October 1918, the Slovak National Council adopted the Declaration of the Slovak Nation, through which it entered into a common state of Czechs and Slovaks. Sub-Carpatho-Ruthenia joined a year later. The new state had an area of 140,394 km sq. and population of 13,007,831. Of this, 48,936 km sq. and 1,910,000 inhabitants belonged to Slovakia.

From the point of view of the realisation of Slovak national interests, the establishment of the Czechoslovak state was the optimal variant in the given conditions in the new European power-political arrangement. Conditions were created for free national development, the development of Slovak culture, education, and the democratisation of society, and Slovakia's borders were defined administratively for the first time. T. G. Masaryk became the first president of the common state, E. Beneš the second in 1935 and after his resignation in 1938 E. Hácha was elected as third president. The process of forming the new state was dramatic, because Hungary attempted to regain its former territory through military intervention in 1919 under B. Kuhn's Bolshevik government. After this aggression was repelled, conditions in Slovakia gradually stabilised.

The new state consisted of three politically, economically and culturally unequally developed territorial units. Their integration into a common state gave rise to a great deal of problems in all areas of social life. Moreover, numerous national minorities lived in the republic, mainly Germans in Bohemia and Moravia and Hungarians in Slovakia and Ruthenia, who were only partly integrated into the new state and were more or less opposed to it.

The Czechoslovak Republic began and developed as a pluralist democracy, which enabled the development of a rich political life. Meanwhile the republic was built as a unitarist, centralist state, where the principle of separate legislative, executive and judicial power was thoroughly applied. Immediately after the state's creation, the party political structure was renewed and in a

certain sense completed in Slovakia. It included nation-wide political parties, Slovak political subjects and minority parties. Individual political subjects had significantly different views on Slovakia's status in the state. The political parties of national minorities, particularly the Hungarian minority, did not agree with the state's existence.

The prevailing majority of Czech or Czechoslovak parties saw Slovakia not as a national territorial whole, but as an administrative unit. This concept arose from the idea of a single Czechoslovak nation and was embodied in a constitutional document from 1920. In the Slovak environment, this idea was supported by state parties, mainly the social democrats led by Ivan Dérer, and the agrarians headed by Milan Hodža for a while at the beginning of the 20s. These political subjects formed a pro-government camp and represented political and economic support of the government parties in Slovakia. They inclined towards civic principles of government and represented upholders of democratic development in the Slovak environment.

The Hlinka Slovak People's Party (HSĽS) led by Andrej Hlinka and the Slovak National Party headed by Martin Rázus limited their political activity to the Slovak environment. They arose from the principle of independence of the Slovak nation and demands of autonomy under the Pittsburgh Agreement of 1918. They wanted to solve Slovakia's problems through decentralisation, the creation of a Slovak Diet and gradual assumption of political power. They elaborated a number of proposals to change Slovakia's status in the republic, the most important of which became its proposal of 5 June 1938, which requested an open federation. HSĽS was conservative/rightwing and the strongest party in the Slovak environment from 1925 (it gained 30 to 34% of the vote in elections). In the 30s, it inclined increasingly towards authoritarian forms of government.

During the 30s, political parties in Slovakia, although clearly different and for various reasons, more aggressively demanded a change in Slovakia's existing status in the state. The content of these demands went from decentralisation and the reinforcement of self-government to the federative organisation of the republic. This process was also influenced by external threats.

Czechoslovakia's international position, which stabilised in the 20s, gradually worsened following the victory of nazism in Germany in 1933. The new state searched for security guarantees in the application of collective security principles and particularly within the framework of its agreements on mutual assistance with France from 1925 and the Soviet Union from 1935. In the process of the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938, which Germany prepared and unleashed under the pretext of addressing the German minority's position in the republic, there was pressure from world powers, to which the government in Prague succumbed. France refused to fulfil its obligations and Great Britain exerted a great deal of pressure for the Czechoslovak Republic to accept Hitler's demands. Four powers—Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain—signed an agreement on 29 September 1938 in Munich, which forced Czechoslovakia to relinquish large territories to Germany and Poland. Another part of this agreement was the Vienna Arbitrage of 2 November 1938, on the basis of which Slovakia had to hand over 10,390 km sq. with 859,880 inhabitants to Hungary.

The Munich agreement weakened the position of the centralist government parties. HSĽS tabled its programme of autonomy more aggressively and on 6 October 1938 in Žilina reached an agreement with some of the Slovak parties on changing the state's organisation. The republic was transformed into an asymmetric-type federation on the basis of a law on the autonomy of the Slovak land of 22 November 1938. The period of building Slovak statehood within the Czecho-Slovak Republic began.

