

Czechoslovakia (The Czech Republic after 1992)

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The Czechoslovak Republic is considered as a democracy from 1918 to 1939 (POLITY gives score of 7 from October 28, 1918 to March 17, 1939). The Czechoslovak Republic was proclaimed on October 28, 1918, and a provisional constitution was adopted on November 13, 1918. COW codes the country as an independent state from this date until March 15, 1939. The period from 1918 to 1938 is commonly known as “the First Republic.” Note that Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009) codes the presidents as effective leaders during this period. However, our regional expert suggests that we should code a pure-parliamentary system for this period. Thus, we code the PMs as effective leaders. Our primary source of the PMs is WSM. We also use scholarly sources to confirm the PMs, their SOLS and their entry dates and exit dates.

Based on the Constitution of 1920, Czechoslovakia was conceived as a parliamentary democracy, guided primarily by the National Assembly, consisting of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies (Kohut 1989). The first prime minister of the First Republic was Karel Kramár of the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party (CND)¹. (Note: WSM codes CSD (Czech Constitutional Democracy) as his party, but we find that most sources list his party as CND). He led the National democratic cabinet from January 1918 to July 1919 under the provisional constitution (Kerner 1949, 146). We do not have exact information that confirms whether he formed a coalition government.

Parliamentary elections were held on June 15, 1919. Kramár resigned on July 8, 1919, and gave way to the coalition government headed by Vlastimil Tusar of the Social Democratic Party (CSDS) as prime minister. This is a SOLS change. The Tusar’s first cabinet was composed of the Social Democrats (CSDS), the Agrarians (RSZML: the Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants), the National Democrats (CND), and the National Socialists (CNSS: the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party) (see Smetanka and Pranter 1920, 225).

The National Assembly approved a constitution on February 29, 1920, which provided for a president and a bicameral legislature. Parliamentary elections were held on April 18-25, 1920.² As a result of the social democratic election victory, Tusar was able to form his second cabinet on May 25, 1920 (Kerner 1949, 461; Rothschild 1974, 103; Van Duin 2009, 369) in which the Social Democrats (CSDS) held over one-half of the cabinet posts. The second cabinet of Tusar’s included CSDS, the National Socialists (CNSS), and the Agrarians (RSZML) (see Capoccia 2005, 249; Kerner 1949, 147; Miller 1999, 68).³ This is a minor SOLS change. This coalition is known as a center-left “Red-Green” coalition (Miller 1999, 194).

Tensions between CSDS and RSZML made Tusar’s coalition difficult. But, as no other political constellation was feasible, a non-political administration was formed under Jan

¹ Tomas Masaryk was elected president by the National Assembly on November 14, 1918.

² President Masaryk was re-elected on May 28, 1920.

³ Tusar’s second cabinet also contained three experts, including Foreign Minister Benes (Miller 1999, 68) (social democratic/national socialist/agrarian).

Cerný, a bureaucrat, on September 16, 1920 (Crampton 1997, 62; Rothschild 1974, 103). Crampton (1997, 62) describes that “[his government] had no political will or voice of its own and to provide these missing factors the leaders of the five major parties met regularly to give advice and at times direction to the prime minister.” There are two sources that claim it as an interim government (Táborský 1945, 46; Čapek 1931, 100). In addition, there are several sources which describe it as “admittedly a provisional.” We consider Cerný as an interim leader and code no SOLS change.

