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## The evolution of the party systems of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia. Comparative analysis

**Abstract:** After the breaking the monopoly of the Communist Party's a formation of two independent systems – the Czech and Slovakian – has began in this still joint country.

The specificity of the party scene in the Czech Republic is reflected by the strength of the Communist Party. The specificity in Slovakia is support for extreme parties, especially among the youngest voters. In Slovakia a multi-party system has been established with one dominant party (HZDS, Smer later). In the Czech Republic former two-block system (1996–2013) was undergone fragmentation after the election in 2013.

Comparing the party systems of the two countries one should emphasize the roles played by the leaders of the different groups, in Slovakia shows clearly distinguishing features, as both V. Mečiar and R. Fico, in Czech Republic only V. Klaus.

**Key words:** Czech Republic, Slovakia, party system, desintegration of Czechoslovakia

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**T**he break-up of Czechoslovakia, and the emergence of two independent states: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, meant the need for the formation of the political systems of the new republics. The party systems constituted a consequential part of the new systems. The development of these political systems was characterized by both similarities and differences, primarily due to all the internal factors.

The author's hypothesis is that firstly, the existence of the Hungarian minority within the framework of the Slovak Republic significantly determined the development of the party system in the country, while the factors of this kind do not occur in the Czech Republic. Secondly, the party system in Slovakia revealed a noticeable readiness to support nationalist groups, which it is difficult to discern in the Czech system.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The tradition of political parties and the party system at the time of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia

The tradition of the existence of political parties on the territories presently belonging to the Czech Republic is longer than in case of the Slovakian lands. The Czech parties were formed in the late 70s of the nineteenth century, whereas political formations seeking support among the Slovakian population could not function *de facto* until the inter-war period. At that time the most important role in the common state of Czechoslovakia was played by Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers Party,

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<sup>1</sup> The article describes the situation of 1 May 2017.

Czechoslovak National Democracy Party and Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants. In Slovakia, the strongest party was Slovak People's Party (Hlinka's Party). In practice, a separate Slovakian party system began to take shape after the fall of the so-called First Republic and the proclamation of Slovakia's autonomy in October 1938 (Bankowicz, 2010, pp. 56–57, 188–189). In March 1939 Slovakia declared its independence, which further promoted the process of foundation of a separate party system (Bankowicz, 1998, pp. 41–57).

During the communist period, in Czechoslovakia as in other socialist countries, a single-party system operated, even though, theoretically, apart from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Communist Party) there were other groups, thus legitimizing the so-called people's democracy. In the years 1945–1948 the Communist Party of Slovakia was formally independent. In Charter 77, the main opposition movement in this country, Slovaks were rare, the whole movement was perceived rather as the Czech (Skotnicki, 2000, p. 30; Bankowicz, 1998, pp. 90–93; Tomaszewski, 1997, p. 86; Kusý, 2002, p. 516).

The democratic system, characterised, among other things, by the existence of a competitive multiparty system, began to take shape after the fall of communism, which is associated with the so-called Velvet Revolution, initiated by the demonstrations in Prague on November 17, 1989. In consequence, Civic Forum (OF – Občanské forum) was established in the Czech Republic and Public Against Violence (VPN – Verejnosť proti násiliu) in Slovakia (Tomaszewski, 1997, pp. 248–249). They were not political parties in the classic sense of the word, but political movements representing the emanation of anti-communist opposition (Jičínský, 1996, pp. 64–65). There were some differences between them. OF was determined to take political responsibility for their actions, while VPN understood its role as a readiness to demonstrate, to organize the society, but not as an opportunity to seize power (Bajda, 2010, p. 29).

It was then that a significant decision was made which possibly – as noted by P. Bajda – determined that a uniform political elite never came into being, and probably also contributed greatly to the division of Czechoslovakia. OF and VPN remained separate movements and the founders of VPN “began to think in terms of us – the Slovaks, you – the Czechs” (Bajda, 2010, p. 32).

Breaking the monopoly of the Communist Party's rule was a breakthrough, a turning point in the party system of the state. From that moment a formation of two independent systems – the Czech and Slovakian – has begun in this still joint country (Fiala, Hloušek, 2003, pp. 17–19). The only connecting elements were the federal government and the parliament. There were not any groups that could function effectively throughout Czechoslovakia (Kopeček, Spáč, 2010, p. 112).

