

*The End of Czechoslovakia. Ed. by Jiří Musil.*

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This book is the product of three workshops organized by the Central European University during 1992 and 1993. Its intent is "to present a scholarly book which would also have a wider appeal to an educated public." The contributors, most of whom are Czechs living in the Czech Republic, examine the causes and process of Czechoslovakia's breakup from a number of angles – political, economic, social, demographic, cultural, attitudinal, historical, and international, providing both narrative and analysis. A number of the authors make a convincing case for the high degree of social and economic development in Slovakia during the Communist period and point to the irony that Czechs and Slovaks split up at the time when they were closer than ever before in terms of demographics, social structure, and level of economic and

cultural development. Thus the so-called socialist model of integration, designed to solve the Slovak question by means of the development of Slovakia, was a failure.

Among the many causes for the split investigated herein, attitudinal ones receive much attention. Attempts by Miroslav Kusý to downplay Slovak exceptionalism notwithstanding, serious differences are found by a number of contributing scholars regarding the prevailing views among Czechs and Slovaks on a number of important questions. For example, the period of normalization (1969–1989) was regarded as a success in many ways by Slovaks, but deemed as unequivocally dismal by Czechs, and was a period in which both Czechs and Slovaks regarded the other nationality as benefitting the most from federalism. Regarding hopes for the future, Slovaks on the whole were far less sanguine than Czechs about the benefits of a rapid transition to a market economy. Musil argues that Slovak society was more solidaristic and Czech society more associative, meaning, among other things, that Slovaks placed greater emphasis than Czechs on family and neighborhood. Sharon Wolchik, in a sound but unsurprising analysis of public opinion data, shows how markedly attitudes toward the state's constitutional set-up and its leadership differed between the two peoples.

Overall, the work provides a fairly comprehensive portrayal and analysis of the long and short-term developments that led to Czechoslovakia's demise. Especially thoughtful are the sociological analysis by Musil and the discussion of Communist Czechoslovakia's last twenty years by Petr Pithart. On the debit side, the book becomes quite repetitive as the reader encounters scholar after scholar dealing with the same events and issues, often making similar points. Furthermore, though the book's purpose was not to provide a spectrum of opinion on Czechoslovakia's collapse but rather to analyze it in a balanced and objective fashion, it would nevertheless have enhanced the pedagogical value of the book had it included a contribution or two from a Slovak nationalist perspective, that is, from someone who regarded 1992 not merely as the end of Czechoslovakia, but as a historic opportunity for the Slovaks.

*The End of Czechoslovakia* is a worthy contribution to our understanding of the break-up of Czechoslovakia and of Czech-Slovak relations in general. As such, it should be of much interest to scholars concerned with the issue, as well as to other interested persons desiring to know how and why the Velvet Divorce took place.