

# Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup



As the clock struck midnight on December 31, 1992, Czechoslovakia, the only genuine democracy in post-World War I Central-Eastern Europe, broke up into two independent successor states. This book explores the failed search for a postcommunist constitution and it records in a lively style a singular instance of the peaceful settlement of an ethnic dispute. For more than three years after the implosion of the Communist regime in 1989, the Czechs and Slovaks negotiated the terms of a new relationship to succeed the centralized federation created under communism. After failing to agree to the terms of a new union, the parties agreed on an orderly breakup. In the background of the narrative loom general issues such as: What are the sources of ethnic conflict and what is the impact of nationalism? Why do ethnic groups choose secession and what makes for peaceful rather than violent separation? What factors influence the course of postcommunist constitutional negotiations, which are inevitably conducted in the context of institutional and societal transformation? The author explores these issues and the reasons for the breakup. Eric Stein, a well-known scholar of comparative law and a native of Czechoslovakia, was invited by the Czechoslovak government to assist in the drafting of a new constitution. This book is based on his experiences during years of work on these negotiations as well as extensive interviews with political figures, journalists, and academics and extensive research in the primary documents. It will appeal to historians, lawyers, and social scientists interested in the process of transformation in Eastern Europe and the study of ethnic conflict, as well as the general reader interested in modern European history. Eric Stein is Hessel E. Yntema Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan Law School. He previously served with the United States Department

of State in the Legal Advisors Office. He is the author of many books and articles on comparative law and the law of the European Community.

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