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Специфіка парламентських виборів 2006 року у Чеській Республіці

Автор статті доводить, що вибори 2006 р. до парламенту Чехії і перебіг всієї виборчої кампанії показали, що громадянське суспільство і демократичні принципи не розвиваються синхронно. Демократичний процес багатогранний і відкритий, він припускає визначеність процедур без зумовленості результату. Однак, політичні процеси в умовах демократії сприйнятливі до впливу окремих індивідів і угруповань, що намагаються використати будь-які можливості зловживання владою. У цьому випадку справедливіше говорити не про «павутину влади», а аналізувати мозаїку політичних подій, дій політичних агентів, цивілізаційний досвід.

Ключові слова: Чеська Республіка, демократичні політична та партійна системи, парламентські вибори, внутрішня політика, коаліції партій

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The peculiarity of the parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic in 2006

The author argues, that the parliamentary elections of 2006 in the Czech Republic and the course of the election campaign showed, that civil society and democratic principles do not develop synchronously. The democratic process is diverse and overt; it does not concede the precision of the procedures without the stipulated results. But the political processes under the conditions of democracy are sensitive to the influence of individuals and groups, which try to take advantage of any opportunity of power misuse. In this case it is better not to speak about the “authorities’ web”, but to analyze the mosaic of political events, political agents’ actions, civilizing experience.

Keywords: Czech Republic, democratic political and party system, parliamentary elections, the internal politics, the coalition parties

Problem statement and its topicality. The Czech Republic is now in the state of transformation connected with the political and economic changes. Transformation is understood as the system changes ensuring the development of the social and market economy, competition between political parties and their programs which cover the ideologically restricted spectrum from left to right and the political centre. Among the post-socialist countries the Czech Republic is one of the most successful as it has accomplished democratization of the political institutions, economic and market reforms i.e. it had prepared itself to the requirements put forward by the NATO and EU and successfully became a member of these international organizations. So, the experience in holding elections during the time of political changes gained by the Czech Republic is interesting for the post-socialist countries, which periodically hold their own presidential and parliamentary elections (often pre-term elections) and this points out at the topicality of the given problem.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the activity of the political parties in the Czech Republic during the transformational period. Owing to the institutional and conflictological approaches the participation of the parties in the parliamentary elections of 2006 and their influence on the development of the political process in the country have been researched.

Analysis of the recent studies and publications. Traditionally, the problem of role and functions of the political parties in the electoral processes and the development of electoral systems have been actively analyzed in foreign and home political science for many decades. Such interest of the researchers is quite obvious, taking into consideration the exclusive importance of the electoral processes and electoral systems for the full-fledged development of the political system and civil society. In their works M. Wallerstein, R. Dahl, G. Almond, M. Duverger, S. Lipset, S. Rokkan, G. Sartori, R. Taagepera analyze the role of political parties in functioning of the electoral systems, represent the analysis of the correlation between party and electoral processes. The above mentioned processes that occurred in the Czech Republic have also been analyzed by a number of Ukrainian and Russian scientist, namely S. Bostan [1-3], I. Kalinina [4], Ye. Kish [5], O. Pelenska [6], O. Prykhodko [7, 8], S. Troian [10], U. Proiss [9], P. Fedosov [11], Yu. Shcherbakova [12]. But the events that took place in the Czech Republic during the last years have not been ascertained in the works of the researches, so the article is aimed at disclosing this problem.

Factual material statement. More than 20 years have passed since the “Velvet Revolution” in Czechoslovakia and considerable quantitative and qualitative changes have taken place in the society. On January 1, 1993 on the world map appeared a new country, the Czech Republic, with already applicable democratic political and party systems [13, p.196]. Implementing civilized principles, as a result of the political changes in 1990s, the Civic Forum and a number of other new political parties as opposed to the Communist Party of the Czech Republic, which had already been losing monopoly of power, were created. During the last years they have undergone various changes, some small parties stopped their activity, some

transformed and merged with more powerful organizations. The Civic Democratic Party (CDP) and the Czech Social Democratic Party (CzSDP) have become real political rivalries in modern Czech Republic [13, p.197]. Most parties appeared and existed for several years and then disappeared, proving the belief that on the Czech political scene the scenario, traditional for the CEE countries, is expanded. Political parties take their places according to the “right – left” scale and the great number of them is marginal parties. Here belongs the Czech National Social Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, Republican association – Czechoslovakian Republican Party, the Civic Democratic Alliance, Czechoslovakian Social Party, the Democratic Union of the Czech Republic, Freedom Union etc. In addition to the CDP and the CzSDP the political life in the Czech Republic is actively influenced by the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (CPBM), which was transformed from the former Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovakian National Party (CDU – CzNP) and “the Green Party” [13].

