

CIVIC CULTURE REVISITED 50 YEARS LATER: CZECH NATIONAL STUDY

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SUMMARY: I. Introduction and Note on Historical Context. II. Concurrent Attitudes and Perception of Policy in Czech Republic. III. Conclusions.

I. INTRODUCTION AND NOTE ON HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following text concerning civic culture in the Czech Republic is primarily based on data from a special survey conducted at the beginning of August 2009¹ but it tries also to show trends of development of some basic indicators according to continual surveys of former Institute for Public Opinion Research (IVVM) and its successor Public Opinion Research Centre of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic (CVVM) from the period after fall of communist regime in 1989 and to put these empirical findings in some historical context as the history and its perception is undoubtedly very important factor in forming of concrete civic culture of the nation. It is an inherent part of the individual “mental maps” as well as collective consciousness of the people and plays an important role in creation of value’s hierarchy. For that purpose at the beginning it is useful to make a note to the history of the Czech Republic and her predecessor Czechoslovakia, which was split up peacefully into Czech and Slovak Republics in the end of 1992.

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¹ Fieldwork of this survey was proceeding from the 3rd to the 10th of August 2009. In this period there was interviewed a quota sample of 1165 citizens of the Czech Republic representing Czech population in age above 15 according to its sex, age, education, residence’s population and regional composition.

Former Czechoslovakia and its Czech part² in particular was quite special case amongst the European post-communist countries in several distinguished ways. It was the only country of these, which experienced a relatively long period of real liberal democracy, which existed since its founding after break-up of Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 till 1938, when the democratic system of the First (Czechoslovak) Republic was replaced by quickly hardening authoritarian regime of the post-Munich Second Republic³

² It is created by so-called Czech countries, i.e. historical regions of Bohemia, Moravia and small part of Silesia (former Austrian Silesia) which remained under control of Austria and its Habsburg dynasty after the War of Austrian Succession in 1740s.

³ The Second Republic is called a brief period of Czechoslovakia's existence after the end of Munich Conference (usually from the 1st of October 1938) and before liquidation of the "rump" Czechoslovakia in the mid of March 1939.

The Second Czechoslovak Republic, though still nominally an independent state, was de facto fully dependent on Germany's will. She was very weakened and diminished by the loss of significant part of her territory. Wide border areas of historical Czech countries (so-called "Sudety" or in German "Sudetenland"), inhabited predominantly by Germans, were occupied and annexed by Nazi Germany in direct consequence of the Munich Agreement at the beginning of October 1938. Also a part of Silesia with significant Polish minority was annexed by Poland at the same time. Furthermore, a few weeks later in November 1938 a huge portion of southern Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia (then part of Czechoslovakia called "Podkarpatská Rus", today it is Zakarpattia province of Ukraine) was ceded to Hungary by the First Vienna Award in the First Vienna Arbitration. After "Munich betrayal" crippled and virtually defenceless country was internationally isolated, completely abandoned by former allies and patrons, France and Great Britain, once the architects and guarantees of the Versailles system, which became the bulwark of Czechoslovakia's very existence, surrounded by not much friendly or even openly hostile neighbours and left at the mercy of its powerful archenemy —Hitler's Germany— against which it was used for previous twenty years as France's strategic outpost.

In this utterly hopeless situation the political elite of then Czechoslovakia was desperately trying to save at least formal independence of the rest of country by finding of some acceptable "modus vivendi" with Berlin. The change of pluralistic liberal democratic regime into de facto one-party autocracy (though nominally there were two parties in Czechoslovakia's new system of so-called "authoritative democracy") after abdication and departure into the exile of the president E. Beneš was in fact a part of these vain attempts to appease Hitler, who demanded it together with absolute submission of Prague to his will. This change was not instant act but it was done rather reluctantly step by step during the autumn and winter of 1938/1939, mainly under German external pressure but also with quite active and eager pursuit of conservative anti-liberal factions of agrarian, clerical and bourgeois rightwing parties as well as to that time marginal and obscure groups of genuine Czech fascists.

Under slogans like "necessity of national unity", "simplification of political system", "concentration of strengths for the defence of national existence" and "authoritative democracy" all existing Czech political parties (with exception of Communist Party which was banned) were quickly integrated into two blocks – ruling rightist "Strana národní jednoty" (Party of National Unity) and leftist "Národní strana práce" (National Party of Labour), which should

in a short prelude to German occupation and Nazi totalitarianism in the era of so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Post-war Czechoslo-

stay in “loyal opposition” – and Parliament adopted laws that authorized the government to rule and act without its control. The Parliament also ratified in November 1938 the autonomy of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, where one-party regimes of nationalistic Slovak and Ukrainian autonomists were established. Under dictate from Berlin many so-called communists, Jews and “Benešists” (i.e. politicians and prominent public figures of the First Republic considered to be firm supporters of political line of long-time foreign minister and president E. Beneš but later this term was used practically indiscriminately for all politically inconvenient people regardless their position towards Beneš’s policy) were excluded from public life and persecuted, the state censorship of press was introduced and many periodicals with antifascist, leftist or liberal credentials were shut down.

It is necessary to say that these steps, which authorities did not undertake with any great zeal to the anger of domestic rightwing radicals as well as Berlin, did not meet any strong opposition from the nation. The public, shocked, deeply traumatized and dismayed by seemingly sudden Munich catastrophe, which was seen not only as “betrayal” of Czechoslovakia by the fellow Western democracies but also as an absolute fiasco of whole conception of pro-western foreign policy created and firmly promoted by tandem of Masaryk and Beneš and their democratic allies (traditionally labelled as “group of Castle”, “Castle’s coalition” or similarly in reference of the Prague Castle, traditional residence of the president) across the political spectre, held from the great part these democratic elites and the system they personified responsible for this national disaster. In fact, many frustrated and disappointed people watched with some satisfaction or even took an active part in hateful campaigns and attacks against eminent advocates of the First Republic’s liberal democracy and “Castle’s” policy like writer Karel Čapek. People also were considering this as a necessity for prevention of imminent German invasion and occupation, which would be admittedly much worse. Moreover, they like E. Beneš believed widely that this situation was just temporary and that it should be changed quickly by generally expected war and “inevitable” defeat of Nazi Germany. This last rather wishful assumption had proven to be correct in the end, though it required very long and horrific six years before it finally happened. But as it became clear quite soon, no accommodating measures taken by Prague government and no demonstrations of its loyalty to the Third Reich could alter Hitler’s intention to erase Czechoslovakia as a symbol of Versailles humiliation of Germany from the map and to turn the Czech countries, which he saw as a traditional and natural German “Lebensraum” (living area), into racially pure German territory.

Immediately after the Munich Agreement, which should have guaranteed existence of belittled Czechoslovakia within her new borders, he adopted a plan for her liquidation via instigating of internal divisions on ethnic base. Not only remaining Czechoslovakia’s Germans but also (and especially) Slovak or Ukrainian autonomists were encouraged and instructed to escalate their demands. These boosted demands were without much hesitation accepted by Prague and Slovakia as well as Carpathian Ruthenia (or their remaining parts after Vienna Arbitration) got wide autonomy in November 1938. But Hitler in close association with Horthy’s Hungary continued with preparation of final blow against Czechoslovakia and in the mid of March 1939 he launched a quick and decisive action in this matter. At the 14th of March Slovak autonomists declared the independent Slovak state on Hitler’s bidding after he had given them a choice to do so immediately or to face Hungarian invasion and takeover of Slovakia. At the same time Czechoslovak president Hácha and foreign minister Chval-

vakia⁴ was also an exception in expanded Soviet sphere of influence after the WW2 as the communist dictatorship was not installed there immediately after the liberation from Nazis in 1945, despite the fact that it was kept mostly by the Soviet Red Army⁵ and that communists⁶ became by far the strongest political faction, especially in the Czech countries, where they won relatively free elections in May 1946 getting slightly over 40 % of Czech votes.⁷ The regime of this Third Czechoslovak Republic existing between May 1945 and communist coup in February 1948, so-called “people’s democracy”,⁸

kovský were summoned to Berlin where they were informed by Hitler that at 6 A.M. of the 15th of March German army will cross the Czechoslovak border and seize the country crushing any eventual resistance in the process. During dramatic night session with top German leadership they were forced to sign a capitulation document by which “the fate of Czech nation was commended into the hands of Germany’s Fuehrer” and to order the Czechoslovak armed forces to not resist advancing German troops. Simultaneously Hungary got a green light for launching an invasion and annexation of remaining territory of Carpathian Ruthenia where local autonomous government with support of units of Czechoslovak army garrisoned there tried unsuccessfully to resist it and to establish independent Republic of Carpathian Ukraine. On the 16th of March the occupied territory of the Czech countries was formally proclaimed as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

⁴ Czechoslovakia was renewed in her borders existing before the Munich Agreement and later Vienna Arbitration with exception of Carpathian Ruthenia which was ceded (after de facto Soviet seizure of its territory) to the Soviet Union.

⁵ Only some parts of western Bohemia were liberated by U.S. Army.

⁶ The party’s name was Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) and it originated from the secession of radical left faction of the Czechoslovak Social-democratic Workers’ Party in 1921. In 1939 after declaration of independent Slovak state Slovak communists formed Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) which after the war and renewal of Czechoslovakia became an organizational territorial branch of KSČ but it always sustained its separate name and till the 1948 it functioned (at least formally) as independent party alongside KSČ. After the revolution in 1989 and split of Czechoslovakia in 1992 KSS became more autonomous and later completely independent and it changed its name to Party of Democratic Left. Czech successor of KSČ is KSČM (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia).

⁷ By this KSČ won 93 (or 114 together with KSS) seats from total 300 within the Czechoslovak National Assembly. The second strongest party – Czechoslovak National Socialist Party (ČSNS) – got 23,7% (55 seats), the third Christian-democratic “Czechoslovak People’s Party” (ČSL) got 20,2% (46 seats) and the fourth Czechoslovak Social-democratic Workers’ Party (ČSDSD) 15,6% (37 seats) of votes in Czech countries. Contrary to this in Slovakia the Slovak Communist Party (KSS) with gain of 30,5% of votes (21 seats) was heavily defeated by non-socialist Democratic Party of Slovakia with 61,4% of votes (43 seats). Remaining 5 seats were won by two small Slovak parties – Christian oriented “Party of Freedom” (4,2%, 3 seats) and social-democratic “Party of Labour” (3,1%, 2 seats).

⁸ The term was very often used by and is generally associated with communist dictatorships but it was not the case here before February 1948, though it was used after it as well till 1960, when Czechoslovakia after twelve years of communist regime adopted new “socialist” constitution and became officially “Czechoslovak Socialist Republic”.

was very different from liberal democracy of the First Republic and it is a matter of discussion whether it can be classified as democratic system or not. But despite of its “revolutionary” character,⁹ some —especially from the viewpoint of today’s normative optics of human rights— controversial decisions¹⁰ and evident shortcomings related to substantially restricted system of political parties based on the platform of so-called “National Front of Czechs and Slovaks”,¹¹ from which were deliberately excluded some of

⁹ The first Czechoslovak government after the liberation arose from the agreement of president Beneš and his London government in exile with exiled Moscow leadership of Czechoslovak Communist Party. There was no legitimate National Assembly and also Beneš’s presidency was —despite of his wide recognition by allies as well as domestic and abroad resistance groups— de facto self-appointed because he abdicated as Czechoslovak president in October 1938. Only after the outbreak of WW2 he started to organise the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile as the President-in-Exile and it was definitely recognised by allies as the legitimate Czechoslovak government linked to the pre-Munich First Czechoslovak Republic much later, when the Great Britain and France in 1942 finally repealed the Munich Agreement as null and void from the beginning. Headed by the president Beneš, the government in exile as well as the “Government of the National Front of Czechs and Slovaks”, which took the control of liberated Czechoslovakia in 1945, concentrated both executive and legislative power (the latter was done by Decrees of the President of the Republic, which are now referred often as Beneš Decrees) in their hands acquiring thus de facto dictatorial power. This provisional “revolutionary dictatorship” ended in the end of October 1945, when the Provisional National Assembly (elected by local National Committees on the principle of parity of all parties associated in the National Front of Czechs and Slovaks), which confirmed Beneš as the President of the Republic and retroactively ratified all presidential decrees, was established. The Provisional Assembly was replaced by regular National Assembly after the general elections held in May 1946 and it elected E. Beneš once again into the office of the President of the Republic in June 1946.

¹⁰ Especially some retributive laws and acts against Germans and Hungarians (confiscation of property, transfer from the Republic with exception of proven anti-fascist) were adopted indiscriminately applying thus the principle of collective guilt on the ground of ethnicity.

¹¹ The National Front of Czechs and Slovaks was originally a coalition of Czechoslovak anti-fascist political parties, which was founded in March 1945 after Moscow negotiations between Beneš and his government in exile, exiled representatives of non-communist anti-fascist parties, communists and delegates of Slovak National Council (underground body formed in the end of 1943 by Slovak democrats, communists and anti-fascist elements within the Slovak army for the preparation of Slovak National Uprising). Members of the National Front then became four Czech and two Slovak parties, later there were added two other Slovak parties founded shortly before the general elections in 1946. This National Front became a legal platform for existence and competition of political parties as only parties associated in the front could participate in general elections.

This measure restricting significantly political competition should have been only temporary and it was advocated by necessity to prevent eventual return of Nazi collaborators, traitors and “reactionaries” to the power. After February 1948 coup this mechanism of then

important pre-war parties¹² with reference to their collaboration with Nazis and activities “against the interests of the nation and of the Czechoslovak Republic” during the period of the Second Republic and Protectorate, the party system was still competitive and 1946 election results were not rigged.

These results had shown quite clearly (despite of above mentioned objections to the restricted party system as well as exclusion of German and Hungarian population from the election) the great shift of the Czech society to the Left, which was even more remarkable if compared to the situation in traditionally religious and conservative Slovakia where the non-socialist Democratic Party¹³ won with landslide margin over Communist Party of Slovakia. Contrary to that, four fifths of Czech voters voted for the parties with leftwing socialist programs and half of these votes were for the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia alone. Authenticity of this great shift cannot be much impugned even by the fact that only one of four Czech parties within the National Front —Czechoslovak People’s Party— was non-socialist and due to its Christian orientation not always acceptable for predominantly secular and partially fiercely anti-clerical Czechs. It is a matter of fact that the policy of nationalization of banks, mines and major industry or the land reform were very popular then as was the idea of “democratic socialism”, to which not only social democrats and national socialists, but also communists publicly professed shortly after the war.¹⁴ There was also

“revived” National Front (i.e. purged and firmly controlled by Communist Party despite of continuing formal existence and participation of other parties, which became mere powerless and loyal appendices of ruling Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) was used all the time during the existence of Communist regime for its “elections”, where the voters could only confirm the “united ticket” of National Front.

