

# 100 YEARS OF DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT IN CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA

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The year 1918, 100 years ago, is very important in the history of Czechia and Slovakia because it is the year the state regained sovereignty after almost 400 years. Austrian Archduke Ferdinand I, from the Habsburg dynasty, founded a powerful Central European monarchy. He was elected the King of Bohemia in 1526 and of Hungary the same year. Slovakia was a part of Hungary at that time. He ruled in a strict and absolutist manner and this generated a lot of opposition from the aristocracy and the townspeople. He established the Central Court in Vienna. He was a relatively successful ruler and he became Holy Roman Emperor in 1556. Only one of his successors, Rudolf II, moved the imperial court to Prague at the end of 17th century.

The Habsburg dynasty ruled Czechia (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) and Slovakia together with Austria and some other regions up until the end of the First World War in 1918 (except for a few short periods in the 16th and 17th centuries). Economic and social development occurred right across Europe during this long period and Austria was a part of it. Many wars took place, some of them lasted several decades, and the borders of states consequently changed. Important events took place in Europe at that time, such as the English revolution and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in the second half of the 17th century, the French Revolution one hundred years later, and the revolutionary movement around 1848 in many European countries and especially in Austria.

The gradual abolition of serfdom was another important event. The liberated rural population moved from the countryside into the cities, where the first manufactories and later industry were growing. The Habsburgs had from the beginning always

intensively promoted the Catholic Church, which led to substantial opposition among the population and a considerable amount of emigration. Only later did this pressure weaken and religious tolerance set in. The school attendance became compulsory in the middle of the 18th century in Austria. The state consisted of many nationalities and this created problems during the period of the national revivals in the 18th and 19th centuries followed by the nationalistic ideology based on ethnic principles. There were three dominant nationalities in the Monarchy: Germans, Czechs, and Hungarians. Because the Central Court was in Vienna, German was the dominant language. Many Czechs moved to Vienna. Czechia was the most economically and socially developed region in the Monarchy, but it had a complicated language problem. Germans made up an important minority in several Czech regions (and in some regions they were the decisive majority) and in a few cities, including Prague. They felt supported by Vienna, so it was very difficult to settle language problems.

The situation in Hungary was different, as there Germans made up a small minority. After Austria lost the war with Prussia in 1866, Hungarians took a chance and secured for itself a union with Austria and autonomous status. A new dualist state, Austria-Hungary, was established in 1868. According to the new constitution, the new state shared only its ruler, the army, and finance. The new constitution introduced a series of positive changes in the field of human rights (personal liberty, freedom of religion, free compulsory schooling, and the free right for people to move and choose their profession), the judiciary (the independence of judges), and the rules for representative assemblies, etc.

Despite the positive provisions in the new constitution, the Czech population was deceived. The situation in Austria was not yet ready for federation

at that time. The discussion of how to solve the language problems continued in Czechia, where strong efforts were being felt to promote the German language. The assertion of the Hungarian language was very strong in Hungary, where there were several non-Hungarian minorities. This also occurred in Slovakia, where, for example, there were then no Slovak schools. The Czech National Revival was strong but it did not impede good cooperation between Czechs and Germans in Czechia in the economic and social spheres. However, the constitutional changes prepared in 1871 were not accepted in Vienna. The language problems became more and more complicated over time as the working class grew. In addition, the process of democratisation continued and led to the first direct general secret vote in Austria-Hungary in 1907.

The last significant effort to settle the language situation came only not long before the end of the empire in 1890. A high-ranking commission was established at the initiative of the government made up of representatives from the Czech and German aristocracy and important politicians. Count Eduard Franz Taaffe, the prime minister and four other ministers took part in the negotiations. They worked on an extensive programme of 11 points discussed in 14 successive sessions, but only a few not very important issues were resolved. The so-called 'punktace' in Czech and 'die Punktationen' in German continued later in several similar deliberations (1898, 1900, 1903, 1909, 1912 and 1914) with similar lack of success.

