

Cleavages in Contemporary Czech and Slovak Politics: between Persistence and Change

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Abstract: The paper is focused on the comparison of the Czech and Slovak party systems. The paper discusses the notion of political cleavages developed in these party systems after the break of communist regime in 1989. The authors point out that although the communist period created deadlock between traditional cleavages raised from the second half of the 19th century, yet it is possible to analyse some politically-based cleavages in these two party arrangements. Main attention is paid to the processes of creation of particular cleavages and to the parties' responses. The Czech and Slovak cases are compared in broader perspective of cleavages of transformation. The conceptual model of cleavages of transformation which is readjusted for post-communist Europe is sketched for this purpose. The paper is concluded by the analysis of the contemporary situation of political cleavages in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The authors try to compare both cleavage structures and show the possibilities of the future development. They try to point out that there is a possibility for the Slovak party system to become more consolidated and for its cleavage structure to become more similar to the Czech example than it is now.

The following paper attempts to offer within the general framework of the transitional cleavage concept the theoretical framework for the analysis of the cleavages and the party politics in Central European countries. The cleavages in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia will be analyzed on the basis of this concept.

1. Cleavages in the Post-Communist Party Systems: the Theoretical Framework

The extensive voters' volatility, the negative voters' identification with the political parties (i.e. the voter knows exactly what parties not to vote, but does not know what parties he would like to vote) or the different understanding of the notions „the political right“ and „the political left“ were and - in some cases - still are typical of the party systems of the Central European countries after 1989. Facing these difficulties, one line of political scientists (Roskin 1994; Stefan, Scalat 2000) stated that in the unsettled conditions of the countries after the break of the communist rule it was not possible to apply the Stein Rokkan's concept of cleavages (Lipset, Rokkan 1967). The other political scientists, on the other hand, tried to use – but not very convincingly - the unchanged model of the cleavages from the Western European milieu (Beyme 1994; Beyme 1997; Ewans, Whitefield 1995). However, most of the authors chose the compromise variant that takes into account the existence of specific cleavages and accepts the need for the specific instruments and research methods (Antoszewski, Herbut 1998; Bielasiak 1997; Kitschelt 1992; Kitschelt 1995; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Sitter 2001; generally comp. Hloušek 2000: 374 – 377 and Hloušek 2002). We will try to use similar compromise approach.

We will call the suggested concept of the cleavages as „the cleavages of transformation“ in order to avoid the conceptual confusion. There are two processes going hand in hand during transformation and leading to the creation of the cleavages:

1. „from above“, i. e. the effort of political parties to structure the party options through the gradual specification and clarification of their ideological and programme profiles,
2. the gradual structuring of the voters community „from below“ to the different social groups that arise on the basis of the restored or newly evolved cleavages.

As well as in the classic Stein Rokkan's model of cleavages, the crossing of individual cleavages is possible. More than one cleavage can be reflected in the identity of individual party actors.

The determining role in all the Central and East European countries at the first stage of transformation played the cleavage that could be called an initiatory matrix of political life. It represented the axis the initial constellation of the party spectrum has been created around. It was **the conflict over the form (character) of the regime** or - in other words - *the cleavage leading between the communist regime and the anti-communist opposition*. The cleavage of the conflict over the character of the regime has not lasted too long after the first democratic election (founding election). The cleavage, however, frequently survives in the residual form of the conflict between the former communist parties that were usually social-democratized and the formations that continued the heritage of the former broad civic movements (forum) from the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. The typical example is the remaining antagonism between the ex-communist formations and their anti-communist right opponents in Poland and Hungary. This cleavage can be manifested for instance in the discussions dealing with the disputes over the so called vetting and generally in the attitudes towards the coping with the communist past etc. For the purpose of this paper we can call the residual cleavage as **the cleavage communism versus anti-communism**.¹

It cannot be ruled out that the dispute over the character of the regime will emerge again, but in a new modified form then. This can happen in the situation when a significant participant or significant participants will start to challenge again „the game

¹ With respect to the frequently „social-democratized“ identity of the former communists it is rather the cleavage with the „post-communist“ or „ex-communist“ basis than with the „communist“ one. However, this terminology seems to be apt due to the form of its instrumentalization by its opponents.

rules“ settled in the given political system during the transformation towards democracy. It is typical of the countries where troubles with the consolidation of the democracy took place. Such countries can find themselves even in the category of the hybrid regimes standing on the boundary between democracy and authoritarian regimes (cf. Diamond 2002). For the purpose of this paper we can call this cleavage as **the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime**. This notion, however, can be different in individual cases (see the case of Slovakia further in the text). The ideological and programme orientation and the origin of the participants that become political allies or define each against the other on the basis of this cleavage can be very varied. If the cleavage is intensive enough, it cannot be ruled out that it will lead to the *prima facie* paradox alliance between ex-communists and anti-communists. It can also cause the arrest in the process of creation such cleavages that naturally reflect the social and political character of an individual country.

Another differentiation of the cleavages takes place at further stage of democratic transition and in the course of democratic consolidation. We conclude that the most important were and are **the socio-economic cleavage of transformation** and the cleavage nationalism versus regionalism/ethnicity, in short, **the nationalistic cleavage of transformation**. These two cleavages of transformation can be observed in all post-communist countries. The feature of these cleavages is the great mobilization power that enables them to become the determining factors of the party system.