Edvard Benes of CNSS suddenly appeared as prime minister on September 26, 1921. The basis for the new government was the Petka (PSZMAL, CSDS, CNSS, CSL, and CND) and four nonpolitical experts (Capoccia 2005, 249; Miller 1999, 79). Benes stayed on as a foreign minister, and he retained three experts from the previous government, including the interior minister Jan Cerný (Miller 1999, 79). This Benes’ cabinet is considered as an interim (Rothschild 1974, 106) until new elections. Several other sources describe it as “semi-parliamentary” (e.g., Miller 1999, 78) or “semi-political” (e.g., Capoccia 2005, 249) government. We consider his cabinet as an interim and code no SOLS change. According to Miller (1999, 79), his cabinet included CNSS, RSZML, CND, CSDS and CSL.⁴

On October 8, 1922, Benes fell from power to be replaced by a new coalition led by Antonín Svehla of the Agrarian Party (RSZML). The emergence of Svehla was no surprise, since he was a leader of the Petka and had been prepared to assume the post before Benes. The composition of his cabinet was simply the version of the All-Nation Coalition, shelved by the Petka in 1921, that had served as the model for Benes’ coalition. Each Petka leader stood at the head of his party’s ministerial delegations: RSZML, CNSS, CSDS, CND, and CSL (Capoccia 2005, 249; Miller 1999, 122). This is a SOLS change.

The first Czechoslovak Parliament, after having lived out a six-year mandate, was dissolved in the autumn of 1925 and elections were set for November. Svehla led a second cabinet from December 9, 1925 to March 18, 1926 to deflate the Social Democratic and National Democratic representation in the coalition (Kerner 1949, 157). In his second cabinet, the coalition parties expanded the All-National Coalition (of RSZML, CNSS, CSDS, CND, and CSL) to include the Small Traders Party⁵ (CZOSS) and two experts (Capoccia 2005, 249; Miller 1999, 146). This is a minor SOLS change.

On March 18, 1926, Svehla became ill and scheduled a vacation. A cabinet of experts took over, with Jan Cerný as prime minister and the minister of the interior, along with Benes as foreign minister (Miller 1999, 149). Hoch (1936, 65) describes about this cabinet that “[A]ll the members were officials except for Benes, Englis, and Kallay.” Similar to Cerný’s first cabinet, this is described as an interim cabinet, which run by those picked for their professional expertise rather than party affiliation (Michálek et al. 2006, 431; Táborský 1945, 46). This is not a SOLS change.

⁴ His cabinet included the Agrarians, two Czech Populists, one National Democrat, five socialists: two Czechoslovak Socialists, and three Social Democrats (Miller 1999, 79).

⁵ The Small Traders Party is also known (in English) as Party of Business and Commerce (Miller 1999, 146)

On October 12, 1926, Svehla returned as prime minister. One major change was the absence of the Social Democrats (CSDS) from forming the government, who remained out of office until 1929. It was the only period throughout the First Republic when they were not party of the administration (Capoccia 2005, 249; Crampton 1997, 68; Milner 1999, 149-150). This transition from Svehla's second cabinet is a minor SOLS change. The parties within this government were RSZML, CSL, CZOSS, and most surprisingly, two German parties: German Agrarians (BdL) and German Christian Social Party (DCVP). This coalition is known as the "Green-Black coalition" or "the Gentlemen's coalition" (Miller 1999, 151). The most striking feature was that Czechoslovak, Czech, Slovak, and German parties were all presented. On January 15, 1927, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSL'S) became a participant in the government (Capoccia 2005, 249; Toma and Kováč 2001, 99). This is a minor SOLS change. On April 28, 1928, CND entered into the cabinet once again (Capoccia 2005, 249; Miller 1999, 159). This is another minor SOLS change.

On February 1, 1929, Svehla retired because of illness and was succeeded by Frantisek Udrzal of RSZML. Udrzal's first government remained in power until further the October 1929 elections, when he formed a new coalition cabinet (Miller 1999, 176). Udrzal's first cabinet consisted of RSZML, CND, CSL, CZOSS, BdL, DCVP, and HSL'S (Capoccia 2005, 249). This is not a SOLS change. On October 8, 1929, HSL'S left the coalition because it was upset by the ongoing court proceedings against party ideologue Vojtech Tuka (Miller 1999, 178; Pánek and Tůma 2009, 417; Oddo 1960, 211). This is a minor SOLS change. On December 7, 1929, Udrzal formed his second cabinet. He completed the cabinet with a coalition of RSZML, CSDS, CNSS, CSL, CND, CZOSS, in addition to the German Agrarians (BdL) and Social Democrats (DSAP) and two experts (Benes) (Capoccia 2005, 249; Miller 1999, 179; Kerner 1949, 160; Felak 1995, 65). This is a minor SOLS change. In April 1932 (the information regarding the exact date could not be found), reflecting economic depression, CZOSS, which sought to avoid new sales or excise taxes, withdrew from the coalition and led the replacement of its cabinet member by non-political experts (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs 1948, 2; Kerner 1949, 161; Rothschild 1974, 124). This is a minor SOLS change. Owing to the friction between the Agrarians and the Socialists over the economic programs, Udrzal resigned on October 9, 1932.

