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A Violence that did not happen
The peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia

Master Thesis



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Introduction

After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the breakdown of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Central and Eastern Europe was stricken by the instability that resulted in the social upheaval followed by a chain of partitions' movements. The end of the Cold War division of Europe suddenly brought to central and eastern Europeans democracy, connected with freedoms and rights to which these people of former communist states were not used to. Some of these were freedom of people to voice their opinions and right for the self-determination as well (Rose, 2000). Carment and James (1998) claim that in the absence of ideological framework caused by the fall of communism, then political leaders were given the advantage to readily mobilize the populations by the means of the stimulation of a sense of collective identity. Under those circumstances new and emerging issues take on an ethnic character and "dormant conflicts have come to the fore" (Carment and James, 1997, 1). Rupeshinge (1990) and International Alert (1993) add to Carment and James's statement by claiming that the replacement of communism by democracy has brought with itself side-effects such as "upsurges in rampant ethno-populism, replacement of elites, or the shattering of fragile democratic institutions" (James and Carment, 1997, 1; Rupeshinge 1990; International Alert 1993).

Considering both things may explain an alternation of war's character after the post Cold War era, when we see the decrease of conflicts and wars between two states and an increase occurrence of the conflicts within states. The notable change also happened in the amount of secession movements and territories that aspired to part themselves from a common state within which they operated, as the number greatly increased. Many of these aspirations for partition were accompanied by the rebellion against a state, numerous insurgencies, followed by bloodshed and atrocities, prolonged ethnic conflict, and even civil wars (Carment and James, 1998). Although each partition was and is a unique case, the majority of the state partitions turned violent. *New York Times* post from 7 February 1993 estimated the existence of approximately forty-eight ongoing or potentially violent conflicts in that year; "Romania, Mauritania, Rwanda-Burundi, Senegal, Togo, Nigeria, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Algeria, Egypt, China, Bhutan, Brazil, Mexico, India, Kosovo" (*New*

York Times, 7 February 1993) and the Republic of Macedonia, East Timor, India, Yugoslavia (Bartkus, 2009). In the first part of the 90s there were over five thousand minorities, circa eighty ethnically oriented protracted conflicts in the world and thirty-five internal wars under way in 1994 (Gurr, 1994).

Despite the fact that partitions are not new phenomena in the international realm, the majority of states nonetheless do not succeed to part their territory without any atrocities, bloodshed or casualties being left behind. The world obviously still did not learn its lesson. We need to further study the partitions, especially now in times of such a globalized world where all countries are interconnected and the arousal of violence could bear a spillover effect. There are only a few cases when the people of lands aspiring for their independence succeeded to part themselves in a peaceful manner. Those cases where not one person loses their life are sadly rare. This calls for the attention and realization of a need to keep studying peaceful partitions until there are mechanisms created that will assure a peaceful process of these partitions. The partition of Czechoslovakia in 1993 is one of those special cases that can help us to draw the factors that facilitate to maintain peace during the partition.

The aim of this thesis is to study the peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia, in particular the examination of the level of accommodation of its political elites, as of a complementary factor to the other factors that contributed to its peaceful partition. The objective is to answer the Research Question that asks How come some countries are able to part peacefully and others not? What are the factors that contribute to the peaceful partition of the states?

The topic is highly relevant taking into a consideration the fact that even nowadays in the 21st century countries still have problems to conduct the partition in a peaceful manner. There is still an absence of a comprehensive list of the necessary factors that could be used as a guideline for those countries that wish to part peacefully and prevent the outbreak of violence. Therefore the objective of my work is to help contribute to this list by testing one of the possible factors that help maintain the peace during state partition; the high level of elite accommodation. In my work I will argue that the high level of strength of elite accommodation during the Czechoslovak partition helped the partition to be conducted in a peaceful way. This will be

examined through the following indicators; the pace of the negotiations, the willingness of elites to compromise, the fragmentation of the political parties, and finally, the behavior and attitudes of the political leaders in Czechoslovakia during 1990-1992.

The work will be divided into the three main chapters. The first chapter will offer the literature review on the topic, the utilized theory and research design of the work. The second chapter will provide an historical overview on the relationship between Czechs and Slovaks. The third chapter will consist of the main body of the thesis that will comprise of 5 subchapters each analyzing one indicator. The last subchapter (3.5) will offer an alternative explanation to the peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia.

Literature Review

A lot has been written about violent partitions and secessions that led to the outbreak of violent conflict. Actually the majority of the research and scholars focus on violent cases rather than on peaceful ones (Horowitz 1985; Fearon & Laitin 2003; Petersen 2002; Rose 2000; Kaufman 2006; Jenkins & Cottlieb 2007). Nevertheless, peaceful cases may provide a good guideline for other states facing secession movements, or countries that wish to dissolve their state, in a non-violent manner. Therefore the case of Czechoslovak partition presents itself as excellent study material of a peaceful partition.

The main limitation of the literature on the Czechoslovak partition is that it focuses mainly on answering the question of why the partition took place (*Kusý; Wolchik; Žák; Rupnik*), and how come the partition was conducted peacefully. Although some authors (*Kopecký, Leff, Young, Žák*) mention the factors that they state are the elements that all together created the fertile field for peaceful process of Czechoslovak separation (the history of good relationships; the clear demographical and geographical borders; the external factors; and others that will be mentioned later in this review) there still can be complementation. Bearing in the mind the still existence of many partitions or demands of partition and secession all over the world, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, there is still a need to further study the partition processes to draw a guideline that can help to the other countries facing this challenge, to part peacefully. There are some scholars that attempt to study the peaceful nature of this partition more in to the depth, like for example *Leff* and *Young*. *Žák* and *Kopecký* mention the factors only briefly, as they mainly focus on studying the reason of the Czechoslovak break up, and not the reason of the peace during this break up. *Leff's* list of factors is almost complete and explains the reason why this partition was peaceful, but he explains the each factor only briefly. He also neglects the political elites within his list. It is however very important to conduct a more deep study of political elites, their behavior and the level of accommodation especially in the case of the Czechoslovak partition. It is because actually the political elites were the ones to decide upon the fate of the country and all its inhabitants. There is a need to examine whether the Czechoslovak elites adopted a special behavior, which had an

impact on the peace maintenance during the partition, so the model for the future attempts to part a state can be derived.

The already presented factors gathered from the existing literature that implemented the peaceful Czechoslovak partition can be summarized into these following sectors:

a., The external factors

Leff (1996) offers as one of the factors that contributed to the Czechoslovak peaceful partition the external factor that appeared in Europe at the beginning of 90s; the war in Yugoslavia. *Leff* claims that the bloodshed and atrocities happening in Yugoslavia made the political elites of Czechoslovakia more aware of the negative consequences of unresolved disputes, and that pushed them to speed up the pace of the negotiations. The outbreak of violence in Yugoslavia certainly motivated the elites to conduct the partition in a manner that would avoid such an outbreak; however, it is questionable whether we can consider a 3 years long negotiation as quick. Therefore *Leff* does not provide a convincing explanation that would support his argument.

b., Clear geographical an demographic division

The second mentioned factor that facilitated the maintenance of the peace during the Czechoslovak partition was according to *Leff* (1996) and *Kopecký* (2000) the clear geographical division of the state along the national line. The fact that there was already clear division helped to prevent dragging disputes over the common land. An almost perfect demographical division helped prevent disputes on which land belongs to whom. Therefore, clear geographical and demographical division certainly was one of the major factors that together with the others helped to facilitate the peaceful partition of the state.

c., The history of good relations

Another of the necessary factors presented by *Leff* is the good history of relations between Czechs and Slovaks, which lacks the presence of any violent and bloody conflicts. *Leff* bases his argument by referring to the polls that indicate that Czechs and Slovaks neither hated, feared, nor disliked one another (*Leff*, 1996). We can agree that a past of good relations surely helps to create a base for common good relationships in the future that will ultimately assure the peace. However, if the peace

was sustained in the past, it does not inherently eliminate any chances that it will be sustained also in the future. There is always a first time for everything if the bargaining sides reach a stalemate over the crucial issues that may lead to the dramatic disputes.

d., The characteristics of negotiations and power-sharing

The fact whether the partition followed protracted constitutional and political disputes was estimated as one of the major determinants of peace during the partition by *Robert Young* (1997). The important positive impact on peace could also have a declaration presented by the land that desires to withdraw from the country. Informing of its intent might lower the risk to exacerbate the conflict that could result in violent escalation (Young, 1997). However his explanation is not convincing enough as the protracted negotiations are oftentimes caused by the difficulties to meet the agreements that accompany these negotiations. The problematic negotiations between the bargaining sides increase the odds for the arousal of the conflict which at the end may lead into a violent conflict. On the other side, quick and smooth negotiations are a greater guarantee for the sustainability of the peace. Therefore Young's explanation is not convincing enough. The main mistake that Young commits is that he perceives the Czechoslovak case as a case of secession of Slovakia from the Czechoslovak federation and not as a case of partition of the federation. Another factor that he lists that is not very persuasive is the declaration of the seceding state of its intent to secede from the state which is not convincing enough to state that it helps to assure the peace. The sustainability of peace depends more on the reaction of the state and whether they are willing to let the part demanding the sovereignty go. If the part that bids for independence declares that they intend to secede, and the predecessor state rejects this demand, then the explanation is not satisfactory. Nevertheless, in general *Young* positively contributed to the study of the Czechoslovak peaceful partition, by presenting a quite wide scope of the possible common elements of peaceful partitions. The important one was the realization of the importance played by the reaction of the remnant state to the demands for sovereignty of an ethnic group of a state. *Young*, and also *Kopecký* as well, mention that the lower the number of participants negotiating the agreement the chances for these negotiations to be conducted in the peaceful manner increased.

The main limitation of the literature on the Czechoslovak peaceful partition is that the majority of the scholars attempt to answer the question of why did Czechoslovakia break up? (*Leff, Musil, Žák, Kopecký*). Another one is that they oftentimes overlooked the important key factor that definitely deserves more attention regarding the study of why the peace happened during this partition. This factor is the reaction of the people, better said, acceptance of the state's decision without opposing it by any means. The fact that the public did not rebel against the state certainly helped to preserve the peace during the partition; despite the fact that the majority of inhabitants of both republics did not wish for the partition to take place. At the same time, as it is therefore evident that the partition was conducted solely by the elites, there is a need for a deeper and comprehensive study of the elite's behavior on the peaceful nature of this partition. Neither of these scholars provides one.

