

Preface and Acknowledgments

IT IS FITTING THAT A BOOK about divisions should begin with conflicting emotions. On the one hand, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia seemed to confirm yet again the disheartening conclusion that it is easier to separate than to join together. On the other hand, the split gave each half of the former country (especially the Slovak half) more freedom to determine its own future. Only from the rather narrower perspective of the researcher did the breakup offer unmixed blessings, creating nearly perfect conditions for a comparative study of politics in two new governments that seemed at the time to be moving in quite different directions. This new development added to the already-strong appeal of a place whose riches—for the researcher if not always for the inhabitant—included a remarkable array of political, economic, and cultural divisions and a history of involvement in nearly every form of government and economic system known to modern Europe.

In retrospect, it seems natural that this work should focus on division, but its course actually followed a series of detours—encounters with the surprising and unexplained—that shifted it away from Václav Havel and civil society and toward the more unsavory but more interesting and influential figures of Vladimír Mečiar and Václav Klaus. From there the trail led to the study of political parties, election results, public-opinion polls and, ultimately, to societal divisions that continued to shape (and to be shaped by) Slovak and Czech politics.

This course of research took me to places I never expected to see, to parliaments and protest rallies, to bridges and dams, to mountaintops and (reluctantly) caves, and most revealingly, to the offices and living

rooms of hundreds of people from both countries and from all sides of the various divisions. The people I encountered in Slovakia and the Czech Republic unfailingly offered me strong coffee (or other drinks stronger still) along with strong opinions about how the countries' new democratic institutions worked and how they might work better. I am particularly indebted to the innumerable employees of state agencies, political parties, universities, and research institutions who patiently endured my questions and went out of their way to narrow the gaps in my understanding. Among these are some of the finest and kindest scholars I have ever met, and without their help this book would not have been possible. I am deeply thankful for the assistance of Vladimír Krivý, Darina Malová, Zdenka Mansfeldová, Lubomír Brokl, Soňa Szomolányi, Zora Bútorová, Martin Bútor, Michal Klíma, Ol'ga Gyrfášová, Grigorij Mesežnikov, Klára Vlachová-Plečítá, Eva Maierová, Tomas Maier, and many others at Comenius University, Charles University, the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and the Institute for Public Affairs. I have also benefited over time from the assistance of Americans abroad in the service of governmental or nongovernmental organizations, including Lindsay Lloyd, Jan Surotchak, Tom Skladony, Scott Thayer, Ralph Johnson, and most especially Pat Antonietti, Adrian Harmata, and Ron and Eileen Weiser, who have been unfailingly generous in sharing their expertise and their hospitality.

I must also extend my heartfelt thanks to the academic community, most especially to the political science faculties of the University of Notre Dame and Wayne State University. Among many exceptional people at those institutions, three stand out: Jim McAdams, Scott Mainwaring, and Brad Roth. As the director of my dissertation, Jim provided the perfect balance of challenge and support and he continued to do so even when I was no longer in his charge; Scott and Brad called me to the highest standard of scholarship and in the process demonstrated an equally great measure of friendship. A wider circle of colleagues and friends have played an instrumental role in the production of this particular book, and I am thankful to those who have lent me their thoughts and inspiration at various stages of this project, including Carol Skalnik Leff, Sharon Wolchik, Anna Grzymała-Busse, Herbert Kitschelt, Hilary Appel, Karen Buerkle, Michael Coppedge, Sharon Fisher, Robert Fishman, Tim Haughton, Karen Henderson, Juliet Johnson, Charlie Kenney, Jeff Kopstein, Paul Kubicek, Radek Markowski, Martha Merritt, Paula Pickering, Sherrill Stroschein, Gábor Tóka,

Mariano Torcal, Martin Votruba, Jason Wittenberg, and most especially John and Simona Gould and Zsuzsa Csergo, whose lives and careers have become so closely intertwined with mine. Mistakes are my own, but they are far fewer in number thanks to the efforts of a large number of manuscript reviewers, some of whom are included in the list of names above and some of whom remain anonymous. In its journey from ungainly manuscript to printed volume, the book has benefited immensely from the proofreading assistance of Mary Fulmer and the unfailing grace and precision of Amanda Moran and her colleagues at Stanford University Press.

Although this book raises doubts about purely economic explanations of Slovak and Czech politics, there would have been no book at all without generous economic support from a variety of sources, including the University of Notre Dame and Wayne State University and grants from Notre Dame's Kellogg Institute, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)—with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Information Agency, and the U.S. Department of State, which administers the Russian, Eurasian, and East European Research Program (Title VIII)—and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. In addition to dispersing stipends, Nora Hložeková and her staff at the Fulbright Commission of Slovakia provided invaluable support and guidance. I also want to acknowledge the hard work and generous assistance of the administrative staffs at Wayne State, at Notre Dame, and at the University of Michigan's Center for Russian and East European Studies.

Finally and fundamentally, I am grateful to the extended family of relatives and friends who together created the kind of community in which it was possible for me to undertake a large and difficult project. Above all, I thank my wife, Bridget, and our children, Elena and Peter. Concern for their welfare is the best possible reason for thinking and writing about the abuse of political power. Fear about the future, however, cannot match the hope they inspire for the new beginning "guaranteed by each new birth" (Arendt 1973, 479).