1.1 The Socio-Economic Cleavage of Transformation

Why is it not possible to reduce the socio-economic cleavage of transformation to the classic Stein Rokkan's cleavage owners - working class? After the collapse of communism the owners relationships has not been made clear for a long period and the social and economic status of an individual has not been determined - in the proper sense of the word - by the class affiliation. The conflict on the social and economic basis proceeded rather between the winners and the losers of economic and social transformation. However, it is not the only source of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation. This cleavage is also strengthened by the disputes over the form, range and pace of the state property privatization and economic liberalization, over the range of social network provided by the state etc. Only as the gradual economic reforms went along the social groups supporting various political parties from the right or the left side of the political spectrum emerged. In the case when the

transformation from the directed economy towards the market one succeeds the probability that the socio-economic cleavage of transformation will draw near to the cleavage owners-working class increases. The conservative and liberal-oriented formations supporting faster transformation towards the market economy usually occupy one side of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation. The social-democratic or socialist parties that take more into account the social impacts of the transformation are formed on the opposite side. In the period when the first stage of the democratic transition is finished and the political system and economy are being consolidated the character of the conflict between these parties is more and more similar to the competition between the right and the left in Western Europe. The socio-economic cleavage of transformation comes near to the contemporary form of the owners - working class cleavage in Western Europe. This is also motivated by the fact that in the West-European conditions this cleavage and the classic Rokkan's concept are not absolutely identical. It is the consequence of the social changes and - first of all - of the increased social mobility of the West-European societies in the last decades (cf. Gallagher, Laver, Mair 1992: 101 – 104).

1.2 The Nationalistic Cleavage of Transformation

As well as the socio-economic cleavage of transformation contains the cleavage owners – working class in some form, the nationalistic cleavage of transformation similarly includes the classic Rokkans' cleavage centre - periphery. The sources of cleavage have significant ethnic or nationalistic configuration in the case of the post-communist countries. The nationalistic cleavage is not based on the socio-economic structure and depends only to a limited degree on the ideological specification of the parties and their voters. It is the cleavage formed on the basis of identity that is being established within nations and ethnic groups, religious confessions, or linguistic differences (Elster, Offe, Preuss 1998: 249). Therefore it tends to polarize very sharply and irreconcilably the certain political community. The complex ethnic situation of the Central and mainly South-East Europe is moreover complicated by the historical resentments and various traditions of national or ethnic oppression and struggles. The collectively shared images of the „traditional national enemy“ become a strong political weapon.

The nationalistic cleavage of transformation can arise as a consequence of three reasons that can coincide or complement one another (cf. Hloušek 2000: 379):

- 1) the existence of an ethnic minority or a specific region within the individual state which try to achieve specific status or respect to minority rights (for example, Albanians in Kosovo, Russians in Estonia or Latvia, Hungarians in Slovakia) that provoke the resistance of majority population,
- 2) the existence of a neighbouring state or a nation that is traditionally regarded in political mythology as a „national enemy“ and a potential threat (see the image of Germany for some Czechs, Hungary for a lot of Slovaks, or the image of Serbia for Slovenes or Croatians etc.),
- 3) the existence of the fundamental dispute over the most desirable character of the state between nationalists and supporters of the more civic-oriented construction of the state (for example, in Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia, or in Baltic states).

In fact, some of the motives or all together occurred in all the post-communist countries. However, they have not led to the emergence of a dominant nationalistic cleavage in each of the countries. The nationalistic cleavage dominated unambiguously in all the states of former Yugoslavia (with the exception of Slovenia) and in a lot of post-Soviet republics during the whole 1990s. It was strong in Slovakia as well.

Table 1: The Main Cleavages of Transformation

<i>The Cleavages of Transformation</i>	<i>The Key Controversial Issues</i>	<i>The Parties Formed within the Cleavage</i>
Conflict over the character of the regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character of the regime, pace, intensity and direction of the social and political transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communist parties • Civic movements (forums) • Anti-communist formations of dissident provenience
Socio-economic cleavage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question of profits and losses of the economic transformation • Dispute over the form and pace of the economic transformation • Rudiment of the <i>cleavage</i> owners – working class (questions of the range of economic redistribution) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal-conservative formations • Social-democratized ex-communist parties • Re-established „historic“ social-democratic or socialist formations
Nationalistic cleavage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of ethnic minority or specific region • Existence of another nation regarded as a traditional „enemy“ • Dispute over the character of the regime (inclusive civic society versus “ethnocracy”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties/movements of national minorities • Regional formations • Nationalistic formations with the “nation-wide mission“
Residual cleavage from the early stage of democratization in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church versus state • Rural versus urban 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian-democratic and Christian-national parties • Agrarian formations
Residual cleavage communism versus anti-communism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of de-communization • Attitude toward the communist past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex-communist parties • Neo-communist parties • Parties formed from the movements (forums)
Revitalized dispute over the character of the regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions of respect to the liberal rights and values, rule of law state, fairness of political competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties formed from the movements/forums (sometimes) • Ex-communist, Christian-democratic, liberal and other formations (their ideological and programme orientation and their origin have not the substantial role)
Embryonal post-materialistic cleavage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material versus post-material values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green parties • Movements/forums (partly) • Social-liberal formations

The party systems in which the socio-economic cleavage of transformation prevails as the main one have more features in common with the west European party systems than those in which the nationalistic cleavage of transformation dominates. The party spectrum is in essence concentrated around the left-right axis in the countries where the socio-economic cleavage of transformation prevails. It is possible to assume that in such party systems the ideological orientation of the individual parties – the components of the system – will be „more standard“ in the sense of its proximity to classic western models. The existence

of more complex organizational forms of political parties can be also expected in these systems. Consequently, these party systems are usually more consolidated and stable.

The more complicated development can be expected in the case of the party systems with the main nationalistic cleavage of transformation. The substantial changes in the party configuration can emerge during this development. The empowering of the nationalistic rhetoric and politics cannot be realised interminably in place of solving the „common“ problems (first of all the economic ones). And there is also the influence of the external factors such as the pressure of the international community (EU, NATO etc.). What is more: the countries with the main nationalistic cleavage of transformation do not usually possess developed (mature) party system. The dominant role of the nationalistic cleavage of transformation requires the existence of strong ethnic or national-oriented parties which can even take substandard form and in most cases rest on the dominant role of the party leader (Mečiar in Slovakia, Milošević in Serbia, Tudjman in Croatia etc.).