Political elites

Although *Kopecký* and *Žák* mention the political elites, they mainly study the impact that these elites had on the partition itself. Although *Kopecký* mentions that the same consociational inheritance - which involved the low level of elite accommodation and the absence of a tradition of elite accommodation – led to the dissolution of the state, “rendered the partition of Czechoslovakia peacefully”. However, he does not provide a deep analysis which would show the connection of it to the peace. He does mention it as a factor that helped peaceful partition, but only very briefly, as he mainly focuses on the analysis of why the partition happened through the lance of theory of Lijphart's consociational democracy. Although he provides a comprehensive explanation of why the state failed to continue to exist, he does not focus on the peace itself. *Žák* also mentions the absence of strong elites in Czechoslovakia that would be capable of sustaining the existence of a common republic; however he also just connects it with the dissolution of the state. Therefore the more exhausting explanation of how the political elites added to the peacefulness of this partition would be of much contribution to not only the studies of this particular partition, but also to the others.

James and Carment (1998) do study the political elites and their impact on the partitions, but they especially focus their attention to the impact of the level of accommodation to the outbreak of ethnic violent conflict. They argue that the low level of strength of political elite accommodation increases the odds for the breakout

of violent ethnic conflict during the partitions. However as they focus on the study of why violence happens and not on the study of peace, nor do they test their theory on the case study of the Czechoslovak partition, I decided to contribute to their study and examine the impact of the level of the elite accommodation had on sustaining the peace during the partitions. Especially on what impact it had on the Czechoslovak partition in particular and consequently, to contribute to the necessary factors that were already determined by previous scholars on what facilitated this peaceful partition. Therefore I will aim to contribute to the existing literature on the Czechoslovak partition by filling the gap that consists of an absence of comprehensive study of impact of the level of elite accommodation on this partition.

1 Theoretical Framework and Research Design

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of my thesis will be derived from the theory presented by *James and Carment* (1998). In their work, James and Carment associate weak inter-elite accommodation, or nonexistent accommodation in the society with higher chances of escalation of ethnic violence partition. However, as the dependent variable of my analysis is peace and its maintenance I will therefore adjust their argument to the study of peace. Deriving from their theory, I will assume that if weak or nonexistent elite accommodation is a condition that makes violence more likely to appear during state partition, than strong elite accommodation should stand as a condition which makes peace more likely to persist during state partition. It is because accommodative behavior of elites is characterized often by the presence of congruence and the willingness to compromise. The opposite of elite accommodation is an intransigence behavior and unwillingness to compromise. The accommodative behavior provides a fertile field for smooth and quick negotiations, easily met compromises and met solutions to any issues that need to be addressed. The elites' behavior of being characterized by willingness to compromise is more likely to avoid the conflict, and therefore sustain the peace. This also assumes, that if the level of elite accommodation grows, the chances for the peace during the partition automatically increase too.

“A long tradition of instrumental approached to ethnic conflict has established that political elites can play important roles in mobilizing masses and triggering conflict”. (Horowitz 1985, Weingast 1995) Eldersveld, Kooiman and van der Tak, argue that “the character of the relationships between and among elites in modern societies is, ... central to the achievement of certain system goals – whether stability, policy change, effective elite-mass relationships, government efficiency, legitimacy, or political development” (Eldersveld, Kooiman & van der Tak, 1981, 3) Zahar (2001) argues that it is required that political elites yield to an intransigent opponent to the prospect of mutual intransigence, if the power-sharing is desired to work smoothly. The elites have a chance to maintain the equilibrium by two possible means; by compromising

or displaying the mutual intransigence. Although Zahar suggests that the best form of sustaining the system and avoid its demise is to compromise, especially on the issues that are crucial to system's interlocutors (Zahar, 2001). Horowitz adds that many elites' met compromises and efforts for accommodative policies are caused by the genuine efforts to avoid or at least reduce the risk of conflict escalation to its minimum. "These efforts typically flow from arrangements, such as coalitions of commitment or alliances, that have built-in incentives for conciliation" (Horowitz, 1985, 578). "A lot of the weight of arguments in favor of power-sharing rides on the elites' willingness to compromise and their understanding/fear of the consequence of mutual intransigence" (Zahar, 2001, 14).

Accordingly, from the above-mentioned puzzle I derive the following hypothesis:

A Peaceful CSFR partition was facilitated by the high level of strong elite accommodation.

The hypothesis will test the impact of the independent variable that is in this case *the level of strength of elite accommodation* to dependent variable; *peace during the partition of CSFR.*

1.2 Research design

In my thesis I perceive elite in a way as defined by *Eldersveld, Kooiman and van der Tak* (1981) who define elites as “individuals recruited, selected, and presumably trained to make decisions for a society” (Eldersveld, Kooiman & van der Tak, 1981, 1). The term elites include all the high officials of a state, starting from cabinet ministers to local officials. “There are two sets of actors of preeminent national importance- the higher civil servants and the members of Parliament. The relationship between them as much as their behavior and attitudes vastly influences the way in which the problems of society are being solved, the direction of the policy, as well as the degree of public support for government” (ibid.). The perception of elites as it is nowadays in modern world politics was created after 1870, when we observe the formation of two important set of elites of the national political system; the national bureaucracy consisting of civil servants and the leaders of political parties who hold control over the national legislative process. These two elites were of a great importance as they gave direction in which the modern policy evolved (ibid.).

I will borrow a definition of elite accommodation by Lijphart who states that elite accommodation is based on the willingness of political elites to engage in “cooperative efforts with the leaders of other segments in a spirit of cooperation and compromise” (Lijphart, 1977, 37). The power of elites dwells in the inclusive decision-making and power-sharing of the state. By having an ability to access the state institutions, and by being given a responsibility to address national problems, elites are given the power to influence politics and the way in which the politics will be driven (Eldersveld, Kooiman & van der Tak, 1981). Problems during the negotiations can be caused by the composition of the leadership between two or more belligerent parts. The leadership of one may be composed predominantly of university-educated professionals, while leadership in another may be confided to traditionally oriented aristocrats. Good intentions will not necessarily be enough to establish points of contact and sympathy among elites whose backgrounds do not mesh” (Zahar, 2001, 565). However there is no guarantee that all leaders of ethnically divided societies aspire to promote an accommodation. There might be cases when conflict is more profitable for some leaders. At the same time policymakers are also

only participants in their societies and may bear adversarial and hostile sentiments toward the members of other groups. In any case, there is still a chance that these policymakers would see the ethnic conflict as necessary to advance the interests of their groups. “Even if political leaders do not hold such views, they may nonetheless benefit, politically and materially, from continuation of the conflict and be loath to pursue policies of amelioration” (Weiner, 1966, 564). On the other side, there might be a situation when the policymakers do aspire to promote an accommodation, however “their hands may be tied by the beliefs and interests of others: group members, voters, party supporters, colleagues, and bureaucrats, all of whom may have their own reasons for pursuing the conflict” (Weiner, 1964, 564). In any case, the political elites hold in their hands a great amount of power to influence; either positively or negatively; the society in which they operate through negotiations of interests of their groups. All these immensely determine whether they will pursue the accommodative policies or not. In my thesis, the peace during the partition is defined as an *absence of violent conflict*.

The independent variable of this thesis is the level of strength of elite accommodation in Czechoslovakia during 1990-1992. I will seek to examine whether it determined peace during the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Federation and analyze its impact on the dependent variable; peace.

The indicators for the level for strength of elite accommodation will be derived from the study done Eldersveld, Kooiman and van der Tak (1981) in the publication “Elite Images of Dutch Politics”. The authors linked their study of Dutch political elites to the consociational model of Dutch democracy. According to the model, in order for the vastly fragmented society to keep its viability, the elites are expected to be as much accommodative as possible. The authors state that elites are behaving in an accommodative way when they realize the existence of a social and political conflict and “believe in the resolution of such conflict, and willingness to work actively to resolve conflict” (Eldersveld, Kooiman & van der Tak, 1981, 235), regardless of their opinion on the conflict.

To study the accommodative behavior of elites, the authors used the following indicators.

- a. Information on the attitudes and behavior of ministers;
- b. The willingness to work towards conflict resolution;
- c. The way in which elites perceive the conflict; whether they see the conflict that arose by disputes over the issue as reconcilable or not.
- d. The readiness of elites - especially the bargaining sides during a dispute – to propose an alternative to the resolution of the dispute.

Their main argument assumes that the elite's willingness to find a compromise is a characteristic mark of accommodative elite behavior. The authors assume that the leaders, which prefer to approach the conflict or a problem in a rather accommodative way, will more likely try to seek a solution to political conflict and will too be more likely to try to find compromises. As the level of elite accommodation is an independent variable of this thesis, inspired by the used indicators by *Eldersveld, Kooiman, van der Tak*, (which I have altered to suit my case study), the indicators of peace maintenance will be a high level of strength of elite accommodation. And the analyzed indicators of the level of strength of accommodation of Czechoslovak elites will be following:

1. the pace of the negotiations
2. the willingness of elites to compromise
3. the fragmentation of political parties
4. the elites behavior and attitudes of political representatives

Mentioned indicators should be satisfactory to be able to conclude whether the elites in Czechoslovakia during 1990-1992 were inclined to compromise or not, therefore whether the level of strength of elite accommodation was high or strong, and consequently conclude in a what way it influenced the maintenance of peace. However, one needs to bear in mind that the factors that will be concluded after the analysis are considered a necessary factor that facilitates the sustainability of peace during state partition, but does not inherently guarantee it. On the same time it is essential to realize that the necessary factors do not need to appear in all peaceful

partitions. But it should be that as more of these factors are present, it is more likely for peace to be maintained.

Data collection:

For my analysis I collected data mainly from the peer reviews, but also from the available interviews conducted during the time of partition, newspapers and the media from the time period 1990-1992.

Case selection:

The hypothesis will be tested on the case study of Czechoslovakia and its peaceful partition process. I have chosen this case study because the political elites played a major role in this partition, and as their impact on the maintained peace during this partition was yet not studied. Therefore I will do so by testing it as a necessary factor that contributed to the peace. I believe that the analysis of the elite behavior and its impact on the peace during this partition will positively contribute to the study of peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia, as well as to the studies of state partition in general.

Limitations of my research

The limitation of my thesis is that I examine only one case study, which makes it difficult to further generalize. However, the peaceful partition cases are in general difficult to generalize as they vary in the factors case by case.

2 A Historical Overview on Czechoslovak common coexistence

In order to be able to study the peace during the Czechoslovak partition and to examine what impact the level of political elites had particularly on the peace maintained during this partition, it is important to comprehend the evolution of the relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks.

Austro-Hungarian Empire

Czechs and Slovaks, as the two neighboring nations have a vivid history of common coexistence. Firstly, the two nations existed together under the umbrella of Austro-Hungary until the end of World War I. The common cohabitation within this empire produced a good mutual relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks, as they were the most similar nations to one another – regarding the language and culture. Their mutual cooperation was a much easier option for them than cooperation with any other nation with which they were surrounded within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, the economic inequality between the Czech and Slovak lands had a negative impact on their mutual relationship (Musil, 1997).