The regrouping of political power in Slovakia led to the degradation of democratic principles and the creation of an authoritarian regime with HSĽS playing a decisive role. Within the party, its radical wing started to demand the creation of an independent state. At the beginning of 1939, Germany in particular started to support the idea of an independent Slovak state as a part of its plan to destroy Czecho-Slovakia. This pressure increased during J. Tiso's visit to Berlin on 13 March 1939. Hitler made it clear that if independence were not declared, Slovakia would be divided among its neighbours. Under this pressure, the Slovak parliament declared an independent Slovak state on 14 March 1939. The next day nazi Germany occupied the Czech lands. This temporarily dissolved the Czecho-Slovak Republic.

The creation of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks had meant the break-up of the single economic space of former Austro-Hungary. Traditional economic ties were broken and some industrial capacities were relocated abroad. Slovakia was home to 23% of Czechoslovakia's population but only 8% of its industry, and in the early decades dozens of large factories closed down: ironworks, roll mills, enamel plants, chemical factories, glassworks, textile mills. Strong competition from the developed Czech economy penetrated the open Slovak market. High unemployment, emigration and social tension, which more than once grew into open clashes with the central power, became a lasting part of economic life in Slovakia. The stagnation of industry increased pressure on agricultural land and the number of inhabitants dependent on agriculture grew. A large section of them worked on small land holdings, which were often not large enough to make a living or increase agricultural production. A land reform of April 1919 attempted to amend land relations. Its advantage was the creation of a group of central landowners, who were able to farm efficiently on the acquired land and use modern and rationalisation measures.

The world economic crisis at the turn of the 20s and 30s affected both agriculture and industry. Its catastrophic results manifested themselves in a rapid growth in unemployment. One of the ways out of this situation was the creation of the National Economic Institute of Slovakia (NÁRUS), in which P. Zaťko and I. Karvaš participated. NÁRUS set itself the goal of resolving Slovakia's serious economic issues (industrialisation, amendment of rail tariffs, nationalisation of roads, support for the construction of technical and economic infrastructure). A new wave of investment, mainly of Czech capital, had a favourable effect on the Slovak economy in the 30s. In the complex conditions of economic transformation following the establishment of the new state and as a result of the economic crises of 1921 and 1929, unemployment in Slovak industry reached a pre-war level in

1937. This situation made it harder to support the population and 204,000 people moved from Slovakia between the wars. The altered international situation at the close of the 30s emphasised Slovakia's geopolitical significance from the point of view of state defence and stimulated the building of industry, mainly arms production.

Despite the complex economic problems, clear progress was made in the social sphere. The eight hour working day was enacted, unemployment support, sickness and old age insurance was improved. Social legislation stood up to the toughest comparison, even on a European scale. Although the gradual pros in economic life were not clearly seen, they had significance for the future. The economic structure was supplemented and developed, transport connections completed, electrification increased productivity in industry, road networks and connections were improved, the network of monetary institutions, savings banks, insurance companies and economic co-operatives, was expanded. Slovak economic policy and interests in the 30s were defined as regional, Slovak.

Important education reform started following the end of the monarchy. By the mid-20s education had been reformed, Slovak introduced in schools and compulsory school attendance enacted. Czech professors and teachers greatly helped the building of Slovak secondary and apprentice schools and universities. In 1919, Comenius University was founded in Bratislava with faculties of arts, law and medicine, later extended by a faculty of natural science. The Technical University opened in the last year of Czechoslovakia's existence. The number of university educated Slovak intelligentsia grew thanks to the education reform and started to fulfil their cultural mission and co-act in the Slovak national emancipation process.

Conditions were created in Czechoslovakia to utilise the opportunity to study at Czech universities. A whole founding generation of Slovak science and education gained a quality university education, mainly at Prague's Charles University. The establishment of Czechoslovakia laid the foundations for the rapid cultural development of Slovakia, which was manifested in Slovak society, culture, art and education. It is hard to find similar examples of a nation developing so dynamically and universally in such a relatively short time. *Matica slovenská* and its departments of history, ethnography, linguistics, and history of literature assumed an important role in the cultivation and development of Slovak knowledge and culture. Science, art and education were also institutionally anchored in many other societies. Associations were created—the šafárik Learned Society, Circle of Academic Synthesis—which significantly influenced the development of academic thinking in Slovakia.