Udrzal turned over nearly his entire cabinet to Jan Malypetr of RSZML. Malypetr headed three governments between 1932 and 1935. His first cabinet was composed of RSZML, CND, CSL, CNSS, CSDS, DSAP, and BdL (Capoccia 2005, 249). This is not a SOLS change. From February 14, 1934, he formed second cabinet (Hock 1936, 66; Kerner 1949, 161) with a coalition of RSZML, CSL, CNSS, CSDS, DSAP, and BdL (Capoccia 2005, 249). This is a minor SOLS change because CND left his cabinet. As a result of the national general elections, Malypetr formed his third government on June 4, 1935 (Kerner 1949, 464; Hoch 1936, 66). CZOSS joined again in his cabinet (Kerner 1949, 164), which is a minor SOLS change. Thus, his third cabinet consisted of RSZML, CSL, CNSS, CZOSS, CSDS, DSAP, and BdL (Capoccia 2005, 249).

Malypetr resigned on November 5, 1935 and Milan Hodza became prime minister. Hodza formed four cabinets until 1938. His first cabinet included RSZML, CSL, CZOSS,

CNSS, CSDS, DSAP, and BdL (Capoccia 2005, 249) (No SOLS change). On Dec. 18, 1935, he formed his second cabinet (Hoch 1936, 66), with a coalition of RSZML, CSL, CZOSS, CNSS, CSDS, DSAP, and BdL (Capoccia 2005, 249). This is not a SOLS change. On July 21, 1937, Hodza formed his third cabinet which included RSZML, CSL, CZOSS, CNSS, CSDS, DSAP, BdL, and DCVP (German Christian Social Party) (Capoccia 2005, 249). DCVP joined in the coalition (Auswärtiges Amt 1949, 2), and this is a minor SOLS change. On March, 1938 (the information regarding the exact date could not be found), Hodza formed his fourth coalition of RSZML, CSL, CZOSS, CNSS, CSDS, and CND (Capoccia 2005, 249), which is a minor SOLS change. Hodza resigned on September 22, 1938, over the Sudetenland capitulation. This is the end of the First Republic.

A new cabinet, under General Jan Syrový, was installed and on September 23, 1938 a decree of general mobilization was issued. There are some sources which claim that he was an interim prime minister (e.g., Sandor 1992, 15; Webb 2008, 168). This is not a SOLS change. He was also named as acting president (after the resignation of Benes) from October 5 to November 19, 1938. Under pressure from its Sudeten German minority, supported by neighboring Nazi Germany, Czechoslovakia was forced to cede its Sudetenland region to Germany on October 1, 1938 as part of the Munich Agreement. Although COW codes the country an independent state until March 15, 1939, it seems that the country was in crisis in 1938.

Rudolf Beran of RSZML became prime minister on December 1, 1938. He was the last prime minister before the Nazi occupation on March 15, 1939. It appears that he formed a coalition government. However, we could not confirm his cabinet composition. While Beran and Hodza (the last regular leader) were both from RSZML, it is possible that their cabinet compositions were slightly different, and thus we code a minor SOLS change for the entry of Beran.