1918-1938 – First Czechoslovak Republic

After the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was the result of World War I, the first Czechoslovak state was established in 1918. This period is significant because of the first attempt to establish a democratic state. However, Slovakia was underrepresented in the state's administration. This was mainly a product of the lack of suitably qualified men among the population in Slovakia (Bartlová, 1997). Subsequently, Slovaks soon became very displeased by their position, as well as 'Czech centralism', which was formed right after the establishment of the common state. This resulted in the first appearance of the Slovak demands for autonomy. As Bartlová (1997, 176) pointed out "such a desire must be seen as a natural evolutionary stage of a developed nation, which craves a fair share of political power". During this period Czechoslovakia was greatly economically flourishing. It was ranked as Europe's fourth largest producer of steel and third largest producer of coal. Although the country was hit hard by the great depression, the country's industrial based did not

take long to recover. Despite the state's strong economic position, the European great powers still had a great say over country's fate (Leff, 1996).

1938 - 1945 – Occupation by Nazi Germany

The dependence of Czechoslovakia's fate on the European great powers was demonstrated in 1938, when Nazi Germany invaded the country. The state territory was divided into three parts; The Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia, Slovak State, and the Czech's former Sudetenland was annexed to Germany. The breakup of the state conducted by the Germans was facilitated by already existing economic tensions and pending political grievances that arose earlier. Although the country was still prospering economically, politically it was a period of a great oppression (Leff, 1996).

1945 – 1992 Second Czechoslovak Republic

By the end of World War II, the Soviet army had entered the country. The motivation to reestablish the common Czechoslovak state came from the realization of Czechs and Slovaks of benefits that generated from common coexistence, above all the greater security and chances for survival within the international arena. For the first three years, there was an intention of settling a democracy. Since 1948 the entire political power was in the hands of communists. They attempted to reach an economic equality between the Czech and Slovak lands, as they believed that was a main root for ethno-nationalist tensions that already appeared during the interwar period (Rychlík, 1995). During the communist times, the country's organization partially recognized Slovak national distinctiveness for the first time in the history of a common state. The Slovak National council and regional government were established in order to fulfill the promise of 'equal asymmetry, which was given to the Slovaks when the nations were being reunited. However, there was not a real asymmetry as there was an absence of a Czech National Council. By the 1970's a dissident movement arose, which reached its peak by 1989, when the Velvet Revolution took place with its main objective – to restore democracy in the country (Leff, 1996).

As seen above, the history of the relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks can be called neutral, rather good than adverse. The main cause of the tensions was mainly caused by Slovaks' economic backwardness. Most importantly, there is no evidence

of any major ethnic conflicts between these two nations that led to any violent outbreaks. The two nations have no history of killing one another. An important key point to realize regarding the analysis of political elites is the impact that the Communist seizure of the power had on the political elites. The communist regime in Slovakia during 1945-1989 that was marked by the absence of democracy impeded any chances for Czechoslovak elites to develop the tradition of elite accommodation (Kopecký, 2000). Therefore, right after the Velvet Revolution, which freed Czechoslovakia from Soviet influence, the representatives of the political elites faced the challenge of learning how to compromise. Unfortunately, as will be shown in the following analysis, the Czechoslovak political elites failed to successfully address this challenge. At a certain moment, the willingness to compromise was so low that the only result that elites were able to reach was an impasse, which ultimately resulted into dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, this will be analyzed in the following chapter.

3 The Level of elite accommodation in Czechoslovakia 1990-1992

In this part of my analysis, I am going to study the political elites of Czechoslovakia. The attitudes, behavior and decision of elites vastly influence the direction of evolution of society (Weber and Eisenstadt, 1968). By having the ability to access state institutions, and having the responsibility to address national problems, they are given the power to influence the way in which the politics of their country will be driven. Therefore, the elites play an enormous role in any society. The role of political elites was tremendous especially in the Czechoslovak case of partition, since they were the first, and the last to decide on whether the partition will proceed.

In the case of Czechoslovakia, the elites were those who decided how the partition would be undertaken, and they were the ones to undertake it. Taking into consideration that the referendum did not take part during this partition, the people were not given a chance to express their wish whether to part of the federation or keep it. The political elites decided upon the fate of Czechoslovakia. “The political dynamics whereby the quest for national self-determination serves as a vehicle for enhancing the political power of certain leaders and elites was a factor in both the Czech and Slovak context” (Kraus & Stanger, 2000, 10). The political elites cannot stay unmentioned when studying the partition of Czechoslovakia. Not only is it important to mention them, but the study of their behavior, reactions and the level of accommodation of these elites will contribute to the studies of this partition. That further may help to set up the inspiration for other elites of countries facing the demands for partition, especially how to behave when such a proposal comes, in order to assure peace during the state partition.

The objective of this analysis is to examine the level of elite accommodation of Czechoslovakia’s elites during the partition. I will evaluate the level of strength of their accommodation and will test the hypothesis of this thesis that suggests that *The peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia was facilitated by the high level of strong inter-elite accommodation*. In order to conduct a study of these elites, the main indicators showing the level of strength of accommodation of these elites will be as follow: the pace of the negotiations, the compromise, the fragmentation of the political parties

and finally, the attitudes and behavior of the ministers. Inspired by the study of Eldersveld, Kooiman and Tak (1981), who tested Dutch elites in 1981, the above mentioned indicators are considered in this thesis as a sign of behavior of congruence and willingness to compromise, which is the main characteristic of a high level of strength of inter-elite accommodation.

Prior to the conducted research, the expected empirical evidence was that the level of political elites during the Czechoslovak partition was high and that was the important complementing factor, which smoothed up the whole process of Czechoslovak partitioning. Notwithstanding, the findings during the research demonstrate the contrary. The protracted negotiations; intransigence of Slovak radicals and nationalists; the alternatives proposed largely only by the one side (pro-federalist groups); as well as the breakup of important political parties; all constitute evidence of weakness of elite accommodation in Czechoslovakia during 1990-1992, and correspondingly the tested hypothesis of this thesis is therefore disproved.

The chapter will be divided into 5 subchapters. The first four subchapters will one by one study the indicators of the level of elite accommodation; 1 the pace of the negotiations, 2 the compromise, 3 the fragmentation of the political parties, 4 the attitudes and behavior of the ministers. The last subchapter will pay attention to the reaction of the predecessor state to a Slovak demands for sovereignty.

3.1 The Pace of the partition process

One of the indicators of the level of elite accommodation in this thesis will be the pace of the negotiations that accompanied the partition process of Czechoslovakia. The strong level of elite accommodation assumes quick negotiations and swiftly met compromises. It is important to mention that not all the events and dates will be presented only those that are relevant indicators of the pace of the negotiations.

After the Czechoslovak elites gained full control over their country, the very first negotiations and settling of the form of the country could commence. These started on 11 April 1990 when the leaders and representatives of governments of both, Czech

and Slovak lands met. Nevertheless, at the very beginning, many conflicting issues emerged as new negotiation dates had to be set in order to address them (Leff, 1996).

Hyphen War

The very first problematic issue that occurred was the dispute over the alternation of country's post communist name, which was later coined with title a *hyphen-war* (Leff, 1996). The Federal Assembly needed to tackle the problem of owning a still communist name, which had been used prior to 1960. The objective was to delete the word "socialist" from the country's name and create a new name that would reflect more precisely the new democratic setting of the country. The president Václav Havel suggested three different versions at the beginning of 1990. However, the so called "war", or rather said the quarrel, started after the Slovak National Council expressed their discontent with all three proposals presented by the president of the federation. They believed that all those proposals expressed a Slovaks' subordinated position toward Czechs and that the proposed names did not explicitly manifested the fact that the country was composed of two and not only one nation (Young, 1994). None of the proposed names were satisfactory for Slovaks, but they proposed an alternative name the 'Federation of Czecho-Slovakia. However, this proposal was rejected by Czechs as they commented that it evoked the painful memories from the times of German occupation (Žák, 1997).

The quarrel led to an intense debate and it took about three months –from 23 January 1990 until 20 April 1990 - to find a solution that would satisfy all bargaining sides (ibid.). On 29 March 1990 it seemed that the Federal Assembly put the "war" to an end, by approving constitutional law 81/1990 that set *the Czechoslovak Federal Republic* as an official name of the country (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). Nevertheless, the name provoked demonstrations in Slovakia led by the Movement for an Independent Slovakia who opposed the country's new name. This was also the first time the very first expressions and slogans regarding the independent Slovak state emerged. A definite end to a "hyphen war" can be dated on 20 April 1990, when the Federal Assembly complied with Slovak demands by approving constitutional law 101/1990. The Federal Assembly approved two separate versions of the name in the language of each nation; in Czech the unofficial name would be spelled as "Czechoslovakia" and the adjective "Czechoslovak", whilst in Slovak the name

would be written with a hyphen and capital S “Czecho-Slovakia” (Kraus & Stanger, 2000; Žák, 1997; Young, 1994).

Bearing in mind that the first discussions on the country’s name started by early 1990 and that the final approval of the name took place on 20 April 1990, the calculations show that it took almost about 4 months to find an agreement. That is to say that it took a long time for the Czech and Slovak leaders to find a name that would satisfy the needs of all. Already, only the name of the country evoked complications with many rejected proposals and lengthy discussions. To summarize, all considered evidence reduces the level of strength of accommodation of Czechoslovak elites, supposing that the high level of strength of elite accommodation is characteristic by the fast pace of the negotiations; that is seen as proof that the compromise is met smoothly. When it came to the talks on even more important issues as, for instance, the form of the state or the constitution of the country, the pace of these talks yet decelerated. This will be shown in the following section.

The form of the state

The second open Czech-Slovak dispute was linked to the principles of the future of Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. On 11 April 1990, the unofficial negotiations between the premiers of the countries began. Slovak political party the Public Against Violence (VPN) recommended a program according to which the negotiations would be based on the principle from 1968 when the debate between the two countries would be seen as the debate between the two independent republics. The formal negotiations were planned to set forth after the first free elections would take place on 8-9 June 1990 (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). Two months after the first general elections, on 8-9 August 1990 the negotiations between the two governments started. However, it was impossible to reach an agreement on what form the country should have. Czech representatives favored the preservation of the federation that would keep their prerogatives over the control of foreign policy, finance and defense. On the other side, Slovak officials advocated a situation in which the Czechs and Slovaks would have their own states, operating within one common confederation and via confederal institutions. Because of the difficulties of coming to an agreement, the representatives of all three governments (Slovak, Czech and Federal) together with President Václav

Havel, issued a declaration on 28 November 1990. In this document all sides proclaimed their will to maintain the federal form of the state (Měchýř, 1991).