2. The Cleavages in the Czech Politics after 1989

The initial form of the Czech party system has been created in the competition between the broad movement of the Civic Forum (OF) and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). The most important confrontation took place in the regular election in June 1990. The initiatory cleavage of transformation – the controversy dealing with the character of the regime – separating the communist party and its opponents (first of all the Civic Forum) has occupied the dominant role until the election (Hloušek 2000: 380). The 1990 voting was considered by the society a plebiscite on the relation of the Czech public to the communist rule (Fiala, Mareš 1997: 107). Convincing and outright victory of the Civic Forum however (over 50 % of votes, the Communist party ended second and obtained nearly 14 % of votes) came to a full stop in the conflict over the character of the regime. The Civic Forum came through its internal differentiation even before the election. This process resulted to its disintegration at the beginning of 1991. The main successor became the liberal-conservative Civic Democratic Party (ODS). The residual cleavage communism – anti-communism was not of great importance in the Czech milieu in the 1990s unlike the case of Poland or Hungary. The exception was the only informal agreement concerning the isolation (ostracism) of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), the direct successor of the KSČ that was applied by the other party actors.

The election 1990 proved the margin relevance of some other cleavages. Partly the cleavage church – state being reflected in the existence of the Christian and Democratic Union – the Czechoslovak People’s Party (KDU-ČSL). The electoral support for the KDU-ČSL remained limited to a small group of the faithful Catholics due to the high degree of secularization of the Czech society. The faithful remained loyal in the next election as well. The other formations, however, expressed only a little interest in “cultivating” the anti-catholic agenda (with the exception of general aversion to the restitution of the church property confiscated by the state during the communist era). The cleavage church - state thus remained a constant of the Czech politics but its significance was very limited.

Similarly, during the 1990 election the influence of the nationalistic cleavage emerged. It was caused due to the success of a Moravian participant, i. e. the formation supporting the regional peculiarity of Moravia as an independent region within the Czech Republic. The “wave of Moravian consciousness“ started to weaken immediately at the beginning of the 1990s as the citizens of Moravia have been gradually giving up to identify themselves with this idea. The internal conflicts in the Moravian political leadership flamed up simultaneously. It resulted in the marginalization of this cleavage.

In 1990 it was possible to observe the influence of the cleavage town – country; however too weak. The party standing in the election - the Alliance of Farmers and Village (SZV) - obtained around 4 % of the votes, it did not enter the parliament and disintegrated after the election. The more important was the fact that there was a different behaviour of rural and urban electorate in the process of support of individual political parties. It was this trend that was manifested - although to a certain extent – in the following election. Nearly marginal was the cleavage materialism – post-materialism. The newly founded Green Party (SZ) obtained – similarly as the Alliance of Farmers and Village – just slightly over 4 % of votes and remained without parliamentary representation. In the course of the 1990s the role of the Green Party on the Czech political stage was only marginal. The environmental topics appeared, however, in a set of programmes of most of the parliamentary parties. But in no one it played a more significant role in its bias practically up to the end of the 1990s. It was quite a natural reaction on the attitude of the majority of voters. The economic transformation accentuated mostly the material interest and marginalized post-material values. This situation was, as a matter of fact, typical not only of the Czech Republic but for nearly all the countries of post-communist Europe (cf. Hloušek, Kopeček 2002).

For the basic complement of the cleavage structure formation the period of 1991-1992 was extremely important. Meanwhile, the clear strengthening of the importance of socio-

economic cleavage of transformation took place. It was accompanied by the gradual formation of the most important participants of both the Czech right and the left. Between the 1992–1996 election, the confirmation of the dominance of this cleavage occurred (cf. Kitschelt et al 1999: 226 – 231, 244 – 260).² The importance of the other cleavages, on the contrary, was falling down with the exceptional cleavage state – church which was already mentioned. This development was especially supported by the fact that the ODS showed to be the major force of the Czech right as early as the 1992 election. Since 1993 when the „historical“ social democrats – the Czech Social-Democratic Party (ČSSD) – started to be headed by the charismatic Miloš Zeman the election potential of this party in the left part of the political spectrum began to rise. The ČSSD based its delimitation on the criticism of the form of transformation realized by the government led by the ODS. The ČSSD could exploit from the fact that the KSČM preserved its orthodox-communist character. This fact made the KSČM unacceptable for most of the voters dissatisfied with the realization of economic transformation, and the ČSSD, thus became the major part of the Czech left. Though the ODS and partly also the ČSSD as early the mid-1990s represented the catch-all party model from many aspects (cf. Fiala, Mareš, Pšejja 1998: 284), and consequently spread its voters' appeal towards the centrally oriented voter, the division into the right and the left reflecting the socio-economic cleavage of transformation became the most important indicator of the position of individual parties. Therefore it is possible to assert that for the analysis of the Czech party competition it started to be acceptable to apply Sartori's one-dimensional simplification (cf. Sartori 1976: 334 – 342).

The 1996 election confirmed the trends manifesting the simplification and transparency of the system of relevant political parties. While in 1992 the 8 electoral participants entered the parliament, in 1996 only 6 – the ODS, the ČSSD, the KSČM, the KDU-ČSL, the minor liberal Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), and the radical populist Association for the Republic – the Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ).³ In the election campaign the economic topics and the competition on the basis the right – the left absolutely prevailed. In

² The economic preferences and the attitudes of the individual parties were fundamental for forming the governmental coalition. It becomes apparent from the comparison with the other Central and East European countries under transformation in which some of the non-economic issues influenced the coalition preferences of the political elites in greater extent at that time (cf. Tóka 1996; Fiala, Mareš 1998: 12 – 15).

