

# AIIS seminar on Czechoslovakia discusses the division of states

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TIRANA, Oct. 3 - On Wednesday, the Albanian Institute for International Studies commemorated through a seminar the 25-year anniversary of the 1993 'velvet divorce' - the division into two states of Czechoslovakia.

In cooperation with the embassies of the Czech and Slovak republics, Director of the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences Slavomir Michalek and Vice Director of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences Pavel Mucke were invited to speak of the Slovak and Czech perspectives of the separation. The Czechoslovak Republic was born on Oct. 28, 1918, in consequence of WWI, destroyed in March 1939, in consequence of the Third Reich occupation and diplomatic pressure and re-established on May 8, 1945, in consequence of WWII.

In 1960, the transition to Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was declared, while in Jan. 5 of

1968, the Prague Spring brought a 'new round' in dealing with Czechoslovak relations, creating a formally decentralized model of state with new constitutional bodies and deciding to split the country into two republics.

Mucke noted, during his presentation, that the federation "actually became a dead shell" due to the lack of democracy, with federal and republic bodies under the actual direction of communist party politics. The Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution happened in 1989, as a consequence of police attacks on legalized student demonstrations on Nov. 17, in Prague.

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communist regime, formed a 'government of national understanding' and respected "non-formal principles of national nomination."

The 'velvet' divorce, following the 'velvet revolution' lasted from 1989 to 1993.

During this time, the federation had limited functions in a democratic environment, with the main problem being the different perceptions of the state between Czechs and Slovaks - with the first tending to have a strong federation and the second opting for two sovereign republics "bridged" with a more decentralized federation.

For the Slovak side, the period until 1993 - when the first sovereign and democratic Slovak Republic peacefully separated from the Czech part - was just part of a series of "efforts to become a modern nation and equal partner to other nations which culminated in the late 20th century," as Michalek mentioned during his presentation.

Among the positives of diminishing the nationalistic agenda in domestic politics and 'self-managing' of both nations in "independent state entities" and the negatives of a weakened position on international ground and the necessity to renew the network of international relations, for Czechs, the new-born Czech Republic meant "a smaller Czechoslovakia" due to "paternalistic sentiments," while the Slovaks identified with their new state relatively quickly during the 1990s.

Nonetheless, in conclusion of both speeches it was highlighted that the case of Czechoslovakia was a contribution to the long-term debates and historical knowledge on how to and not to deal with the issues of nationalism in supranational states - still a necessary knowledge in modern history. The seminar was attended by a number of ambassadors, Albanian politicians and officials, scholars and international and Albanian students alike.

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