The first democratic elections in Czechoslovakia (June 1990) resulted in the victory of the two opposition groups: OF in the Czech Republic (49.5%) and VPN in Slovakia (29.3%). However with time, the two movements underwent decomposition,<sup>2</sup> thus deepening the process of formation of separate parties and contributing to the independence of the party systems of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic which appeared on the political map of Europe on 1 January 1993.

<sup>2</sup> In the election of 1992 OF gained only 4,6% of the votes, VPN underwent decomposition.

## 2. The party system of the Czech Republic

In the emerging Czech party system the process of reactivation of “the historical parties” took place. An excellent example of this is the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD – Česká strana sociálně demokratická) which continued the traditions reaching back to the nineteenth century. Also the Christian Democratic Czechoslovak People’s Party (ČSL – Československá strana lidová) followed the old traditions. It eventually became the main driving force of the lasting coalition with the Christian and Democratic Union (KDU – Křesťanská a demokratická unie).

The Communist Party, undergoing transformations, became a perceptible element of the system. From it Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM – Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy) sprang up and has remained present in all the parliaments of the Republic after 1993. The party emphasizing Moravian regionalism was Movement for Autonomous Democracy – Association for Moravian and Silesia (HSD-SMS – Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii – Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko) (Fiala, Hloušek, 2003, pp. 19–23; Tomaszewski, 1997, pp. 250–251).

There were also a lot of populist parties, even though they played a marginal role. In 1990 Association for the Republic/Republican Party (SPR – RSC – Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa) was established and won the seats in parliament after the elections of 1992 and 1996. Anti-communism was one of its main electoral slogans (Wojtas, 2011, pp. 169–170). Other, diverse groups, such as Green Party (SZ – Strana Zelených) or Democratic Union (DEU – Demokratická unie), did not play any important role (Skotnicki, 2000, pp. 32–33).

OF, mentioned above, with time was divided and replaced by a right-wing Civic Democratic Party (ODS – Občanská demokratická strana), becoming over the years one of the dominant parties, and Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA – Občanská demokratická aliance), which eventually disappeared from the political scene (Skotnicki, 2000, pp. 30–31).

In the middle of 1990 there were approx. 70 groups/partys registered in the Czech Republic, some of them quite “exotic”, with no chance to get into parliament, for example Friends of Beer Party (SPP – Strana Přatel Piva) (Kozłbiał, 2016, p. 199). Currently, as of May 1, 2017, there are 263 political parties and movements registered in the Czech Republic (*Rejstřík...*, 01.05.2017).

In the first period of the Czech independence a strong and sometimes even dominant position of the two parties: ODS and ČSSD was noticeable. They received the strongest support: in 2006 these parties won a total of nearly 68% of the votes. ODS has been losing support, in the last election only less than 8% of voters voted for it. The loss of voters by the Social Democratic Party was not so painful and the party participated in governing coalitions (also now, as the winner of the last elections). Both parties sought to reduce the importance of the smaller parties. In 1998 ODS and ČSSD signed a coalition agreement which enabled the Social Democrats to create a minority government. At the same time it was the beginning of the changes in the electoral law, aimed at establishing an easier route to the emergence of a stable majority in the Chamber of Deputies. The changes did not go this far because of the opposition of the Constitutional Court (Sokół, 2007, pp. 387–394).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The change of the electoral method from Hagenbach’s to d’Hondt’s was the reflection of these preferences.

Despite the high level of support, none of these parties could govern single-handedly (apart from the mentioned minority government). The Czech party system was also characterised by the isolation of the Communist Party and ruling out coalition talks with it. KSČM can be regarded as the third political force in the country, in 2002 it was supported by even more than 18.5% of the voters.

The dynamics of the party system, which resulted in the emergence of new groups, was revealed in the elections of the years 2010 and 2013. The Christian Democratic Party KDU was absent from parliament, but a new group appeared instead, the pro-European Tradition Responsibility Prosperity (TOP 09) obtaining the support of every sixth voter. In 2010 the electoral threshold was also exceeded by the (VV – Veči Veřejné) group, being a supporter of the decision-making process through the instruments of direct democracy. But it was an episodic party present in parliament only for one term. On the other hand, in the election of 2013 Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011 – Akce nespokojených občanů) gained significant support (over 18% of the votes) and even entered the government coalition,<sup>4</sup> as well as less significant group Dawn of Direct Democracy (Úsvit).<sup>5</sup> ANO 2011 can be regarded as the party of social protest against the abuse of power, propagating in their electoral slogans, among other things, the need to combat corruption, and also as a group which gained significant support through catchy slogans and electoral consequences of a Europe-wide crisis noticeable also in the Czech Republic (Kožbiał 2014, pp. 135–136; Kožbiał, 2016, p. 208).<sup>6</sup>