Here we can see that the consultations about the form of the state started by April 1990 and were closed by the end of November 1990. After almost 8 months and numerous meetings the bargaining sides finally found a compromise of keeping the federal form and issued a declaration. Even the most radical political part the Slovak National Party (SNS) signed the document, although they proclaimed that they wouldn't give up on their idea of a confederation as their long-term goal (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). The fact that the agreement was finally reached can be considered a sign of Czechoslovak elites' willingness to compromise. Therefore the establishment of this document would strengthen the examined level of elite accommodation in Czechoslovakia. But the examination cannot be completed yet, as despite the fact that a declaration was signed, the Slovak party SNS together with other nationalist parties later strengthened their demands to establish a confederation and were reluctant to adjust this demand. Therefore further study needs to be conducted, and will be done in the next section. However, regarding the study of pace of the negotiations and the argument that quick negotiations and readily met compromise is a sign of the high level of the elite accommodation, we observe from the before-mentioned events that the talks about the state form were still lengthy and the agreement required many meetings in order to be settled. In this case, the slow pace of the process of these negotiations is an indicator of low level of the Czechoslovak elite's accommodation.

The power-sharing constitutional amendment

The clashes and the lack of the common opinion appeared also regarding the matter of power-sharing within the federation. Prolonged negotiations were undertaken with the objective to find a solution that would fit to all bargaining sides. However, the issue spurred few fruitful debates. The state officials met at following meetings; 8-9 August 1990 in Trenčianske Teplice; 10-11 September 1990 in Piešťany; 27 September 1990 in Kroměříž, 28 October 1990 in Slavkov, 5 November 1990 in Prague, and 6-7 November 1990 in Luhačovice (Rychlík, 2000, 53). Many of the above-mentioned negotiations settled some issues but the main matter remained unresolved. At the meeting in Prague on 5 November 1990, the three ministers, Marián Čalfa (federal), Pithart (Czech Prime Minister) and Vladimír Mečiar (Slovak Prime Minister)

addressed the majority of the problematic issues connected with the division of the powers. Despite all the disputes that preceded this meeting in Prague, with the exception of few issues, the new agreement was approved on following days 6-7 November 1990. The agreement was indistinguishable from the one already proposed 4 months ago in Trenčianske Teplice. The first document however did not get the support of the Slovak national Party SNS and eight other Slovak national parties (Obrman and Pehe, 1990).

The new agreement did not put an end to the disputes regarding the matter of power-sharing, as the federal government agreed only in principle and it “viewed some of the provisions as adversely affecting the ability of federal agencies to function properly” (Kraus & Stanger, 2000, 311). There was a need for the revision of the document before it would become law. The revised version of the document was approved unanimously on 15 November 1990 by the federal government and only a day after by the Czech government. It took one week for the Slovak government to approve it, but once they did, the approval was also unanimous. Finally, the agreement was passed by the Slovak National Council on 21 November 1990 and on 29 November 1990 by the Czech National Council before it became law (Kraus & Stanger, 2000).

Although the Slovak National Council did agree with the document, only a couple of days later the government issued a declaration which proclaimed the supremacy of Slovak laws over the laws of the Czechoslovak federation (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). The end of the disputes linked with power-sharing came finally to an end on 12 December 1990. After almost five months, The Federal Assembly passed the power-sharing constitutional amendment drafted in November with few alternations. The new version gave more extensive powers to the republican government, although the Federal Assembly maintained its power over the crucial matters such as economic and financial strategy, foreign policy, defence, ethnic minority affairs and in the case of an emergency also of energy distribution. Notwithstanding, the central issue – power – sharing was not tackled as the officials did not manage to settle precise parameters of decentralization (Obrman and Pehe, 1990).

Not only were the negotiations to address power-sharing of the state long-drawn-out, but they failed to produce a comprehensive solution to the conflicting issue. The very

final solution that addressed the problem of power-sharing was the passing of the two constitutional amendments by the Federal Assembly after the election in 1992, on 8 October 1992. The amendments distributed the federal powers among the two republics, as well as reduced the amount of federal ministries from previous number of fifteen, to only five (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). But this was after what the leaders already decided to dissolve a country. Additionally, the economy was also a conflicting matter that played an important role in deterioration of the discussions. The Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus himself pinpointed that the economy was the factor for which the negotiations were dragged on. Slovak foot-dragging jointly on economic and the power-sharing issues were said to be the factors that complicated and prolonged the debates, as well as the cause of the Czech frustration (Young, 1994).

The power-sharing debates once again bear the signs of slowness. Here it is demonstrated that power-sharing was yet another issue that Czechoslovak leaders found difficult to tackle. After the talks that commenced on 8-9 August 1990 by the meeting in Trenčianske Teplice, the ultimate version of the document that finally settled the dispute was accepted on 12 December 1990. But even then the central issue of power-sharing was not comprehensively addressed as the leaders did not set the precise parameters of decentralization. The politicians accepted their incapability to come up with the solution that would serve the needs of all and so they agreed to disagree. Once again, as in the previous case of debates on the form of state, the step of politicians to agree to disagree, to rather dissolve the country than to give up on their demands and find a common solution is a sign of a low level of elite accommodation. As in this case we are examining pace of the events as an indicator of the level of elite accommodation, henceforth it is important to realize that the final agreement on the power-sharing required about 5 months of negotiations, 6 official meetings, and two revisions, before it was reached. In other words, the pace of these negotiations was tedious and slow, that diminishes a level of accommodation of Czechoslovak elites.

The New Constitution

A deep constitutional uncertainty accompanied Czechoslovakia since the end of the Velvet Revolution, through the elections in June 1992 and even beyond. The second crucial topic of the heated discussions was the constitution as a whole. In Czechoslovakia the old constitution did not serve the then-current needs and needed to be revised. Additionally, there was also a need to draft the constitutions for each republic. The officials were realizing that such complex tasks, being the revision of an old constitution and draft a two new constitutions demands a long time. As that process in that particular moment seemed as not pressing, the talks regarding the finishing of the federal constitution were postponed and agreed to be reopen at the next elections (Schwartz 1991). After the election, President Václav Havel met the Slovak Prime Minister Ján Čarnogurský on 5 September 1991 with the objective to plan the further steps that needed to be taken in order to set the preparations of all three (federal and of each republic) constitutions (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). The talks took place also because of the growing tensions between the two rival groups: on one side a group of Czech and federal representatives, and the group of Slovak authorities on the other. The outcome of the talks was that issues, which gained the consent of both sides, were listed and a new deadline for finishing the constitution (end of 1991) was planned. However, these were mainly marginal matters. By the new deadline all of Czechoslovakia's constitutional setup basic documents were supposed to be completed. Although the disputes over the constitutions tried to be resolved from the very beginning of the transition to democracy in 1990, the elites failed to resolve them even during 1991 and 1992. The happenings that followed after determined fate of constitution, as well as of the state (Schwartz 1991). Eventually, the events that followed after the elections in 1992 led to the approval of the legislation on the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation, understandably, there was no more need to discuss or establish a common federal constitution. Therefore, no additional meetings connected with constitutions occurred.

The negotiations regarding the constitution can be traced from the first post-revolution official meetings until the moment when the republican leaders agreed on the dissolution of the state in the second half of 1992. Definitely the pace of the constitutional talks was anything, but quick. The level of the elite accommodations is therefore in this case once again weakened and considered low.

The path towards the agreement on the dissolution of Czechoslovakia

Another focal point of the debates was a state treaty. During the mediations on 3-4 February 1991, of which the objective was the preparations of a new constitution, the chairman of the Slovak nationalist political party named Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) presented an order in which the constitutions should be approved after the documents were finalized. The order recommended that firstly, the republic constitutions should be approved individually, that they should be followed by the agreement to enter the state treaty, and only afterwards the voting on the approval of a federal constitution should be commenced. As Jiří Pehe (1991a, 6-7) described, such a scenario would indirectly guide to what nationalist groups were aiming for “the de facto declaration that Slovak laws have precedence over those of the federation”. The KDH gained the support of its coalition partners; the Public Against Violence (VPN) and the Slovak Democratic Party; concerning the proposed order. However the order was strongly opposed by Václav Havel who coined the order as unconstitutional as neither republic had a state of sovereignty, which according to international law enables a state to sign a state treaty (Pehe, 1991a).

On 12 September 1991 a document “Initiative for a Sovereign Slovakia” was signed by Vladimír Mečiar and other thirty-four representatives of the Slovak political elite. The document called for the National Slovak Council to approve a ‘full constitution, by full meaning a document with content different from the federal constitution, as well as to approve the declaration of Slovak sovereignty issued on 7 March 1991 by five Slovak nationalist groups. However, the Slovak National Council rejected the request as well as any other bids to force a vote on the document (Kraus & Stanger, 2000).

The Czechoslovak relations grew complicated. František Mikloško, the chairman of the Slovak Parliament lodged a complaint on 28 October 1991 about debates on the fate of Czechoslovakia being too tedious and long – eight months (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). This demonstrates that there was a growing frustration not only on the Czech side, but also that the Slovak elites were becoming impatient. The relations were aggravated by still existing disagreements about the fundamental issues; the nature of the state treaty and the division of the powers. The leading politicians of both republics met with Václav Havel in Hradáček also on 3 November 1991 to debate on

mentioned constitutional issues. Later on another meeting took place on 11-12 November 1991. Regardless the number of conducted meeting, the Slovak Presidium was not capable of reaching consensus. The Czech Prime Minister Pithart described a situations as a “failure” (Jiří Pehe, 1991d).

As no progress was made and all the talks led only to a stalemate, on 17 November 1991 Václav Havel presented a proposal to the Federal Assembly for the approval of five constitutional amendments, most of which the Federal Parliament rejected. After months of debates, a step forward was finally made on 9 February 1992 in Milovy (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). The present politicians agreed on defining the future of the relationship between the two republics and on keeping the country together, accordingly a treaty was drafted. Nevertheless, it was immediately rejected by the presidium of Slovak parliament. The happenings were labelled by federal Prime-Minister Čalfa as the commencement of the partition of the Czechoslovakia (Musil, 1997).

The above-mentioned negotiations were yet another chain of meetings marked by the slow pace. We can actually understand them as the continuation of the constitutional talks that were complicated by the appearance of the disputes over the new matters; the state treaty and the order of approval of the constitutions. We derive from this that the level of elite accommodation decreases with the prolongation of negotiations.

General Elections 1992

The general elections were held on 5 and 6 June 1992 with the victory of Václav Klaus’s Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic and Mečiar’s Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) in Slovakia. Henceforth, the first rounds of the talks on the future of the relationship between the republics started in Brno on 9 June 1992, where Klaus explicitly expressed his reluctance to become a prime minister of the federal parliament (Leff, 1996).