In the political development of the Czech Republic a great role belonged to the government of right and left adherents. In 1998-2002 the country was governed by the CzSDP on the basis of the so-called oppositional agreement with the CDP. A union of this kind is a bit unusual for the political environment of the Czech Republic, which undergoes a number of changes. It was a tactical ploy of the great coalition. In fact within the frames of it one governing party, the CzSDP carried out the preconceived activities, coordinating them with another party, the CDP [14].

The parliamentary elections of 2002 showed the increasing influence of the CzSDP (30.2% of votes). Besides, the leading positions were occupied by the CPBM (18.51% of votes). Voting for the CzSDP, electors voted retrospectively, showing their support to the party and positively estimated party's policy in the previous electoral cycle. At the same time the electors' positions were affected by the negative experience of the voucher privatization which had been carried out by the CzSDP and which is criticized even now. It was influenced personally by the former leader of the CDP, and the former president of the Czech Republic V. Klaus. Privatization did not bring in enrichment or material welfare for most of the citizens, who at the beginning had to invest 1000 Czech korunas to buy a voucher book. The voucher privatization was criticized by the experts, scientists and practitioners, namely M. Zelenyi, J. Svejnar, J. E. Stiglitz, J. D. Sachs [16, p.127].

To provide a qualitative analysis of the voucher privatization it is necessary to describe economic and political relations, though it is difficult to do thoroughly in the frames of one article. That is why we just outline the fundamental problem, i.e. insufficient legalization of cardinal proprietary and property changes in early 1990s, which has been depicted by experts from various non-governmental organizations for several years. Gradually, a number of criminal cases, namely intentional bankruptcy of a range of enterprises, various schemes of tax evading,

avalanche-like increase in bank problems (inconsistent credit policy, interweaving of politics and economy), the growth of unemployment, the loss of foreign investors, has been opened.

After the elections of 2002 the left-of-centre coalition between the CzSDP, CDU – CzNP and the Freedom Union managed to seek the social reconciliation and achieve relatively stable economic performance. In 2006 GDP in the Czech Republic was 7.4%, the average inflation index did not exceed 2.4%, and the number of unemployed (in June) equaled – 7.9% [19]. In 2004 the Czech Republic became a member of the EU, having overcome the displeasure of the part of the citizens, which can be considered as the necessity to pay attention to the new demands. It should be mentioned that the Czech Republic has some practical opportunities to realize its suggestions in the EU and together with the other EU members can influence its political and economic indices.

Speaking about its inner politics the Czech Republic has managed to slacken the risks of the changes in the pension scheme, education and health service. Under the Constitution these spheres remained free of charge [21]. This criterion is not exact, as most of the citizens pay taxes to the state, and this, according to the scheme of the secondary transfer of finance, determines the level of material support of the mentioned spheres. At the same time the principle of the free of charge education and health care is effective, though the parties evaluate it from their own ideological points of view. The right wing believes that tuition fee and health care fee must be introduced, the left wing rejects this idea with various levels of publicity. The CzSDP is rather inclined to the principle of “free of charge” social programs, and the CPBM strictly and categorically points it out [8]. The discussions, which could lead to the fruitful result, are non-constructive, as the representatives of various parties tend to political maneuvering and discussions, and the desire to search a compromise and solution, which would be acceptable for all political players, is absent. So, it is necessary to admit that the measures which have been taken considering the problem of ageing (in Europe this index changes at minimal level in comparison with other countries) need more considerable groundings, not only the usage of the theory and experience of other countries, but also practical researches. Besides, to solve social problems it is necessary to take into consideration the level and structure of people employment, necessities in the quality and nature of health care.