The results of the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Parliament of the Czech Republic, carried out after 1993, have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1

**The results of the elections to the Czech Chamber of Deputies after 1993 (Support in %)<sup>7</sup>**

Party	1996	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013
ODS	29.62	27.74	24.47	35.38	20.22	7.72
ČSSD	26.44	32.31	30.20	32.32	22.08	20.45
KDU-ČSL	8.08	9.00	14.27	7.22	–	6.78
KSČM	10.33	11.03	18.51	12.81	11.27	14.91
SPR-RSČ	8.01	–	–	–	–	–
ODA	6.36	–	–	–	–	–
US	–	8.60	–	–	–	–
SZ	–	–	–	6.29	–	–
VV	–	–	–	–	10.88	–
TOP 09	–	–	–	–	16.70	11.99
ANO 2011	–	–	–	–	–	18.65
Úsvit	–	–	–	–	–	6.88

**Source:** Own elaboration based on: [www.volby.cz](http://www.volby.cz), „Týden”, nr 44/2013 z 29 października 2013 r., p. 11. In election 2002 KDU started in electoral coalition with US-DEU.

<sup>4</sup> The group was formed in 2011 by Andrej Babiš, a billionaire and businessman of the Slovakian origin with the Czech citizenship who controlled the Agrofert a.s. holding.

<sup>5</sup> The founder of this populist movement was Tomio Okamura. The formation demanded introduction of the direct democracy into the political system of the Republic.

<sup>6</sup> In the opinion poll conducted in November 2013 by CVVM (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění) 17% of the respondents described the economic situation in the Czech Republic as very bad, 45% as bad, 28% as neither good nor bad and only 8% as good. See: *Občané o hospodářské situaci ČR a o životní úrovni svých domácností – listopad 2013*, [http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c1/a7139/f3/ev131202.pdf](http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a7139/f3/ev131202.pdf), 12.11.2016.

<sup>7</sup> Only the groups that were represented in parliament in 1993 were taken into account.

Political scandals and affairs also had an impact on the perception of politics and the parties. One that should be mentioned took place in spring 2005 when Prime Minister Stanislav Gross resigned after having trouble to explain the origin of his private assets. In 2009 the public opinion was shaken by pictures of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek in the company of naked women in a villa belonging to the head of the Italian government Silvio Berlusconi. A year later, accusations of corruption resulted in disappearance of the President of the Chamber of Deputies Miroslav Vlczek (Siekłucki, 2010, p. 80), and in 2013 the government of Petr Nečas resigned in consequence of the corruption scandal in which the persons from the immediate milieu of the Prime Minister were involved (*Skandal...*, 20.10.2013).

### 3. The party system of the Republic of Slovakia

The framework of the emerging party system can be tracked down to the spring of 1991 when a group of supporters of former prime minister Vladimír Mečiar founded the People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko). The following year the movement won Slovakian parliamentary elections (within the federation) gaining over 37% of the vote and repeating the success of 1994. The decomposition of VPN occurred almost automatically. Formed in its place Democratic Party (DS – ODS – Demokratická strana – Občianska demokratická strana), later DS, already in 1992 found itself outside parliament (Kopeček, Spáč, 2010, pp. 113–114).

Until 1998 the party scene was characterized by an overwhelming dominance of Mečiar's group, which, however, never won a sufficient number of seats to be able to govern single-handedly. Christian Democratic Movement (KDH – Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie) became a stable component of the scene regularly acquiring the support of approx. 10%. Catholic circles were active already in the communist era, for a long time being even the main platform of oppositional activities (Bajda, 2010, p. 21).<sup>8</sup> In turn, the Communists transformed in Party of the Democratic Left (SDL' – Strana demokratickej ľavice) – a party of social democratic orientation. During the election in 1992 the party managed to get nearly 15% of the votes, but in the parliament of independent Slovakia it was present once more from 1998 to 2002 and later never again. The orthodox Communists, on the other hand, as the successors of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, managed to be reborn as Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS – Komunistická strana Slovenska). The formation was isolated by other parties (Kopeček, 2003, p. 190).