The second round of talks took place in 11 June 1992. However, the two republics had a different vision of the Czechoslovakia. These two visions were incompatible, as the Slovak side continued to demand the creation of a confederation and the Czech side favored a continuation of federation. Further talks were necessary. Therefore, the

representatives met again on 17 June 1992, but once again they failed to find an accord on the principles of a new federation. By the end of the June 1992, the two republics' governments were sworn in. Mečiar proclaimed on 23 June 1992 that the new government of Slovakia would declare the republic's sovereignty in July and subsequently, adopt a new Slovak constitution (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). On 2 July 1992, a federal government was also sworn in. On 16 July 1992 the Federal Assembly approved a program of the federal government proposed by Prime Minister Jan Stráský, in which the Prime Minister called for the republics' parliaments to find a compromise over the future of Czechoslovak relations by the end of September 1992. In the end, on 22 and 23 July 1992 Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar reached an agreement to submit a law with the name "On the End of the Federation" by 30 September. By the consent of both leaders, the Czechoslovak Security and Information Agency would be split by approval of this document. (Leff, 1996)

After the representatives of both republics agreed on the dissolution of the country, the Federal government approved, and the Federal Assembly later submitted, a draft law on the abolition of the Czecho-Slovak Federative Republic. Subsequently, there was a necessity to pass a bill on the dissolution of the federation. On the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution (17 November 1992) the parliaments of both republics urged the Federal Assembly to do so. Therefore, the voting procedure took place on 18 November 1992, however unsuccessfully. The approval of the legislation on dissolution failed to gain the majority by only three votes in the Slovak section in the Chamber of the Nations (Musil, 1997). It was blocked by opposition deputies, which were asking for the 'ratification referendum regarding the split to be held. A week later, on 25 November 1992 the Federal Assembly finally succeeded in approving the legislation on the dissolution of Czechoslovakia by passing it by a three-vote majority (Leff, 1996). Afterwards, the leaders continued the talks on the breakup of the country on 26 August 1992 in Brno. Ultimately, Klaus and Mečiar agreed on the breakup of Czechoslovakia and on the republics functioning as separated and sovereign states by 1 January 1993 (Kraus & Stanger, 2000).

Here we can see that once the leaders found consent to submit law names "On the End of the Federation" the negotiations gained a faster tempo. Although the approval on the dissolution of the state within the Federal Assembly was firstly slow down by

the Slovak section of the Chamber of the Nations (that also indicates the split in opinion on confederation within the Slovak elites), shortly after one week the Federal Assembly finally approved the legislation on the dissolution of the state (Musil, 1997).

The pace of the negotiations was faster once after the Czech side changed their stance, which was a result of the election of new leader, Václav Klaus. Therefore we could say that the level of elite accommodation grew by the change of leadership. However, we cannot say that, as the evidence above demonstrate that the leaders could not find a compromise on the fundamental issue. The only solution they found was a dissolution of country, but this however is linked with the sign of an intransigence; that is contrary to accommodative behavior. Later we will see how leaders gradually continued on the dissolution of the country. Neither of them wanted to drag the talks anymore as they became tedious and were already going on since early 1990. Such a situation strengthened the motivation of leaders to find a settlement quickly, although it would have be the dissolution of the country.

The dissolution of the state

After the agreement on the breakup of Czechoslovakia was reached on 26 August 1992, the negotiations became faster, but not smoother, neither less complex. The leaders of the two republics needed to decide on the precise steps that would be taken in order to part the country. They expressed their unwillingness to protract the negotiations any longer, especially Czech leader Václav Klaus. He said that “every day this country is losing the chance for economical revival, the chance for stability, and that is something which no politician can or should have the right to accept” (FBIS, 12 June 1992, 19). The promised deadline to resolve the crucial constitutional matters set on 30 September 1992 accelerated the pace of the negotiations. By the end of September, the bargaining sides managed to find a consent regarding the steps that would be conducted to part a country. They agreed on the main principles that would determine the relationship between the two republics after the partition of Czechoslovakia as well. It did not take a long time for leaders to set another deadline (1 January 1993) by which Czechoslovakia should cease its existence. Afterwards, only within four months, the steps such as negotiating, drafting the agreements and their signing took place at the following crucial meetings: in Jihlava on 6-7 October,

in Javorina on 25-26 October, in Zidlochovice on 9 November 1992 and in Bratislava on 23 November (Young, 1994). Robert Young (1994) described this period as one of “frenetic political activity”, when many matters were left behind unresolved, but once the republics’ representatives made the decision to part the country “no time was lost” (ibid., 41). As promised, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist by the end of the night of 31 December 1992 and since 1 January 1992 the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic have functioned as two new separate and sovereign republics (Kraus & Stanger, 2000).

The strong level of elite accommodation assumes quick negotiations and swiftly met compromises. However, as shown above, the negotiations during the Czechoslovak partition were protracted and the disputes that started clashes between the elites’ opinion regarding the constitutional talks started in 1990 were dragged on all the way until the elections in 1992. After the elections, although the crucial meetings that divided the country were already swifter, the whole process took about three years time. Robert Young pointed out a reason for the prolonged negotiations claiming that the Slovak Nationalists persistently delayed and modified the reforms that at the end complicated the finding of a settlement. He described the situation stating that “Slovaks were not clear about their intent to secede until relatively late in the game, and their vacillation and uncertainty hindered settlement of outstanding constitutional differences within the union” (Young, 1994, vi).

After the elections in 1992 the new leadership sped up the pace of negotiations. Obviously the process of partition of state itself was conducted swiftly; we can say that the level of elite accommodation grew stronger. But still, the negotiations on the future relationship of the two nations also faced many obstacles and were too complicated, many meetings needed to be conducted.

To conclude the whole subchapter on the indicator “the pace of the negotiations”, we can see from the evidence that except the process of partition itself, the negotiations on all the other matters were protracted and lengthy. Therefore we can conclude that the pace of these negotiations indicated the low level of elite accommodation. The above mentioned events demonstrate that the talks were oftentimes complicated by the Slovak side blocking the approvals of agreements, unwilling to compromise, as

well as strengthening their nationalist demands. The more comprehensive study on the complications of settling the compromise will be provided in the following chapter, in which the second indicator “the compromise” will be addressed.

3.2 The willingness to compromise

This subchapter is dedicated to the examination of the indicator of elite accommodation number 2; the compromise. More specifically, I will have a close look at the negotiations with the objective to see whether the compromise was met easily or whether there were any complications. If the complications were present, then it is further in our interest to study what was the cause of these complications. Based on the hypothesis, the main argument regarding the compromise is that when the level of strength of elite accommodation is high, the compromise will be met without any complications. However, if the negotiations lead to a stalemate and if the documents are repeatedly being rejected, that shows unwillingness to compromise and therefore is a sign of a low level of elite accommodation. As the hypothesis is that the high level of elite accommodation in Czechoslovakia was a necessary factor that helped to maintain the peace during the partition, we assume that there was a high level of elite accommodation. This suggests that we can expect to find many easily met agreements satisfying all sides, no rejected documents and especially no stalemates. However the main findings reached after conducted research indicates that the willingness to compromise was especially coming from the advocates of the federation and Czech elites (until the elections 1992). The Slovak elites showed an obstinacy and unwillingness to compromise on their demands.

The hyphen war

The negotiations about the name of the country were the first talks between the Czech and Slovak elites that bore the first complications. These complications led to the prolonged disputes later labeled as the hyphen war. In the review of the events in the previous chapter¹ we could see that Václav Havel, then President of Czechoslovakia proposed the three options for the new name of the country. However the all three proposals were rejected by the Slovak National Council, which condemned the

¹ In order to prevent from repeating myself regarding the events, I will oftentimes refer to the previous

proposals stating that they put the Slovak nation into a subordinate position towards Czechs. Therefore they have proposed a new name “Federation of Czecho-Slovakia”. Nevertheless, this time the Czech side opposed the name as inappropriate to use, as it brought back the bad memory of German occupation (Žák, 1997).

Slovaks insisted on incorporation of the hyphen and capital S into the new name to express that the Czechoslovak Federation is a country of two equal nations. After four months of debates the republics obtained a right to use the name which they perceived convenient for them, therefore the federation was, in the Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia (without a hyphen) and, in the Slovak Republic, Czecho-Slovakia (with hyphen). The demands for formal equality were of great importance to Slovaks. It was felt during the negotiations that all of the sudden even the politicians that before did not show much interest in nationalistic issues, became eager nationalists during the hyphen war (Leff, 1996). The debate on the name as well as on the reformation of the state resulted in the debates marked with frequent stalemates regarding the matters on which the agreement was already reached. As P. Kopecký described it, “the debate had produced the climate of almost total political immobility as well as adversity and distrust between the politicians” (Kopecký, 2000).

To conclude the whole “war”, although the compromise was met (that both sides could choose the name they liked), the debate spurred a nationalistic feeling on the Slovak side. Slovak nationalists were later trying to push through more and more nationalistic demands regarding Slovak sovereignty. Looking at the fact that the compromise was met, we could conclude that the level of elite accommodation was high. Even so, these debates manifested obstinacy on the Slovak side and an unwillingness to adjust their demands. Therefore the level of elite accommodation can be in this case described as weakened by intransigence of Slovak elites.

The compromise to give up on the negotiations

The negotiations regarding the constitutions, their order of approval, the power-sharing, as well as the form of the state was finalized in the period after the elections of 1992. This actually occurred when both sides agreed that it was impossible to resolve it, and terminated the disputes by agreeing on the dissolution of the state. In the previous chapter we saw that all the negotiations were lengthy, the meetings frequently repeated and many did not resolve the main issues. In the previous chapter we could see that as the leaders met an impasse on the constitutions and power sharing, and after numerous conducted meetings, they agreed to postpone the further talks for after the general elections in 1992. This proves the low level of elite accommodation, as the sides were unable to find a compromise.

The negotiations were oftentimes dragged on and blocked by the Slovak side, especially by Slovak nationalists in the beginning. There were 6 official meetings conducted and two revisions until it finally looked like that the agreement on power-sharing was settled (on 21 November 1990). The Slovak national Party SNS and eight other smaller Slovak political parties rejected the very first accord met in Trenčianske Teplice. SNS urged for the constitution to be rewritten in such a way, that Slovakia would be seen as an independent state. The Slovak National Party was intransigent in their demands. Czech Prime Minister Pithart replied to SNS that the presented constitutional draft was the only possible alternative on how to disintegrate the state. Subsequently SNS reacted by voicing their opinions during the memorial celebrations of Slovak Nationalist Andrej Hlinka that followed on 25-26 august 1990 (Leff, 1996). The SNS proponents yelled slogans like ‘down with the Czechoslovak federation, or “long live the Slovak state.” Therefore further talks on power-sharing were required. Although the agreement on power-sharing was made in the Prague on 5 November, the leaders failed to agree on its central issue. Despite the fact that the Slovak National Council also approved it on 29 November, the Council was meanwhile preparing the declaration on supremacy of Slovak laws over federal laws (Kraus & Stanger, 2000).

On the same time, the Slovak Prime Minister Mečiar and the Foreign Minister of Federation Dienstbier agreed on establishment of an institution for international relations that was supposed to be headed by a member of the Slovak government. This was one of the first signs of the Slovak’s will for a looser federation and greater

autonomy. Later on, the Slovak National Council refused to accept an emergency bill approved by the Federal Government as they believed that it preserved too much power to the federal government (Leff, 1996). Young (1994) observed that the pace of the negotiations was drawn by the side that was least ready to compromise. According to him the advantage was in the hands of that side that was ready to accept the partition of the state and its consequences, which he claimed was from the beginning the Slovak side.