¹² It afflicted namely the Agrarian Party, which was a leading political force of the First Republic that participated in every of her coalition governments and usually kept the post of prime minister. Other significant First Republic’s parties, whose renewal was not allowed, were conservative far right National Democracy or Tradesman’s Party. Slovak People’s Party (since 1925 known as Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party), which was the ruling party of fascist Slovak state was banned.

¹³ The party was formed underground in 1944 by anti-fascist former agrarians and evangelicals and later it was supported by influential Slovak Catholic church.

¹⁴ Whether it was a mere tactical manoeuvre from their part or their proclamations in this matter were meant real, it is hard to judge with certainty. Of course, the reality of post-February communist regime was completely different from the promises declared in communist 1946 election program. On the other hand, there are also some indications supporting the view that at least at the beginning the communists believed in a possibility of some specific Czechoslovak way to the socialism without phase of revolutionary “dictatorship of proletariat” and that they radically changed their approach in worsening internal and especially international political climate under direct and harsh pressure of Stalin. The same idea of

no remarkable dissent from the restriction of the party system and thwarting of renewal of pre-war Agrarian party or other parties of Czech bourgeois Right whose leaders were from major part utterly compromised by their role in post-Munich and Protectorate's politics. Large-scale retribution against "domestic collaborators, traitors, Germans and Hungarians" were widely welcomed and perceived with deep satisfaction by vast majority of Czech population.

All these sentiments —by far not exceptional in post-war Europe— sharply reflected fresh memories and direct historical experience of recent past: Great Depression, everyday internal political reality of pre-war Czechoslovakia, which was usually troublesome at least,¹⁵ disastrous and

democratic socialism or "socialism with human face" resurfaced within the reformist faction of the Czechoslovak Communist Party also in 1968 inducing once again anger and violent reaction from the Soviet leadership.

¹⁵ The First Czechoslovak Republic was characteristic by her extremely fragmented system of political parties, which had roots in very complex structure of cross-cutting cleavages that existed there in all basic dimensions —i.e. Centre/Periphery, State/Church, Urban/Rural and Social Class (Owner/Worker) dimensions— identified in 1960s by S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan as important in the processes of forming of European party systems. Majority of these cleavages and conflicts arising from them had existed long before the Czechoslovakia was founded, and the creation of the Czechoslovak state on the rubbles of Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 brought into some new ones or in some cases inflamed and changed the polarity of those already existing before. Czechoslovakia was de facto a multiethnic state with Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians (who from the great part saw themselves as Ukrainians but by far not all of them), Jews, Poles, Gypsies, Romanians, Russians and others living within her borders. Approximately three millions Germans and nearly three quarters of million Hungarians became suddenly minorities from their former position of "ruling" nations in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and it didn't make them much happy, though the Czech Germans were often dissenting from the old Austria as well preferring to be part of Germany instead. Czech-German conflict, which dominated to the politics in the Czech countries since the early 19th century, resurfaced in the new state with switched roles of the "Centre" and the "Periphery" and led to the creation of separated system of exclusively German political parties, which initially from the most part copied the existing system of major Czech parties. There were thus alongside several small ultranationalist and irredentist German parties a German agrarian party, a German social-democratic party, a German Christian-social people's party and also German tradesman's party, which were in general labelled as "activist parties" for their more or less constructive approach to the Czechoslovak Republic. Only communists had become really nation-wide political force as the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia integrated Czechs, Slovaks as well as Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians and others into its ranks. The Czech-German conflict and the question of national emancipation of the Czech nation within the Austro-Hungary led even to the splitting of the Czech worker's movement, when in late 1890s nationally oriented faction of social democracy had separated and formed the Czech National Social Party, after 1918 called Czechoslovak Socialist Party and since 1926 Czechoslovak National Socialist Party.

agonising end of the republic and the terror of German occupation with widespread collaboration from the significant part of the First Republic's

Creation of Czechoslovakia and especially her official state ideology of "czechoslovakism" (political and cultural conception that considered Czechs and Slovaks not to be two different nations but two branches of one "Czechoslovak" nation) alienated many Slovaks from the Czechoslovak state and led to the appearance of strong autonomist tendencies represented mainly by ultraconservative, firmly Catholic and nationalist Slovak People's Party, which was the strongest party in Slovakia for the most part of the First Republic's existence, which later formed so-called "Autonomy Block" with Slovak National Party and which in the end became the hegemonic political power in Slovakia and the only party of independent Slovak state in period 1939-1945. As a reaction to secular tendencies of socialists and liberals in Czech countries had arose wide Catholic movement, which was very strong especially in more religious Moravia and which formed several Catholic parties that finally merged in Czechoslovak People's Party (today's KDU-ČSL). Differences in the interests of rural and urban Czech bourgeoisie led to the forming of Agrarian party and bunch of minor and variably splitting and merging parties representing interests of small traders or great capital. Due to the First Republic's highly proportional electoral system never less than twenty political parties had their representatives in the National Assembly since the first general elections held in 1920. Under these conditions it was always very difficult to create politically coherent coalitions and in fact such a coalition of ideologically akin parties existed only between years 1926 and 1929, when so-called "Lord's Coalition" (Panská koalice) of rightwing parties led by agrarians existed (but even in this government was present as "independent" socialist E. Beneš in the position of minister of foreign affairs). All other First Republic's coalitions were composed of rightist agrarians and leftist social democrats, usually accompanied by national socialists, Czechoslovak People's Party, representatives of German activist parties and sometimes also by far rightwing national democrats or tradesman's party. There was practically no chance for true alternation of ruling elites. The situation became even worse in 1930s, when the impact of Great Depression sharpened not only social but also national conflicts boosting thus anti-system parties. Alongside communists, who were quite strong already in 1920s, there appeared Henlein's Party of Sudeten Germans (Sudetendeutsche Partei – SdP), which supplanted and de facto erased German activist parties among German voters, whose vast majority (about two thirds in 1935 elections to the National Assembly and over 90 % in local elections held in May and June 1938) voted for SdP, and also Slovak People's Party shifted to clearly anti-system position by adopting of fascist ideology and close collaboration with German, Polish, Ukrainian and Hungarian irredentists. That practically petrified very strained coalition of politically heterogeneous parties with its troublesome and ineffective decision-making and many compromises seen as unsatisfactory by their own voters. This situation led to creation of internal opposition within the ranks of all coalition parties but especially strong this tendency was in Agrarian party, where powerful conservative wing begun openly dissent from the pro-Castle's policy of the government weakening thus further its position. Such a development in combination with numerous scandals of politicians from ruling coalition could not help to the building of trust in the liberal democratic system of the First Republic and it undoubtedly played significant role in the development of the Second as well as the Third Republic, where very few defended this system as the best in principle against authoritarian and totalitarian drive to banish it.

rightwing political elite. This notion lingered among Czech population for very long time despite of heavy-handed communist regime with its multiple lawless excesses and social-economic setbacks of established state socialism and central planned directive economy, which became apparent soon. That was why the reform communists in the end of 1960s could still get such a wide and spontaneous popular support, which they were receiving during the Prague Spring of 1968.

Communist regime installed by bloodless constitutional coup in February 1948¹⁶ passed through several different phases of development with al-

¹⁶ This event known in communist historiography as “Victorious February” or the “February Victory of the Working People” was the climax of gradually growing conflict between communists and non-communist parties within the coalition government of National Front established after 1946 election. It was led by Communist party’s chairman K. Gottwald and communists held eight other seats in it while remaining seventeen members were non-communists, including two independents – minister of foreign affairs Jan Masaryk and minister of national defence gen. Ludvík Svoboda. Since 1947 the frictions within the coalition were multiplying over many different issues, and non-communist parties were worried by growing influence of KSČ, which controlled crucial departments including finance, interior, agriculture, internal trade, work and welfare or culture and information. Especially communist’s strengthening control of security forces and police became a passionately disputed point here and communists were —not without foundation— roundly accused of misuse of the police against their political rivals.

¹ⁿ February 1948 one of these disputes over relatively marginal matter broke out into an open political and cabinet crisis, which gave communists an opportunity to seize the power. In early February communist minister of interior V. Nosek deposed eight non-communist senior police officers in Prague and replaced them with loyal communist cadres. This step was strongly protested by non-communist parties which saw it as unlawful and their majority in government passed a resolution demanding from Nosek to revoke his decision. As Nosek ignored it, non-communist ministers requested from the Prime Minister Gottwald for his punishment but Gottwald refused to do so and supported Nosek’s decision in the matter. Then twelve non-communist ministers from National Socialist Party, Czechoslovak People’s Party and Slovak Democratic Party gave Gottwald an ultimatum threatening with demission if the situation would remain unsolved to the 20th of February. They calculated that Gottwald would yield under this threat not risking the fall of his government and if he would not, then they thought that the president Beneš would not accept their individual resignations dissolving the whole cabinet instead and that an early election would be held in which they hoped they could beat soundly the communists who in the meantime allegedly lost significant part of their former support according to unpublished but widely rumoured January 1948 poll of Czechoslovak Institute of Public Opinion Research (ÚVVM). As nothing was done to meet their demands, they decided to act and they demised to their posts in the 20th of February believing that the government will fall in the consequence of it. But next few days had proven their calculation to be utterly wrong and their decision —not supported by all non-communist ministers nor consulted beforehand with the president Beneš— ill-advised. Communists immediately mobilised their supporters demanding from president Beneš to accept the demission of non-communist ministers and Gottwald’s proposal of reconstruction

ternating of hard-line ruthless rule and more liberal periods. The first phase after the coup was characterized by quickly escalating Stalinist terror accompanied by surge of political show trials with opponents as well as some “purged” prominent representatives of communist regime, who were often sentenced to death or long-term confinement. During this period, which died out gradually after Stalin’s and subsequent Gottwald’s deaths in March of 1953, there was realized forcible collectivization of agriculture and nationalization of all remaining industry as well as nearly all small private businesses including individual craftspeople and social services. By that Czechoslovak economy became an extreme case of socialization in comparison to other European communist countries where usually significant private sector in agriculture, small-scale production and services maintained. This in combination with drastic monetary reform from 1953, which liquidated all financial savings of population, led to erasure of all former social differences and significant levelling of property within the society. Thus achieved low social-economic differentiation was later sustained by strong wage-levelling policy, which was characteristic for whole era of state socialism in Czechoslovakia under communist regime, despite of some attempts for

of the government. Communists and their supporters organised massive demonstrations on behalf of this demand throughout the country and on the 24th of February also one hour long general strike with participation of 2,5 million of people took place. From their members and pro-communist workers Communist party also quickly organised and armed so-called “People’s Militia”, departments of non-communist ministers as well as important institutions or factories were occupied and pro-communist activists within the National Front begun to constitute so-called “Action Committees”, which started to purge the National Front as well as state institutions, media and social organizations of all “reactionaries”. On the 25th of February president Beneš, facing the danger of turning tense situation into civil war and eventual Soviet intervention, accepted all Gottwald’s proposals. Reconstructed government composed of communists and pro-communist members of other parties, who gave it a semblance of continuity of National Front coalition, was established and two weeks later overwhelmingly confirmed by daunted National Assembly. May 1948 election was already fully arranged by Communist party with united ticket of “revived” National Front and blank ticket as its only alternative (in all following elections held under communist regime even these blank tickets were not used). Some 80% of citizens voted according to official results for the united ticket of NF, 10% casted the blank ticket and 10% abstained from the election. These results were undoubtedly rigged with intention to present new regime as widely popular and accepted by vast majority of people and in many places the voting was not secret but made manifestly pressing thus the voters not to cast blank tickets but despite of this it still cannot be denied that the new regime had then substantial support within the population. President Beneš, already seriously ill, resigned in June 1948 on the office dying just three months later and K. Gottwald was elected by National Assembly as his successor completing thus the takeover of the power in Czechoslovakia.

economic reforms trying to cure obvious ineffectiveness of the system and such a policy.

The Czechoslovak Stalinists stayed in control from major part till the late 1960s but some of most discredited by their performance in purges and show trials were quietly put aside in the meantime and after Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin in 1956 the slow and long-term process of de-Stalinization with amnesties and rehabilitations of victims was set in motion. Despite persisting of very conservative leadership headed by A. Novotný, since late 1950s there was perceptible gradual easement (sometimes referred as "melting") of the regime especially in the field of culture, which continued throughout the 1960s. During this time a reformist faction was formed within the communist party and Novotný's leadership was under mounting pressure and criticism from his party opponents¹⁷ as well as from growingly emboldened and discontent society and its "cultural front".¹⁸ After series of embarrassing events from the second half of 1967 and beginning of 1968¹⁹ Novotný's position became untenable. On the 5th of January 1968 he was deposed from the position of the First Secretary

¹⁷ Among these were not only more liberally oriented communists and proponents of deeper economic reforms, which should have met some chronic problems of Czechoslovak economy (heavily and one-sidedly industrialized according to Soviet model since early 1950s with negative impact on supply of consumption goods and services, which shortages became recurrent), but also Slovaks alienated by Novotný's noticeable Slovakophobia and grudge against the idea of federalization of Czechoslovakia.

¹⁸ Especially remarkable event in this matter was the 4th Congress of Czechoslovak Writer's Union in June 1967.