The assassination of the emperor's successor Francis Ferdinand d'Este on 28 June 1914 in Belgrade became the pretext for issuing Serbia a 48-hour ultimatum on 23 July 1918. Even though Serbia accepted almost all of the ultimatum's demands, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914. This marked the start of the First World War, which would have fatal consequences for Austria-Hungary.

Based on long experience with the Habsburg Monarchy and the pressure of the Vienna government on Czechia, Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, with the support of some politicians, decided to start the fight for freedom. He was convinced that the monarchy would lose the war. He left Czechia in December 1914. His young collaborator Edvard Beneš created a secret organisation called Maffia in 1915. However, under threat

of arrest, he had to leave Czechia too, and in September of the same year he went to Paris.

The president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, suggested that he act as a mediator between the two fighting parties in 1916. He laid out the preliminary conditions, which among other things included the liberation of the nations in Austria-Hungary from foreign domination. The Austrian minister of foreign affairs, Ottokar Czernin, reformulated the arranged refusal of the Czech union towards Wilson's suggestions. However, Wilson's initiative was important for the Czech fight abroad for independence. The Czechoslovak Council was established in Paris in 1916 and Czechoslovak legions were created in Russia, France, Italy, Romania and Serbia made up of Czechs and Slovaks who had deserted the Austrian army and Czechs and Slovaks living abroad. They had tens of thousands of soldiers at the end of the war and played a significant role in the liberation of Czechoslovakia.

The result of the war became more and more evident as time moved ahead. Italy joined the Entente in 1915, Romania in 1916 and the United States in 1917. The National Council of Czechia was established in Paris in February 1916, based on former Czech delegation. On 17 May 1917 a manifesto was issued by 222 Czech writers to Czech deputies, appealing for an awareness of Czech interests and European democracy. The French government officially recognised a representative of the Czechoslovak nation on 29 June 1918. The National Committee was reorganised on 13 July 1918 in Prague (to make it more representative).

The Vienna government and even the new emperor Charles I suggested the federalisation of the monarchy, but nobody was willing to speak with them. It was too late. The provisional Czechoslovak government was created on 29 September 1918, and was formally presented to the Entente's governments on 14 October 1918. The provisional government was made up of premier and minister of finance T. G. Masaryk, minister of foreign affairs Edvard Beneš and minister of military affairs Milan Rastislav Štefánik. This government was recognised by France the next day and by other governments in the days that followed. It issued a declaration (called the Washington Declaration) in Paris on 18 October 1918. Its content is a strong critique of the Habsburg dynasty

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and the rejection of any possible federation in Austria-Hungary, and it underlined important characteristic features of the future Czechoslovakia.

Any date could have been used for the important event of Czechs and Slovaks regaining their independence and liberty, but 28 October was chosen as the day on which political power was peacefully handed over to the National Committee in Prague. Austrian military power still existed, but it was completely disoriented. It took a few days to settle this status. The provisional Czechoslovak government had moreover not expected such a quick evolution.

The 100 years of the development of Czechia and Slovakia can be divided into three different periods. The following contributions accept this periodisation. The first started in 1918 with the end of the First World War and ended in 1945 by the end of the Second World War. This was a 27-year period of parliamentary democracy in Czechoslovakia, with six years of German occupation and the Second World War at the end. The second period was the period of communist dominance that lasted 44 years, from 1945 to 1989. It started with the people's democracy (etymological nonsense) and transmuted into communist totalitarian regime after 'victorious February' in 1948. The third period started with the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and it has lasted for the past 29 years up to the present. The following contributions are based generally on this periodisation. The demographic prognoses up to 2060 have been included additionally.