³ The SPR-RSČ failed in the next 1998 parliamentary election and later perished. The ODA underwent the internal crisis before the 1998 election, lost most of its voters and did not stand in the 1998 election. It tried to revitalize its political potential within the Four-coalition project (see the text).

the 1996 and 1998 elections the significance of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation was continuing to increase (cf. Novák 1999: 136 – 138). All the relevant political parties fully and clearly delimited themselves on the right-left axis which copied the cleavage. The socio-economic cleavage was dominant not only for party competition but also for the reason that it was perceived as a constantly more important factor of the identification and party preferences by the electorate.⁴

The surveys of voter preference and attitudes demonstrated at the same time that in the framework of this cleavage a new dimension starts to manifest. It could be called „axiological“ (proto)cleavage dividing the supporters of more or less liberal on the one hand and state-centred and authoritarian political, cultural and social attitudes on the other hand. The axiological orientation of voters was mostly compatible to the right-left dimension (Vlachová 1998: 263). Due to the increasing importance in the subsequent years it was possible, however, to reflect about this axiological cleavage as about an independent one. Nothing changed, however, about the dominance of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation, since the axiological elements are primarily represented by its completion.

The complicated situation connected with the formation of majority government after the early election in 1998 was solved by the agreement between the ČSSD and the ODS (The Agreement on the Formation of the Stable Political Environment in the Czech Republic – the so called („opposition agreement“). It has arranged the relation of the both political parties and allowed the formation of the minority government of the ČSSD with the parliamentary support of the ODS. The „opposition agreement“ significantly but only temporarily influenced the arrangements in the party competition. The minor parties – the Union of Liberty (US) created by the secession from the ODS at the turn of 1997/1998, the KDU-ČSL and two formations the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) and the Democratic Union (DEU) standing outside the parliament – formed the so-called Four-Coalition (Čtyřkoalice) in autumn 1998 (the US and the DEU merged into one party the Union of Liberty-Democratic Union – US-DEU in 2001). The main *raison d'etre* of the Four-Coalition lied in the criticism of the

⁴ The analysis of 2000 pointed out that the voters of the KSČM declared themselves to be the most leftist on the left-right scale followed by the voters of the KDU-ČSL, the ČSSD, the US and the ODS. The voters of the ČSSD in particular moved towards the centre, on the other hand, the electorate of the KDU-ČSL moved relatively markedly to the left. Also the US came from the clear right in 1998 to the political centre. The position of the KSČM, the US and the ODS voters corresponds to the declared political option represented by „their“ parties. The position of the ČSSD and the KDU-ČSL voters slightly differs from the positions of their parties (Vlachová 2002: 265 – 266).

opposition agreement. The opposition agreement was presented by the Four-Coalition as an utilitarian cartel deal aimed at restraining the democratic institutions in the Czech Republic. The Four-Coalition refused the supposed constitutional changes and modifications of the Act on the Parliamentary Election leading to the strengthening of the effects of the voting system towards the majority one. Most of the proposals concerning the innovations of the Czech political system confirmed in the agreement finally failed. The Four-Coalition that lost the grounds for its existence subsequently disintegrated. Despite this fact, the KDU-ČSL and the US-DEU stood as an electoral coalition in 2002 election.

Table 2: Parliamentary Election Results in 2002 (the successful parties only)

Party standing in the election	Votes (%)	Parliamentary seats
ČSSD	30,20	70
ODS	24,47	58
KSČM	18,51	41
KDU-ČSL a US-DEU	14,27	31

Source: The Czech Statistical Office: The Election to the Assembly of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in 2002 (<http://www.volby.cz/pls/ps2002-win/psm>) – checked on 18/7 2005

3. The Present Party System and the Cleavages in the Czech Republic

The 2002 election manifested the stability of voters' support of the main participants of the Czech party system – the ODS and the ČSSD. The subsequently formed government led by the left-centrist ČSSD and comprised as well by the centrist KDU-ČSL and right-centrist US-DEU did not reflect to a certain extent the logic of the right-left government alternation. It reflected rather the complexity of the majority government formation under Czech conditions than the weakening of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation. The artificial character of this governmental alliance was proved by the fact that US-DEU rapidly lost the majority of its voters, a part of its members left the party and the party is facing the prospects for marginalization in 2006 election. The prevailing dominance of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation is indicated by the main themes of the political approach between the ČSSD in the government and the ODS in the opposition after 2002 election (the taxation, pension reforms, reforms of health care etc.). Apart from that, it is possible to state that the socio-economic cleavage is (already) very similar to the cleavage owners versus working class in contemporary West European countries. The position of the individual participants in the framework of the socio-economic and the axiological cleavage is depicted in the table 3.

Table 3: The Orientation Scheme of the Parties and Cleavages in the Present Czech Political System

axiological cleavage	socio-economic cleavage	
	the left	the right
liberal		US-DEU ODS
	ČSSD	KDU-ČSL
authoritarian	KSČM	

The dominant position of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation was not endangered even by the new topics that have been influencing the Czech politics since the end of the 1990s. That means the party rivalry concerning the different attitudes towards the European integration and the EU. These topics had a certain dividing and uniting capacity at the same time. It was the proclaimed pro-European attitude of the ČSSD, the KDU-ČSL and the US-DEU that served as an important reason for the common government created by these parties. On the other hand, the attitude of the ODS is much more sceptical. But European subjects can be hardly considered real cleavage. The Czech voters do not decide on the basis of this topic, yet, and the attempt to ground a part of the party's identity in the proclaimed „europeanism“ (that has been manifested particularly by the US-DEU) did not prove to be appealing for the voters.

Table 4: The Orientation Categorization of the Present Czech Political Parties' Position Concerning Their Attitudes to European Integration and the EU

Hard Euroscepticism (principled opposition to the EU and European integration, the parties think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or their policies towards the EU oppose the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived, they have no commitment to reform but to change radically the current trajectory of European integration)	KSČM ↓
Soft Euroscepticism (principled objection to European integration or EU membership but concern on one or a number of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or there is a sense that national interest is currently at odds with the EU trajectory, the party has a will to reform Europe)	ODS

Functional Europeanism (support to European integration can be re-conducted to a strategy, serving domestic interests or a different party goal, no commitment to further integration, unless it is proved it would serve such interests, otherwise, commitment to European integration is mainly in terms of defence of the status quo)	ČSSD, KDU-ČSL US-DEU↓
Identity Europeanism (principled support to the EU and European integration, claim in favour of further competence shift from the national to the supranational arena, of Federal Europe and of a European citizenship, further integration is a fundamental party goal)	

Note: The theoretical typology of the attitudes to European integration was adopted from the categorization used in N. Conti's essay (2003) which deals with the influence of European integration on national political parties. The categorization of the individual parties was performed on the basis of the analyses of party programmes, leaders' statements and attitudes to questions connected with the integration etc. examined in the following articles: Mareš 2000 and Kopeček, Šedo 2003. The arrow indicates the orientation of the party.