¹⁹ Notable was especially violent dispersal of peaceful happening protest of university students due to repeated electricity and water shortage in their Prague Strahov campus in late October 1967, which was personally bidden by Novotný and which was later publicly overwhelmingly denounced by university officials, party representatives from academic sphere and many others. Another embarrassment for Novotný was the affair of his protégé general Jan Šejna, who was indicted of corruption and large-scale economic and financial machinations and who fled in February 1968 with his family to the United States before he could have been stripped of his immunity of the National Assembly's deputy and arrested. But the most damaging for Novotný's position of the First Secretary of KSC were his repeated public anti-Slovak outbursts and especially his scandalous and insulting behaviour during celebrations of the 100th anniversary of foundation of the first Slovak Grammar School in Martin organized by "Matica Slovenská" (the Slovak Mother-Bee – traditional national Slovak cultural and scientific institution founded in 1863) in August 1967. After this event Slovak conservatives within the Central Committee of KSC joined the anti-Novotný reform faction and this alliance ousted Novotný from the position of the First Secretary and replaced him by Dubček, who was then acceptable for reformists as well as anti-Novotný Slovak conservatives.

of the communist party and replaced by A. Dubček, and in March he was forced to resign from the office of the president, where popular L. Svoboda succeeded him. After Novotný's fall in January, reformists within the leadership of Communist party prevailed and the country started to change rapidly. Just within a few weeks all censorship in media ceased to be applied²⁰ and politics became once again public "res". Communist party's proceeding became widely open to the public, media thoroughly scrutinized and informed about ongoing discussions and conflicting views of high party officials and became field for polemics over many political, social or economic issues. Investigative journalism focused on tabooed themes from recent past like activities of secret police StB,²¹ suspicious death of foreign minister J. Masaryk in March 1948 or lawless political show trials of early 1950s entered into its brief "golden age". Also many other former restrictions of civic rights, including freedoms of assembly, association or traveling abroad were practically lifted soon. Political reforms debated within the communist party then did not envisaged a return to the First Republic's liberal democracy and they even should not have abolished or put in doubts the "leading role"²² of KSČ but they were directed to decentralization and "democratization" of decision-making process in sense of its greater openness towards needs and wishes of the people, of course within the frame of maintained "socialist social order". One of main points of reformist's agenda and the only one, which was in the end realized and survived this brief period of political liberalization known as Prague Spring, was federalization of Czechoslovakia as a union of Czech and Slovak Republics.

The Prague Spring was enthusiastically welcomed by Czechoslovak public and it aroused very high expectations and spontaneous activity of the people.²³ At the beginning also Soviet reaction to the changes in the

²⁰ Censorship was formally abolished in June 1968 but in fact it was completely out of use not later than in February.

²¹ Státní Bezpečnost in Czech, which means the State Security.

²² It was an official euphemism for power monopoly of KSČ, which was explicitly incorporated into the Constitution adopted in 1960.

²³ Pro-reform leadership of KSČ was not encouraging it in any way and in fact Dubček and others were rather unhappy with it because this reaction of public made Moscow more nervous than anything else. Their initial reformist intentions also were not as radical as the public had expected from them and they quickly found themselves to be towed by events, which got soon out of their control. Some more radical public acts like the manifest "Two Thousand Words" were even officially denounced by KSČ's leadership. But this denouncement was not followed by any repressive measures (at least then) and it was done mainly with intention to soften anxiety and prevent eventual overreaction of Moscow or domestic

leadership of KSČ was not negative. Brezhnev, who was in December 1967 on Novotný's invitation in Prague, refused to intervene on his behalf in ongoing internal conflict within the leadership of KSČ and stated repeatedly that it is the business of Czechoslovak comrades, not his own. But the situation changed quickly once the process of political liberalization started with full speed. Soviet leadership was concerned especially with possibility that Czechoslovak communists would lose control and that Czechoslovakia would break out after that from the Soviet area of influence joining the West instead, which was perceived by Moscow as unacceptable strategic loss and dangerous precedent within the Soviet bloc that must be avoided at all costs. After series of fruitless talks between Czechoslovak and Soviet communist party leaderships, when Czechoslovak pro-reform communists were trying in vain to defend and explain their new reformist course and calm down Soviet anxiety and Soviets were persuading Dubček to abandon it voluntarily before it would be too late, Kremlin decided to solve the situation by force. At night from the 20th to the 21st of August 1968, during a planned session of the Presidium of the Central Committee of KSČ, Soviet army accompanied by soldiers of four other Warsaw Pact countries invaded and quickly seized Czechoslovakia and Dubček with other pro-reform members of the Presidium of the Central Committee were taken and kidnapped to the Soviet Union.

But paradoxically at the moment the invasion did not achieve any of its political objectives, i.e. internal consolidation of Czechoslovakia with restoration to the power of conservative leadership, which would be absolutely subordinated to Moscow, and complete reversal of post-January liberalization process with immediate suppressing of all granted civic freedoms, because the conspirators from neo-Stalinist faction within the leadership of KSČ failed to fulfil their part in the prearranged plot. They were supposed to have majority within the Presidium of the Central Committee, which should have deposed Dubček at the Presidium's meeting and adopted a resolution demanding officially from the Soviet Union and other fellow communist countries "fraternal assistance" in form of military intervention against "imminent threat of counter-revolution" in Czechoslovakia. There should have been immediately established so-called "worker-peasant's government", which would have pronounced a martial law and crushed down every opposition by any means with backing from the occupying forces. But

conservatives who were still influential and who had strong position especially in security apparatus.

this plan collapsed at the beginning as two conservatives of totally eleven members of the Presidium, who were supposed to support the coup and Dubček's deposition but who were in fact unaware of the plot embracing the invasion, switched the side when the information of it had arrived during the Presidium's meeting. Then the Presidium quickly issued a declaration (supported by seven members against four) condemning the invasion as an act violating international law, which was done without awareness or consent of Czechoslovak Communist Party's leadership and Czechoslovak legal authorities. Similar declarations were adopted by the government, the president of republic and the National Assembly and all were broadcasted by radio to the public, together with appeal to the population to keep cool and with order to the armed forces not to resist the invading troops. After that the planned creation of putschist government became impossible as the vast majority of state and power apparatus remained loyal to the legal leadership. In this situation Soviets, facing a nation-wide non-violent mass resistance from the population as well as uncooperative authorities on the ground and bitter denouncement on the international field, were forced to seek a different solution and began to negotiate directly with Dubček and other kidnapped officials, who were originally destined to be judged by "revolutionary tribunal" of "worker-peasant's government" with predictable outcome.

This change of tactics from their part had proven to be very effective in the long run, though the results of it became apparent only after some time. By harsh pressure from the Soviet side during talks held since the 23rd to the 26th of August the captured Czechoslovak officials, who were kept in isolation and complete dark of the events and the situation in occupied country, which was in state of non-violent but quite effective revolt against the occupation,²⁴ were stampeded into signing of so-called Moscow protocol. This document was seemingly a compromise but in fact it opened the way to gradual dismantling of all liberal achievements of Prague Spring and elimination of reformists as a relevant political force, though it did not happen at once.²⁵ During the negotiations Soviets also found a more com-

²⁴ This included general strike, provisional broadcast of "free" Czechoslovak television and radio and also secret arrangement of the 14th extraordinary Congress of KSČ, which should have been prevented by invasion and which bitterly condemned it, proclaimed the full trust in Dubček and other kidnapped reform leaders and demanded their release and deposed all main plotters from their posts in the party.

²⁵ It allowed Dubček to remain in the position of the First Secretary, all captive officials were released and Czechoslovak leadership was not explicitly obliged to negate all post-

petent and suitable man for the task to reverse Czechoslovak liberal reforms in ambitious deputy chairman of the government Gustav Husák.²⁶ Husák, originally Dubček's distinguished supporter and reformist, was quickly promoted to the highest post within the party and in April 1969 he replaced

January changes but on the other hand it legalised the presence of Soviet army on Czechoslovak territory, rejected any interference in the Eastern Bloc by the United Nations Security Council, annulled conclusions of the 14th extraordinary Congress of KSČ, guaranteed immunity from any prosecution for all Czechoslovak conspirators and obliged Czechoslovak authorities to restrict freedom of the press, especially to preclude any other criticism of Soviet Union and the invasion. Moscow protocol gave to the Soviet leadership also a greater control over appointments in leadership of KSČ and the state and some of staunchest reformists were immediately put aside at Soviet bidding.

²⁶ G. Husák, jurist and pre-war Slovak communist intellectual, who became a member of illegal leadership of Communist Party of Slovakia during the war and one of main organisers of Slovak National Uprising in 1944, was in 1946 appointed as the head of quasi-autonomous government of Slovakia known as Board of Commissioners, where he played very important role in communist takeover of the power in 1948. As very intelligent, ambitious, strong-willed and ruthless politician he was on the rise till the 1950, when he became a victim of Stalinist purge. In February 1951 he was arrested and in April 1954 sentenced to life imprisonment in the process with "Slovak bourgeois nationalists". He was amnestied in 1960 and rehabilitated in 1963 but not allowed to return to the high politics till the fall of Novotný at the beginning of 1968. He openly declared his support to reforms and as a Dubček's man he was appointed to the government in April 1968, where he became a deputy chairman responsible for preparation of federalization of Czechoslovakia. He was then widely popular as an excellent speaker, who vigorously advocated liberal reforms and democratization of Czechoslovak society. After invasion he personally prevented Slovak conservatives from the Presidium of Central Committee of Communist Party of Slovakia to adopt proclamation supporting the invasion. But when he attended the Moscow negotiations as a member of Czechoslovak delegation accompanying the president L. Svoboda, he started to present there more accommodating "realist" stance towards Soviet demands and Brezhnev picked him as a new man to support. Husák was still able to hold a trust of reformists as well and when in April 1969 after an anti-Soviet incident in Prague (people celebrating in the streets a win of Czechoslovak national ice-hockey team over Soviet Union at the World Championship in Sweden chanted anti-Soviet slogans and smashed a shop-window in Soviet Aeroflot's Prague office) Dubček was forced to resign on the position of the First Secretary, he replaced him getting support from conservatives and "realists" (former pro-reform communist who decided to cooperate with Soviets), but also from remnant of reformists. As the new First Secretary Husák—pressed by Soviets as well as domestic conservatives—quickly started to fulfil Soviet agenda in all directions. To prove absolute fealty to Moscow, he ordered to suppress by force the protests at the first anniversary of invasion, the borders were shut and reformists or opponents of occupation were purged from the party, media and all important institutions or organizations and proscribed en masse. For all 1970s and the first half of 1980s Husák became an obedient executor of Moscow's biddings, despite of his personal objections to many of them. In 1975 he became also the president of Czechoslovakia and in that position he served till the 10th of December 1989, when he abdicated on the demand of winning opposition after fall of communist regime in "Velvet Revolution".

Dubček as the First Secretary²⁷ of the KSČ. At the moment this change was not seen as a definitive end of by then already significantly restricted achievements of Prague Spring but Husák's policy of "normalization" immediately started to follow strictly all Soviet demands. Quick implementation of tight control over society, purge and repression of those, who had taken part in reform process and refused to yield up this policy or who publicly did not accept the invasion as "friendly international assistance", arrived soon after that appointment. Like in the period after communist coup in 1948 and following Stalinist terror, this wave of repression, hardening regime and the invasion itself led to massive emigration from Czechoslovakia before the borders were definitely closed again in the second half of 1969, and to significant disruption of social structure. Hundreds of thousand people in specialized or managerial working positions were fired from their jobs for political reasons. Persecution was widespread though by far not so drastic as it was in early 1950s. Proscribed people and their families were usually discriminated economically and socially but with some exceptions they were not prosecuted and jailed or even executed as it was common in early 1950s. Hard-line conservatives had at the beginning an ambition to replace all these people with loyal "normalization" activists but this vision had proven to be utterly unrealistic and so ejected specialists, if they yielded politically and repented of their "errors" during 1968, were in many cases quietly taken back after some time or allowed to make similar work elsewhere. But any demonstration of opposition or independence was followed by harsh repressive reaction of the authorities, which was a constant mark of the regime till his fall in the end of 1980s.

Husák's normalization regime was highly unpopular and despised almost immediately since its character of Soviet hand puppet became apparent and its performance utterly destroyed all previous socialist illusions and sentiments of Czech population, especially as the new post-war generations of people were growing up in 1970s and 1980s. They were comparing political and social-economic reality of then Czechoslovakia rather with neighbouring West Germany and Austria than with the period of Great Depression or Protectorate, which had influenced so strongly the thinking and attitudes of their parents. And this comparison, based usually on very cursory view of these two rich and well-functioning "capitalist" market economies and on pure fascination by glossy shop-windows and overwhelming supply of consumption goods seen there, resulted always even much worse than was

²⁷ Since 1971 this highest post in KSČ was called "Secretary General".

the reality, which was quite inconvenient and unsatisfactory anyway. The regime, whose legitimacy was based mostly on the Soviet military and political backing and the loyalty of power and repressive apparatus with only thin ingenuous support in the society, was well aware of this and its more realistic representatives knew well that they are unable to change it and to win wider support from the population, which saw them as traitors, collaborators, oppressors and usurpers and the regime as the main obstacle to the welfare and prosperity of western neighbours.

But they were trying at least to appease the bitterness of population by very profuse social policy which became a high priority then in contrast to the first two decades of “building of socialism” with its intensive and often mismatched industrialization done according to Soviet model. The control over cultural sphere became very tight with omnipresent and overzealous censorship as the regime was afraid of repeating of scenario from the 1960s, when the “melting” in the culture preceded and in some way launched the Prague Spring’s reforms, but the arts and entertainment —purged and deterred from its past liberal tendencies— was generously supported as an instrument of distraction of population from the politics. The role of the culture under strict regime control was much different in contrast to the Stalinist era, when it should primarily “educate” or indoctrinate the population by Marxist “scientific worldview” and celebrate the “building of socialism” under leadership of worker’s class guided by the Communist Party and its “great Soviet teacher”. This approach did not disappear completely in 1970s and 1980s but it was usually more allusive and great part of the cultural production then became entirely apolitical and oriented on mass pastime consumption.²⁸ The regime left also relatively free space for different leisure time activities (sport, hobbies, recreation etc.) and was supporting them financially. For the same reason —despite of significant pressure from conservatives to repeal it— the leading pragmatists of Husák’s regime kept valid one of very few survived Prague Spring’s economic reforms, which was a five-day working week with free Saturday and Sunday.