Referring to the negotiations regarding the constitutions and the state treaty, the key point to highlight is the intransigence of Slovaks demonstrated firstly by insisting on approving the state treaty before the approval of the constitutions, secondly Mečiar's urging the Slovak National Council to approve the Slovak constitution and declaration on Slovak Sovereignty from 7 March 1991, and finally the Slovak Parliament's presidium's rejection of Milovy accord, a treaty that talked about keeping the country together. All these events show there was a will on part of the Slovak elite that wished for the greater autonomy of Slovakia and denied the classic federal form that was already established. Their rejection of any accords on the federal form of the state indicates the unwillingness to compromise or to give up their demands, which further manifests the low elite accommodation. The elections of 1992 finalized the stalemate on the constitution talks.

After the elections of 1992

The results of the general elections 1992 produced a shift in the stance of the Czech side. The change was caused by the elections of a new leader Václav Klaus. He was rigidly committed to defend the federal form as the best possible form of Czechoslovakia. Actually, that was the only possible form that he was open to agree on. His main focus was aimed at economic reform and tighter federation. This vision did not comply with the Slovak presidium. As already mentioned, Slovaks, and especially the new leader Vladimír Mečiar, preferred a loose and decentralized confederation (Mlynář, 1992). However, in the opinion of Václav Klaus, this form of the state was intolerable. The elections were won by the two leaders who were not capable of settling an agreement on how to further continue the existence of the state, and therefore it led them to the question whether they should continue its existence. As we have observed, although the Slovak side was most of the time the one to

complicate the debates, reject the proposals and in the case of the nationalist parties those who were pushing for the request of Slovak sovereignty, at the end Czechs led by Klaus were the ones who started the actual process of dissolving the country (Leff, 1996). Klaus declared the federation to be dead as he commented that it was evident that the visions of such a divisive character were evidently incompatible and therefore it was impossible to reach a compromise. Mečiar accused Klaus stating that he “decreed the state after forty minutes” (Vladimír Mečiar, Interview with *Le Monde*, 7 July 1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-131, 8 July 1992) and forced the Slovak side to agree on the partition of the country. But we can see from the events previously described in the chapter “the pace of the negotiations” that Vladimír Mečiar was neither much willing to abandon, nor adjust his vision of decentralized confederation.

The Process of partition

The Process of partition was just as complicated as the negotiations on the continuation on the state that preceded it, although the settlement was made quickly. The revision of the constitution needed the support of at least three-fifths of both chambers of the Federal Assembly; however the federal government did not have enough of the required votes. HZDS even supported the Czech opposition in October 1992 to help pass the nonbinding resolution. This resolution was supposed to scrutinize the ‘Czech-Slovak Union, that was actually a confederal structure similar to what had been proposed by HZDS previously. The idea of the “Czech-Slovak Union” expressed a kind of will of joint coexistence between the two republics. Since the Czech Prime Minister already spurned HZDS’s proposal of confederation, as the “Czech-Slovak Union” had an identical structure as the Mečiar’s previous proposal, Klaus rejected it. At this instant the governing Czech majority was the one to impede the continuation of the common state. He stated that any alternative other than dissolution of the state was just deleterious, as it was already too late and the only best solution that the elites could opt for was the Velvet Divorce. After two failed attempts, the Federal Assembly finally agreed on parting the federation (Pehe, 1992c).

The happenings manifest the change of the Czech approach to the negotiations from the one before the elections. The reason for the change was simply the new government that championed the federation and was not willing to step aside and led HZDS to fulfil its vision of a confederal Czechoslovakia. The Slovak side was not

ready to succumb to the federal vision of Václav Klaus and his supporters. This is a clear demonstration of the unwillingness to compromise expressed by both the Czech and Slovak sides. Certainly, it is an indicator of a very low level of elite accommodation.

To conclude this subchapter, we can say that the Slovak side blocked the majority of the negotiations. Slovaks unwillingness to agree on a majority of the issues compelled the Czech Republic to step aside on the important matters. In the cases when an impasse was reached and an agreement impossible, both sides were ready to accept the impasse and the consequences that it carried. The negotiations on the form of the state and constitutions were finalized in the period after the elections of 1992, when both sides accepted the impasse. The character of the meetings changed when the parliament changed after the elections of 1992. The new Czech leader approached the issue of the form of the state determined not to cease to Slovak requests of a looser decentralized confederal form. The events and attitudes of the leaders from after the elections of 1992 manifest the high intransigence from both sides. Therefore I conclude that the lack of a compromise proven in this subchapter manifests the weak and low level of the elite accommodation in Czechoslovakia.

3.3 The fragmentation of Czechoslovak political parties

This part of the analysis focuses on the inner clashes of the political parties in Czechoslovakia. The fundamental issues regarding the political form of the country and the constitutional matters did not evoke the disputes only between the Czech and Slovak politicians, but clashes in opinions emerged also within the factions. The incompatibility of these opinions caused the fragmentation of the two main political parties; Civic Forum in the Czech Republic, and the Public Against Violence in Slovakia. As the focus of this thesis is the elite accommodation, the fragmentation of the political parties that occurred during 1990-1992 cannot remain unnoticed. The fact that the variety of opinions over the issues caused the dissolution of particular parties indicates that its representatives preferred the dissolution of the party rather than further talks with the objective of finding an agreement. Such attitude bears a sign of intransigence, which is contrary to the typical attitude characteristic to a strong level

of elite accommodation; the willingness to find a compromise (Eldersveld, Kooiman and van der Tak, 198).

The situation of Czechoslovak political arena after the Velvet Revolution

The Velvet Revolution triggered a boom in the formation of new political parties. Only six weeks after the Velvet Revolution successfully overthrew communism, 40 brand new parties were already established, and the number grew to 100 by July 1990 (Pehe, 1991c, 2). The polarization between the political elites that consequently emerged greatly influenced the pace of events, which ultimately led towards the partition of the state. As Brown (1994) stated “the break up was driven by political polarization of intensely partisan groups who engaged in mutually profitable antagonism” (Brown, 1994, vii). He adds that the political parties together with their leaders were reluctant to make an appeal to broader constituency, and that it was in their interest that referendum on the secession would not be held (ibid.).

The fragmentation started just ten days after the elections in 1990, spurred by the separation of the Liberal-Democratic party from Civic Forum (Czech). Then the demise of the Christian Democratic alliance, caused by Čarnogursky’s proclamation to participate in the Slovak government followed. The alternations happened also within the Communists who created its new form, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Pehe, 1990) However, the dissolution of the Czech Civic Forum, from which Klaus’s new party ODS emerged, and the split of the Slovak VPN from which Premier Vladimír Mečiar walked out and in the aftermath created his own political party, HZDS; had the gravest impact on the partition of the country.

The split of Civic Forum

After the elections in 1990, the Czech political party Civic Forum had a very unclear program and organization. Nevertheless, its representatives decided to maintain such a program and organization and not transform the Civic Forum into a disciplined political party (Pehe, 1990, 15-16). In October 1990 the party elected a new chairman, Václav Klaus. Immediately after this, the right-leaning representatives of Civic Forum formed the Inter-parliamentary Club of the Democratic Right. The other left-leaning representatives instantly felt the need to create a counterpart to this Club, and so consequently the Liberal Club of Civic Forum was formed. In January 1991, Civic

Congress, together with the chairman Václav Klaus and his supports, succeeded in passing the resolution by which the Civic Forum was transformed from a movement into an official political party. However, not all the members were pleased with the new face of Civic Forum; the Club for Socialist Restructuring and the Engaged Nonpartisans withdrew from the Civic Forum as they did not wish to become the members of Civic Forum as of a political party. The Liberal Club was also not delighted by the transformation of Civic Forum into a political Party, but instead of withdrawal, the Liberal Club decided to resist (Draper 1993).

In February 1991, a special congress took place during which the Liberal Club declared its conversion into the Civic Movement, and proclaimed to keep the old loose and nonhierarchical organizational form. In the meantime, Klaus and his group formed the official right-of-centre political party with the name Civic Democratic Party (ODS) (Draper 1993; Pehe, 1991b, 15-16). The political party Civic Forum remained to operate as a loose umbrella of these two newly created formations, although the undertaken changes had weakened it. By April 1991, the federal caucus of the Civic Forum broke down. The Civic movement afterwards also faced difficulties and it proved to be a weak formation. That was proven when six of its deputies left the movement with the objective to join the Social Democrats (Young, 1994).

The split of VPN

Meanwhile in Slovakia, the formation called the Public Against Violence (VPN) that was established in the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution also encountered problems to keep its full composition. The troubles arose when Vladimír Mečiar pronounced his motivation to become a chairman of the formation, transform VPN into a formal political party and highlight especially those nationalistic principles of its program. However, the initiative did not find the support of all the members of VPN. This subsequently erupted into the party's crisis, which set forth on 3 March 1991. On 5 March 1991 then Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar walked out of the VPN council meeting accompanied by fourteen other party members, informing them that they plan to create their own platform with the name For Democratic Slovakia (FBIS, 6 March 1991, 29-33). The VPN crisis divided the party into two groups. On the one side a group led by the representative of the liberal wing Fedor Gál that comprised of

supporters of the original program of VPN that aimed to resolve Slovak national concerns within the federation. On the other side, there was a group led by Vladimír Mečiar that stated that Slovak concerns came before all others. On 17 March 1991 the party passed a vote of no confidence in Vladimír Mečiar, accusing the prime minister of blackmailing his opponents by using the files of the former communist police and of championing the separatist idea (Young, 1994). Despite the happenings, Mečiar expressed his reluctance to resign from the post of prime minister. Nevertheless, after voting, the Slovak parliament dismissed Vladimír Mečiar from his post. The post of Prime Minister of Slovakia was succeeded by Ján Čarnogurský. Čarnogurský was a chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and openly promoted the idea of a full independent Slovakia, but believed it would happen so only after the acceptance of Czechoslovakia into the European Commission. Therefore by that time he did not consider it as the “republic’s most pressing issue” (Rychlík, 2000, 55).

On 1 May 1991 the Slovak political party VPN was officially divided into two formations out of which one continued to operate as VPN with its original program. The other one, based on Mečiar’s platform ‘For Democratic Slovakia, became a new political party called the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) (Rychlík, 2000). Mečiar’s establishment of a new political party and consequential split of VPN was perceived by many as a major strategic move that aggravated a crisis developing in Slovakia. Nationalist and leftie groups showed support to Mečiar. Although their standpoints on how to address economic and national issues of the country diverged; nationalists were demanding a sovereign and independent Slovakia, Mečiar’s HZDS was championing for the coexistence of Czech and Slovak republics under the auspices of common confederation (FBIS, 11 March 1991, 22-23). Later on, Mečiar’s HZDS, together with the Slovak National Party SNS and the Christian Democratic Movement’s splinter group led by Klepáč, submitted a proposal to the Slovak national Council, to pass a ‘declaration on Slovak sovereignty (Rychlík, 2000; Měchýř, 1991).