Shortly before the 2002 election the „resuscitation“ of the Green Party allowed to think about the vitalization of the marginal cleavage materialism versus post-materialism. However, the election profit of the Green Party (2,36 %) showed that the supporters of the post-materialistic values and environmentalists are not yet so numerous to be able to influence to a greater extent the structure of cleavages and the political competition. This conclusion is valid despite the fact that some politicians exercising the post-materialistic values in practise can be found also in some parliamentary parties (Vladimír Mlynář – the US-DEU, Libor Ambrozek – the KDU-ČSL).

4. Cleavages in the Slovak Politics after 1989

The Slovak democratic „starting point“ was not different from the other ones that took place in other Central and East European countries. As well as in the Czech lands, neighbouring Poland or Hungary the key cleavage for the first stage of democratic transition became the cleavage concerning the conflict over the character of the regime. Unlike the Czech conditions, the June 1990 election did not become the duel between the communist party and the broad civic movement the Public Against Violence (VPN) in Slovak circumstances. Even a few months before the election the two main rivals emerged – the Public Against Violence (VPN) and the conservative-catholic oriented Christian Democratic Movement (KDH). It reflected the tendency towards the revitalized long-standing cleavage state – church. The conditions for its emergence were more suitable in the Slovak context than in the Czech one. Although the secularization during the communist era has significantly influenced the character of the society, the country preserved its relatively strong Christian (Catholic) character. Thus, the initiatory conflict over the character of the regime had been in

fact „battled out“ even before the first democratic election in 1990. The VPN obtained around 30 % of votes and won the 1990 election; the KDH gained only 19 % of votes. However, the profit of the VPN was obviously lower compared to the OF in the Czech lands. Due to this fact, the VPN had to form the Slovak government together with the KDH (the other parliamentary parties were even less acceptable).

Also the development of the VPN after the election was different from the evolution of the OF. As well as in the case of the OF the heterogeneity of the movement appeared very quickly. Its Prime Minister, charismatic Vladimír Mečiar, left the movement in 1991 and established with a part of the party elites the Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) which won the election in 1992 (with 37 % of votes). It was the best result that any political formation reached after 1989. But the character of the HZDS differed significantly from the features of the Czech ODS. It was not the liberal-conservative formation but a broad centrist party with a number of greatly different streams (nationalistic, social-democratic, Christian etc.).

The situation in Slovakia differed from the Czech conditions also in another aspect. In the course of 1990 and 1991 the communist party changed its programme and officially declared its discontinuity with the former communist party. The start of the social-democratization was reflected in its new title – The Party of the Democratic Left (SDL). The political development from the 1992 election enabled the SDL to break its political isolation. Also the parties that used the slogans about the de-communization in their programmes and rhetoric were forced to co-operate for the pragmatic reasons with the ex-communists on the governmental level (see below). Thanks to this, the residual cleavage communism versus anti-communism asserted itself very slightly in Slovakia.

The key factor, why it was so, was closely connected with the rise of the HZDS. The HZDS achieved to build its electoral capacity on the conjunction of more cleavages. The most important cleavage for the HZDS was the cleavage centre-periphery in the era of Czechoslovakia to the year 1992. The relevance of the cleavage derived from the explosive discussion about the configuration of Czechoslovakia. The Slovak National Party (SNS) that promoted the Slovak independence and the KDH, the idea of which drew near to the confederative model, cohabited initially within this cleavage. The KDH was forced to manoeuvre and mitigate its anti-federal line with respect to its governmental role (Rychlík 2002: 276). It appeared to be very advantageous for the HZDS that combined the nationalistic rhetoric with promoting itself as a main defender of the interests of the Slovak „periphery“ during its opposing role before the 1992 election. It supplemented this role with the protests to

cruel social impacts of the fast economic transformation initiated from the „Prague“ federal centre (cf. Tuček, Bunčák, Harmadyová 1998: 43 – 52). The HZDS offered a „specific“ Slovak way of economic transformation that should have realized the economic reforms more slowly with minor social impacts. The HZDS simultaneously managed to utilize the embryonal socio-economic cleavage of transformation. The main participant acting against the social impacts of transformation was not the left, but the broadly centrist HZDS that achieved to connect it with the defence of the interests of the periphery. The SDE only „parasited“ on the resistance against the economic transformation (nearly 15 % of votes in 1992 election), the historical social democrats remained practically a marginal party. However, the HZDS started to act in the way which challenged the democratic „game rules“. In the following years this very fact became the core of the party competition in Slovak politics. It resulted in the situation when the socio-economic cleavage of transformation was promoted only to a small degree in Slovakia unlike the situation in the Czech Republic.

The HZDS also achieved to take advantage of the nationalistic cleavage of transformation. The dispute between the Czech (Prague) centre and the Slovak periphery ceased after the split of Czechoslovakia. However, it had been possible to identify the nationalistic cleavage of transformation in the framework of the cleavage centre-periphery as its sub-variant even before (Rybář 2003: 278 – 279). Under the conditions of the independent Slovakia after 1992 it was connected with the ethnic otherness between the Slovak majority and the Hungarian minority (approx. 10 % of population). The anti-Hungarian rhetoric was used not only by the HZDS but more or less also by other Slovak political formations. The Hungarian political parties were therefore nearly separated in the party system (cf. Kopeček 2003: 211 – 213). The nationalistic cleavage of transformation played a great role on the Slovak political stage during the whole 1990s. It was gradually overshadowed by another cleavage – the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime. One of the by-products of this revitalized dispute was a greater willingness of a part of the Slovak parties to co-operate with the Hungarian political elites even on the governmental level. The nationalistic cleavage thus started to lose its importance.

