



Czechoslovakia — Va-PoReg Country Report

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08/11/1804 Start Part of Other Country [of Austria]: The territory of today's Czech Republic was under control of the Austrian Half of the Habsburg Empire.¹ Both countries have a long common history. For the first time united from 1253 until 1276 under the reign of Ottakar of Bohemia. They later joined again, with the inheritance of rule over the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary in 1526 under Ferdinand of Austria, under the Habsburg dynasty. In addition to Vienna, Prague also became Habsburg capital and residency. As conflicts between Protestants and Catholics culminated in 1618, the Roman Catholic forces of the Austrian empire defeated the Protestants at the 'Battle of the White Mountain' on 11/08/1620, and emperor Ferdinand of Austria was able to reassert Habsburg authority over the territory. The country lost its status as a kingdom and was henceforth subjected to the absolutist rule of the Habsburgs.² On 08/11/1804, following the founding of the Austrian Empire, the territory was subordinated to it.³

10/28/1918 End Part of Other Country [of Austria, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Democratizing Regime: On this date the Czechoslovak National Council in Prague declared the independence of Czechoslovakia. Both LIED and V-Dem only start to provide data for Czechoslovakia since 1918. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held.

06/05/1919 End Democratizing Regime/Start Liberal Democracy: Due to the postponement of the national parliamentary elections from 1919 to 1920, the municipal elections of 07/15/1919 were de facto the founding elections of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak Constitution adopted on 02/29/1920 guaranteed the universal vote for every citizen including women to every electable body.⁴ However, already the municipal elections of 1919 and the parliamentary elections of 1920 guaranteed these rights. The parliament (National Assembly) had the authority for legislative proposals and was entrusted with supervisory control over both the executive and judiciary branches. National minorities were ensured special safeguards; in regions where they constituted 20% of the population, individuals from minority communities were granted unrestricted rights to use their language in everyday activities, schools, and dealings with authorities.⁵ Due to the multiethnic composition of the society, in this regime period the governing coalitions consisted of up to eight parties (Hodza's third cabinet of 1937).⁶ Consequently, governments were not very stable and reformed frequently, but non-violently. Coalitions would encompass parties in the conservative part of the political spectrum up to socialist parties, indicating a strong willingness to compromise.⁷ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Elections during that period are categorized as competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI and CEI score them as free, fair and clean. LIED classifies political liberties as present until 1937 and as absent in 1938. According to V-Dem's PCLI political liberties were present until 1937 and somewhat present in 1938. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. From 1920 to 1929, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive.

09/30/1938 End Liberal Democracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: From this date on, following the Munich Agreement, political liberties were compromised as Nazi influence grew. We code this regime change event as a foreign intervention acknowledging the Nazi occupation of Sudetenland and the subsequent political pressure exerted on Czechoslovakia. Through the Munich Agreement in which Czechoslovakia was not involved, the Sudetenland was ceded to Germany. On 11/30/1938 Rudolf Beran was appointed as prime minister by President Emil Hácha.⁸ Beran implemented antisemitic policies and banned the Communist Party and later dismissed most members of his cabinet.⁹ LIED continues to code political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI indicates them as what we interpret as somewhat present. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were held.

03/15/1939 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: On this date, German troops entered and occupied Prague. On 03/14/1939, the remaining portion (referred to as the „rump“) of Czechoslovakia was dismantled with the establishment of the Slovak State. The next day, Hungary occupied and took over the remainder of Carpathian Ruthenia. Then, on the following day, the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared.¹⁰ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. For the German occupation, both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicate that political liberties were absent.

04/03/1945 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: Following World War II, the pre-war Czechoslovakia was restored, except for Subcarpathian Ruthenia, which was taken over by the USSR and merged with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.¹¹ However, Czechoslovakia fell under the Soviet sphere of influence, a factor that heavily influenced any plans or strategies for post-war reconstruction.¹² The Third Republic came into being in April 1945 with the creation of the Košice Programme. In Košice, the formation of the new National Front government took place, rooted in discussions dating back to 1943. Beneš retained the presidency, while Zdeněk Fierlinger assumed the role of prime minister, with Klement Gottwald serving as deputy prime minister. The National Front coalition was characterized by the predominance of three socialist parties, KSČ, Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, and Czechoslovak National Social Party. The Slovak Popular Party was prohibited due to collaborationist associations with the Nazis.¹³ The government moved back to Prague after its liberation on 05/10. Political liberties are coded as absent per LIED and can be interpreted as not really present per V-Dem's PCLI. For the year 1946, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were held.