The Slovak National Theatre was created in 1920, and a Slovak company performed there at the beginning of the 30s. A new generation of Slovak composers and musicians appeared, in which the Music and Drama Academy in Bratislava played a significant part. There was an unprecedented growth in literature, the number of periodicals published in Slovak increased noticeably, *Slovenské pohľady*, which dedicated a lot of space to developments in world literature, started to be published again. Slovak literary criticism entered the floor. Slovak artists, who presented their work at exhibitions abroad, assumed an important place in artistic life. The expansion of means of mass communication also supported the favourable cultural atmosphere in Slovakia. From 1926, the broadcasting of Czechoslovak Radio in Bratislava and later Košice and Banská Bystrica disseminated education and information. The radio promoted the formation of a Slovak national identity and civic solidarity within Czechoslovakia. Film gradually became a part of cultural and artistic life. The network of cinemas was expanded in Slovakia, their number rising to around 200 by the end of Czechoslovakia's existence. Bratislava became an important cultural, administrative and economic centre, the proportion of Slovaks there increased. Regional administrative and trade centres—Košice, Prešov, Žilina, Zvolen, and Trnava, did not lose their importance. Slovakia rose from anonymity and gained clearly defined boundaries for the first time in its history.

Slovakia During the Second World War: 1939–1945

A new country appeared on the map of Europe in spring 1939—the Slovak Republic, which, however, was not created through natural national emancipation developments, but as a by-product of nazi aggression against Czechoslovakia. With its size (38,456 km sq.) and population (2.6 million), the Slovak state was among the smallest countries in Europe. And so for the first time in its history, Slovakia became a subject of international politics. It was recognised by 27 states, but despite this the Slovak Republic's international position was uncertain and weak. The so-called Protective Treaty dictated by the nazis subordinated the new state's foreign, military and economic policy to Germany. In the hands of German diplomacy, its territory became a potential instrument in its plans to become a great power and negotiations with central European countries, which was revealed at the end of March 1939, when Slovakia was attacked by Hungary and subsequently lost a part of its territory and population.

The Slovak Republic's international position was partially stabilised shortly before the outbreak of the second world war, when it was given the role of a "model" satellite state. A logical result of this was that the Slovak Republic participated in the German aggression against Poland in September 1939. It joined the Axis power pact in November 1940, deployed its army in the war against the Soviet Union in June 1941, and even declared war on the USA and Great Britain in December 1941. These acts of war created an insurmountable obstacle to the existence of an independent Slovak state in post-war Europe, especially as all of the powers in the anti-Hitler coalition declared the reinstatement of Czechoslovakia as one of their military aims. The preservation of the Slovak Republic at that time was only linked with Germany's victory in the war. The futureless collaboration with Germany led the Slovak state into clear international isolation even during the war and invariably deepened its internal crisis.

The satellite state's political regime was built on antidemocratic principles with clear fascist traits from the outset. The totalitarianism of the regime in Slovakia had many peculiarities and cracks, and was far from being as comprehensive as in other satellite fascist countries. The head of state was president Jozef Tiso. The executive power was in the government's hands. The

state's legislative authority was the parliament of the Slovak Republic, which, however, gradually degenerated. The whole of political and public life was governed and controlled by the state party—the Hlinka Slovak People's Party—which confirmed its leading position in the constitution and other laws, so that it governed not just the state's political, but its whole public life through its own party structures and the organisations it created (Hlinka Guard, Hlinka Youth, etc.). The highest executive authorities and the state party were cumulated both personally and institutionally.

There was a harsh power struggle between the conservative and radical wing inside the governing camp. The conservative camp led by president J. Tiso wanted to create a specific model of a totalitarian state with religious and corporate colouring. The fascist radicals led by prime minister Vojtech Tuka and interior minister Alexander Mach attempted to introduce a national socialist regime in Slovakia. The German leadership supported the radicals, but above all they wanted Slovakia to be a model satellite state with internally consolidated conditions and a dependable economy. Tiso's wing was a better guarantee of this, but it won over its opponents with its own weapons: by introducing the Führer principle, deepening collaboration with Nazi Germany and "solving" the Jewish issue. 90,000 Jewish citizens (almost 4% of the population) were gradually deprived of their political, economic, basic civil and eventually even human rights within this process, which culminated with the transportation of 58,000 Slovak Jews to nazi extermination camps in 1942. Another 13,000 Jewish citizens were deported or murdered in Slovakia in autumn 1944.

However, the Slovak Republic also represented the concretisation of the idea of Slovak statehood, which evoked national awareness among the majority of its population. It was also empowered by the relatively stabilised economic and social situation, which was noticeably better than in the occupied or other satellite countries of central and eastern Europe. Despite the subordination of its economic needs to Germany, the Slovak economy developed dynamically thanks to the wartime conjuncture and the fact that the war did not directly affect Slovak territory until autumn 1944. Slovakia's traditional social problem—unemployment—was eliminated. The contemporary cultural life also had relatively favourable conditions for development, although it was limited by the difficult wartime situation and ideological pressure from the totalitarian regime.