5. The Revitalized Conflict over the Character of the Regime – Mečiarism versus Anti-Mečiarism

The conflict between the liberal democracy and the non-liberal approach to the political regime dominated the Slovak political stage during the 1990s. It was closely

connected with the political style and with the methods of governance realized by the chairman of the HZDS Vladimír Mečiar.⁵ Therefore the originally journalistic expression Mečiarism versus Anti-Mečiarism that labels the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime became quickly common in the Slovak political science terminology.

Taking into account the intensity of the cleavage, it is possible to differentiate the three following stages. The first, *crystallic* one, began during the period of the VPN's disintegration at the beginning of 1991, and its final point can be situated at the beginning of 1994. At this time Mečiar's newly established HZDS managed to build the huge electoral basis and to take power after the 1992 election. However, a part of dissatisfied deputies who did not accept premier Mečiar's ruling methods, broke up with the HZDS and with the HZDS' governmental ally, the SNS. The Mečiar's government, therefore, lost its majority in the parliament and as a result the parliament passed the vote of censure in March 1994. It was the starting point of the second stage that could be called *escalatory*. The new Anti-Mečiarist governmental coalition headed by Prime Minister Jozef Moravčík was very heterogeneous. Its two main components were represented by the anti-communist and the right-centrist KDĽ and by the ex-communist left SDĽ. The cement of the coalition was represented at that time by the common rejection of Vladimír Mečiar's methods. Mečiar however took advantage of being in the opposition and successfully mobilized the voters. It resulted to the repeated victory of the HZDS in the irregular election in autumn 1994 (35 % of votes). It came to light during the post-electoral negotiation that no party represented in the government of Moravčík was willing to co-operate with Mečiar's HZDS. Mečiar solved this problem by creating an exceptionally heterogeneous government. It was comprised - beside the HZDS - of the nationalistic SNS and radically leftist Alliance of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). This heterogeneity manifested the trend in the party competition arrangement that was based on the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime. Both the SNS and the ZRS were ready to accept and participate in a line of controversial steps typical of the government of Vladimír Mečiar. For example, the unconstitutional deprivation of two deputies of their mandates can be mentioned. Or the abuse of the secret service that intimidated and discredited the opposing politicians and journalists

⁵ Relatively high degree of political pluralism remained preserved also in the era when this cleavage came through (1998 – 1994). In spite of the tendency to eliminate its opponents, the restrictions were never so tough that would allow to qualify the regime as the authoritarian one (cf. Linz 2000: 159). Probably the most obvious evidence was the competitive character of the 1998 election. The regime was, however, far away from what is commonly perceived as liberal democracy. Therefore it is legitimately qualified as the *hybrid regime* (cf. Szomolányi 1997 and 1999; Učeň 1999).

or organized the kidnap of the son of president Kováč who was in conflict with the Prime Minister. The acute situation made the Anti-Mečiarist parties accomplish the extensive integration in spite of the differences in the parties' profiles. The Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) that covered the right-centrist KDH, liberal Democratic Union (DU) and liberal-conservative Democratic Party (DS), and the two small left formations, the historical social democrats and the Green Party in Slovakia (SZS), was established in summer 1997.

The influence of the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime was projected into the new governmental coalition after the 1998 election. Although the HZDS won the election again (27 % of votes) it was not able to find – except the SNS – any coalition partner willing to co-operate (the ZRS did not pass to the parliament). Therefore the HZDS was not able to gain the parliamentary majority. The new government was formed by the opposing parties – the SDK, the left SDE, the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK) comprised three Hungarian parties, and by the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) established shortly before the election. The new government was heterogeneous as well as Moravčík's government of 1994. The fear of the HZDS' coming back to power became its main „binding agent“, and the main unifying goals were the removal of the non-liberal consequences of the former era, the consolidation of democratic regime and the Slovak accession to the EU and the NATO. In spite of many conflicts, the Anti-Mečiarist parties have always achieved to find a kind of *modus vivendi* that enabled the government of Mikuláš Dzurinda to survive until the 2002 election (cf. Mesežnikov 2002: 19).

The third stage of the development of the cleavage Mečiarism – Anti-Mečiarism has started to shape up since 2000. It could be called the *erosive* one. One of the first signals was the electoral success of the new political formation Direction (Smer). The Smer was established at the end of 1999 by the former vice-chairman of the SDE Róbert Fico. According to the opinion polls, the Smer won over a great part of the electorate of the SDE, to a smaller degree of the SDK, the SOP and the HZDS (Mesežnikov, Krivý 2001: 103). The new party rejected the existing division within the cleavage Mečiarism–Anti-Mečiarism and based its success on the critique of the steps made by Dzurinda's government (of Dzurinda), especially in the social-economic sphere. The similar attitude to this cleavage expressed another new political party – the liberal Alliance of a New Citizen (ANO). The ANO was established by the media tycoon Pavol Rusko in 2001. The important fact as well was the change of the HZDS' hostile strategy that originally attempted to push the governmental coalition of the running at all costs. Instead, it aimed at presenting its political change and partially dissociated itself from the past. This should have helped the HZDS to break the

international isolation and to increase its coalition potential. It started to call itself as a “popular, people party” that aspires to enter the European People Party. It dissociated itself from its ally – the nationalistic SNS – at the same time.