This populist policy combined with some amount of repression headed against open dissent was partially and temporarily successful. People from the most part, when recognised their inability to change present situation at the moment by open revolt, accepted provisionally an unwritten “social

²⁸ Variety shows with popular pop singers, comics and other artists, quizzes and contests, comedies, documentary films about the nature, sport broadcasts etc. became very frequented formats in the state TV. Some of them successfully survived the regime change in 1989 or were revived by private TV stations later.

contract” with regime, according to which it should guarantee them solid living standard, social stability and security, and undisturbed personal life for abstaining from any protests or opposing political activities. Otherwise they could count on retaliatory moves of authorities ranging from “soft measures” like recourses in the job (wage cutbacks, demotion, job loss or denial of employment), denial of educational opportunities for them or their children, housing restrictions or refusal to grant travel requests, to harder strokes including repeated arrests, summons to interrogation by the police or prosecution and imprisonment. A problem for wholly satisfying fulfilment of the “contract” from the regime’s part were chronic shortages and faults of supply of consumption goods but in general the living standard was relatively quickly increasing during the 1970s, and it was higher than in any other country of Soviet bloc, though still significantly lower than in neighbouring West Germany or Austria. The situation became more difficult with economic stagnation or very slow growth, which was characteristic for the most part of 1980s, but despite of these problems, regime was still able to keep status quo easily till the mid of 1980s. Vast majority of population in the meantime utterly resigned on the politics or public events turning from that to their private lives, hobbies and other interests. Opposition to the regime was scarce and weak though so-called “dissidents” had hidden sympathies of many citizens and among them were some well known figures from the period of Prague Spring or notable artists. Of course, many people were listening Czechoslovak broadcasts of foreign radio stations and at home or privately among close friends they sharply criticized the government and the system, but publicly they displayed sheer conformity.

Politically very rigid and since 1970 personally nearly changeless regime avoided stubbornly all changes of its internal course even after Mikhail Gorbachev started his “perestroika” in the Soviet Union, though it verbally endorsed them. But Gorbachev’s new policy, which clearly evoked and was undeniably inspired by Prague Spring reforms, had strong impact on Czechoslovakia’s internal and international situation anyway. With Soviet Union’s retreat from the Cold war power policy and with disengagement of previous firm control over its satellite states the Czechoslovak normalization regime lost its external buttress. Changes of Soviet “perestroika” and “glasnost”, which could not be concealed from the public nor openly denounced by the conservative Czechoslovak leaders as a mistake or counter-revolution, were also encouraging regime’s opposition and rising hopes of common citizens. Realists within the communist leadership were then already well aware of long-term untenability of status quo under these condi-

tions and necessity of some reforms, at least in economic sphere. But conservatives dominating the leadership blocked every attempt of it. In the end of 1987 their utter dominance became apparent, when elderly Husák, belonging clearly to the “realist” camp and attempting to assert some reforms, stepped down from the position of the Secretary General under pressure of conservatives formally demanding to split this post from the office of the president. He was then unsuccessfully trying to push pragmatic Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal as his successor but the Central Committee elected conservative Miloš Jakeš and a few months later Štrougal resigned on his position of Prime Minister. But this last triumph of orthodox neo-Stalinists was their swansong. They quickly realized their utter isolation and the mounting discontent of society. In period 1988-1989 the activity as well as numbers of overt opposition grew rapidly and open criticism of the regime started to appear frequently even from the side of some official structures or media. The society was still predominantly staying passive and cautiously waiting next development but the leadership of KSČ headed by apparently clumsy Jakeš lost the rest of any respect in the eyes of citizens and was taunted especially with Secretary General’s unprepared speeches, which circulated for the fun among the population on audio or video records. The fall of regime had become only a matter of time and favourable occurrence, which arrived in November 1989 after ill-advised crackdown against unauthorised march of students and other citizens held after officially allowed action commemorating International Students’ Day in Prague. This event mobilized the public and started the non-violent “Velvet Revolution”. After mass demonstrations in Prague and other big cities, continuous strikes of university students and theatres and the general strike on the 27th of November the regime collapsed and was replaced in December by provisional “Government of National Understanding” composed of representatives of broad opposition movements founded during the revolution,²⁹ communists and representatives of other parties of National Front, which led the country to the free democratic elections held in June 1990. Its appointment on the 10th of December was the last act of G. Husák as the president and he abdicated the same day being succeeded by former dissident Václav Havel.

²⁹ Civic Forum (Občanské Fórum - OF) in the Czech Republic, Public Against the Violence (Verejnost proti násiliu - VPN) in Slovakia.

Table 1
Turnout of Czech voters in elections since 1990 (%)

<i>Type of election/Year</i>	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2009
Federal Assembly	96,8	85,1									
House of Deputies*	96,8	85,1		76,4	74,0		58,0		64,5		
Senate (1 st round)				35,0	42,4 ¹	33,8 ²	24,1	29,0 ⁴	42,1 ⁵	39,5 ⁶	
Senate (2 nd round)**				30,6	20,4	21,6	32,6 ³	18,4	20,7	29,9	
Municipal elections	73,9		62,3		46,7		45,5		46,4		
Regional elections						33,6		29,6		40,3	
European Parliament								28,3			28,3

* In 1990 and 1992 it was the Czech National Council, which later became House of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The second House of Parliament —The Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic— was established only in 1996, though it should have been established provisionally from Czech members of Federal Assembly after cessation of Czechoslovakia. This transfer of their federal colleagues to the Czech parliament was blocked by members of then Czech National Council or the House of Deputies, who refused to adopt necessary law for that once the Czechoslovakia ceased to exist.

** The second round of election to the Senate with participation of two leading candidates is held one week after the first round in all districts where nobody received over 50% of valid votes.

1) The first round of elections to the Senate in 1998 was held in the same term as municipal election.

2) The first round of elections to the Senate in 2000 was held together with regional election.

3) The second round of elections to the Senate in 2002 was held together with municipal election.

4) The first round of elections to the Senate in 2004 was held together with regional election.

5) The first round of elections to the Senate in 2006 was held together with municipal election.

6) The first round of elections to the Senate in 2008 was held together with regional election.

Source: Czech Statistical Office.

The change of regime into multiparty liberal democracy was enthusiastically welcomed by vast majority of citizens and the first election, won by large margin by Civic Forum (53,2%) in Czech and Public Against Violence (32,5%) in Slovak part of the federation with Communist Party (13,5% and 13,8%) far behind them on the second or the third³⁰ place, were characteristic by extremely high turnout of voters, which was 96,8% in the Czech Republic and 95% in Slovakia. But this revolutionary euphoria leading to very high participation and interest of citizens in politics did not persist for long. Already municipal elections held in the autumn of 1990 had significantly lower, though for this type of election still quite high turnout 73,9%. Decreasing turnout of voters in “main” national elections, i.e. elections to the Federal Assembly and later to the House of Deputies, was stable trend till 2006, when for the first time it increased a bit in comparison to previous election (see table 1). Nevertheless, it still remained some ten percent points under level of elections from the second half of 1990s, twenty in comparison with 1992 and more than thirty below 1990. Also turnout in case of municipal elections had fallen from nearly three quarters in 1990 to less than one half in every election since 1998. Turnout in elections to the Senate, which is the second and somewhat less important House of the Czech Parliament, never reached the level higher than 42,4% in the first round and 32,6% in the second, despite of the fact that these elections were in the first round with exception of 1996 and 2002 always held together with municipal or regional elections. The second round of the election to the Senate had usually significantly lower turnout than the first round and the only exception from 2002 was caused only by the fact that the second round was then accompanied by municipal election with relatively higher participation.³¹ Very low participation in the elections to the Senate can be partially explained by widespread disagreement with very existence of the Second House of Parliament, which was perceived as quite useless body introduced into the Constitution in

³⁰ In Slovakia also Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) got more votes (18,9%) than KSCĽ.

³¹ Still, as the difference between turnouts of municipality election (45,5%) and the second round of election to the Senate (32,6 %) in 2002 suggests, significant part of voters participating in municipal election refused at the same time to vote in the election to the Senate despite their presence at the polling station. Of course, above mentioned data do not represent exactly the same samples of voters as the election to the Senate were held only in one third of electoral districts (only one third of Senators is elected every two years with mandate on six years) but the conclusion of comparison of turnouts made exclusively in districts, where both elections were held, would not be significantly different.

the end of 1992 only for pacifying of Czech deputies of Czechoslovak Federal Assembly resenting the abolishment of their mandates with the end of Czechoslovakia, who were for that reluctant to support the dissolution of Czechoslovak federation by federal parliament without referendum. Due to that sentiment, which was very strong especially in the 1990s, a significant part of people deliberately refused to participate in the senate elections on the protest against it. But all other types of “second-rate” elections, i.e. the elections to the regional self-governments or to the European Parliament are mostly ignored by voters as well with turnouts usually in interval between one quarter and one third of entitled voters. Last regional election from 2008 with higher but still unimpressive turnout 40,3% was rather an exception caused by the fact that it was successfully presented by oppositional parties on national level as a “referendum” on the government of M. Topolánek and its policy of healthcare and social reforms as well as other controversial issues, which had no or only negligible relation to the regional politics.

Table 2

Trust of Czechs in constitutional institutions (% of people who “definitely” trust or “rather” trust the institution; half-year averages)

	I/90	II/90	I/91	II/91	I/92	II/92	I/93	II/93	I/94	II/94	I/95	II/95	I/96	II/96	I/97	II/97
President	88	82	88	82	82	x	69	70	69	72	76	73	77	80	72	64
Fed. Govt.	82	69	67	55	49	26	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Czech Govt.	79	72	67	56	50	56	58	57	57	55	54	54	51	49	39	27
Fed. Assembly	65	54	51	41	27	17	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
CNR/PS*	x	63	58	51	48	50	34	24	25	25	29	27	29	31	26	18

(continue)

	I/98	II/98	I/99	II/99	I/00	II/00	I/01	II/01	I/02	II/02	I/03	II/03	I/04	II/04	I/05	II/05
President	63	57	49	52	54	54	54	55	53	53	64	64	74	73	70	70
Czech Govt.	37	41	33	23	28	35	37	40	43	37	41	32	31	34	29	42
CNR/PS*	17	26	24	19	21	24	26	28	30	26	32	23	23	24	22	26

(continue)

	I/06	II/06	I/07	II/07	I/08	II/08	I/09	II/09
President	71	73	73	66	61	64	65	61
Czech Govt.	42	x	33	29	29	27	29	54
CNR/PS*	25	25	24	22	22	21	22	21

* CNR/PS = Czech National Council (1990-1992) and since 1993 House of Deputies of the Parliament.

Source: Data IVVM/CVVM

This development of sharply decreasing or continuously low participation in the elections was accompanied by apparent shrinkage of trust in politics and political institutions of any kind. Especially in Czech part of federation the trust in constitutional institutions was very high at the beginning of 1990s and though it was going down significantly in period since the second half-year of 1990 to the end of 1992, majority of people trusted not only to the president but also to national government, which was usually safely above 50% until 1996. Above mentioned decline of trust from the early 1990s had a bearing on political turbulences and conflicts within the heterogeneous and broad political movement like the Civic Forum that had split up not long after its overwhelming electoral victory in 1990³² and also to growing tension between Slovakia or its political representation and the federal government, which somewhat alienated Czechs, who had from major part very little understanding for Slovak troubles and complaints, and Slovaks from each other and especially Slovaks from the federation, which they saw as too centralist and ignoring their needs and “specifics”.³³ Very low trust in federal institutions in the second half-year of 1992 was

³² The Civic Forum (OF) was quickly after the election in 1990 transformed from political movement without firm structure and without individual membership into “right-wing political party” by a mighty faction supporting then federal minister of finance Václav Klaus. The spine of this faction was created by paid “electoral managers”, who were in great number elected to the Federal Assembly or Czech National Council from back positions on the OF’s tickets due to unexpectedly high gain of votes for OF. There these people had organised themselves in so-called Inter-parliamentary Club of Democratic Right and this group constituted a majority within the Czech part of Federal Assembly as well as Czech National Council. In such a position they had very strong or even decisive influence on the government, which was composed mostly from centrists and former dissidents who were not eager supporters of Václav Klaus and his views of economic reform. There were quite sharp conflicts between them and Vaclav Klaus within the government but Klaus was able to push his agenda against will of his colleagues due to support in parliament. With their support he also became the head of the Civic Forum and began to change it into regular political party. His opponents in the OF, who disagreed with this change, formed their platform from which they later created a new subject “Civic Movement” (OH). It was also agreed that neither of succeeding political subject should bear the old name and logo of OF and so V. Klaus with his supporters renamed the new party from Civic Forum to Civic Democratic Party (ODS). People who did not wish to join the ODS nor OH left the politics or came in other already existing parties. Also Slovak equivalent of Civic Forum VPN had fallen apart in 1991 when part of its representatives, led by deposed but widely popular Slovak premier Vladimír Mečiar, broke away and founded Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS).

³³ There were several issues, which led to open conflicts on federal level, some of them were rather symbolic and sometimes ridiculous like highly emotional “Hyphen War” in Federal Assembly over the new official name of Czechoslovakia after fall of communism, but some of them were very grave and essential. One of them was the decision on conversion

related to the composition, “liquidating” character and the only program—dissolution of the state— of the federal government of ODS and HZDS. But in general—despite of significant drop in comparison with 1990—for the most part of the first half of 1990s and at the beginning of their second half the trust to constitutional institutions was relatively high and very stable. It has changed quite radically in 1997, when the trust in government fell deeply under 50%, and in following twelve years it got back over it only once³⁴ and close to this level it was also rarely and always only for very short time. It became also much more variable in comparison with period 1992-1996. Only traditionally high trust to the respected office of the president sustained prevailing, though in period since 1997 and especially 1998 to the end of V. Havel’s mandate it dropped significantly as well. The trust to the parliament represented by the House of Deputies was very low already since 1993 and it only occasionally reached the level of one third. Continual surveys of public opinion indicated also very deep fall of sat-

of armament industry. Czechoslovakia was in the end of 1980s the seventh greatest exporter of armament in the world. The new post-communist federal government, influenced by then humanistic and pacifistic thinking of former dissidents like Havel, Dienstbier, Pithart and others from the circle of Charta 77, cancelled several lucrative contracts on the consignment of weaponry to some developing states as a gesture of good will and the new direction of Czechoslovak foreign policy. Later it decided in the same manner and spirit to converse majority of Czechoslovak armament industry to peaceful civilian production. It was very naive and rather empty gesture with very negative consequences as these decisions of the government in Prague hit hardly and almost exclusively Slovak companies and economy. It led quickly to rapid increase in unemployment in Slovakia, which crossed the level of 10% before the end of 1992, while in Czech part of federation the unemployment rate was only 2-3% at the same time. Also impact of the “radical economic reform” pushed ahead by federal government was much harder on Slovakia than on the Czech Republic and Slovak representation demanded its reconsideration and correction, which was dismissed from the federal level as unreasonable and unacceptable. The most problematic issue was the question of redistribution of competences between the federation and both national republics, when Slovak representation demanded significant empowerment of national governments, and the question of state-law arrangement of Czechoslovakia, which was not successfully solved during the period from 1990 to 1992. After the election in the summer of 1992, when in both parts of federation won overwhelmingly politically disparate formations, their leaders Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar agreed quickly upon the dissolution of Czechoslovakia by decision of Federal Assembly. Despite of prevailing wish of citizens in both parts of Czechoslovakia to preserve common state in some form, the federation was abolished to the end of year and Czech Republic as well as Slovakia became new independent states.