In the first period the new state of Czechoslovakia went through difficult challenges. It inherited the quarrel between the Czechs and Germans from the former monarchy. Germans wanted to take territory containing a German majority from Czechia and join it to Germany or new Austria. The new state could not accept this because it believed this would violate the historical borders of Czechia. Military power had to be used to settle the problem. Another challenge was the revolutionary movement of workers, which was influenced by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917. In this case again, power had to be used. Defining the borders between Slovakia and Hungary (which had not officially existed before) and the borders with Poland in Silesia were other not easy to solve tasks that faced the new state. These problems were successfully overcome. The Austro-Hungarian political party

system adapted to the new situation and Czechoslovakia became a democratic country in Central Europe. Representatives of the German population even took part in the government. However, two new challenges emerged. The Communist Party was formed in 1921 out of the left wing of the traditional Social Democratic Party and immediately joined the Comintern. It was an anti-system party directed from Moscow with no coalition potential. The second challenge was more dangerous at that time. Adolf Hitler took power in 1933, installed a racist totalitarian regime in Germany, and proclaimed himself a dictator (officially Führer). He radicalised not only the Germans in Germany, but also the Germans living in other countries. He immediately started to prepare for war to redress Germany's defeat in the First World War and to occupy the whole of Europe. He installed a totalitarian regime in Germany and introduced ethnic cleansing, which ended in the Holocaust. He managed to annex Austria in 1938 and the same year made an agreement with France, Great Britain and Italy to issue an ultimatum to Czechoslovakia that it allows Germany to seize the parts of Czechoslovakia territory with a majority German population (the so-called Munich Agreement). The Czechoslovak government did not want to be the cause for war and so the ultimatum was finally accepted. Slovakia became independent under German tutorship and Germany promised to respect the borders of the rest of Czechoslovakia, i.e. the rest of Czechia. However, Hitler did not keep his word and a year later he occupied the rest of the country (and turned it into a protectorate) and he started the Second World War with his attack on Poland. He made an alliance with fascist Italy and Japan with a plan to dominate the whole world (they created the so-called Berlin–Tokyo–Rome Axis). They had been preparing for war for several years and consequently they had considerable territorial success, both in Europe and in Asia, for the first three years. The democratic countries established a coalition, which was enlarged to include the Soviet Union after it was attacked by Germany in 1941; the collapse of the Axis was therefore inevitable, and it happened in 1945.

The second period started after the Second World War in 1945. It is possible to include Czechoslovakia among the victorious countries given that it had an army abroad and an anti-Nazi movement inside