The split of KDH

The Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) was yet another party to undertake dissolution. The faction parted over opinions regarding the country's form. KDH's nationalistically oriented group led by Ján Klepáč favored a confederal form of Czechoslovakia. A definite split of KDH took part on 7 March 1992 as a consequence of disputes over the Milovy accord. The faction officially withdrew from KDH on the same day and continued its existence as formal political party the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement (SDKH) (Rychlík, 2000). Both parties, the newly formed party SDKH and the remains of KDH, proclaimed to stay in the then ruling Slovakia's government coalition in order to prevent governmental crisis. Under these circumstances, the new governmental coalition consisted of the following political parties; KDH, VPN, DS, MOS and became a minority government (Rychlík, 2000). The split of KDH was yet another factor that contributed to the alternation of a balance of political power in Czechoslovak society.

The division of political elites

As a result of the above-mentioned fragmentation of Czechoslovak political parties, the number of major political parties that the Federal Assembly composed of grew from 6 (in post-election 1990 period) to 12 by mid-1991 (FBIS, 14 February 1992, 6-11), and by the time prior to the elections of 1992, there were in total 42 parties competing for seats (Obrman, 1992a). As shown above, the Czech, and also Slovak political scene was split into groups deeply divided in the opinion regarding the degree of Slovak autonomy. VPN and Democratic Party were advocates of a continuation of Czechoslovak existence as a federation, and were in the favor of only moderate modification of the federation (ibid.).

On the other hand, KDH, HZDS and SNS proposed more extremist demands (Rychlík, 2000). As Young stated "Such a conflicting responses demonstrate the deep divisions that existed in Slovak society" (Young, 1994, 56). Another indicator of this division was the approval of Slovakia's declaration of sovereignty by the Slovak National Council and further adoption of the new Slovak constitution on 1 September 1992. Despite the fact that the document was passed, it had its opponents: former Slovak Prime Minister Ján Čarnogurský and Hungarian deputies, who expressed their disapproval by walking out of the meeting (Young, 1994).

To summarize, the high level of elite accommodation is characterized by strong political parties, coalition formation and a willingness of elites negotiate until they reach an agreement. That does not inherently mean that a high level of elite accommodation does not allow for any existence of divergence in opinions, but it assumes that representatives of elites will rather opt for the continuation of negotiations towards a compromise rather than the fragmentation of a political party. The fragmentations of Czech and Slovak political parties that appeared during 1990-1992 are yet another indicator of a low level of strength of elite accommodation in Czechoslovakia.

3.4 The behavior and attitudes of representatives of Czechoslovak political elites

In order to conduct a comprehensive examination of the level of the elite accommodation of Czechoslovak elites between 1990-1992, it is important to have a close look at the behavior and attitudes of these elites. The behavior and attitudes of politicians serves as great indicator of the level of the elite accommodation. Czechoslovak politicians played a main role in the process of Czechoslovak partition and this role was reinforced even more when it was decided to not to let the public express their will in the referendum. The former president of the Federation Václav Havel was himself realizing the power that Czechoslovak politicians held when he commented that it was “largely up to the politicians which social forces they choose to liberate and which they choose to suppress, whether they rely on the good in each citizen or on the bad” Havel (1993, 4). Therefore, it is greatly essential to make a close study of political elites and their attitudes, especially in this case; the partition of Czechoslovakia. Based on the hypothesis “*A Peaceful CSFR partition was facilitated by the high level of strong inter-elite accommodation*” the expected empirical evidence of this part is negotiations and bargaining when it is evident that the attitude of politicians is directed towards a compromise, cooperation and tolerance of the ideas of others. However, the talks and reactions of Czechoslovak elites did not always prove that the cooperation and finding a solution to problems was prevailingly their main objective.

Václav Havel

When examining Czechoslovak political elites and its representatives, we cannot afford to overlook the position of President Václav Havel and the impact that he had on the whole process of partitioning Czechoslovakia. Many times he was portrayed as a force for unity during the period 1990-1992. Although he did not succeed in preventing the partition of Czechoslovakia, he tremendously contributed in assuring that the partition process had a peaceful character. Together with the governmental and legislative leaders, Havel was the only coordinating mechanism of the talks regarding the constitutions and other fundamental issues, from their very beginning until their end (Young, 1994). As Draper put it: "(Havel) imparted to politics a moral dimension that commanded respect" (Draper, 1993, 20-1).

Havel relentlessly tried to push through for the referendum on sovereignty to take place. He tried by all possible means to guarantee the persistence of the peace during the partition and tried to hamper any chances for the outbreak of violence. In order to strengthen the stability of peace in the country, in 1991 he gave a speech of soldiery in the Slovak town of Trenčín at the time when national fervor was at its peak. He addressed the crowd with the following words: "I would like to stress that our Army must not interfere or take part in this complicated process in any way, under any circumstances. No one must even use this option as a threat or to speculate with it... To play with the idea of the Army influencing internal political events is to disclaim all ideals of our democratic revolution and all the values in which we believe" (FBIS, 15 March 1991, 16). The former president Václav Havel was a great figure in the history of Czechoslovakia not only because of his contribution to the success of the Velvet revolution, but just as equally because of his contribution to the partition of the state that helped to sustain the peace all the way through its process.

In order to study the attitudes and behavior of the Czechoslovak elites at the times before and after the definite decision to part a federation was made, a close look at the negotiations and the statements of politicians made during those negotiations will be offered in the following section.

The frustration over constitutional issues (Time period between 1990 and elections 1992)

As shown previously in the beginning of this analysis, the speed of the discussion concerning the constitutions of the federation, and those of the republics was rather slow. The tedious negotiations resulted from the opposing views of parties' representatives on the fundamental issues that needed to be addressed. Additionally, the whole situation was even more aggravated by the fragmentation of the political parties and the divergence in opinions of the Slovak elites (which we have witnessed in the previous subchapter).

Then president of federation Václav Havel described the situation about the complicated and dragged on bargaining between the Czechs and Slovak on the constitution commenting on the attitude of Slovak's elites saying:

“More than once I have observed work on the constitution made complicated by the fact that Slovak positions held yesterday are no longer held today, and no one can say whether positions held today will still be held tomorrow. And so proposals and demands that at first appeared marginal or absurd are suddenly taken seriously, and defended even by those who, until recently, rejected them – who now adopt them as their own. Unfortunately, they do so not out of conviction but for fear of appearing too half-hearted in their championing of Slovakia's interests” (Havel, 1993, 3).

According to Brown (1994), the hesitation and instability of the Slovak opinion “hindered settlement of outstanding constitutional differences within the union” (ibid., vi). It took a really long time for Slovak elites to make a definite decision on their position towards whether they should leave the federation or not; exactly two years time, and even then not all the representatives of Slovak elites sympathized with such a decision.

During the period of the first talks on constitution, the bargaining sides agreed on the establishment of the National councils, which were given rather extensive competencies. This agreement took place during the first half of 1990. Despite that, the Slovak political forces were intensifying their demands, requesting greater autonomy for Slovakia, and the Slovak government also supported their quest. The Czech and Slovak side clashed when it came to talks about the form of the state. The Czechoslovak elites parted in the answer to this question into two blocks; on one side there were Czech representatives together with pro-federalists representatives advocating the continuation of Czechoslovakia to exist as a federation, on the other

side there were Slovak political elites championing the confederal form of Czechoslovakia. KDH, as a political party belonging to the latter group publically addressed its demand for the establishment of a confederal Czechoslovakia so that Slovakia could enter then the European Commission “as a sovereign and equal entity” (Martin, 1990, 56). Czech sides opposed a confederal form of the state and further negotiations followed. After the chain of conducted meetings the sides finally found a consent regarding the division of powers. As a result of the agreement from Trenčianske Teplice (8-9 August 1990) decision-making power should have been taken from the federal government and placed into the hands of the republican governments by 1 January 1990. Albeit the agreement was already profusely decentralist, it met a rejection jointly from the Slovak Nationalist Party SNS and other eight smaller parties (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). While KDH spoke in support of the Trenčianske Teplice’s agreement, their further demands were also marked by nationalist and pro-sovereignty language. Then president Václav Havel blamed some Slovak politicians of brinkmanship and rabbleroxing, pointing to the polls conducted that year demonstrating the wish of the populace of both republics to remain living in the common Czechoslovak state. He claimed, “the attempts to divide the state constitute a high-powered play of politicians and do not reflect the interest of ordinary people” (FBIS, 11 December 1990, 11).

The crisis linked with the bipolarity of the elite’s interests regarding the form of the state, and with the expansion of demands from Slovak nationalists and radical political parties developed even more profoundly in the year that followed. On 7 March 1991 the radical representatives of the nationalistic demands issued a Declaration of the Sovereignty of Slovakia, proposing a guideline towards the independence of Slovakia (Kraus & Stanger, 2000). Vladimír Mečiar, who held a post of prime minister back then, immediately rejected the document and henceforth proposed demands for Slovak sovereignty grew only stronger and were gaining more participants.

The talks on the future relations of Czechs and Slovaks (Time period after the elections of 1992)

Until the elections of 1992, the Slovak nationalist parties, above all KDH and SNS, were championing for the independence for Slovakia, but these demands did not comply with the Czech side's vision of the Czechoslovak form of state. The situation turned around when the advantage shifted from the Slovak side to the hands of the Czech government. The change happened right after the elections of 1992 when the Czech government led by new Prime Minister Václav Klaus became more determined in its standpoint, expressing a reluctance to accept any other form of the common state than functional federation. Sudden intransigence of the Czech side left the newly elected Vladimír Mečiar in astonishment, as was evident from his interview conducted by French newspaper *Le Monde*. The head of the Slovak government commented on the behavior of Czech Prime Minister stating:

“Voyez-vous, nous nous trouvons dans la situation suivante: la partie tchèque nous propose de constituer immédiatement deux États indépendants, sans même une monnaie commune. Nous, nous proposons une confédération, avec un marché commun, une défense commune et également en commun la protection des droits civiques. Mais les Tchèques ont refusé. Ils veulent un accord sur la partition avant le 30 septembre, alors que les Slovaques, à cette date, ne veulent qu'un accord sur l'avenir. Les Slovaques veulent empêcher la désintégration: les Tchèques proposent soit une fédération, soit deux États....

M. Klaus ne m'a pas surpris. Ce qui m'a surpris, c'était l'agressivité de son entourage qui, dès la première rencontre à Brno, a décrété la désintégration de l'État au bout de quarante minutes de discussions. Ils ne se rendent pas compte de ce qu'ils font! Nous ne voulons pas l'indépendance, on nous y pousse.”