³⁴ In December 2002, immediately after well organised Prague Summit of NATO and just a few months after catastrophic floods, when people were quite appreciating the prompt reaction of the new government led by V. Špidla, the trust reached 51%.

isfaction with present political situation during 1997³⁵ and its evaluation sustained predominantly critical since then despite of different changes in following years. Overall attitudes and perceptions related to political reality in the country became then very critical as well as the evaluation of many aspects of post-communist transition.

The reasons of these changes were probably manifold. General decline of interest in politics and consequently level of participation from originally high stage was partially natural as the people mobilized by ongoing revolution started to return to “normalcy” of their habitual routine, which was in long normalization era essentially apolitical and oriented to the family or close friends and personal matters. New situation of liberty opened also many new opportunities for personal self fulfilment or interesting activities outside the politics. But undoubtedly a major factor here was also continuous impact of political events, working and behaviour of political actors, whose political culture is prevailingly contradictory,³⁶ and also social-economic development and its perception after 1989.

³⁵ In July 1996 after the election to the House of Parliament 53% of Czechs were “definitely” or “rather” content with present political situation and 43% discontent according to then survey of IVVM. Just one year later in July 1997 only 18% were content, while 79% expressed their discontent. This dissatisfaction culminated in the end of 1997 when 91% of respondents in poll said that they are discontent, 50% even “definitely discontent”.

³⁶ Unlike in the First Czechoslovak Republic, where alliance of right-wing agrarians and left-wing social democrats, accompanied by national socialists, Christian democrats and sometimes national democrats, tradesmen and German activists, was the spine of majority governments by then, the present Czech Republic is politically sharply divided on right and left political camps, which are not able to cooperate in long term (only provisionally if they have no other choice) and which are usually exercising each other a policy of “zero tolerance” towards opposing camp. Problem is that there are also deep divisions within these both camps as communists on the left side are still excluded from any coalitional cooperation by all other parties including also left-wing social democrats and the right is divided by personal animosities as well as some essential differences in political attitudes (for example concerning EU and Lisbon Treaty, environment, restitution of church property etc.) which makes it very difficult to create any stable coalition government. In fact, Czech Republic had no such a government since 1996. The only government, which managed to survive full term since 1996, was minority social democratic cabinet of Miloš Zeman in period 1998-2002, when both “major” Czech parties —V. Klaus’ ODS and social democracy— were forced to cooperate when unacceptable demands and fundamentalist stances of minor right-centrist parties —Union of Freedom (US) and Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People’s Party (KDU-ČSL)— practically aborted any possibility to create their coalition with one of both major parties. In next term these two minor parties created a coalition with social democrats, which lasted till 2006, but the government was changed three times and in the end of term it doesn’t work as true coalition at all. In last term the right-centrist coalition of ODS, KDU-ČSL and Greens was internally tense from the beginning, only its creation

Since 1992 Czech political scene was dominated by rightwing coalition under leadership of ODS,³⁷ which showed no respect to opposition. During this period coalition aborted habitual practise of proportional distribution of functions in the leadership of parliament and its committees and coalition deputies seized all functions in the parliament. Also public institutions, where management is appointed by parliament or the government, were under control of ruling parties' cadres and associates, including state news agency ČTK, public TV and radio, Supreme controlling office, Statistical office etc. Quite similar situation was in state administration, where nearly all senior clerks of district offices were members of coalition parties despite of non-political character of these positions. Opposition, which was then very fragmented and heterogeneous,³⁸ had only little space to voice its views and was under strong pressure and often attacks not only from coalition camp but also from majority of mainstream media, which identified themselves since early 1990s with rightist ideology represented by ODS and ODA and their conception of post-communist transition and neoliberal economic reforms presented as "the only possible way" of successful transformation. Label "left" was highly discredited by former communist regime and rightwing parties with their supporters exploited it in campaign against leftwing opposition parties, which were en bloc associated with "communism" and past state socialism with central planning and accused of aspiration to re-establish it. At the same time the government's performance and especially its economic reforms were widely and uncritically presented and appreciated as huge success. Arguing with picked macroeconomic indicators the government officials and media regularly described the Czech Re-

took more than half year and its existence was allowed only by desertion of two social democratic deputies from their club into government camp. In March of 2009 it was deposed by opposition supported by group of rebellious deputies from coalition parties.

³⁷ Other members of it were Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), KDU-ČSL and little Christian Democratic Party (KDS) which ran with ODS on the same ticket in 1992 election.

³⁸ In 1992 election some parties with a different vision of economic reforms did not overcome quorum of 5% for parties (or 7% for electoral coalitions) and won no seats in parliament, surprisingly including centrist OH, which had in its ranks many ministers of Czech and federal governments (including Czech premier) of 1990-1992 period as well as other important political figures and former dissidents. Parliamentary opposition was consisted of communists, far right populist and xenophobic republicans, social democrats, electoral bloc of three left-centrist parties (national socialists, greens and "agrarian" party representing interests of agricultural cooperatives and employees in agriculture) called Liberal Social Union and centrist regional party HSD-SMS (Movement for Self-governed Democracy – Society for Moravia and Silesia).

public as a “miracle” or “economic tiger” and the public largely believed it. During this period the trust in government kept relatively high level above 50 % and overall evaluation of the situation and perception of politics were rather positive, though in the meantime it started to be more sharply differentiated by social-economic position and situation of the people, when those, who were negatively afflicted by ongoing economic changes, became more critical and moved towards opposition.

An important change in this course of development was brought by 1996 election when the rightwing coalition a bit surprisingly lost its majority winning only 99 seats of 200 in the House of Deputies.³⁹ Opposition composed of social democrats, communists and republicans was unable to establish its government for evident disparateness of opposition parties but for the first time rightwing coalition was not able simply to roll it by force as in the past and must negotiate over the tolerance of its minority government and also make some concessions to social democrats who allowed creation of the government on the base of last coalition in exchange for greater control over its actions and some important posts including the position of Chairman of the House of Deputies. Proportion of strengths in the parliament changed soon after that with desertion of two social democratic deputies from their party⁴⁰ but it did not stabilize the rightwing government for long. Relations between ODS and both minor coalition partners

³⁹ It was possible due to above expectation successful effort of social democracy led by Miloš Zeman to unite voters opposing the policy of rightwing coalition. At the beginning Zeman tried to create so called “Realist Bloc” of all “democratic” opposition parties (i.e. without communists and republicans) in as well as outside of parliament for united opposition ticket in 1996 election but this project failed due to unwillingness of other opposition leaders to cooperate with strengthening and strictly oppositional leftist ČSSD, which would become easily a hegemonic force of such a subject. Some of these leaders also did not believe in possibility to beat the rightwing coalition and rather counted on eventual rapprochement with coalition parties. But despite of failure of this project ČSSD managed to convince discontent voters that it is a viable and trustworthy alternative to ruling coalition and in 1996 election ČSSD finished on the second place closely following the strongest ODS, when its support grew from 6,5% in 1992 to 26,4% in 1996.

⁴⁰ Very similar thing occurred also ten years later in 2006 during the process of creation of quite similar coalition government (with only one little change in party composition of coalition, where ODA was replaced by greens) and in both cases this event had deep and very negative impact on perceptions of politics and functioning of democracy by Czech public. In general deputies switching their allegiance without dropping their mandate became quite serious problem of Czech political reality since early 1990s and especially last electoral term was afflicted by this heavily.

became quite tense and at the beginning of 1997 mounting problems,⁴¹ till then ignored or downplayed by the government officials and supportive media, finally hunted down the Czech “tiger economy”, when V. Klaus was forced to admit publicly looming crisis and propose quite drastic package of budget cuts and other unpopular measures to prevent the worst scenario.⁴² Exactly this moment, which came as a shock to many till then rather optimistic Czechs, marked a radical change in overall perception of political situation and previous development. After that Czechs became much more critical towards politics, political institutions as well as functioning of democracy in the Czech Republic and it essentially did not change since then though attitudes and perceptions of Czech population were all the time quite versatile and usually somewhat better than in period of the deepest pessimism registered in the end of 1997, when the currency and economic crisis and series of great scandals related to financing of ruling political parties led to collapse of rightwing coalition, demise of V. Klaus’ government and splitting of ODS, from which in January 1998 broke away a faction of anti-Klaus rebels defeated in internal party struggle and formed new party Union of Freedom (US).

After fall of government in November 1997 followed by decision to shorten the term of the then House of Deputies and held early election in the summer 1998, the Czech Republic had for the first time a provisional “administrative” government composed predominantly from experts not much associated with political parties and led by the then governor of the Czech National Bank J. Tošovský.⁴³

⁴¹ Especially enormous imbalance of external trade, high inflation and interest rates combined with fixed exchange rate of Czech crown creating positive interest differential and consequently huge inflow of short-term speculative capital, which temporarily allowed to finance quickly growing deficit of current account of balance of payment, making thus the inevitable crisis much worse in the future, widespread insolvency of un-restructured industry provisionally bypassed by banking credits and consequently very bad credit portfolio of whole banking system were the main problems, which led to financial crisis and protracted depression of Czech economy in period 1997-1999.

⁴² It did not help much as the Czech crown in May 1997 became target of massive speculative attack leading to collapse of fixed exchange rate regime and deep depreciation of the crown followed by significantly increased inflation, decline of real wages, depression and growth of the unemployment from 3,5% in the end of 1996 to 9,4% in the end of 1999.

⁴³ The same scenario was replicated in 2009 after deposition of Topolánek’s government, though this time constitutional court unexpectedly abolished the law shortening the functional term of present House of Deputies and so the provisional “administrative” government led by the President of Czech Statistical Office Jan Fischer will probably sustain

Election in 1998 brought another important new development in functioning of Czech democracy as after it followed the first real alternation of political elites between right and left, though it was done in very specific way, which was fiercely criticized and denounced by many domestic commentators and all political parties, which were put aside by post-election arrangement of two strongest parties. The elections were won by social democrats ahead of ODS and with communists, Christian democrats and US as other parliamentary parties. But in contrast to 1996, oppositional republicans did not pass over 5% and it led to the arithmetic creation of rightwing majority on the platform of recent coalition (with ODA replaced by newly created US) despite of the fact that their electoral support was weaker than two years before. But it became quickly apparent that these three rightist or right-centrist subjects were not able to agreed upon common coalition, which they mutually conditioned by unacceptable demands and there were too much animosities and conflicts between their leaders, which originated from the fall of their government and its painful existence, especially in 1997. But US also categorically refused any form of collaboration, not only coalition but even tolerance of any government, with participation of social democracy. Christian democrats, closely cooperating with US, after that refused to participate directly or indirectly in any coalition without their close allies cancelling thus possibility to create a minority cabinet supported or “tolerated” by communists. Instead of that they repeatedly stated that it is absolutely unacceptable for them to participate directly or indirectly on creation of any government, which would be dependent on whatever kind of support from communists. Both little parties declined in the end even a proposal of coalition cooperation from M. Zeman, which would have granted them half of posts in the government including position of Prime Minister. This behaviour⁴⁴ pushed both major parties, ČSSD and ODS, or their leaders and long-term rivals V. Klaus and M. Zeman to make a deal according to which social democracy as a winner of election would establish a minority one-coloured government tolerated by ODS, which was obliged not to initiate nor support any attempt to depose it. In exchange for that ODS

acting till the election held in regular term in May 2010 and establishing of a new government afterwards.

⁴⁴ The reasoning behind this was not clear but Union of Freedom, which categorically demanded omission of V. Klaus from any future arrangement of government with her participation, probably expected that in situation with no other acceptable solution V. Klaus would yield or his party would depose him to open the way for creation of renewed rightwing coalition without his involvement.

was granted similar concessions that ČSSD got two years earlier, when it tolerated the creation of Václav Klaus' minority coalition government, and ČSSD was obliged in cooperation with ODS to prepare and support a change of electoral system, which would make it possible to generate more efficient majority governments than existing proportional system. The deal also presumed several changes in the constitution concerning competences of the president and some other issues. This deal, known as the "Opposition treaty", should lead according to its signatories to the creation of stable and politically transparent government for whole four years long term and to secure such a situation for the following electoral terms as well. But smaller parties saw this deal as an attempt to erase them or to minimize their influence at least and they attacked it fiercely as a deal about eternal power-sharing of two strongest parties. This stance was widely echoed in the media which by large sympathized with US and their partners from KDU-ČSL. These two parties with the non-parliamentary ODA and Democratic Union (DEU) formed in the autumn of 1998 an electoral coalition known as Fours-coalition campaigning against parties of "Opposition treaty" with remarkable success⁴⁵ in elections to the Senate in 1998 and 2000, in which ODS a ČSSD lost their constitutional majority necessary for adopting of planned changes of the constitution. New electoral law adopted by ODS and ČSSD, which significantly weakened proportionality of the electoral system for the House of Deputies, was later abolished by Constitutional court as unconstitutional.