In June 2006 the parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic were held and the results were the following: civic democrats achieved 35.38%, social democrats – 32.32%, communists – 12.81%, Christian democrats – 7.22%, the Green Party – 6.29% [22]. Nearly 65% of population took part in the elections. The main factors which determined the results of the elections are guarantees and stability. At the same time it is not absolutely clear why the CzSDP, who had left behind its rivals, did not win, and why against the background of the successful economic development of the Czech Republic, the most important factors for electors were the internal political situation and some incidents concerning the CzSDP.

The insufficient level of self-reflection connected with some representatives of the party must be seen as the main reason (thus the head of the party was replaced twice V. Spidla was succeeded by S. Gross). Some superior representatives (M. Kraus, who was the head of the fraction of the party) and officials who were members of the party too actively cooperated with businessmen and in a number of cases were suspected of corruption or excess of power. The CzSDP was criticized for deviation from its political aims in favor of two other parties who were their partners in coalition. The CDP took advantage of the CzSDP's inner conflicts and twice gave a vote of confidence to the government. In the first case the CzSDP substituted the Prime Minister V. Spidla for S. Gross. In the second case M. Kalousek, the head of the coalitional CDU – CzNP, played an important role in this political game. Through his critical speeches, he humiliated the authority of the CzSDP, hoping that the government would resign, and he, at the head of the CDU – CzNP, would guarantee himself a plum place and good chances in case of closer cooperation with the CDP. Some negative role was played by the communists who could not forgive the former Prime Minister V. Spidla the fact that he had not set the minority government, backed up by the CPBM, but preferred coalition to them in 2002. Under the influence of own inner ambitions the communists acted insidiously and did not support the proposal submitted by the CDP [15]. Probably, it influenced the further program cooperation between the CPBM and the CzSDP, but in practice the political game turned out to be a different one.

It should be mentioned that in 2006 an ideological and program (and logical) variant of cooperation between the CPBM and the CzSDP could create among the adherents of the left wing an impression that the CPBM was just a “cover” for some suspicions as to the excess of power by the CzSDP. Such suspicions led to the fact that a part of electors just did not come to the elections, creating an outflow of votes from the communists. The more profound reason for the loss of votes by the communists was the fact that inside the party there was no real influence on the activity of the executive power. A part of the left electors, focused on the effective actions of “their” party, voted for the CzSDP, which, as they thought could become a real rival for the CDP. Besides, a part of electors, who changed their sympathies, probably reacted more sharply to the negative election campaign, which ensured the following displacement in polarization of political prerogatives of society.

The electors who supported the CDP felt danger of the excessive national regulation of production, reduction in individual activity in the sphere of business, the increase in tax pressure. The CDP proposed to implement the so-called “equal tax” and some of the voters made the conclusion that it would help them to get rid of additional tax pressure (double tax).

The fact that the CzSDP gained the second place at the elections has some historical grounds. The activity of two parties on the left wing of the political spectrum, with their constant arguments, which affected their prestige, means the loss of positions in competition with the right wing. It is known that the communists' historical mission failed because of the social reasons and under the conditions of globalization left-of-centre parties cannot successfully

compete on the political scene, if they struggle with the help of old, obsolete and very often inefficient methods. The CPBM and the CzSDP have ideological and program differences as to the classical understanding of the so-called social state with its active role in the society. The CPBM has a weak project of the socially fair society, and the search of the third way (its interpretation is close to the CzSDP's one, and to a part of European social democrats and socialists) is still ineffective both in theory and in practice.

The CDP is a classical conservative party that supports traditional market, family and individual's values. In foreign politics it maintains ties with the USA and NATO and criticizes the EU. Its former head and the former president of the Czech Republic V. Klaus believed this project to be a restriction of the market relations and the foreign interference in the national states' functions of primary importance. The CDP overestimates the role of the national state in the process of globalization. So, we reckon that in the CDP's position there is some violation of logic, i.e. the party stands up for the role of the market, which plays the main part in the process of globalization and that is why its critics of the EU, which, as they think restricts the markets of the countries-members, is ungrounded.