Since 1994 two antagonist camps were formed in the Slovakian party system, defined by their attitude towards Mečiar's ruling party. The dividing line of pro-Mečiar – anti-Mečiar dominated internal relations. The parties co-creating the government of the HZDS belonged to the camp supporting Mečiar. These were right-wing and nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS – Slovenská národná strana) and radical left-wing Union of the Workers of Slovakia (ZRS – Združenie robotníkov Slovenska) which was present in parliament only for one term. In the years 1994–1998 the polarization of the political scene of this period took the form violating the constitution of the young republic.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth adding that in the 80. of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the pilgrimages to the main sanctuary of the Slovakian land, Levoča, gathered even up to 150 thousand people.

Secret services were employed to attack persons inconvenient for the government (the kidnapping of the president's son Michal Kováč). That is why the then state system was described as the hybrid regime which situated itself on a thin line between democracy and authoritarian rule (Kopeček, Spáč, 2010, pp. 116–117).<sup>9</sup>

Before the elections in 1998 the reluctance towards HZDS triggered the formation of so called Blue Coalition by the right-wing groups: Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK – Slovenská demokratická koalícia). The coalition was headed by the future prime minister Mikuláš Dzurinda who soon became the leader of a new group called Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ – Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia). Despite the electoral victory of HZDS he failed to form a government and gave up the power.

The final defeat put an end to the activity of Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO – Aliancia nového občana) founded by the media magnate Pavol Rusko. ANO was present in the National Council in the years 2002–2006. In turn, Prime Minister Dzurinda's group never managed to get the support exceeding 20% and disappeared from parliament after elections in 2016. This leads to the claim that the changes were of the short-term nature and the newly created parties have not become a permanent part of the system.

The formation of Direction (Smer) that took place in December 1999 should be assessed differently. It was headed by former SDL's activist Robert Fico assuming the role of the opposition to Dzurinda's government. In his declarations Fico stressed the need for a pragmatic policy, which was expected by the citizens, and at the same time distanced himself from the government. His rhetoric contained populist elements (e.g. distancing from the ideology, criticism of politicking, a general reluctance towards party favouritism, finally distancing from the establishment), and the mixture of the socialist slogans and the extreme right-wing antiziganist demands. From the very beginning it was difficult for the researchers of the Slovakian political life to classify the party (Bajda, 2010, pp. 145–146; Zenderowski, 2004, pp. 124–125).<sup>10</sup> Only in 2005 the formation adopted a program of defense of the welfare state and the social democratic profile (Kopeček, Spáč, 2010, p. 125). In the 2002 elections Smer gained more than 13% of the vote, four years later, over 29%, which meant that Fico's party became the strongest party in parliament and took over the power. Also next elections: in 2010, 2012 and 2016 resulted in its victory.<sup>11</sup> In 2012 Smer gained overall majority in the National Council. Thus, it is justified to emphasize that this group has become the most stable part of the Slovakian political life since the state gained independence.

The party system of the Slovak Republic is characterized by two more elements worth highlighting. The first is the constant presence in parliament of groups representing the Hungarian minority (it represents approx. 10% of the population of the country). In the first period the Hungarians were represented by Hungarian Coalition (MK – Magyar Koalíció – Maďarská koalícia) gaining in 1994 more than 10% of the votes. In the years 1998–2010 Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK-MKP – Strana maďarskej koalície – Magyar Koalíció Pártja) was present in parliament, and since 2010 the minority has been represented by Most-Híd. These groups should be classified as ethnic and right-wing par-

<sup>9</sup> The external symptom of V. Mečiar's policy was the delay in Slovakia's negotiations on the membership in the European Union and its abstaining from NATO in 1999.

<sup>10</sup> For some it was a typical populist party, deprived of ideology.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Fico was the prime minister in the years 2006–2010 and has been again since 2012.



ties, they have in mind first of all protection of the interests of the minority. Given the size of the minority, its participation in parliament will assuredly be noticeable in the future.