6. The Present State of Cleavages in Slovakia and the Prospects of the Future Development

Despite the decrease of the intensity of the conflict Mečiarism – Anti-Mečiarims, it still remained important for the arrangements in the party competition during the 2002 election. Although the HZDS won the election again it was still regarded as an unacceptable partner and that is why it remained in the opposition. The fear of the consequences in the foreign policy if the HZDS would be incorporated into the governmental coalition played the significant role. The result of the negotiation after the election was the formation of the second government of Mikuláš Dzurinda. It was occupied by the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) that Prime Minister Dzurinda established out of the ruins of the SDK, and by the SMK, the KDH and the ANO. The new government differed from the former one by its more homogeneous right-centrist character. The Smer - in spite of great expectations – obtained finally fewer votes than it was presumed and found itself in the opposition. The SDL, the SOP and the historical social democrats did not pass to the parliament as well as the SNS which split in 2001. The astonishing fact represented the orthodox Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) that passed to the parliament. The KSS was restored in 1992 but remained marginal until 2002. Its electoral success was based on the socio-economic troubles that afflicted the eastern parts of Slovakia. The cleavage Mečiarism – Anti-Mečiarims was not important for the conduct of the KSS as well as for the Smer and the ANO. The change in the socio-economic atmosphere was also predetermined by the electoral agenda of some traditional parties. They paid only an indirect attention to the issues connected with the conflict over the character of the political regime. For example the KDH strongly accented the demand for the equal income tax, for the better safety of the citizens and for the support of the traditional family model.

Table 5: The Results of the 2002 Parliamentary Election (the successful parties only)

Party standing in the election	Votes (%)	Seats
HZDS	19,5	36
SDKÚ	15,1	28

Direction	13,5	25
SMK	11,2	20
KDH	8,3	15
ANO	8	15
KSS	6,3	11

Source: The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic <http://www.statistics.sk/volby2002/webdata/vysledky.htm>, checked on 18/ 7 2005

The 2002 election signalled the increasing importance of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation. It was reflected in the character of the new (second) Dzurinda's government after the 2002 election. The background of its members was *relatively* similar from the point of view of their position around the right-left axis. The agenda of the new government only confirmed that. It stressed the radical reforms in the social and economic fields (the reform of taxation, social welfare, pension reform, health care reform etc.). This induced the reactions of the opposition. The Smer found itself in the position of the main critic of the reforms. The most important was the fact that the Smer simultaneously redefined its own identity. It clearly manifested its social-democratic orientation (the signs were, however, noticeable even before the election) instead of the previous vague position on the right-left scale and unclear political character. This tendency was confirmed by its affiliation to the left standing outside the parliament – the SDE, historical social democrats and other small formations. The new identity was symbolized after the affiliation by the change of the title – Smer – Social Democracy at the end of 2004. It opened the course for the international acceptance of the Smer by the Party of European Socialists and the Socialist International. It signified the Slovak political course towards the logic of the right-left competition at the same time.

The disappearing importance of the cleavage Mečiarism – Anti-Mečiarism was best illustrated in the situation that came after Dzurinda's governmental coalition lost its parliamentary majority in autumn 2003. The HZDS expressed obliging attitude to the government and did not attempt to pass the vote of censure in the parliament (unlike the Smer made such efforts). The HZDS deputies voted identically with the governmental deputies for more times.⁶ In exchange, the HZDS achieved more tolerable attitude of the SDKÚ. On the other hand, the Prime Minister Dzurinda repeatedly appreciated the tolerance of the HZDS and admitted the possible future coalition co-operation after the 2006 election. It is, however,

⁶ The governmental coalition pressed their proposals not only thanks to the HZDS, but it found the support from the increasing number of independent deputies.

necessary to note that the other governmental parties – the KDH and the SMK - supported the potential co-operation with the HZDS with reserve. The descent of its electoral support was the price the HZDS had to pay for getting out of the political isolation and the prospective increase of its coalition potential. According to the public opinion polls it reached the historical minimum between 12 % and 15 % of votes in the first half of 2005. On the contrary, the Smer occupied the first position in the public opinion polls with the support of 30 % of votes.⁷

The significance of another cleavage – state-church - was accentuated after the 2002 election, too. The quickly escalating conflict in the governmental coalition between the conservative-catholic KDH and the liberal ANO flamed up soon after the 2002 election. The question of the abortions was the cause. The proposal of the new liberal legal regulation on the abortion submitted by the ANO and supported by the Smer and the KSS – brought about an exceptionally hard protest of the KDH. The other issues that sharpened the relation between the KDH and the ANO were the disputes over the regulation of registered partnership and the issue of divorces. These were the classic issues typical of this cleavage. This explosive relation between the KDH and the ANO did not lead to the disintegration of the governmental coalition. It predetermined, however, the future arrangements in this cleavage. The positions of the individual participants are depicted for the purpose of this paper in the following table 6.

Table 6: The Orientation Scheme of the Parties and the Two Most Significant Cleavages in the Contemporary Slovak Party System

cleavage	socio-economic cleavage	
state-church		
	the left	the right
religious	(SNS), HZDS	KDH SMK, SDKÚ

⁷ The Institute for the Public Opinion Polls of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (ÚVVM SR) - <http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/slov/infor/uvvm/uvvm0705.htm>, checked on 18/7 2005.

secular	KSS	Smer	ANO
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Note: The SNS which had been split before the 2002 election was re-united after the election. According to the polls, it has a great chance to obtain the parliamentary representation in the 2006 election. Therefore it was classified in the table.

The last question we should pay attention to is the „European issue“ in the Slovak politics, i. e. the attitude to the EU and European integration. Similarly to the Czech politics, it can hardly be considered an independent cleavage. The elites of all the relevant political parties reached an agreement on the necessity of the full membership at the time of the accession to the EU. Even the KSS that had traditionally assumed a very negative attitude to the EU recommended to its voters before the referendum on the accession to vote for the accession, though its deputies pointing out the unfavourable accession conditions had voted against the accession in the parliament (cf. Haughton, Rybář 2003).⁸ Also the HZDS, the governmental policy of which caused the temporary freeze of relations with the EU and suspension of the accession process, fully supported the membership in the EU.