There was an anti-fascist resistance on the Slovak state's territory from the beginning of its existence. This was directly or at least ideologically linked to Czechoslovak political exiles in the West or in Moscow, which was reflected in its domestic membership and mainly in its post-war aims. The resistance took full advantage of crises inside the state, whose power and administrative authorities were increasingly infiltrated by opposition, excusatory moods from 1941. The main wings of the resistance forces were united at the end of 1943 on the basis of the Slovak National Council. Their main political aim was to overthrow the domestic anti-democratic regime and re-establish Czechoslovakia with the unconditional recognition of the Slovak nation's separate existence and equality in the re-established state. The illegal Slovak National Council, in co-operation with resistance forces in the Slovak army, but also other state power and administrative elements, prepared an armed uprising, which broke out on 29th August 1944, when German units started to occupy Slovak territory. The Czechoslovak state was re-established on rebel territory and the Slovak National Council assumed executive and legislative power. At the beginning, the uprising seized about two thirds of Slovak territory, where 1.7 million people lived.

For two months it formed a continuous front behind the retreating German forces. Its armed force consisted of a 60 thousand strong Slovak army and 18 thousand partisans. After two months of fighting, German squads occupied the resistance's territory, but the armed resistance continued in the form of a partisan war until Slovakia's liberation from its occupiers in spring 1945.

The Slovak National Uprising started the process of the liquidation of the wartime Slovak Republic, which existed for another few months with the help of the occupying Germany army, but in almost complete international and domestic isolation. Slovakia entered the re-established Czechoslovak Republic with ambitions of being an equal political and state partner. An internal political struggle started in the renewed state about its future direction.

After the War (1945–1948). 41 Years of Communist Totality (1948–1989)

Following its liberation and the end of the second world war, Slovakia became a part of the reinstated Czechoslovak Republic led by president E. Beneš. The new power had the nature of a limited and governed democracy with contained plurality. It determined itself as a paired democracy, a so-called popular democracy, while the word popular was meant to emphasise that it was a new democracy, different from the pre-war one. It was not a totalitarian regime, but a democracy in the Soviet sphere of influence. After the war, Slovakia faced the task of reintroducing democratic principles in political and public life. But there was a problem in that the totalitarian Soviet Union was supposed to guarantee democratisation and every effort of the co-governing communist party was aimed at negating democracy and introducing it own dictatorship.

The National Front, which was a popular democratic coalition uniting all political parties, became the political basis of the new power. The process of forming a party-political structure in Slovakia culminated in spring 1946. There were four political parties: the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), Democratic Party (DS), Freedom Party and Labour Party. Before the war, the KSS was the countrywide organisation Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). It was an illegal party during the war and parted with social democracy on communist principles in the Slovak National Uprising. The unification of civic resistance groups during the uprising laid the foundations of the DS. The organisation built itself up after the changeover of the front. It was a centralist party. The Freedom Party was created in April 1946 by a splinter group from the DS. The Labour Party united social democrats who disagreed with uniting with the KSS. The KSS and DS had a decisive position, while the Freedom and Labour Parties' influence was minimal. The strongest political parties in Slovakia in the first Czechoslovak Republic—the Hlinka Slovak People's Party

(HSĽS) and Republican Farmers' and Smallholders' Party (Agrarians)—could not renew their activity; these rightist conservative parties were therefore not present in the post-war party-political structures.

The new political system did not recognise opposition parties. There was no voting in the National Front. Decisions were adopted on the basis of agreements and were binding for the government, parliament, Slovak National Council and Board of Commissioners. As a result, the power and oversight function of legislative bodies was weakened. One new element in the popular democratic regime was national committees, which gradually assumed the function of state administration and self-government in districts, towns and villages and Slovak national bodies: the Slovak National Council, Board of Commissioners, commissions, and other authorities.

Slovakia entered the re-established Czechoslovak Republic as an equal partner. The leadership of the anti-nazi coalition had already sustained the legal continuity of Czechoslovakia during the war. The domestic anti-fascist resistance and new political representation spoke out in favour of the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia with an equal status for the Slovak nation. However, Slovak communists' and democrats' attempts to declare a federative state failed due to the non-concession of Czech political parties. An asymmetric type of state organisation was created—a unitarist state with state and Slovak national authorities—commissions, which had no counterpart on the Czech side. This model was at odds with the proclaimed principle of "equal with equal" and moreover the power of Slovak national authorities was gradually restricted.

After the war, Czechoslovakia re-established itself as a state of Czechs and Slovaks. It did not originally count on national minorities. It was expected that they would cease to exist due to transfers, population exchange and assimilation. The German issue was "resolved" through resettlement on the basis of a decision from the Potsdam conference of the winning powers. The Czechoslovak government lobbied for approaching the Hungarian minority in the same way. The Western powers rejected this alternative and so instead of resettlement there was only a partial population exchange between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The other members of the Hungarian minority were given Czechoslovak state citizenship and full civil rights by autumn 1948. The development of a national education and culture was only ensured for the Ukrainian minority, but without constitutional guarantees.

