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**MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF RELATIONS
BETWEEN CZECHS AND SLOVAKS IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

**ОСНОВНІ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ ВІДНОСИН
МІЖ ЧЕХАМИ ТА СЛОВАКАМИ У XX СТ**

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Czechs and Slovaks are among the closest nations of Europe. Their relations fully developed in the 20th century, when they went through a process of double integration and disintegration. In 1918, they created a common state – the Czechoslovak Republic (CR). In 1939, mainly under the influence of the policy of Nazi Germany, they broke up and existed independently until 1945. After the end of the Second World War, they restored the Czechoslovak Republic again. After the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, they separated again and on January 1, 1993, they created separate states – the Slovak Republic (SR) and the Czech Republic (CR). Since May 1, 2004, they have been integrated into the multinational entity of the European Union (EU). The cultural-historical proximity of Czechs and Slovaks is due to the fact that both nations belong to the Slavic ethnicity. Already in the 9th century, they existed together in a state unit called Great Morava. Their linguistic and geographical proximity directly determined the positive development of their relations throughout the entire historical period. Cooperation between them developed significantly within the Austro-Hungarian state, especially in the second half of the 19th century. It was a process of national emancipation, the search for one's own national identity and statehood. There were also significant differences between the two nations. They were the result of specific development tendencies. The Habsburg Monarchy was, from a formal point of view, a unified state entity. However, it was actually two state entities. One was Austria, which also included the Czech nation, and the other was Hungary, which included Slovakia.

Administrative, linguistic, cultural and economic specificities and differences of Czechs and Slovaks flowed from this fact. Among the fundamental differences was the different degree of national awareness and cultural maturity of the two nations. After the Austro-Hungarian settlement (1867), the Czech nation faced Germanization pressures. Despite this, many Czech cultural organizations developed. There were primary, secondary and higher schools with the Czech language of instruction. The Czech political representation also participated in the political life of the Austrian part of the monarchy. The Slovak nation faced Magyarization attacks, which were very strong and followed the Magyarization of the Slovak nation. It manifested itself in attacks on the Slovak language and culture with the aim of totally assimilating the Slovak nation. In the conditions of Slovakia, national organizations and the Slovak press were banned. There was no higher or secondary education with the Slovak language. These facts were the historical heritage with which Czechs and Slovaks entered the common Czechoslovak state in 1918. The differences between the two nations formed the basis of future conflicts between them. In the process of establishing the Czechoslovak Republic, the relations of the two nations in the common state were defined. This is documented, for example, in the agreement between the Slovak and Czech representatives from October 22, 1915: "... The union of the Czech and Slovak nations in a federal union with complete national autonomy of Slovakia, with its own parliament, with its own state administration, complete cultural freedom, i.e. with full use of the Slovak language, own financial and political administration, with the Slovak state language". [1, p. 445] The same was confirmed by a joint agreement from Pittsburgh just before the creation of Czechoslovakia. After the declaration of ČSR (October 28, 1918), the Slovak political representation joined it two days later in the form of a declaration. The drafting of this declaration was influenced by the persistent Hungarian persecution in Slovakia, and therefore the wording about the Czechoslovak nation was used in it: "The National Council declares that only it is authorized to speak and act on behalf of the Czechoslovak nation living within the borders of Hungary ...The National Council... certifies: 1. The Slovak nation is part of the linguistically and culturally historically united Czecho-Slovak nation... 2. For this Czecho-Slovak nation, we also demand unlimited self-determination on the basis of complete independence..." [1, p. 513] After the creation of Czechoslovakia, the concept of the Czechoslovak nation became part of the state ideology. This conception did not recognize the Slovaks as a separate nation but as part of the Czechoslovak nation. Czechoslovakia was also built on the principles of

centralism. It meant that the competences of Slovak authorities were suppressed and power was centralized by the Czechoslovak government. The demands of Slovaks for the recognition of autonomy were not accepted by Czech politics. It led to the strengthening of Slovak nationalism. Gradually, its radical wing, which openly sympathized with fascist and Nazi ideology, gained ground in the autonomist stream. The further development of Czechoslovakia was fundamentally influenced by the fascism of Europe. The Slovak autonomists finally asserted their autonomy against the Czechoslovak government under international pressure (October 6, 1938). The Slovak political representation was subsequently confronted in Berlin with two alternatives for the further fate of Slovakia. One was the declaration of an independent Slovak state. The second division of its territory between Hungary and Poland. On March 14, 1939, the Slovak Parliament proclaimed an independent Slovak state. A day later, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared. The Czechoslovak Republic disappeared primarily as a result of the international situation and the power interests of Hitler's Germany. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that Germany used the tense relations between Czechs and Slovaks for its own purposes. In the years of the Second World War (1939–1945), in the framework of the anti-fascist, foreign and domestic resistance, Czechs and Slovaks gradually came closer and cooperated. Both resistance components formulated the goal of the post-war restoration of the joint state of two equal nations, Czechs and Slovaks. On April 5, 1945, the government program for the new Czechoslovakia was adopted: "... Recognizing that the Slovaks are to be masters in their Slovak land just as the Czechs are in their Czech national homeland, and that the Republic will be restored as a joint state of equal nations, the Czech and Slovak, the government will express this recognition with important state political acts." [2, p. 407]. Development in the new Czechoslovakia, however, went against the mentioned provisions. The equal arrangement of relations between Czechs and Slovaks in the common state was sacrificed to the Communists' interest in power. In order to obtain a monopoly of power, they gradually enforced the centralization of the entire state. The new Czechoslovak Constitution of May 9, 1948 formally guaranteed the existence of Slovak national bodies, but fully subordinated them to the Czechoslovak government in Prague. The centralization of the state was also confirmed by the Czechoslovak Constitution of July 11, 1960. The compensation for Slovaks was their greater involvement in national politics as well as the industrialization of Slovakia. Only the reform process and democratization in the Czechoslovak Republic in 1968 had a positive impact on

Czechoslovak relations. On October 27, 1968, the Constitutional Law on the Czechoslovak Federation was adopted. Czechoslovakia officially became a federated state of two nations – Czechs and Slovaks (January 1, 1969). Within the framework of the federation, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic were established. Both republics had their own legislative bodies and governments. Despite the fact that the federation was deformed by the powerful position of the Communist Party, the national interests of the Slovaks were largely fulfilled. After the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia (1989), relations between Slovaks and Czechs were re-addressed. The dominance of different political currents in the Czech Republic and Slovakia ultimately led to the division of the common state. This happened on January 1, 1993.

Currently, there are very close relations between the two nations and states, which can be described as above-standard. The development of the relations between the two nations was determined by their historical and cultural proximity, but also by mutual specificities and differences. Their relations were fundamentally determined by geopolitical changes in the European area. Despite the turbulent development of their relations, both nations were able to coexist and develop successfully. The process of their double separation in 1939 and 1993 took place in a more or less peaceful and cultural manner.

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