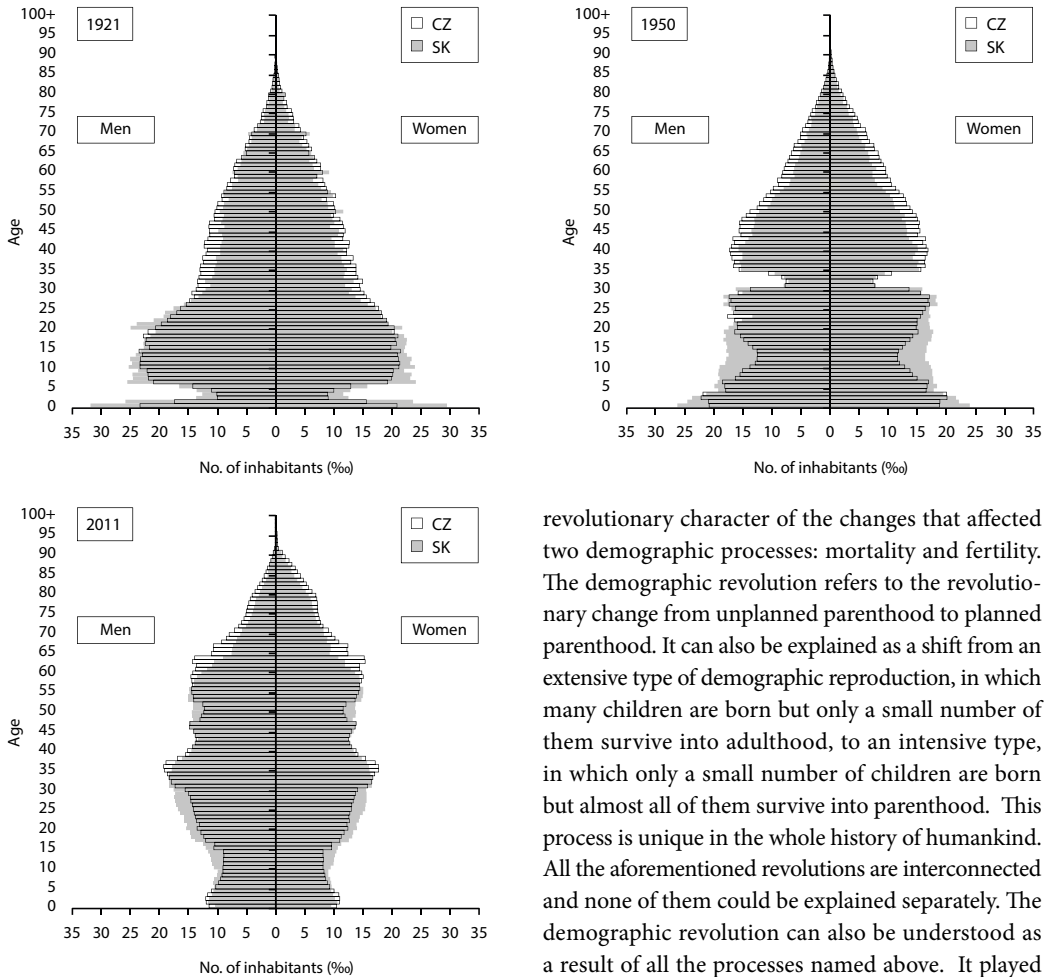
the country. The seat of the Czechoslovak government and of President Benes was in London. The government was reorganised before the end of the Second World War in liberated Košice in Eastern Slovakia. Other than the president, only a few members of the London government were acceptable to the communists, who played a decisive role after the war and were controlled directly from Moscow. They criticised the democratic party system of the First Republic and suggested establishing the National Front with just four parties in both Czechia and Slovakia. No opposition parties were allowed and this was the first important step towards the totalitarian system. In the new government, communists or crypto-communists in other parties (or non-partisans) took the most powerful ministries (premier, internal affairs, information, national defense, agriculture). The nationalisation of big factories and the expulsion of around 2.4 million Germans were further important steps towards totalitarianism. However, opposition emerged within the National Front. It was called 'reactionary' by communists, which always proclaimed the unity of the nation (workers, youth, students and other professional or civic groups). The Communist Party received 40% of the votes in Czechia in the first democratic election in 1946 and 30% in Slovakia. The communist leader Klement Gottwald became the new premier. The elected Parliament was supposed to prepare a new constitution in two years and new elections were then planned for 1948. The Communist Party declared the goal of receiving 51% of votes in the next election. The Cominform, the successor of the Comintern, which was tactically dissolved during the war, (unsuccessfully) urged communist parties in all countries, especially in Italy and France, to seize power by revolution after the war. The Soviet Union installed a communist regime in all the countries that had been liberated by the Russian army. Germany was divided into four zones and the communist regime was installed in the Russian zone (Berlin was divided, too). Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Soviet and the American armies, so both armies left Czechoslovak territory in 1945. The Communist Party was losing voter support and its goal of gaining 51% of the vote seemed unlikely and to have only been propaganda after the Second World War. It officially posed as a democratic party, but in secret it was