The second regular element of the system (except the parliamentary terms of 2002–2006 and 2012–2016) are right-wing or extreme right-wing groups. Initially, it was already mentioned SNS, temporarily being a member of the coalition government. Following the elections of March 2016 also People's Party Our Slovakia (L'SNS – L'udová strana Naše Slovensko) has been present in parliament. It advocates the need to renew national sovereignty and base it on three pillars: national, Christian and social (*O nas...*, 13.11.2016). It is led by Marian Kotleba, known for his controversial remarks.<sup>12</sup> In 2016 both nationalist groups won about 1/6 of the votes.

In recent years, four new groups have entered the political scene, but for now it is difficult to assess their importance and consistency of the support they are likely to gain. These include the right-wing Eurosceptic liberal party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS – Sloboda a Solidarita) in the National Council since 2010; Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OL'aNO – Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti) – conservative party present in the parliament since 2012; considered as right-wing protest movement We Are Family (SME Rodina), and centre-right party of the former presidential candidate Radoslav Procházka #NETWORK (#SIEŤ).

According to the records of 15 November 2016 there are 151 political parties and movements registered in the Slovak Republic (*Register of...*, 01.05.2017). The results of the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic after 1993 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

**The results of the elections to the Slovak National Council after 1993. (Support in %)**

Party	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2012	2016
HZDS	34.96	27.00	19.50	8.79	–	–	–
SV	10.41	–	–	–	–	–	–
MK	10.18	–	–	–	–	–	–
KDH	10.08	–	8.25	8.31	8.52	8.82	–
DU	8.5	–	–	–	–	–	–
ZRS	7.34	–	–	–	–	–	–
SNS	5.40	9.07	–	11.73	5.07	–	8.64
SDK	–	26.33	–	–	–	–	–
SDL	–	14.66	–	–	–	–	–
SMK-MKP	–	9.12	11.16	11.68	–	–	–
SOP	–	8.01	–	–	–	–	–
SDKÚ	–	–	15.09	18.35	15.42	6.09	–
SMER	–	–	13.46	29.14	34.79	44.41	28.28
KSS	–	–	6.32	–	–	–	–
ANO	–	–	8.01	–	–	–	–
MOST-HÍD	–	–	–	–	8.12	6.89	6.50
SaS	–	–	–	–	12.14	5.88	12.10
OL'aNO	–	–	–	–	–	8.55	11.02
SME Rodina	–	–	–	–	–	–	6.62
#SIEŤ	–	–	–	–	–	–	5.60
LS Naše Slovensko	–	–	–	–	–	–	8.04

**Source:** Own elaboration based on: <http://volby.statistics.sk/>, 01.05.2017.

<sup>12</sup> Kotleba made himself famous for his frequent antiziganist remarks in which he referred to this minority as parasites.

#### 4. Comparison of the Czech and Slovakian party systems

The party systems of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic escape traditional classifications, both quantitative and qualitative. This is caused by the discernible changes in both systems and the permanent revolution.

Political competition in the Czech Republic was characterized by several main lines of conflicts and divisions. The division into communist and reformist parties (until the disintegration of OF) seemed to be irrelevant. Instead, the importance of socio-economic dividing line has been increasing. It has become dominant and has had an impact on the consolidation of the right and left side of the party scene. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the dividing line reflecting the attitude to European integration became visible. In addition, the conflict between supporters and opponents of the free market economy should be noticed. The latter were represented the KSČM. The Communists also participated in the conflict between the authoritarian regime and open democratic society, supporting the first option.

In Slovakia the conflict between the Communists and the reformers also did not play a noteworthy role. Initially, the main parties were formed along the main lines of the dispute as defined by Rokkan and Lipset,<sup>13</sup> above all along the socio-economic line (the attitude towards the transformation of the system, which should be done gradually or radically), the dispute between centre and periphery (however, Prague was treated as the centre, from there SNS evolved, and in time the attitude towards the Hungarian minority was placed at the periphery), church-state conflict (KDH built its position on the principles of Christian morality, in opposition to the VPN). The division of agriculture-industry (or town-village) was insignificant, because no important agrarian parties have developed. The polarization which occurred after the elections in 1994 proceeded along several lines of division, including centre-periphery, church-state, finally authoritarianism-democracy (Leška, 2013, pp. 72–79).

Comparing the party systems of the two countries one should emphasize the roles played by the leaders of the different groups. Slovakia shows clearly distinguishing features, as both V. Mečiar and R. Fico exerted a significant impact on the activities of HZDS and Smer. The figure of a charismatic leader has had an impact on the support among voters<sup>14</sup> who have identified the party with its boss. In the Czech Republic it is difficult to find this kind of relationship, possibly the only example was the influence of the prime minister, and later president, Vaclav Klaus on the actions of ODS in the 90s.