During the Nazi occupation, Emil Hácha, who was a nonpartisan, served as the state president of a German protectorate. At the end of World War II, the USSR occupied Czechoslovakia and, in 1945, Hácha was arrested. The CSSR regained independence in May 1945 and immediately thereafter the USSR appointed Edvard Benes, who had formed an exile government in Britain with friendly ties to the Soviets, as president. We code this as a SOLS change. (Note: might not actually be a SOLS change since Benes had been in power right before Hácha who became a German puppet. Need to investigate Benes affiliation pre-1945.) According the US Library of Congress, Benes government “was a National Front coalition in which three socialist parties (the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC), Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party (CSDS), and CNSS) predominated. The Slovak Populist Party was banned as collaborationist with the Nazis. Other conservative yet democratic parties, such as the Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants (RSZML), were prevented from resuming activities in the post-war period. Certain acceptable non-socialist parties were included in the coalition; among them were the Catholic People's Party (in Moravia) and the Slovak Democratic Party” (US Library of Congress 1987). Benes had cooperated with the Soviets to prevent a coup of the Communist Party and instead create a broad coalition government with

the hope of then being able to move the country back to democracy. In fact, we code the CSSR as democratic in 1945 and 1946 under Benes.

Czechoslovakia lived under a non-democratic system for 43 years from 1947 until 1989. It was ruled by a single-party regime, the KSC. In 1946 there was an election in which the KSC won 38% of the vote and Klement Gottwald became “premier at the head of the National Front coalition cabinet, which included Social Democrats and Democrats, as well as Communists” (Cook 2001, 251). Benes’ policies tried to build a bridge between the East and the West. Indeed, Benes wanted to participate in the Marshall Plan but the Soviets did not want Czechoslovakia to be too close to the West. This situation led to a crisis in February 1948 because the Communists were occupying key positions in the police, army, and media services. As a result of the use of the state’s security forces by the Communists, the twelve non-communist cabinet members resigned. In the meantime, the Communist Party obtained control of broadcasting and non-communist ministries and purged the party (US Library of Congress 1987). Gottwald also proposed a new Constitution that established a de facto communist system. Benes refused to sign the new Constitution and then resigned. In the May 1948 elections, the National Front won 90% of the vote, and Gottwald became new president. One of his first actions was to declare the country a People’s Republic. This constitutes a SOLS change because Benes coalition government is replaced by a Communist government under Gottwald and with Soviet support. Geddes also codes the single-party regime starting in 1949.

After Gottwald, there were several presidents who belonged to the same party, the KSC. The last of these presidents was Gustav Husak who ruled the country from 1975 to 1989. His term was characterized as an orthodox communist government, even stronger than the Soviet. Indeed, when Gorbachev came to power, he strongly suggested to the Czech government to implement some reforms. Husak accepted a limited agenda of reforms in 1987 including the secret ballot.

After 1989, Czechoslovakia is considered a parliamentary democracy until its dissolution in 1992. In November 1989 Gorbachev sent a warning to the First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Milos Jakes. This action led to a series of student demonstration. That month, approximately 25,000 students marched in Prague, calling for democracy and free elections in the so-called Velvet Revolution. These demonstrations were severely suppressed by the police, and then Jakes decreed martial law in the country. As a result, there were several casualties. One month later Husak and Jakes were forced to resign because a general strike had paralyzed the country.

After Husak, Marian Calfa (initially KSC) assumed the presidency as a provisional leader (Cook 2001, 174; Skalnik 1996, 95). Even though Calfa was initially an interim leader, he went on to become the regular leader of the CSSR under the banner of the Slovak Public Against Violence (PAV) grouping. Eyal (2003, 147) writes that “Havel took Husak’s place as president, and while communists still ran the country as caretaker prime ministers, true power resided with the Czech Civic Forum and PAV...this control was solidified by a resounding popular mandate produced by the first post-communist elections in June 1990.”