To some degree the new discovery of the parliamentary elections of 2006 became the Green Party. For several years it had been acting on the political scene, but only that year it gained favourable chances to be represented in the parliament. To our mind, the party succeeded thanks to the so-called electors' negative choice, people who refused to vote for one of the parties-leaders, namely the CDP or the CzSDP. The electors voted for the new actors in politics, backed up the discussions over the ecological situation. Among those who voted for the Green Party, there were many people from the ecologically polluted areas. The party found its adherents among the unstable supporters of other parties and the intellectuals. Apparently, the support of the Green Party by the former president V. Havel played its role.

So, as it has been mentioned above during the elections of 2006 the CDP, the CzSDP, the CPBM, the CDU – CzNP and the Green Party surmounted the 5% barrier and entered the parliament. It should be reminded that the electoral system in the Czech Republic is a proportional representation electoral system, and the parties who get more than 5% of votes enter the parliament and gain a certain number of deputy's mandates in accordance with the percentage of votes. The Czech proportional representation electoral system is believed to be pure, though it includes some elements, which are typical for the majority voted system.

The presence of the barrier determines the compulsory number of the electors' votes which is necessary to gain a deputy's mandate. Usually it causes sharp criticism of the political parties, which do not have great influence on the political scene in the Czech Republic. Thus, the Green Party resented that the CzSDP had gained only twice of the Green Party's votes, but had got mandates in four times more than the Green Party. Such resentment was shown by other parties and this caused considerable thoughts concerning the necessity of the electoral system modification to have a fairer distribution of places in the parliament, posts, changes

in the electors' conduct and the nature of the election campaigns, which would ensure the program and ideological distribution according to the axis "left – right".

At the same time, the general political course of the country would hardly be influenced by the elections. According to their results the CzSDP and the CDP have become the most influential in the parliament and a variant of the great coalition between these parties is possible. There were many grounds (foreign-policy and national appraisals of the elections), connected with the economic and political interests, which pushed the parties to compromise and agreements as to the next Czech government. Therefore, the variants of the transitional government, the administrative government and the pre-term elections have been discussed. To our mind none of these variants is optimal, as if politicians embrace one of them it will affirm that they do not accept the electorate's choice and in its turn it can provoke a part of the electorate to the political apathy, absenteeism and passiveness during next elections. We reckon that a deliberate expectation as to the low turnout of voters and hopes on other parties' election victory is the lack of political maturity and culture. Usually, pre-term elections are considered as a disgrace for democracy or as something unusual, but this variant must be used only in case of crisis or deadlocks. Negotiations as the available ways of solving problems have not been settled yet.

But the reflections how to bring conceptual changes into the tactics of work with voters and into the party leaders' political rhetoric were premature. The situation was difficult and it took some time to normalize the political life, to mark off the problems concerning the elections, to focus on the everyday political work, to start implementing election promises. Lately it became obvious, that the CDP tried to carry out its election program. Public opinion and critics by political opponents greatly influenced the party's activity in fulfillment of its engagements.

It should be said, that the election campaign of 2006, as the analysts believe, was distinguished by the greater acuteness in comparison with the previous elections. Sometimes political contest expressed itself in the scandals over the individuals (while criticizing the opponents, politicians made personal remarks). Especially it could be seen in polemics between the CDP and the CzSDP. Both parties used the so-called negative elements, i.e. negative advertising, for instance the advertising device "the Civic Democratic Party – minus" which was used by the CzSDP. The CzSDP's representatives systematically criticized main points from the CDP's program and compared them with the CzSDP's decisions. The main CzSDP's slogan was "Guarantees and Success". The sociologist I. Habal mentioned that the negative campaign influenced not only the party's voters but the rival's adherents. It was the basis of the CzSDP's election strategy. It strengthened after receiving the data as to the election situation, which witnessed to the reduction of the variation in number of votes between these two parties in favor of the CzSDP.