05/26/1946 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, mostly free and fair parliamentary elections were held. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia emerged as the largest party, winning 114 of the 300 seats. Following the elections, Communist leader Klement Gottwald formed a coalition government. However, the Communists gradually tightened their grip on the country. During the rule, the Communists' reprisals against other parties increased. Despite holding only a minority of portfolios, the communists managed to assume control over crucial ministries such as information, internal trade, finance, and interior (which encompassed the police apparatus). Utilizing these ministries, they suppressed non-communist opposition, positioned party members in influential roles, and established a firm foundation for a takeover endeavor. Their efforts were further amplified through media and police channels. The announcement of the reactionary plot, initially declared by Gottwald during the KSČ Central Committee meeting in November 1947, was propagated nationwide through the communist press.¹⁴ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The elections are categorized as competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI scores their electoral freedom and fairness as ambiguous while their CEI scores them as not really clean. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and ambiguous according to V-Dem's PCLI in this period. According to the

Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. For the year 1947, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. For the following year, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

02/25/1948 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Communist Ideocracy: In a situation of increasingly extreme communist tactics, the 12 non-communist ministers resigned. The Communist party took over complete power. The following elections were controlled and won by the communists (Kohut 1989). On 08/20/1968 Soviet leaders grew suspicious of Dubcek's reforms and openings in the Czech political system and decided to invade and remove him from power. Svoboda was appointed as an interim president in the aftermath of Dubcek's removal. However, this is not classified as a regime change but the prevention of a possible regime change initiated by Dubcek (Kohut 1989). According to LIED, both executive and legislative elections were held, but they were not categorized as multiparty. From 1948 to 1967, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. Since 1969, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent. As classified by FH for this regime period since 1972, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. For the communist period, both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicate that political liberties were absent except in 1968 when it indicates that political liberties were not really present.

12/09/1989 End Communist Ideocracy/Start Democratizing Regime: On 12/04/1989 the communist regime leadership resigned in response to massive protests, general strikes and internal discord. This led to the dissolution of the Communist Party and the first government not dominated by Communists (Velvet Revolution). The conservative leadership of the Czech Communist Party abdicated, leaving a rump group to negotiate the transfer of power. The first „government of national understanding” was dominated by leaders of the two main opposition movements: the Civic Forum that had emerged in the Czech lands and its Slovak counterpart, Public Against Violence (Bernhard 1993: 324-325, Friedheim 1993: 483). LIED identifies political liberties as absent and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties are absent. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive.

06/08[+09]/1990 End Democratizing Regime/Start Liberal Democracy: After the general election in June 1990, the majority of key positions in the national government were occupied by Civic Forum leaders, while Public Against Violence dominated in the Slovak regions. These divisions eventually resulted in the split into two separate countries (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 24). The failure to address the Czech-Slovak conflict in 1992 led to a constitutional deadlock, undermining the federation's functionality. Despite this, political parties in both the Czech lands and Slovakia were free to organize and participate in the political arena. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Elections during that period are categorized as competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI and CEI score them as free, fair and clean. The establishment of a twelve-member Constitutional Court in early 1992 marked a significant milestone in establishing a system of checks and balances among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In 1992, three years following the conclusion of the 1989 velvet revolution that terminated 41 years of Communist rule, Czech and Slovak leaders initiated concrete measures to dissolve the 74-year-old Czecho-Slovakian federation. The results of free and fair elections held in June accelerated the dissolution process, culminating in the federation's dissolution by 01/01/1993 (McColm 1993). Per FH, for this regime period between 1990 and 1992, the country is classified as free, scoring between 2 and 4, which we also place in the free category. LIED and V-Dem's PCLI classify political liberties

as present. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also comprehensive.

01/01/1993 End Czechoslovakia [Liberal Democracy]: On this date the ultimate dissolution of the federation culminated after free elections in June 1992 accelerated the separation process. For the time after 01/01/1993, see Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Additional sources (Bernhard 1993, Bradley 2000, Braghiroli 2007, Coakley 1986, Gawdiak 1987, Friedheim 1993, Heimann 2009, Kohut 1989, McDermott/Stibbe 2006, Paul 1983, Saxonberg 2001, Zinner 1963)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Czech_Lands
- ² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bohemia>
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austrian_Empire
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Czechoslovak_Republic
- ⁶ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Czechoslovakia_R: 4
- ⁷ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Czechoslovakia_R: 2-4, Czechoslovakia_V: 1-3.
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Beran
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Czechoslovak_Republic
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechoslovakia#Munich_Agreement,_and_Two-Step_German_Occupation
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechoslovakia#Communist_Czechoslovakia
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Czechoslovak_Republic
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Czechoslovak_Republic
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Czechoslovak_Republic

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