But despite of above mentioned and not completely ungrounded criticism of "Opposition treaty", the period of minority social democratic cabinet of Miloš Zeman was quite successful and very useful for the development of Czech democracy. The government not only succeeded in effort to stabi-

⁴⁵ This bloc was in fact for a long time during 2000 and 2001 by far the most popular political subject according to continual surveys of party preferences, but in the end of 2001 it started to fall apart due to some essential political differences between liberals and Christian conservatives within its ranks and also due to an old but newly opened scandal related to financing of ODA. After these internal turbulences the support of Fours-coalition significantly dropped, ODA left it and little Democratic Union merged with Union of Freedom. In the election for the House of Deputies in 2002 only two of originally four parties ran on the same ticket under label of "Coalition" and their result was very disappointing (the fourth place behind ČSSD, ODS and communists, with only 14,3% of votes and 31 seats) and especially for the Union of Freedom which got only eight seats due to preferential votes used en mass by Christian democratic Union's supporters favouring their candidates on the common ticket. After the election the Coalition split and both parties created separate clubs in the House of Deputies.

lize Czech economy and established its long-term conjuncture based on foreign investments or realized majority of preparatory steps necessary for accession of the Czech Republic to EU. It managed to convince the Czech population that alternation of power between right and left is possible and that it does not mean catastrophe. Moreover, the minority government was forced to search support for its legislative proposals or for budget across the political scene, which led to creating of more rational and cooperative relations between the parties opening thus a way for future coalition cooperation, which was impossible before in 1998. When social democrats won the election for the House of Deputies in 2002, Union of Freedom and Christian Democratic Union had already no problem to associate it in a common coalition with social democratic premier.

But period since 2002 meant also a return to confrontational political style when ODS in opposition and with a new leader launched a policy of “zero tolerance” towards new government. ČSSD, also under new leadership of Vladimír Špidla, which refused to create a coalition with communists or minority one-coloured cabinet with quiet support of communists,⁴⁶ began to lose support as their policy in the coalition with KDU-ČSL an US became too liberal and centrist for traditional electorate of the party and it doesn't won new supporters from liberal faction of population for which ČSSD was still too leftist. Result of this was a disastrous defeat of ČSSD in election to the European Parliament in summer 2004⁴⁷ as well as to the Senate⁴⁸ a few months later. After that, Špidla resigned from the positions of

⁴⁶ Such a leftist government was arithmetically possible as both parties held together 111 seats of 200 in the House of Deputies (70 ČSSD, 41 KSČM) and in many ways their programs were not much different. But the problem was strong anti-communism of social democrats, who have since 1993 still valid decree forbidding coalitions with KSČM, and also a fear from negative reaction of public who by large do not see communists as acceptable political party for any form of participation on the power.

⁴⁷ Party won only two seats after getting 8,8% and finishing on the fifth place among running parties and coalitions, which was by far the worst result of ČSSD in any election since 1992.

⁴⁸ Senate election was never strong discipline of ČSSD whose electorate by large usually ignored or even deliberately boycotted Senate as an unwelcomed and useless institution demanding its abolishment. But 2004 was even among other poor electoral performances of ČSSD in Senate election a real flashing point in negative sense, when in 27 electoral districts only three candidates qualified for the second round, where they were all defeated. Thus ČSSD won no seat in this election, which had happened never before. On the other side, when social democratic electorate was successfully mobilized in 2008 by its bitterness over government of M. Topolánek and its policy, ČSSD won 23 seats of 27. Only three districts in traditionally rightist Prague, where ODS manage to defend its dominant position, and

chairman of ČSSD and the Prime Minister. Later the party under leadership of its present chairman Jiří Paroubek started to assert more leftist policy (often in ad hoc cooperation with communists) and more vigorous confrontational style, which appeared to be more effective way to get electoral support, though it created a lot of animosities and worsened the wholesale relations between political parties as well as the atmosphere in the society.⁴⁹ As political parties are widely blamed for this situation, their reputation in general is very low among Czechs today, and it is clearly the main reason of quite negativist perception of policy from the Czech public. On the other hand a bit paradoxically political crisis in 2009 and fall of Topolánek's government in March led to establishment of a government, which is trusted by prevailing part of Czech citizenry because it has no direct ties to despised political parties.

II. CURRENT ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTION OF POLICY IN CZECH REPUBLIC

Following data illustrating attitudes and perceptions related to politics of Czech population are based on a survey conducted in August of 2009. It is quite important to note, that the political situation, when the survey was conducted, was very atypical and in the meantime it has changed significantly. Since the end of March 2009, when the House of Deputies declared its distrust to the government of ODS, KDU-ČSL and Greens led by ODS' Chairman Mirek Topolánek, the Czech Republic has not a standard "political" government. As political parties were not able to create stable majority coalition, they agreed then on early election, which should have been held on the 9th and 10th of October, and establishment of provisional "administrative" government, which should have ended with the early election and the appointment of new "political" government based on the new House of Deputies. This was still expected course of events in early August and some parties already then started their electoral campaign, but in September the Czech Constitutional court has concluded surprisingly that the law shorten-

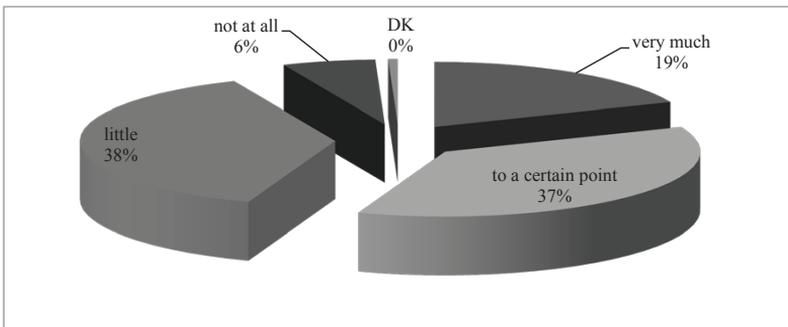
one district in South Moravia, where a locally popular communist candidate won, were not seized by social democrats in then sweeping victory of senate and regional elections.

⁴⁹ There were a lot of incidents with verbal and even physical attacks involved during the campaign for election to the European parliament, including massive "egg attacks" during meetings of ČSSD organized via Facebook by Paroubek's opponents. During campaign for cancelled early election in August of 2009 the leader of ODS Mirek Topolánek was hit presumably by a stone in another incident of this kind.

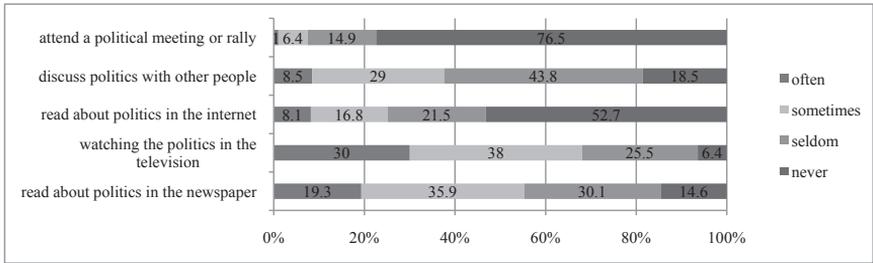
ing the term of current House of Deputies violated constitutionally guaranteed right of one deputy, who issued a complaint against it, on “undisturbed execution of public function” deduced in one court’s previous judgement, and abolished the law thwarting thus the planned early election. As another attempt to reach the early election at least in November has failed too, the provisional solution designed for a few months will sustain almost certainly at least till the May 2010, when the election will be held in ordinary term. This development as well as the atypical situation, in which the survey was realized, could influence the current attitudes and perceptions of people, not to mention the fact, that under present arrangement some questions from proposed core questionnaire were not applicable or had somewhat disputable sense. For example, to ask people whether they trust the opposition or not, when it was unclear, what is the opposition at the moment, was impossible. Also questions concerning hitherto performance of current government, which was appointed just three months before, were not exceedingly valuable, though still legitimate. Still the data from the survey gave quite interesting picture of Czech society’s political stances and feelings.

1. *Political Information, Interest in Politics and Civic Activity*

Graph 1
How do you interest in the politics?

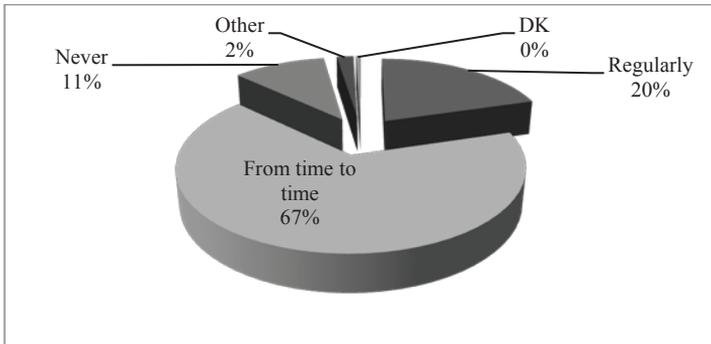


Graph 2
Interest in the politics – how often do you... ? (%)



Note: Complement to 100% includes answers “don’t know”.

Graph 3
Do you follow the accounts of political and governmental affairs?



Answers of respondents to the questions inquiring their interest in politics suggest quite clearly that Czech people prevalingly do not ignore the politics, but that their relation to it is rather cold and passive. Only one fifth of respondents declared that they are “very much” interested in politics but with those, who are interested “to a certain point” (37%) this group represents an absolute majority of 56%, while people, who are not at all interested in politics, create only 6%. As it is apparent from the graph 2, very few people never watch the politics on TV or never read about it in the newspaper, though as “often” these activities are not declared from the majority of them as well. Seemingly quite few people are reading about politics on the internet but it is just a consequence of the fact that a huge portion of population do not use internet at all or cannot use it freely for their personal interests, if they have internet connection only in their job. Vast majority of the people are also at

least “seldom” talking about politics with other people, though only small part declares that discusses the politics often. What is really illustrating the political passivity of the Czech population it is very low portion of those, who are attending political meetings or rallies. More than three quarters admitted that they are never taking part in such an event; only 1% of respondents say that they are attending meetings or rallies often. Active mass protests are in fact very rare in the Czech Republic even in cases, when the public’s attitude and feeling against something is really strong. For example, anti-war protests during the war in Iraq were attended by no more than three or four hundreds usually the same young people from radical leftist or humanist groups or (if the action was organized by KSČM) by approximately the same number of elder party’s supporters, despite the fact that more than two thirds of people opposed the war. The same picture was to be seen in case of U.S. anti-ballistic missile defence radar, which should have been located in central Bohemia and which was opposed by 60-70% of Czechs all the time. It is quite striking difference in comparison with neighbouring Germany, not to mention countries like Italy, France, Spain or Greece, where mass rallies attended by hundreds of thousand people are quite common.

Interest in politics differs somewhat according to socio-demographical characteristics like age, gender and especially education with elders, men and more educated people as more interested.

Table 3
Civic activity – membership in organizations (%)

	Yes
Free time association, club	19,9
Any local association	13,6
Political party*	4,0
Social (political) movement	3,6
Ecological group	4,0
Professional associations	5,3
Sport club	20,1
Trade union	8,1
Parish religious organization	5,7
Others	2,4

* Only members of KSČM (1,3%), ČSSD (1,1%), ODS (1,1%) and KDU-ČSL (0,5%) appeared among respondents.

Level of organization of civic activity quite corresponds with that, what was stated above. Very few Czechs are taking active part in politics. Only four percent of respondents are members of political parties or social movements and —as we know from other surveys— majority of these are only passive members. It causes practical problems especially to lesser political parties, which have chronic problems with building their electoral tickets in regional or local elections due to shortage of willing candidates. Especially “new” political parties, i.e. those, which were founded after 1989 (with exception of ODS) and did not exist —unlike communist party or KDU-ČSL— before that in National Front, have usually very weak and scattered organizational structure on the lower than central level with very few and mostly inactive local cells. Old traditional Czech parties had a history of mass political parties with huge membership and many affiliated organizations (trade unions, sport, woman’s, youth’s and even economical associations etc.) in their ranks. This is a far away history now but these parties, which continuously survived all changes of regimes and did not lost all support after 1989 revolution have still tenths of thousand members and active party cells nearly everywhere, which is huge comparative advantage especially in municipal elections, but these are quite often generating political talents for other types of elections. New parties were usually organized from above on the central level by narrow group of activists and so their grass-root support is usually nearly nonexistent. The exception in this was only ODS, which inherited the nationwide structure of former Civic Forum, a mass movement from the 1989 revolution. Social democracy was also a traditional party and though it continuously existed only in exile during the communist regime, many old social democrats from 1948 or their offspring, eventually the people who were around the attempt to renew social democracy in 1968 became members after 1989.

Quite high participation in sport clubs, free time associations and local associations is a residuum from the past, when these quite traditional activities were very common since the 19th century. Many of them survived in some form the communist regime, which was giving them plentiful support especially after 1968.

Quite striking is very low level of participation in trade unions. It continuously declines since 1989 despite the fact that majority of economically active Czechs are employees and that the country has still huge industrial sector. An explanation of it can be a fact, that trade unions were closely asso-

ciated with communist regime and that they are still stigmatized with it and with their association to the left in general. Once again this trend quite differ the Czech Republic from other countries of the region where trade unions have traditionally strong position and numerous active base in population.

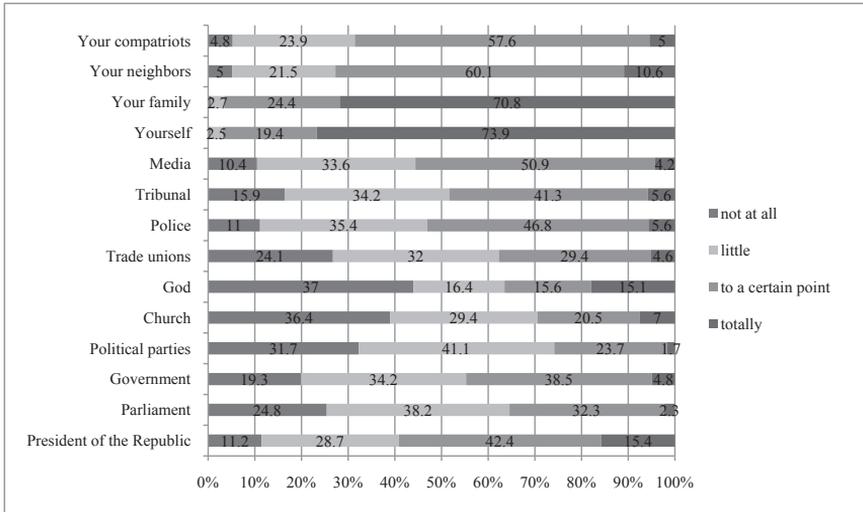
Table 4
Possibility to discuss politics

Talk about politics to no one.	6,6
Many people with who can't talk politics.	21,9
Some, a few people with who can't talk politics.	17,0
No restrictions. Can talk politics to anyone.	39,3
Other	5,1
DK	10,1

Concerning a possibility to discuss the politics with other people, the biggest part of respondents declared that they feel to be free to talk about politics with anyone. But there are also one fifth of those, who feel to be quite restricted in this way in conversation with many people and 6,6% dares not to speak about politics with anybody. As the most frequented reasons for not talking about politics with other people were mentioned biases and dogmatism or fanaticism of other people (31,9%) and unpleasant disturbing of personal relations, which seems to be the same problem as the first possibility, only expressed via a plausible result instead of origin (15,0%). This very well reflects current tense, sharpened and quite intolerant atmosphere between Czech political parties and also between their hardcore supporters. Only after that there figures noninterest in politics of respondent (10,1%) or his partners in conversation (7,4%) and fear of embarrassment caused by own incompetence to talk about politics (3,5%). Fear of economic or administrative recourses of political discussion did not appear as statistically measureable answers.