The economic basis of the popular democratic regime was a three-sector economy with a public, private and private capitalist sector. It arose as a result of state interventions into the economy. In autumn 1945, key industries, large industry, banks, and private insurance companies were nationalised. There was an extensive land reform, which liquidated large estates. The land was shared by the landless and smallholders. In October 1946, the parliament approved a two-year economic plan (for 1947–1948), whose main aim was to complete the renewal of the war damaged economy. In addition to this renewal in Slovakia, the foundations of the planned industrialisation of the country were to be laid through the construction of new factories and relocation of some industry from the Czech border area to Slovakia.

The May 1946 parliamentary elections altered the share of individual political parties in power. The previous parity (equal) representation in the government, temporary parliament, Board of Commissioners, and Slovak National Council was replaced by proportional representation after the elections (each party gained a power share proportional to its election results). The DS won in Slovakia with two thirds of the vote, while just under a third of the electorate voted for the KSS. The election results for the other two parties were minimal. The DS' victory in the elections secured it a majority in Slovak national authorities and national committees. However, this did not produce a stabilisation of political conditions in Slovakia. Since the KSČ was the winning party in the elections in the Czech part of the republic and the communists gained a small majority in parliament together with the social democrats (the communists' leader Klement Gottwald became prime minister), Slovak communists' approach to Slovak national authorities changed significantly. They stopped defending their competencies and participated in the restriction of their powers. From then on, many Slovaks saw a double danger in Prague: the threat of centralism and communism. Czech society on the other hand believed the communists' propaganda, partly also supported by civic parties, that HSĽS was rallying in Slovakia and expressing separatist tendencies.

The KSS leadership were aware that the prospect of victory in the next elections (to be held in May 1948) was unrealistic and therefore wanted to change the balance of power through non-parliamentary means. It counted on intervention from Prague and its position in unions and among former partisans. It used every opportunity to discredit the DS, which it accused of sabotaging the land reform and supplying, supporting or concealing anti-state forces. In autumn 1947, the police, which were controlled by the communists, fabricated a so-called anti-state conspiracy in Slovakia with the aim of destroying the DS. They did not succeed, but the DS was significantly weakened. By the turn of 1947/1948, the popular democratic regime was in crisis. The communists had lost interest in the National Front and were attempting to assume complete power. The civic parties on the other hand tried to keep the National Front functional and saw elections as a way out of the crisis. Their representatives were convinced that they would win the elections and the balance of power would change.

On 20th February 1948, the ministers for the Czech civic parties and Slovak Democratic Party resigned as a sign of protest against communist policy. They believed that the governmental crisis would be solved by parliamentary means. However, the communists took advantage of this in a decisive confrontation. They took control of the streets and created their owned armed units—People's Militia. On 25th February 1948, President E. Beneš accepted the ministers' resignation under pressure from the communists and the mobilised masses and prime minister K. Gottwald was able to fill the government with "his people". It was a state coup and the communist party gained a power monopoly, which was a prerequisite for building the communist regime.

Czechoslovakia went from a state in the sphere of Soviet influence to a part of the Soviet bloc just as the bipolar division of the world intensified and the East and West found themselves in fierce confrontation.

In the days of the February coup of 1948 and shortly afterwards, very few people were aware of the deep political changes and their impacts. At first sight, it seemed that the changes were not large and were more about people than the system. Non-communist parties, the National Front and other pre-February institutions still formally existed. President of the republic E. Beneš continued to perform his function for several months after the coup. But in reality it meant a qualitative change of the political system, transfer of the popular democratic coalition into KSČ monopoly power, which first affected the political area and then penetrated all other spheres of social life. The non-communist parties (in Slovakia the Freedom Party remained and the Slovak Revival Party was created from the remains of the DS) did not have the nature of real political parties and the National Front became a mere apparatus of KSČ policy. Elections no longer fulfilled their function because they were neither free nor democratic. The tight circle of KSČ leaders made decisions, not the parliament or government. The so-called "leading role of the KSČ", which was also enshrined in the constitution of 1960, was enforced in practice. The constitution also proclaimed Marxism-Leninism as the state ideology.

After the February coup of 1948, centralisation was intensified within the communist party and the whole state. The KSS became an organisational part of the KSČ in autumn 1948 and its activity completely dependent on the KSČ leadership in Prague. Within the framework of a drive against so-called bourgeois nationalism, nationally oriented communists were ousted from the KSS' leadership at the beginning of the 50s and some suffered persecution (Vladimír Clementis, Gustáv Husák, Ladislav Novomeský, etc.) Viliam široký became its leading figure and other functionaries (Karol Bacílek, Pavol David and others) obediently carried out orders from Prague. The asymmetric model of state organisation and increasing centralisation led to a weakening of Slovak national authorities' powers. The Board of Commissioners was abolished in 1960 and the Slovak National Council became a powerless institution, which "governed only itself".