In Slovakia a high level of unpredictability of the electorate can be noticed. This is evident both in the growth and decline of support for individual parties (Smer and HZDS which virtually disappeared from the party scene) (Kopeček, Spáč, 2010, p. 128) as well as readiness to vote for completely new groups (eg. in the elections of 2016). No doubt the party system of the Slovak Republic was for nearly a quarter-century of statehood more fragmented than that of the Czech Republic. Since regaining the independence in Slovakia representatives of as many as 21 groups have taken seats in parliament, while in the Czech Republic only 12.

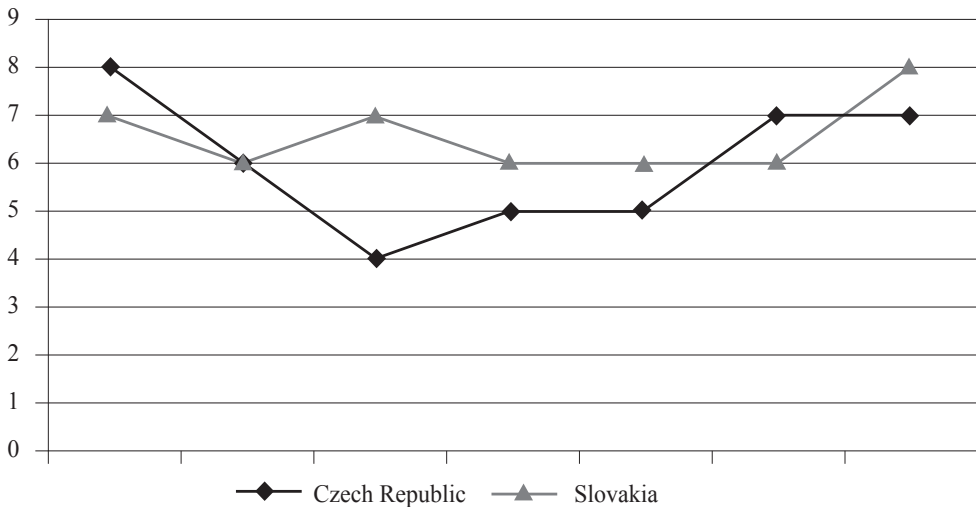
<sup>13</sup> The lines outlined by these authors were not „clear”.

<sup>14</sup> Mečiar lost the presidential elections in 1999 and 2004 in the second round, likewise Fico, also in the second round, in 2014.



As the National Council consists of a great number of small parties there has been the need of forming broad governmental coalitions, made up of 4 or 5 parties. The Slovakian parties have been very flexible when it comes to the creation of ruling coalitions, which according to Kopeček and Spáč makes this country similar to a model of open competition described by P. Mair (Kopeček, Spáč, 2010, p. 129).<sup>15</sup> In the Czech Republic only to form Klaus's government, in the years 1992–1996, as many as 4 parties were needed. The number of groups in parliaments usually has been higher in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic. This is shown in Chart 1.

**Chart 1. Number of parties in Parliament of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic after 1993**



Source: Own elaboration.

A. Antoszewski, analyzing the political parties in Central and Eastern Europe, draws attention to the low level of trust in political parties, which can be associated with already mentioned political affairs and scandals. In attempt to assign groups and movements to the main families of political parties he notes that both individual Czech and Slovakian parties can be classified as liberal, socialist (social democratic), conservative Christian-democratic and radical families. The only problem was unambiguous classification of the HZDS, described by the author as populist and personal at the same time (Antoszewski, 2006, pp. 111, 119–143).

On the other hand, R. Herbut described the Czech party system as dispersed, while the Slovakian as multi-party, which is the result of the aforementioned lack of groups strong enough to form the basis for a stable coalition (Herbut, 2006, p. 151). Smer was proceeding in this direction after the elections in 2012, but its influence has clearly weakened after the last election. Also in the Czech Republic there is currently no group that

<sup>15</sup> According to Mair's concept government alternation is characterised by an open rivalry when the activities of the parties are unpredictable.

could have a chance to gain broad public support in the foreseeable future. The dispersal system is also indicated by the degree of support for the two largest groups.