prepared to seize total power. It organised the Working Militia without legal grounds for doing so and waited for the opportunity to seize power. That opportunity came when the ministers resigned from their offices because the communist minister of interior did not execute a government decision to cancel the nomination of several top police officials. The resignation of democratic ministers was logical, but the Communist Party used it as a chance to reorganise the government, isolate President Benes, and push him to accept this reorganisation under the threat of civil war. 'Victorious February' was the last step in installing a single-party totalitarian regime in 1948. It committed all the crimes that such regimes do, and did so under the control of Soviet advisers. The persecution of the opposition, including among supposed Party members, the construction of political show trials with harsh punishments (imprisonment for life or many years, hundreds of executions), the closing of borders, the censorship of information, etc. Almost a hundred thousand people emigrated. All sectors of the economy were fully nationalised, central planning was introduced, and cooperatives were forced on agriculture. The small steps towards liberalisation in 1968 (the Prague spring) were brutally suppressed by the Soviet army with the assistance of some armies of the Soviet bloc (Warsaw Pact troops) on 21 August 1968. Another wave of emigration occurred, comparable to the one that occurred in 1948. The communist regime survived in Czechoslovakia up to the end of the Cold War in 1989.

The third period started with the peaceful Velvet Revolution in November 1989. Civic Forum (and in Slovakia the Movement against Violence) took power and its leading figure, Václav Havel, was elected president by the then still communist parliament, which also had a few members of Civic Forum and of the Movement against Violence. All civil liberties were restored, as were the political parties, and Czechoslovakia became a parliamentary democracy again. The Slovaks never accepted Masaryk's idea of one Czechoslovak nation and on 1 January 1993 Czechoslovakia was divided peacefully into two sovereign states: the Czech Republic or Czechia and the Slovak Republic or Slovakia.

Over the last three hundred years all processes with people have changed profoundly, to an extent that can

Figure 1: Age-sex structure in the years 1921, 1950 and 2011, Czechia and Slovakia



Source: Population Census 1921, 1950 and 2011.

even be described as revolutionary. The changes in industry and technologies were called the industrial revolution; the changes in the settlement system could be referred to as revolutionary urbanisation; the process of secularisation and the emancipation of women were also deemed revolutionary; and there were dramatic changes also in the school system, medical care, new medicines were developed, scientific discoveries made and globalisation, democratisation, and many other processes occurred. The demographic revolution or transition is one of the most important changes that occurred. I prefer the term 'revolution' because of the

revolutionary character of the changes that affected two demographic processes: mortality and fertility. The demographic revolution refers to the revolutionary change from unplanned parenthood to planned parenthood. It can also be explained as a shift from an extensive type of demographic reproduction, in which many children are born but only a small number of them survive into adulthood, to an intensive type, in which only a small number of children are born but almost all of them survive into parenthood. This process is unique in the whole history of humankind. All the aforementioned revolutions are interconnected and none of them could be explained separately. The demographic revolution can also be understood as a result of all the processes named above. It played an important role in all of them. Altogether, all these processes created the global revolution of the modern era or simply modernisation. The political events described above had only a small (if any) impact on the changes in the process of demographic reproduction.

The demographic revolution started at the end of the 18th century in France and lasted around 150 years. It is not easy to determine exactly when this process began and ended in France as a whole because of the regional and social differences between population groups. In Czechia, this process started in the first half of the 19th century and ended a century later in the 1930s. In Slovakia, it started in the second half of the 19th century and ended after the Second World War.

The demographic revolution has already occurred in all so-called developed countries. It started in the developing countries after the Second World War and in some of them it has already been completed. The African countries are furthest behind in this process, especially the countries in Central Africa. However, the intensity of mortality in those countries is much lower than what it was in the now demographically developed countries when they were at the start of their demographic revolution.

Demographic ageing is a necessary consequence of the demographic revolution because of the rise in life expectancy that occurs during this process. This creates social problems connected with the financing of pensions. One possible solution would be to increase

the retirement age or admit more migrants. This could create social problems with the integration of migrants.

Another problem is very low level of fertility that exists after the demographic revolution is over. This phenomenon is rather frequent among developed countries and it has been named the second demographic transition. It is completely different in character from the demographic revolution. The number of one-child families and childless couples or women is increasing. This has no connection with mortality, which suggests that there are problems with the concept of the family itself and its different forms. In this respect, there are differences between social strata and the variations that are occurring are becoming permanent.