The arrival of communist totality was accompanied by brutality and persecution. They took their most brutal form in the early years of its existence (from 1948 to the mid-50s), when the new regime pressed through fundamental changes in all areas of society following the "Soviet model". The society underwent almost non-stop purges, civil and political rights were suppressed, people were discriminated against for political, religious and social reasons. The highest form of persecution was political show trials, which were meant to evoke an atmosphere of fear and forced citizens to obey the regime implicitly. Thousands of "class enemies", church representatives, but also former partisans and resistance fighters from the war years, suffered. The most important trial politically in Slovakia was that of the so-called bourgeois nationalists (Gustáv Husák, Ladislav Novomeský and others) in April 1954, by which time such forms of persecution had already ended in other Soviet bloc states.

Shortly after the February coup of 1948, further nationalisation was carried out and the land reform continued. Essentially, the state gained control of the whole of industry, construction, wholesale and foreign trade. By the end of 1948, the KSČ leadership had started to focus on forcing out capitalist elements and transferring small businesses into "higher forms of business", i.e. state-owned businesses or co-operatives under state control. Economic pressure and administrative measures eliminated private businesses by 1953. Smallholders in the countryside also suffered a similar fate through collectivisation, i.e. the creation of co-operatives. Although officially it was emphasised that this was voluntary, in reality agriculture was mainly collectivised by force. This transition of smallholdings into "a higher form of business" was dramatic and lasted for decades. Nationalisation, the liquidation of private businesses and collectivisation, together with the country's industrialisation (economic and social development was governed by so-called five year plans), changed the structure of Slovak society. The bourgeoisie disappeared and only a fragment of the middle classes survived. The number of employed, members of the intelligentsia and factory workers increased significantly. Society was levelled and nationalised, the economy became dependent on the state.

However, the communist regime's existence can not simply be reduced to brutality and persecution, because no dictatorship can be maintained in this way only. Many people believed the communist propaganda about a "brighter tomorrow" and visions of a society free of oppression and exploitation, with harmonious relations and lasting prosperity. The regime's economic and social policy also solved many problems from the past. The most pressing of these was the industrialisation of Slovakia, which had progressed very slowly until then. For all of its faults, the centralised economy created space for its acceleration. Thanks to this, Slovakia was transformed from a semi-agrarian to an industrial agrarian country in less than two decades. Urbanisation accompanied the industrialisation and the urban population increased. The gradual increase of investment into agriculture and inflow of qualified workers increased agricultural production, particularly after the mid-60s. The regime eliminated agrarian overpopulation and ensured a certain social security. The population became better educated and progress was made in the areas of science, healthcare and culture. But they were only relative successes and had their dark sides. The opportunities of the delayed industrialisation were not utilised and mainly heavy industry was built regardless of the economic impacts. The proportion of arms production was increased, wages were levelled, culture ideologised, and social security had a "barrack" nature.

As a result of the extensive development, the economic situation became complicated in the early 60s and the economy stagnated. The situation in the political sphere was even more complex, because the party and state leadership led by Antonín Novotný was not able to abandon the unlawfulness and reprisals of the early 50s. The situation, influenced by the de-Stalinisation in the USSR at the beginning of the 60s, forced it to review the political show trials, but only those of communist functionaries.

Meanwhile they tried to put the blame on a few "sacrificial lambs". For example, Viliam Široký, the Czechoslovak prime minister, was removed from his function, as was the KSS First Secretary Karol Bacílek. Disclosures about the trials shook the leadership's authority and increased calls for redress and reforms, criticism of KSČ policy grew. The unrest was especially strong in Slovakia, where attempts at democratic transformations were linked with the national emancipation movement and efforts to end the Slovak nation's unequal status in the state. The new leadership of the KSS (from 1963), headed by Alexander Dubček, was not plagued by the political show trials. It therefore acted more energetically than the leadership in Prague and promoted the process of democratisation. From the mid-60s, it became increasingly clear that the society had somehow woken up and abandoned its illusions and fear, and the calls for redress got louder.

At the beginning of 1968, changes were made in the leadership of the KSČ, which launched an attempt at social reform in Czechoslovakia. The compromised Antonín Novotný had to retire from the most important function in the state, first secretary of the KSČ. They replaced him with the pro-reform Alexander Dubček. This change was followed by the replacement of the president, prime minister, chairman of parliament and party functionaries on various levels. The reform started "from above", which was typical of all attempts at reform in Soviet bloc states. In April 1968, the new leadership of the KSČ submitted a reform concept called the "Action Programme", which was the most comprehensive programme of reforms of the political system in the Soviet bloc at that time. Space was created for the tabling of previously unspeakable issues, which led to dynamic societal activity.