The example of the election campaign, which steps outside “the standards”, can become the notes made by J. Kubice (Jan Kubice was the head of the Department for Organized Crime Control – «Útvar pro odhalování organizovaného zločinu» (ÚOOZ), which were based on the statements, that organized crime interfered in the official governmental structures, in policy, which was carried out by the CzSDP. Even the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic J. Paroubek was accused of sexual relationship with the underage. This dirty case introduced a tangle of inappropriate political struggle, rude manipulation and went beyond the bounds of the democratic principles.

Though the case showed how it was dangerous to ignore the possible penetration of organized crime into the official structures or inadequate, deliberate misrepresentation of information by mass media. It is too difficult for politicians to protect themselves from speculations, deliberate improper use of negative information, which is spread during the election campaign, aimed at discrediting political enemies. At the same time, it is not clear how the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the part of the government formed by the CzSDP (during 8 years) set it aside.

Spread of the faulty information went out of control and caused the loss of votes by the CzSDP. Though the official governmental structures have conducted an inquiry concerning J. Kubice’s notes and any conclusions are premature, but the unpleasant compulsive thoughts still exist. The political scientists repeatedly warned that dirty technologies, connected with defamation and unfair actions are inadmissible, but “negative campaigns have become a stable part of the political process” [3, p. 5]. So, V. Burian and T. Tichak state that it is necessary to accentuate on the differences in programs, to give an elector an opportunity to make the choice deliberately. “Ideological polarization is necessary as the voter must see the minimum difference between the alternatives” [3, p. 5].

The electorate conduct cannot be considered as a measured and predicted value, because it is subordinated to the objective, rational, and subjective, irrational influence, a citizen must make his choice before every election. Extension of the “dirty technologies” increases the number of those who refuse to vote. These groups of absentees must be taken into account by the political parties in their electoral strategies. Usually, most of the absentees are marginal persons, who do not take part in the elections deliberately. Voting procedure is the right of choice for every citizen and one of the main democratic principles, which influences the events and the unwillingness to vote and can hide a range of problems. The analysis of the reasons for absenteeism can become a source of measures for stabilization of the voter turnout, though from elections to elections the voter turnout index continuously falls.

It should be mentioned that in the Czech Republic from time to time the idea to make the elections obligatory (the former Prime Minister M. Zeman backs it up) as they are in Belgium, Luxemburg, Greece or Italy appears. The political scientists and average citizens treat this idea rather negatively. Next idea which is discussed in mass media is to introduce

the compulsory percentage of the voter turnout, namely 50%, as an essential requirement to consider the elections valid. This position is actively supported by the so-called radical left wing. But to our mind the specificity of the electoral systems of the above mentioned countries cannot be a model for other countries. Secondly, the implementation of the mentioned measures would mean the top-down development of the democracy and not an upward one which is the distinctive feature of the Czech Republic. Usually, compulsion does not contribute either to democracy or politicians who try to change it by means of influencing the society.

The experience of the parliamentary election campaign of 2006 in the Czech Republic determined the following direction of political discussions, which in their turn, revealed 3 problems: causes of voting during the democracy development in the country; the presence of some additional factors which can influence the choice of the voters; if it is reasonable to analyze the electorate's behavior only on the basis of the economic theory of democracy proposed by A. Downs (1957), according to which "voting indicates the electors' egoistical interest who choose among the political parties much as the consumer chooses the goods or services, which he receives" [2, p. 256], or they should adhere to the criteria that irrationality predominates in their decisions (custom, social experience, prestige of political parties and actors). The essence of these processes must be based on the multilevel set of symptoms and reasons, which can be revealed in various forms, and which can veil the nature of the phenomenon. Thus, A. Heywood states, that "the point is not in the "goods" proposed by the parties, but rather in "the way the goods are offered", by means of advertising, political campaigns, propaganda and so on" [2, p. 257].

Conclusions. The parliamentary elections of 2006 in the Czech Republic and the course of the election campaign showed, that civil society and democratic principles do not develop synchronously. The democratic process is diverse and overt; it does not concede the precision of the procedures without the stipulated results. But the political processes under the conditions of democracy are sensitive to the influence of individuals and groups, which try to take advantage of any opportunity of power misuse. In this case it is better not to speak about the "authorities' web", but to analyze the mosaic of political events, political agents' actions, civilizing experience.

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