More interesting is the attitude of the Slovak parties to the character of the EU and European integration in general. The Slovak conditions are delayed in this aspect in comparison to the Czech ones. The view of this issue remained outside the main political focus due to the previous dominance of the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime. It was possible to observe a certain specification of the attitudes only before the 2003 parliamentary election and before the referendum on the accession. However, even at the time of the 2004 European election the parties signified relatively little interests in this issue. It was reflected in the lacking electoral campaign (it was – among others - one of the factors that influenced the small voters' participation – only 17 %). Taking into account all the facts, it is possible to depict the position of the parties according to their attitudes to the EU and European integration only approximately. The table 7 indicates different opinions on (the) European issues. It seems to be possible that these issues could play the role of an additional factor in the party competition.

⁸ The similar example represents the SNS – irrelevant and standing out of the parliament after the 2002 election – that advocated the negative attitudes to the EU during the 1990s as well. However, it finally supported the membership.

Table 7: The Orientation Categorization of the Slovak Political Parties' Position Concerning Their Attitudes to European Integration

Hard Euroscepticism (principled opposition to the EU and European integration, the parties think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or their policies towards the EU oppose the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived, they have no commitment to reform but to change radically the current trajectory of European integration)	
Soft Euroscepticism (principled objection to European integration or EU membership but concern on one or a number of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or there is a sense that national interest is currently at odds with the EU trajectory, the party has a will to reform Europe)	KSS↑ (SNS↑) KDH
Functional Europeanism (support to European integration can be re-conducted to a strategy, serving domestic interests or a different party goal, no commitment to further integration, unless it is proved it would serve such interests, otherwise, commitment to European integration is mainly in terms of defence of the status quo)	Smer SMK, ANO, HZDS SDKÚ↓
Identity Europeanism (principled support to the EU and European integration, claim in favour of further competence shift from the national to the supranational arena, of Federal Europe and of a European citizenship, further integration is a fundamental party goal)	

Note: The theoretical typology of the attitudes to European integration was adopted from the categorization used in N. Conti's essay (2003) which deals with the influence of European integration on the national political parties. The categorization of the individual parties was performed on the basis of the analyses of party programmes, leaders' statements and attitudes to questions connected with the integration etc. examined in the following articles: Henderson 2001; Kopeček, Šedo 2003, Kuchyňková 2003. The arrows indicate the orientation of the party.

7. Concluding Remarks

The comparison of the Czech and the Slovak cases shows what different ways can the development of the party systems and cleavages in Central Europe after the break of the communist regimes follow. The Czech conditions demonstrate a relatively smooth emergence of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation and its dominance supplemented with the axiological components. The other cleavages are nowadays marginal or nearly marginal. Only the cleavage state-church maintains a small, but lasting importance. The possibility that another insignificant cleavage at the time will become more important in the future cannot be of course ruled out. However, it is not probable that it would overshadow the socio-economic cleavage of transformation.

The Slovak case which is - from many points of view - more interesting demonstrates vividly two problems that the post-communist party systems can face:

- 1) the problem of personalization of politics connected with the existence of strong populist and charismatic leaders,

- 2) the problem of the concurrence of the democratic transition and the last phase of forming the modern nation/national state.

It resulted in the interim dominance of the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime. As the above mentioned problems were – at least partially - solved (and the Slovak accession to the EU on the 1st May 2004 could be the symbolic turning point) the greater convergence of the cleavages structure started to take effect in the Czech lands as well as in Slovakia. There is only a small probability that the Slovak conflict over the character of the regime occurs again. The remnants of this conflict will be, however, present in the Slovak politics. It is related to the remaining emotions that the chairman of the HZDS Vladimír Mečiar still evokes. The importance of the nationalistic cleavage of transformation has been significantly weakening since the end of the 1990s, though its termination cannot be proved. On the other hand, the relevance of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation becomes more intense at the time. It continues after the interruption that was caused due to the expansion of the „Mečiarism phenomenon” at the beginning of the 1990s. Similarly the cleavage state-church that was present at the fresh start of the transition is returning to the Slovak political stage now. The rise of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation represents the important prerequisite for the consolidation of the unstable party system. The stabilization of the cleavage structure in Slovakia is only at its starting point. The evidence of the current trend is a matter of quite the near future.

The Slovak development of the cleavages of transformation corresponds – at least in the Central and East European area - with the cases represented by the countries, such as Croatia. The clear dominance of the socio-economic-based cleavage in the Czech case was rather exceptional within Central European countries. The long-lasting dominance of the cleavage and its shift towards the cleavage owners – working class in the contemporary western European societies provides a new comparative perspective that does not need to respect the boundary previously outlined by the iron curtain.

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The list of abbreviations of political parties:

Czech Republic

ČSSD - Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická)

DEU - Democratic Union (Demokratická unie)

KDU-ČSL – Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie - Československá strana lidová)

KSČM – Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)

KSČ – Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa)

ODA – Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická alliance)

ODS – Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)

OF – Civic Forum (Občanské fórum)

SPR-RSČ - Association for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro republiku - Republikánská strana Československa)

SZ – Green Party (Strana zelených)

SZV – Alliance of Farmers and Village (Spojenectví zemědělců a venkova)

US – Union of Liberty (Unie svobody)

US-DEU - Union of Liberty-Democratic Union (Unie svobody-Demokratická unie)

Slovakia

ANO – Alliance of a New Citizen (Aliancia nového občana)

DS - Democratic Party (Demokratická strana)

DU - Democratic Union (Demokratická únia)

HZDS - Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko)

KDH - Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie)

KSS - Communist Party of Slovakia (Komunistická strana Slovenska)

SDK - Slovak Democratic Coalition (Slovenská demokratická koalícia)

SDKÚ - Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia)

SDL – Party of the Democratic Left (Strana demokratickej ľavice)

SMK – Party of the Hungarian Coalition (Strana maďarskej koalície)

SNS - Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana)

SOP – Party of Civic Understanding (Strana občianskeho porozumenia)

SZS - Green Party in Slovakia (Strana zelených na Slovensku)

VPN- Public Against Violence (Verejnost' proti násiliu)