The conservative powers linked with the past (Alois Indra, Vasil Biľak, Drahomír Kolder, and others) went on the defensive and their influence was reduced. Non-communist political parties, social organisations and churches were activated. In Slovakia, the issue of the organisation of state relations between the Czech and Slovak nation leading to the federalisation of the previously unitarist Czechoslovak state was especially topical.

The leadership of the USSR and central European Soviet bloc states watched the reform movement in Czechoslovakia with growing disapproval. Since the "warning" given to the KSČ leadership did not have the desired result, the leadership of the USSR, supported by Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, and Poland, decided on military intervention. On 21st August 1968 Czechoslovakia was occupied, which provoked spontaneous dissension from the population. The Czechoslovak party and state leadership condemned the occupation as an act contrary to international law. The conservative forces, relying on help from the occupying forces, were not able to form a pro-Soviet government. The Soviet leadership therefore exerted enormous pressure on A. Dubček and other reform representatives. It forced them to accept a "temporary stay" of Soviet forces on the territory of Czechoslovakia and gave the domestic conservatives unlimited support with the aim of enforcing so-called "normalisation", i.e. a return to an authoritarian style of government.

"Normalisation" started as early as autumn 1968. The conservative forces joined the so-called realists (Ludvík Svoboda, Gustáv Husák, Ľubomír Štrougal) in the battle against the reformists on a platform of recognising the military occupation of August 1968 as "international brotherly assistance". They succeeded in removing A. Dubček, the main representative of the reforms, from the post of first secretary of the KSČ in April 1969. They replaced him with G. Husák, who had been unlawfully incapacitated in the 50s and originally supported the reforms. However, in his thirst for power he did an about face and became a symbol of "normalisation" for the next twenty years.

A shake up began in the party and state apparatus. Protest demonstrations by the population on the first anniversary of the occupation were broken up by "its own forces": army, People's Militia and police units. In 1970, mass purges were carried out in the KSČ leading to the expulsion and incapacitation of supporters of the reforms. Non-members of the KSČ who disagreed with "normalisation" were also affected.

A great deal of hope was invested in the federative organisation of the state in Slovakia in 1968. A law on Czechoslovak federation was adopted in October 1968 and entered into force in 1969, but it failed to live up to expectations. In 1970–1971, federative authorities were strengthened so much at the expense of national authorities within the framework of renewed centralisation that the principles of real federation were substantially deformed. But even in these conditions, Slovakia made progress in the 70s and 80s, although it struggled with many problems concerning the structure of industry, efficiency of production and finalisation of products. Despite all of its difficulties, it began to catch up with the more developed Czech lands in a number of important manufacturing indicators and standard of living. However, its rapid rise slowed down throughout Czechoslovakia in the mid-70s. The economic stabilisation of the "normalisation regime" helped this, but economic stagnation subsequently weakened the regime. The economy's possibilities were gradually exhausted and it was unable to grasp modern development trends.

Czech and Slovak society was divided and traumatised by the normalisation of the 70s and 80s. Besides those who benefited professionally, the "normalisation leadership" had very few active supporters. The majority of the population "adapted" and withdrew into passivity. The reformers, excluded from public life, were under police surveillance and had no opportunity to voice their opinions. The formation of an opposition with wider public support therefore met many obstacles. The belief that the model of socialism in the Soviet bloc was unreformable strengthened in the atmosphere of fear of repression. Civic groups and so-called dissident movements gradually took the initiative in the emerging opposition. The communist regime only regarded them as a fringe affair with no influence over the population and its leadership lived in the belief that it had nothing to fear from them until the mid-80s.

However, the opposition strengthened under the influence of international developments, including the situation in the USSR after M. S. Gorbachev took over. A. Dubček became active, the Catholic church and its underground structures spoke out more clearly, the green movement gained public approval. By the mid-80s, the normalisation regime had exhausted its chances of reinforcing its stability and rapidly lost not just public support, but also the support of the communist party's membership. The situation became critical and the communist regime started to fall apart.

In the Democratic World

The communist system in Czechoslovakia found itself in crisis in the late 80s. Other Soviet bloc countries succumbed to competition from the western democratic system. The democratic revolution in Czechoslovakia started on 17th November 1989. It created space for systemic changes in Slovak and Czech society influenced by Soviet Perestroika and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The transformation of the social system also arose as a result of the communist regime's suppression of the 1968 Prague Spring through twenty years of normalisation policy. 17th November 1989 was a historic milestone in Czechoslovakia's and Slovakia's history. It was connected with the establishment of a democratic system.