According to Kopeček and Spáč the party system in Slovakia is unstable, closer to the Polish patterns than the Czech ones (Kopeček, Spáč, 2010, p. 128). With this statement, formulated in 2010, one could probably agree a few years ago. Currently, it seems debatable, and by no means due to the increased level of system stability in Slovakia.

Taking into account the typology proposed by Maurice Duverger, both in the Czech Republic and Slovakia we are dealing with the multi-party systems. There are at least 3 parties operating on the political scene that may gain power. Currently, no party in both systems is able to govern single-handedly (the only such case occurred in Slovakia in the period 2012–2016). Consequently, to form governments coalitions have been necessary.

Assuming as the basis for the classification G. Smith's concept, one can speak both in case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia about the so-called dispersion system in which several groups operate, but none of them has a position strong enough to be identified as dominant.

Referring to the classification by G. Sartori, in both countries we are dealing with a multi-party system, extremely polarized, characterized by a large number of relevant parties (over 5) separated by a strong ideological distance, and at the same time the position of the extreme or even anti-system parties is relatively strong (Bankowicz, 1998, pp. 188–189). Before the election of 2013 the Czech party system could have been described as moderately polarized.

Therefore, the analysis and the attempt to classify party systems of the Polish southern neighbours require the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. Because of the processes of evolution this poses specific research problems.

## 5. Summary

Before the break-up of Czechoslovakia in both parts of the federation distinct party systems began to take shape. This process was reinforced when the two independent states came into existence in 1993. As a result multi-party systems with a particular specificity have been established. In the years 1996–2013 in the Czech Republic the two-block system was formed. After the elections in 2013 it has undergone fragmentation, because the predominance of the two largest parties over the rest is significantly weaker. In Slovakia a multi-party system has been established with one dominant party (HZDS, Smer later).

The specificity of the party scene in the Czech Republic is without doubt reflected by the strength of the Communist Party, which has not occurred in Slovakia. On the other hand, Slovakian system is characterised by strongly indicated presence of right-wing groups, even nationalistic (especially after the election of 2016). These types of parties have not appeared in the Czech Chamber of Deputies.

In an attempt to outline the prospects for the development of political systems of the two countries first of all the growing support for extreme parties in Slovakia should be emphasized, especially among the youngest voters. According to opinion polls in Sep-

tember 2016 among voters up to 39 years old LSNS enjoys the largest support (23.5%), 10.4% want to vote for SNS – a total of more than 1/3 of the voters (Kapitán, 2016). These results can be interpreted as a harbinger of possible changes in the party system in Slovakia towards the major role played by the radical right-wing parties. It is not excluded in a situation in which more than 40% of respondents in a poll carried out by the newspaper Sme would accept a strong leader to take the power, and 1/4 advocates even for the liquidation of the parliamentary system of governance (Cuprik, 2016). In the Czech Republic a much greater stability of the party scene is noticed, in consequence of which no party of this type is to be expected in parliament.

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## **Ewolucja systemów partyjnych w Czechach i na Słowacji po rozpadzie Czechosłowacji. Analiza porównawcza**

### **Streszczenie**

Odrębne systemy partyjne Czech i Słowacji zaczęły się kształtować jeszcze przed rozpadem wspólnego państwa czechosłowackiego. Początkowo oba systemy cechowała dominacja ugrupowań stanowiących opozycję wobec dawnego systemu komunistycznego.

Ewolucję obu systemów różniła się. W Czechach dominowały przez długi okres prawicowe ODA i socjaldemokratyczna ČSSD, na Słowacji doszło do dominacji pojedynczych ugrupowań: najpierw HZDS, następnie Smer, które de facto zdominowały scenę polityczną. Niemalą rolę w tym procesie odegrały wyraziste osobistości słowackiej sceny politycznej: V. Mečiar i R. Fico. W Czechach taką rolę odgrywał jedynie V. Klaus. Słowacki system partyjny był bardziej rozdrobniony, cechował się poza tym rosnącym znaczeniem ugrupowań nacjonalistycznych i stała obecnością ugrupowań mniejszości węgierskiej.

Obecnie na scenie partyjnej obu państw zauważalne są ugrupowania budujące swe poparcie na hasłach populistycznych (ANO 2011 w Czechach) bądź nacjonalistycznych (LSNS i SNS na Słowacji).

**Słowa kluczowe:** Czechy, Słowacja, system partyjny, rozpad Czechosłowacji