“You see, we are in the following situation: the Czech side proposes to create two independent states immediately, without a common currency. We propose a confederation with a common market, a common defense and also shared protection of civil rights. But the Czechs refused. They want an agreement on the partition before September 30, while the Slovaks, by that date, do not want an agreement on the future of state. The Slovaks want to prevent the disintegration: the Czechs offer either a federation or two states Mr. Klaus did not surprise me. What surprised me was the aggressiveness of his entourage, at the first meeting in Brno, decreed the disintegration of the state after forty minutes of discussion. They do not realize what they are doing! We do not want the independence, into which they are pushing us”

²(Vladimír Mečiar, Interview with *Le Monde*, 7 July 1992, in FBIS-EEU-92-131, 8 July 1992, p. 4).

An anonymous commentator described the plight by saying that it was “as if Mečiar pounded at Klaus’s door without really wanting to knock it down; to Mečiar’s surprise, Klaus opened the door, and Mečiar fell in” (Draper 1993, 26).

Klaus was highly determined to end a dysfunctional federation and he expressed his wish already prior to the elections, when he said that “if there won’t be a reasonable united state, a reasonable federation, it will be necessary to decide in a quick and intelligent manner on a different way” but he added “our priority is a reasonable common state” (NYT, 7 June 1992, L-3). In the light of these events, the Czech government expressed its full readiness to accept the partition of the federation, if necessary. Mečiar described Klaus’s rejection to his proposal of the establishment of a Czechoslovak confederation as a “joke” and accused him of being the first to suggest an option “of a single, centralist state or disintegration” which he perceived as being way too extreme (FBIS, 10 June 1992, 14).

On 17 June the two prime ministers met in order to bargain the future of the federations, but they failed to reach a compromise. Mečiar suggested a coexistence of the two internationally recognized republics under the auspices of a common confederation that he imagined as a loose defense and economic community. Klaus turn down this idea by labeling it a “nonstandard entity” and was asking the Slovak government to finally choose one of the that they had previously offered. For this reason Vladimír Mečiar stated that Czechs “say Slovakia has to make a unilateral step leading to the total disintegration” of the country, but “that is not what we want” (NYT 17 June 1992, L-14).

At a further meeting the prime ministers would eventually agree on the creation of a temporary federal government. This institution would be given a prerogative power to solve any constitutional problems, but especially gradually prepare Czechoslovakia towards the partition (Obrman, 1992a). Klaus highlighted that “the federal

² Translated from French by Adriana Valkova

government understands its mandate as temporary” (NYT, 20 June 1992, L-3) and added that in that instant “(they) are not “pre-determining the results, our duty is to take part in the creation of a process which will make it possible to see this choice with clarity” (FBID, 22 June 1992, 20). The Czech government changed its opinion on the form of the state. After major talks on 19-20 June, Klaus’s ODS stated that it did not “consider a confederation of two republics as two subjects of international law to be a common state, but a union of two independent states” (FBIS, 22 June 1992, 12). The KDS declared that they “(prefer) the constitutional separation of the current state to this confederation” (FTL, 22 June 1992, 1).

Under these circumstances, even the president Václav Havel, that was until then a strong supporter of a federation adjusted his rhetoric and commented on the then events with following words:

“I share the view that the stake of uncertainty cannot be prolonged forever and the sooner the decision is taken the better. Every day of delay increases the unfortunate consequences of uncertainty – moral, economic, international-legal, and political. The very agony of the common state, its gradual collapse, or an unruly break-up would turn against all citizens” (Keesing’s, June 1992, 38945). But at the same time the president insisted that the people should be given a right to choose the fate of their country in referendum. Additionally, he declared his intentions to run on the presidential elections 1992. His intentions to be reelected as president were hampered by Mečiar’s HZDS and the former communist party, as the Slovak deputies did not support him. Klaus pinpointed the fact that Václav Havel was elected only by Czech deputies as “yet another step casting doubt on the common state” (Obrman, 1992b, 3). With this in mind, Václav Havel tried to warn the public from the irresponsible politicians and encouraged the citizens to avoid giving their vote to “people for whom power is more important than the fate of the nation, people who hide conceit and pride behind their indulgent smile, people who are not able to listen to others but are full only of their own importance” (NYT, 6 June, 1992, 3).

In the final analysis of this subchapter, from the mentioned above we can derive that the attitudes and behavior of the representatives of both, Czech and Slovak elites, were vastly marked by a unwillingness to compromise. The biggest indicator of this is the fact that they had failed to produce a consensus on the form of the state that

consequently led towards the partition of the country. The above quotations also manifest the adverse behavior between the leaders and that is certainly not a sign of the cooperation. Thereupon we can derive from the collected data that the level of the elite accommodation was low.

3.5 The reaction of the predecessor state

In the previous subchapters in order to test the hypothesis *A peaceful Czechoslovak partition was facilitated by the high level of strong elite accommodation* the following the tested indicators; the pace of the negotiations, the willingness to compromise, the fragmentations of the political parties and the attitudes and behavior of elites disproved the hypothesis. Because the peace during the Czechoslovak partition was maintained, based on the hypothesis, it was expected to find out from the study that the level of the elite accommodation was high. However, the analyzed indicators demonstrated that the pace of the negotiations was lengthy and tedious, the negotiations to meet a compromise were complex, the willingness to compromise was low, there was a fragmentation of the main political parties and the existence of the adverse behavior and attitude of intransigence. These all are the characteristic signs of weak and low level of the elite accommodation. Therefore this leads us to ask the question (as elites played the main role during the partition process), how was it possible that peace was maintained if the level of elite accommodation was low?

What was the necessary factor that helped maintain the peace during the partition of Czechoslovakia?

The answer is the reaction of the predecessor state (Czechoslovakia) on the Slovak national demands. The realization of the pro-federalist and the Czech side was that it was impossible to reach a consensus on the fundamental issues without which the continuation of existence of federation was not possible. As Václav Havel, pro-federalist and representative of Czech elite, described it “we came to realize that the Slovaks had the right to independence” (Havel, 2000, ix). And they were willing to let Slovaks enjoy that right.

The former president Václav Havel himself played an important role during the negotiations from the very beginning all the way until the decision to cease the country's existence was made. He was one of the majors 'coordinating mechanisms that helped to solidarize the Czech elites as well as the public. He tirelessly tried to push through the referendum at each crisis, although unsuccessfully.

Conclusion

The main objective of this thesis was to contribute to the explanation of the peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia that took place in 1993. This task was undertaken through the study of what impact Czechoslovak political elites - in particular, the level of their elite accommodation – had on peace maintenance during the partition process of the country. The theory introduced by James and Carment suggests that the weak inter-elite accommodation, or nonexistent accommodation in the society is a necessary factor that increases the chance for escalation of an ethnic conflict. Assuming that the definition of peace inherently means the absence of violence, I derived my hypothesis accordingly; *the peaceful Czechoslovak partition was facilitated by the high level of strong elite accommodation*. However, it is important to highlight that the level of elite accommodation is considered a complementary factor that increases the chances for peace maintenance during the state partition. As there were another crucial factors that added to the odds of maintaining the peace during this particular partition; the history of good relations, clear demographic and geographical division and the external factors like for instance the then ongoing bloodshed in the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia, after which created an awareness of what can kind of disaster a ethnic conflict can create, and so Czech and Slovak elites were motivated to prevent it. Therefore by my study I aimed to contribute to the other factors.

In order to test this hypothesis I examined the following indicators of the level of elite accommodation; the pace of the negotiations; the willingness to compromise; the presence of fragmentation of political parties; and the behavior and attitudes of representatives of political elites. However the main finding gathered after the research and analysis implied that the level of accommodation of Czechoslovak elites during 1990-1992 was low. This was concluded after gathered evidence, which manifested that the pace of the negotiations was slow, discussion were protracted and oftentimes complicated especially by Slovak elite, especially by its nationalist factions. The events also indicated that the elites were unwilling to compromise, especially on crucial issues. Another factor that indicated a low level of accommodation of Czechoslovak elites was the fragmentation of the main political parties that appeared during 1990-1992. That manifests the division of opinion and

intransigence even within political elites of each nation. The last analyzed indicator of a weak level of accommodation in Czechoslovakia was an antagonistic behavior and attitude between the Czech and Slovak elites that accompanied the talks.

To conclude, as the peace during the process of partition of Czechoslovakia was maintained despite the fact that the level of its elite accommodation was low, the tested hypothesis was disproved. However it is important to state here that the unwillingness to compromise was more characteristic of the Slovak elites than of the Czech, at least until the elections of 1992. Until the elections of 1992, Czechs elites were inclined to accommodative behavior. After the elections, the leadership of the both republics changed and the new presidium of the Czech government was more intransigence than its predecessor. Their new leader Václav Klaus was not willing to drag the negotiations any further, especially after he saw that it was impossible to find consent on the fundamental issues; the form of the country and the future relationship of the nations. His main concern was the negative impact of protracted and inefficient debates on the economy of the country. With the objective to finally terminate the disputes, he proposed two possible solutions with which he was willing to agree; to continue the common cohabitation under the auspices of federation, or to cease the existence of the republic. The Slovak elites were divided into two groups regarding the opinion on what should be the future form of the country. The Prime Minister, Vladimír Mečiar, and his supporters advocated the loose and decentralist confederation, and the other group led by nationalists championed the idea of a sovereign and independent Slovakia. As Mečiar's proposal of confederation was not acceptable for Klaus, he upheld the will of the Slovak nationalists for a sovereign Slovakia. Ultimately, the two leaders agreed to dissolve the country by the end of 1992. Therefore the alternative explanation of how the peace was maintained even though the level of elite accommodation was low can be that it is satisfactory for the peace to be maintained if only one of the bargaining sides is accommodative, and ultimately gives up to the demands of the other side.

I focused in my study at the level of elites accommodation, as on the complementary factor of the peaceful partition in Czechoslovakia. However, I believe that the important factor that helped to maintain the peace was also the fact that the people of the republics did not rebel against the decision of the state to dissolve the country,

despite the fact that polls conducted in 1990-1992 showed that they did not agree with the partition. As violence does not always come from the state but can also be initiated by the people, it is important to study the political behavior of elites in connection with the peaceful partition. It is striking that the Czechs and Slovaks did not rise up against the state, even after the right to express their wish and determine the fate of their state through the referenda was taken away from them. The questions that rises here is therefore “why the people did not rebel, but remained silent, remained peaceful?” Is it rooted in their political culture or was it simply just indifference? The limitation of my study is that I neglected this factor, which was due to the volume constrains of the thesis. But I believe that the study of the political culture of the Czechoslovak public as a complementary factor that helped to maintain the peace would be fruitful as it would positively contribute not only to the study of peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia, but also to the studies of peaceful partitions in general and it would maybe help to facilitate the peace during future partitions.

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