The "velvet" revolution started with the suppression of a student demonstration in Prague on 17th November. Students had already protested in Bratislava the day before. The revolution's main demands included freedom of the press, the observance of human rights and freedoms, the removal of the leading role of the KSČ from the constitution, the de-ideologisation of education and culture, equality in law of all forms of ownership, the establishment of the rule of law, and a real democratic federation. The Federal Assembly cancelled article 4 of the Constitution of the ČSSR on the leading role of the KSČ through a constitutional law. The occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was condemned as illegal, wrong and unjustified. The communist regime's main document of the "normalisation" policy—Lesson From the Crisis Development in the Party and Society Following the Thirteenth Congress of the KSČ—became invalid. One of the regime leading representatives, president Gustáv Husák, resigned. Václav Havel, a representative of the new political power in the Czech lands—Civic Forum—became the new president. The central figure of the 1968 Prague Spring, Alexander Dubček, became chairman of the Federal Assembly.

The hand-over of power from the pragmatic communists to democratic forces, mainly represented by Public Against Violence, was carried out peacefully in Slovakia. Rudolf Schuster became chairman of the Slovak National Council and Milan Čič Slovak prime minister. The political reconstruction of the Federal Assembly and national councils enabled the adoption of key legislation on citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms and a pluralist political a economic system. Parliamentarianism was renewed. Slovak and Czech civic society was formed.

The face of Slovak society changed. New political parties and movements appeared and some which had disappeared following the state coup in February 1948 were re-established. The largest political entities included the Christian Democratic Movement, Slovak National Party, Green Party in Slovakia, Democratic Party, social democracy, and Hungarian political entities. The Slovak communists underwent a process of transformation into a modern left-wing social democratic type party. The nationalities' status was addressed. Relations between the Czech and Slovak nations started to be resolved on the principles of equality, equality in law and autonomy in democratic conditions. Slovakia received a new name—the Slovak Republic. But in spring 1990, a dispute broke out between the Czech and Slovak political representation over the equal status of the Slovak Republic with the Czech Republic in the common state's name and state symbol of the Czechoslovak federation. The name Czech and Slovak Federative Republic was adopted. The basic political, national, property, civic, and economic aims of the democratic revolution in Czecho-Slovakia were fulfilled in the parliamentary elections in June 1990. Public Against Violence won in Slovakia. The election results showed that the citizens of Slovakia had decided in favour of a democratic system and the end of the communist dictatorship.

The system was changed through reforms in ownership relations and the economy, education, the legal system, healthcare, the social system, and public administration. Privatisation and the rehabilitation of all population groups acquired substantial dimensions. There were changes in the orientation of foreign and security policy. As early as February 1990, the government adopted a decision on Czecho-Slovakia's withdrawal from the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. The ČSFR was accepted as a full member of the Council of Europe a year later. The Czecho-Slovak state's sovereignty was renewed with the Soviet army's withdrawal. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved and Czecho-Slovakia developed initiatives to join NATO. It signed a large number of international agreements, and not just with neighbouring states. International relations gained a different nature to the period before November 1989.

However, Slovakia was burdened by disputes with Hungary over the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Dam.

Resolving the Czecho-Slovak state's status on new democratic principles was one of the key problems faced by Slovak and Czech society after the elections. Two different concepts were put forward: Czech representatives lobbied for a more centralist federation with powerful federal authorities, the Slovaks more for strong national republics. The adoption of the so-called competency law in December 1990, which amended the deformed federation of December 1970, drew the dividing lines in the Czecho-Slovak federation and its relation to the national republics. However, the disputes over the organisation of legal relations between the Slovak and Czech nations continued. There were also differences of opinion on the signing of agreements or treaties between the Slovak Republic and Czech Republic. In November 1991, the federal government submitted a proposal for a centralist federation. The Slovak national authorities opposed this and did not adopt the draft agreement on the principles of the legal organisation of the common state of February 1992. Further attempts to reach a political agreement between the Slovak and Czech representation also failed.

The parliamentary elections in summer 1992 showed that the winners—the Civic Democratic Party headed by Václav Klaus in the Czech lands and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia led by Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia—differed in their concepts for the common state's organisation. At talks in Brno, Bratislava and Jihlava they decided to dissolve the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic as of 1st January 1993. The Slovak National Council adopted the Declaration of the Slovak National Council on the Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic on 17th July 1992. On 1st September 1992, it adopted the Constitution of the Slovak Republic under the number 460/1992 Coll. On 25th November 1992, the Federal Assembly of the ČSFR adopted a constitutional law on the dissolution of the ČSFR as of 31st December 1992. The peaceful split of the Czecho-Slovak federation led to the creation of two independent states. On 1st January 1993, the Slovak Republic was created as an independent, sovereign and democratic state. It had become a fully-fledged member of the international community.