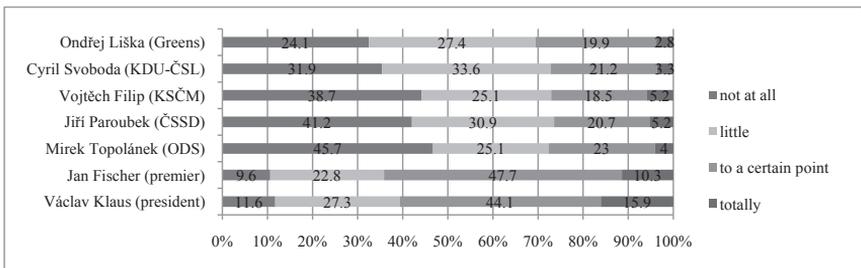
2. Trust

Graph 4
Trust in.... (%)



Note: Complement to 100 % includes answers “don’t know”.

Graph 5
Trust in politicians



Note: Complement to 100% includes answers “don’t know him” and “don’t know”.

Concerning the trust of people in basic political or social institutions and in their surroundings (family, neighbours and compatriots) as well as the trust in them, the result was in the light of that what was already said before easily predictable. The lowest trust was registered in case of politi-

cal parties, though not much better was the situation of churches (in Czech case it means mainly the Catholic Church, which among mostly secular and from great part atheistic Czechs became very unpopular due to its restitution demands) and also trade unions and parliament. Relatively better position of the government was caused by its extraordinary character and it is quite sure that if the survey would be realized a few months earlier, the result would be probably much different and certainly worse. On the other hand today it could be somewhat better. Traditionally high trust is related to the office of the president. Other state institutions like police or tribunals and their perception is quite dependent on actual events. In last few years the police has been perceived in somewhat better light than justice due to chronic problems with its functioning (especially slow proceeding of cases and several corruption scandals played quite important role in this), which this survey just confirmed. Not an absolute trust but relatively positive perception people are expressing towards media. Of course, by far the greatest trust people keep in relation to their surrounding and especially to their family. They also usually trust to themselves.

The graph 5 shows the trust in some leading figures of current Czech politics. There is quite remarkable difference between leaders of all current parliamentary political parties and the president V. Klaus and the premier J. Fischer who are both perceived rather as non-party figures and statesmen than ordinary politicians (despite of V. Klaus' background of founder and long-time chairman of ODS)⁵⁰ and thus more respected and trusted by Czech public in general. Differences among particular leaders of political parties are quite small, but somewhat worse appears to be the image of leaders of both major Czech parties (i.e. ODS and ČSSD) and communists in comparison with smaller parties and especially Greens with relative newcomer O. Liška at the head. Leaders of major parties are usually trusted mainly by voters and sympathisers of their own parties while leading figures of minor parties are also partially accepted outside their constituency.

⁵⁰ Shortly before V. Klaus became the president of the republic in 2003, approximately one third of Czechs —mainly supporters of ODS— trusted him. After he was elected the president, the trust in him increased to the level of 60 % in April 2003 and since then never fell under 55% being usually in interval 60-70 % and occasionally even over 70% according to CVVM's continual polls.

3. *Economy*

Table 5

How much can the state to solve the problems in the society?

Can't solve the problems	8,2
Can solve only a few of them	54,2
Solves them largely	27,5
Solves the majority of the problems	5,2
DK	4,9

Table 6

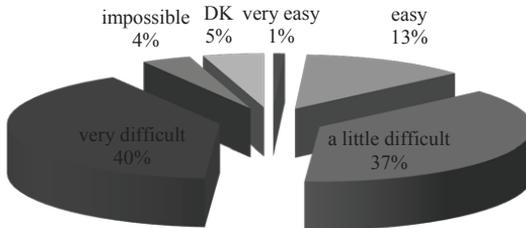
Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

Statement 1			Statement 2
There should be no limits on the amount of money one is able to earn.	58,4	29,8	It is necessary to place limits on the amount of money that one can earn.
Instead of depending so much on the government, people should learn to take care of themselves.	40,1	53,1	The government doesn't do enough to protect people from economic difficulties.
Keeping inflation down should be a priority.	32,6	50,4	Keeping unemployment down should be a priority.
This country is run for the benefit of all the people.	13,8	75,5	This country is run by a few big interests.
Everyone should be free to pursue their life's goals without interference from the state.	36,2	55,6	The state should play an active role in the society so as to guarantee that nobody is in need.

Note: Complement to 100 % includes answers "don't know".

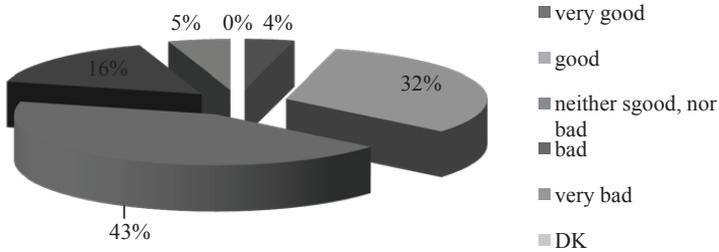
Graph 6

How easy or difficult would be to find a suitable replacement for lost job?



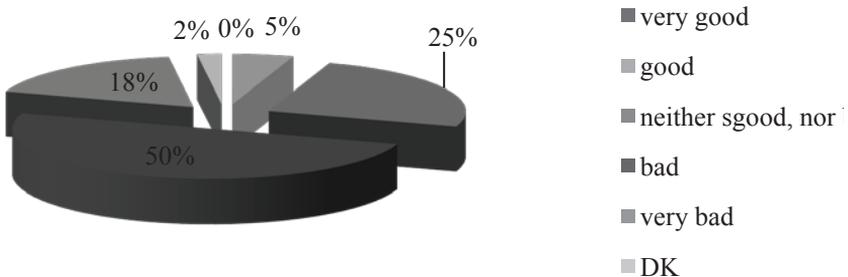
Graph 7

Subjective evaluation of material living conditions of own household⁵¹



Graph 8

Subjective evaluation of economic situation in the Czech Republic⁵²



⁵¹ Data are from December 2009 survey of CVVM.

⁵² *Idem.*

On the field of economy and welfare Czech public's attitudes and views are composed of specific mixture of liberal and paternalistic or statist stances combined with very deep mistrust towards actual political institutions and leadership.

As the table 5 shows, the Czech population is prevailingly sceptical to the ability of state to solve problems in the society. An absolute majority of them is expressing cautious view that the state can really solve only a few of them. In capacity of state to solve the problems "largely" or even to solve their majority believes one third of Czechs and even among them the less optimistic variation five times surpasses the believe that the state can solve majority of problems in the society. Understandably, this believe is mostly held by voters of leftwing parties and especially of KSČM, but it is also quite often expressed by people, who are not voting at all. These are usually people with significantly worse social-economic status, who see the state as their last hope.

Majority of Czechs also does not prefer to place any limits on the amount of money that one can earn. On the other hand, more Czechs incline to see the social-economic welfare of the people as one of basic duties of the government than to see it as exclusive task of themselves and prefer an active role of state in the society to guarantee that nobody is in need over principles of absolute liberty and laissez-faire. They also prefer to keep down unemployment rather than inflation. Three quarters of Czech citizens think that the country is run by a few big interests and only slightly above one tenth of them believe that the country is run for the benefit of all the people.

They are also quite sceptical in evaluating their chances to find a new job, which would be a suitable replacement of their current occupation in case of its sudden loss. Only one from seven economically active Czechs thinks that it would be easy for him to find an adequate substitution in such an occurrence while three quarters consider it to be somewhat difficult or even very difficult and 4% expressed a fear that they would be simply unable to find any suitable replacement for their job. Under conditions of economical crisis Czechs became very critical of current economic situation but despite of it they are evaluating material living conditions and living standard of their households rather positively.

4. *Politics, Democracy and Participation*

Table 7

Could you do something about...?

	<i>Could do</i>	<i>Couldn't do</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
national government decision	14,4	77,4	8,2
local government (council) decision	32,7	57,2	10,1
workplace decision	41,6	45,7	12,7

Table 8

Have you ever tried to influence a decision at...?

	<i>several times</i>	<i>once or twice</i>	<i>never</i>
national level	0,9	9,8	86,9
local level	3,5	27,3	66,1
workplace level	16,6	41,9	39,0

Note: Complement to 100% includes answers "don't know".

Table 9

Approval/disapproval of forms of protest and anti-protest measures

	Approve strongly	Approve	Disapprove	Disapprove strongly
The police using force against demonstrators	7,2	34,6	35,6	15,1
The courts giving severe sentences to protestors who disregard police	11,4	39,9	29,4	10,5
The government passing law to forbid all public protest demonstration	3,4	9,9	46,6	34,4
Petition (sign it, collect it)	45,4	43,8	4,3	4,5
Boycotts (did it, organize it)	19,2	41,7	23,4	4,8
Lawful demonstration	31,5	53,1	7,4	4,5

Note: Complement to 100 % includes answers "don't know".

Table 10

Views of democracy, politics, politicians and political parties

	Agree	Disagree
Politicians do their best to seek the views of the people.	13,3	78,1
Politicians are glad if people don't interfere in their matters.	87,8	8,4
Parties served their leaders' interests.	76,1	12,7
Parties provide opportunity to participate in political activities.	47,1	37,3
You'd better not trust politicians.	74,7	14,1
Ordinary people are always excluded from power.	78,8	13,6
It's always better not to get involved in politics because sooner or later you'll get your fingers burned.	58,6	25,2
I can't see any difference between the existing parties.	46,8	44,0
As long as things are getting on well I'm not really interested in, who is in power.	54,4	36,2
The democracy is the best way for our country.	76,8	13,1
Elections are the best way to choose government.	72,7	16,6
We need parliament for democracy.	61,1	25,1
We need parties for democracy.	57,1	29,7
We should trust politicians.	47,0	42,0
Democracy is not good form of governance but a better form does not exist.	62,1	24,2

Note: Complement to 100% includes answers "don't know".

Table 11

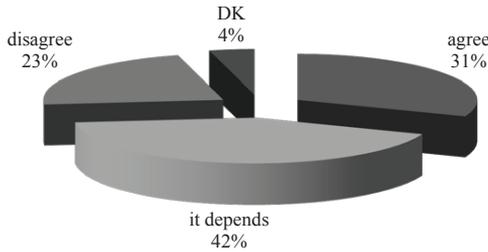
Satisfaction with the way in which democracy is working in the Czech Republic

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
dissatisfied	1,9	2,2	8,3	11,1	11,8	13,5	15,0	16,2	9,2	6,6	satisfied

Note: Complement to 100% includes answers "don't know".

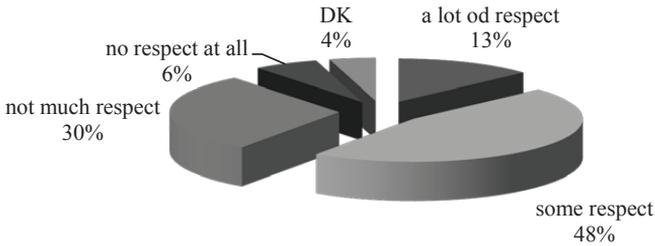
Graph 9

Politics and government are so complicated that the average man cannot really understand what is going on



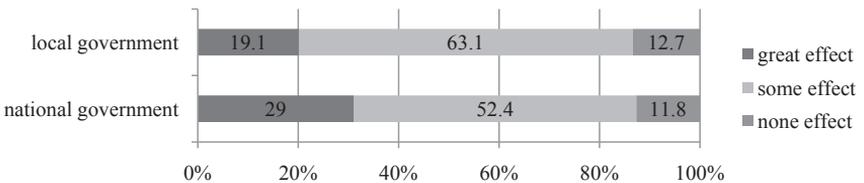
Graph 10

How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in the Czech Republic?



Graph 11

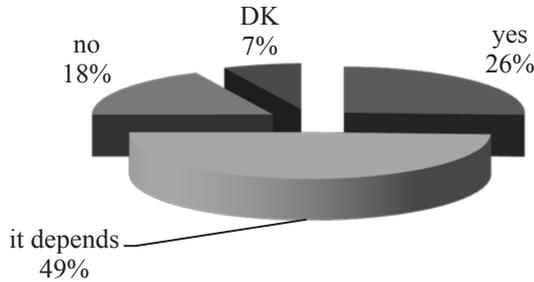
Effect of national and local government on day-to-day life



Note: Complement to 100% includes answers “don’t know”.

Graph 12

Would he be given an equal treatment by government office?



Graph 13

Content/discontent with current political situation

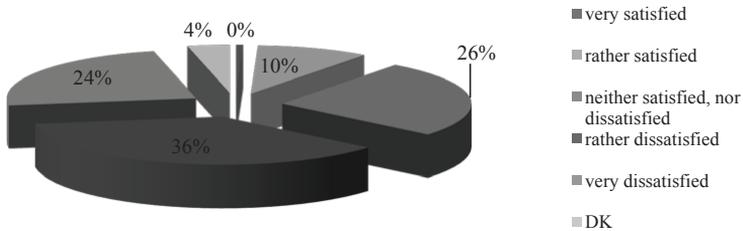


Table 12

Political participation

	yes	no
Have you ever done anything to try to influence an act of parliament?	7,7	89,3
Have you ever done anything to try to influence a decision on national level?	10,7	86,6
Have you ever done anything to try to influence a decision on local level?	30,8	88,1
Have you ever been active in a political campaign?	5,1	94,2
Have you ever signed or collected signs on a petition?	51,9	46,9
Have you ever participated or organized boycotts?	12,0	86,7
Have you ever participated or organized lawful demonstration?	20,8	78,2

Note: Complement to 100% includes answers "don't know".