On December 29, Václav Havel, one of the leaders of the revolutionary movement and a member of the Civic Forum, was elected president. According to Banks et al. (2011, 368), before the election, Calfa had resigned from the KSC on January 18 and became a member of PAV. On June 12, President Havel reappointed Prime Minister Calfa (PAV) and asked him to form a new government. On June 27, a 16-member coalition cabinet was sworn in: four from Civic Forum, three from PAV, one from Christian Democratic Movement (CDM; called KDS-CSL by WKB) and eight independents (Europa World Yearbook 2011, 1405). We code a minor SOLS change here. The PAV was dissolved in April 1991 when a founding member of PAV, Meciar (the Slovak PM), was removed from the party and Jan Carnogursky, the Chairman of the CDM, replaced him (Europe World Year Book 2011, 1508). After the dissolution of PAV, Calfa became a member of the Civic Democratic Union (CDU, also called ODU-VPN by Cahoon 2013) in October 1991 (Cahoon 2013). The CDU was created by the remaining members of PAV. This is a minor SOLS change.

Havel tried to maintain the unity of the federation between the Czech and the Slovaks. However, the Slovak premier Vladimir Meciar wanted a different outcome, the separation. So, the June 1992 election was fundamental to decide the future of the country. The electoral outcomes were clear: the nationalist Movement for a Democratic Slovakia was the biggest winner. Due to this result, Havel resigned on July 1992. In July 1992, Jan Strasky (Civic Democratic Party) became a federal premier with all presidential powers except the power to appoint and recall the Federal Government. He essentially was the acting leader (Cahoon 2013; Casper 1997) of the federal system until the “Velvet Divorce” was finalized. Therefore, there is no SOLS change in 1992.

In January 1993, Czechoslovakia split in two republics: the Czech Republic and the Slovakia. The Czech Republic became a parliamentary democracy with Vaclav Klaus of the right-wing Civic Democratic Party (ODS) as the first prime minister. Klaus governed in coalition with the KDU-ČSL (the Christian and Democratic Union) and the ODA (the Civil Democratic Alliance) until 1997. Because of economic problems and corruption scandals, Klaus resigned in November 1997, and President Havel appointed a non-party technocrat, Josef Tosovsky, to lead a caretaker government (Cook 2001, 271; Innes 2001, 224). This is not a SOLS change.

Tosovsky stayed in office from December 1997 to June 1998 when new elections were held, in which the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) won 74 out of 200 seats in the lower house. The Klaus’ ODS received the second most votes and became the main opposition party. The CSSD appointed Milos Zeman as prime minister, and it started a period in which Czech politics was dominated by this party. This is a SOLS change given the different party affiliations of Klaus and Zeman. Zeman was followed by Vladimir Spidla, who led as coalition government with the KDU-ČSL and US-DEU (the Freedom Union-Democratic Union). The coalition government continues when Spidla resigns and Stanislav Gross takes over. After Gross resigns, Jiri Paroubek took over with the same coalition until 2006. In 2006, Topolánek (ODS) entered office. This is a SOLS change. In 2007 the ODS formed a coalition government with the KDU-ČSL and SZ (the Green Party). This is a minor SOLS change.

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Pre-1945 coded by Eelco van der Maat

1945-1992 coded by Arturo Maldonado (Vanderbilt) on August 24, 2010

Post-1992 coded by Arturo Maldonado (Vanderbilt) on August 25, 2010

Pre-1945 revised by Michaela Mattes on June 11, 2012

Pre-1945 revised by Naoko Matsumura June 15, 2013

1945-1992 checked by Michaela Mattes on August 30, 2010

1945-1992 revised by Eelco van der Maat on September 15, 2011

1945-1992 revised by Ashley Leeds on February 27, 2012

1945-1992 revised by Michaela Mattes on March 05, 2012

Post-1992 checked by Michaela Mattes on August 30, 2010

Post-1992 revised by Eelco van der Maat on September 15, 2011

Post-1992 revised by Matt DiLorenzo on July 18, 2012

Combined by Ahra Wu (Rice) on September 9, 2013

Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) 05/22/2014