Similarly to economy and welfare, also in the sphere of policy we can see range of pro-democratic, liberal and participative attitudes alongside views anti-liberal, subjective or highly sceptical and alienated towards functioning of representative democracy and towards one's own ability to influence its development and fundamental political decisions.

In general, like in case of a question whether they agree or disagree with that that democracy is the best way for the country, more than three quarters (78,6%) of Czechs express their agreement while opposite view is declared only by 13,1 % of them. Very similar outcome is also instant appearance in case of particular questions related to the change of regime in 1989. In compliance with that a persuasion that the election is the best way to choose the government (72,7%) prevails over the antipodal opinion (18,6%). Despite of discreditable image of parliament 61,1% of Czechs think that the parliament is necessary for the democracy with 25,1% claiming contrary. 57,1% against 29,7% feel the same in case of political parties. With expression of protest in a form of petitions, lawful demonstrations or boycotts large majority of Czechs has no problem.

On the other hand, only a few people (14,4% against 77,4%) think that they could do anything about a decision of national government with which they disagree, and only a bit better situation appears to be in relation to decisions of local authorities (32,7% against 57,2%). Vast majority of Czechs believe that the country is run by a few big interests and not for the benefit of all people (75,5% against 13,8%), that the politicians do not do their best to seek the views of the people (78,1% against 13,3%), that politicians are glad if people don't interfere in their matters (87,8% against 8,4%), that parties served their leaders' interests (76,1% against 12,7%), that they'd better not trust politicians (74,7% against 14,1%),⁵³ that ordinary people are always excluded from power (79,8% against 13,6%) and that it is always better not to get involved in politics (58,6% against 25,2%). More than half (54,4%) of people also admitted that as long as things are getting on well they are not really interested in, who is in power, while only slightly over one third (36,2%) think contrary. Moreover, large portion of respondents thinks that average man cannot really understand

⁵³ Contrary to that respondents in the same survey answering slightly different question concerning the same point agreed (47%) rather than disagreed (42%) with statement that "we should trust politicians". This apparent contradiction suggests that part of respondents interpreted this second question as a matter of general principles while in the first case they were looking on it from the angle of their contempt towards political parties and politicians in particular political context of today's Czech Republic.

what is going on in politics and government because they are so complicated (30,7%) or that he can understand it only sometimes (42,2%). Despite of benevolent attitude towards different forms of protest two fifths of respondents declared for the use of police force against demonstrators and half of them expressed their approval of severe sentences by courts to protestors who disregard police. Of course, these last two mentioned stances should be interpreted rather as expression of exigency of protection of public order against extreme or violent forms of protest than any demand of iron-fisted rule because only minor share of people in survey supported the idea of government passing law to forbid all public protest demonstration (13,3% against 81,0%).

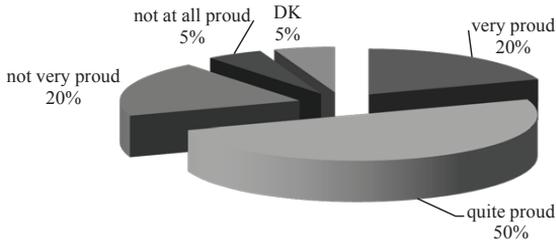
Vast majority of Czechs states at least some effect of national as well as local governments' activities on their day-to-day life though only one fifth in case of local government and three tenths in case of national government claim this effect to be great. Czech citizens also are not much sure about that they would be given an equal treatment by a government office in case they would have to take some question to it. Only one quarter is convinced that they would be treated as well as anyone else while nearly one fifth expects contrary. Nearly a half of polled citizens expressed an equivocal stance that it depends on circumstances.

But despite of complaints of everyday political reality, politics and political actors and expressed dissatisfaction, criticism and scepticism towards it, Czechs are prevailingly satisfied with the way in which the democracy is working in the Czech Republic and they mostly positively evaluate country's current situation with regard to respect of individual human rights. But their active participation in political life and attempts to influence politics, for example via attendance to demonstrations, working for candidates in electoral campaign or trying in any way to affect any decision of national or local authority are rather scarce.

5. National Pride and Relations Towards other Nations

Graph 14

How proud are you to be Czech?



Graph 15

If you had a chance to choose which country you could live in, would you choose the Czech Republic?

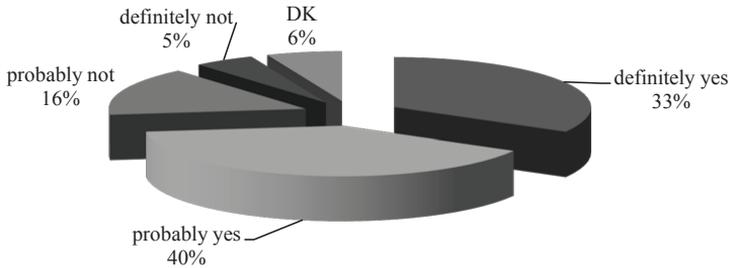


Table 13

Attitude of other nations towards Czechs

	<i>Very friendly</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Very hostile</i>
<i>Bulgaria</i>	7,7	47,5	31,7	2,8	0,2
<i>France</i>	4,7	42,7	38,0	6,3	0,4
<i>Germany</i>	3,3	29,3	41,0	18,2	2,0
<i>Hungary</i>	4,3	37,3	42,4	6,2	0,5
<i>Netherland</i>	3,9	34,7	45,8	1,3	0,2
<i>Italy</i>	6,7	44,3	38,7	1,6	0,3
<i>Poland</i>	14,2	55,8	22,6	2,7	0,6
<i>Mexico</i>	1,7	15,3	46,0	2,1	0,3

	<i>Very friendly</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Very hostile</i>
<i>Romania</i>	2,2	25,6	43,8	9,0	1,6
<i>Russia</i>	3,6	26,9	40,3	19,5	1,4
<i>Serbia</i>	2,9	26,5	43,7	9,8	1,1
<i>Slovakia</i>	32,5	45,3	14,4	4,1	0,7
<i>Slovenia</i>	5,9	39,3	37,2	2,1	0,8
<i>Spain</i>	4,7	36,1	45,3	1,4	0,1
<i>Great Britain</i>	4,7	29,7	50,5	5,2	0,2
<i>Ukraine</i>	3,6	33,2	38,2	12,1	1,1
<i>United States</i>	4,3	29,5	48,1	8,2	0,9
<i>Austria</i>	4,0	30,6	43,0	14,9	1,3
<i>Croatia</i>	12,2	49,3	29,0	2,2	0,6
<i>Venezuela</i>	1,5	12,1	43,0	2,5	0,4
<i>Cuba</i>	2,2	16,6	36,9	13,0	1,7
<i>Israel</i>	2,3	14,4	39,1	10,0	2,3

Note: Complement to 100 % includes answers “don’t know”.

Table 14
Attitude of Czechs towards other nations

	<i>Very friendly</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Very hostile</i>
<i>Bulgaria</i>	5,7	48,6	36,0	3,6	0,5
<i>France</i>	7,0	54,5	32,0	1,5	0,3
<i>Germany</i>	4,8	39,6	37,0	11,9	1,9
<i>Hungary</i>	5,4	43,3	40,9	4,0	0,4
<i>Netherland</i>	4,9	42,2	42,5	1,0	0,3
<i>Italy</i>	8,4	51,0	33,9	0,9	0,3
<i>Poland</i>	13,8	55,1	23,8	2,7	0,4
<i>Mexico</i>	2,0	23,0	47,2	2,3	0,3
<i>Romania</i>	2,2	26,5	42,5	17,9	1,1
<i>Russia</i>	2,5	23,9	38,5	24,6	3,5
<i>Serbia</i>	2,4	26,2	46,9	11,9	0,9
<i>Slovakia</i>	31,9	47,2	13,8	2,2	0,8
<i>Slovenia</i>	5,3	41,5	40,1	1,7	0,3
<i>Spain</i>	4,7	43,6	42,1	0,6	0,2

	<i>very friendly</i>	<i>friendly</i>	<i>neutral</i>	<i>hostile</i>	<i>Very hostile</i>
<i>Great Britain</i>	6,5	43,0	42,8	1,4	0,2
<i>Ukraine</i>	3,1	26,2	38,1	23,2	2,3
<i>United States</i>	9,9	42,5	37,3	4,2	0,6
<i>Austria</i>	5,5	43,2	39,2	6,0	0,5
<i>Croatia</i>	14,1	54,2	24,4	1,0	0,3
<i>Venezuela</i>	2,2	16,6	46,2	2,8	1,0
<i>Cuba</i>	2,0	18,5	43,3	12,9	1,6
<i>Israel</i>	2,5	19,7	44,1	8,1	1,7

Note: Complement to 100 % includes answers “don’t know”.

More than two thirds of Czech citizens feel to be proud that they are Czechs, when 20% of respondents claimed to be “very proud” and 49% “quite proud”. On the other hand, one fifth of polled said that they are not very proud to be Czechs and 5% stated that they are not proud at all. Nearly three quarters of respondents declared their will to choose the Czech Republic again if they would have got a chance to pick freely a country to live in, 33% “definitely” and 40% “probably”. Only one fifth of Czechs would have chosen a different country in such a case, 16% “probably” and 5% “definitely”. As a reason for national pride among two recorded answers respondents mentioned frequently traditional Czech products (Czech beer, glass etc.) and achievements of science (28,2%), sport and successes of Czech sportsmen (27,8%), art and cultural monuments (27,4%), Czech history or historical figures (20,7%), human qualities (9,4%) and beauties of the nature (9,1%).

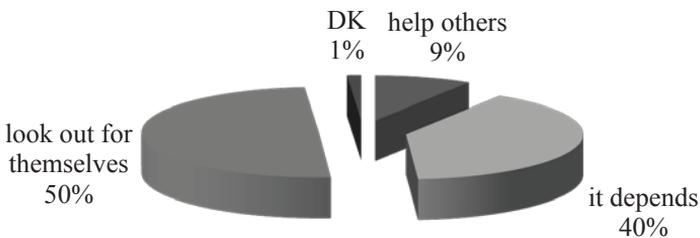
Concerning relations with other nations, Czech respondents tend to believe that other nations are friendly or at least neutral towards Czech Republic or Czechs. In case of all nations included in the survey the share of “friendly” attitude prevailed over the share of “hostile” attitude, which was in many cases statistically negligible. Relatively higher level of presumed hostility towards Czechs has appeared in case of Russia and Germany, followed by Austria, which can have roots in the 20th century’s and older history. In case of some other nations like Cuba, Ukraine, Israel, Serbia, Romania, the United States or France a small but not utterly insignificant share of alleged hostility can be related to some recent diplomatic disaccords, visa policy or particular incidents involving Czech citizens sojourning there or people from respective countries in the Czech Republic publicized in the media.

In case of Czech's attitude towards other nations the situation is quite similar, though this time we have registered one minor exception from the standard of prevailing share of "friendly" attitude over share of "hostile" attitude, which was slightly lower in case of Russia (26,4% against 28,1%). The most positive feelings Czechs have towards former federal partner Slovakia, followed by neighbouring Poland and Croatia, which is traditionally by far the most popular destination of Czech tourists going on holiday to the sea.

6. Human Relations and Contentment in Life

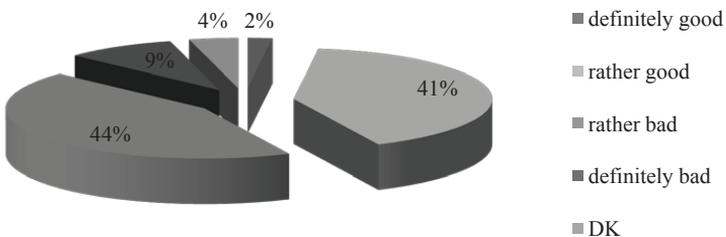
Graph 16

Would you say that most people are more inclined to help others, or they are more inclined to look out for themselves?



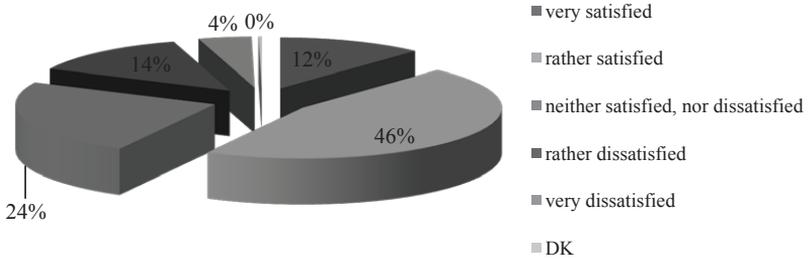
Graph 17

Evaluation of human relations in the Czech Republic⁵⁴



⁵⁴ Data are from March 2005 survey of CVVM.

Graph 18
Content/discontent with personal life



Concerning human relations, Czechs tend to believe that most of people are rather selfish looking out mainly for themselves than altruistic and eager to help others. But a significant part of them thinks that it depends on circumstances. In subjective evaluation of human relations in the Czech Republic there is slightly prevailing their negative perception. But despite of this, remarkable majority of Czech citizens regularly declares their content with their personal life and trusts in people from their surroundings as was mentioned above in the part 2.2 of this text dedicated to trust.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Civic culture in the Czech Republic has been passing through deep changes during last two decades after the fall of communist regime. Very high level of participation and interest in politics from the period immediately after 1989 declined gradually with damping out of revolutionary atmosphere and under impression of manifold events or affairs as well as negative effects of economic transition. Remarkable turning point in this respect became particularly the period of 1997-1998, when in consequence of deep economical and political crises the evaluation of many particular aspects of post-revolutionary development and especially perception of political situation, institutions and actors had changed fundamentally and became overwhelmingly critical. Very negative image of politics, politicians and political parties persisted afterwards despite of relatively favourable social-economic development since 1999. It was accompanied by increase of attitudes of subjective or alienated character, which are mixed up with

participative stances. In most general questions concerning liberty, democracy and pluralistic political system participative attitudes prevail decidedly among Czech citizens. Some scepticism or distance related to functioning and perspectives of democracy and freedom in the Czech Republic have a bearing on some setbacks occurred during last two decades but also in broader and remote experience of minor nation, whose fate was always influenced and sometimes directly and dramatically changed or shaped by external powers.