

Ivan Gabal (ed.): The 1990 Election to the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly. Analyses, Documents and Data

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The years 1990-1992 meant many things in the history of Czechoslovakia. The book is concerned primarily with one of them – the transition from a totalitarian regime to democracy and shaping the political system. It could be concisely called “a historical study of a non-existent state and its non-existent political system” and has the character of an historical document about this unique period in the history of Czechoslovakia and, of course, both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Nine chapters provide information and analysis of the historical context which cover: past experiences with elections, current legislation regulating elections, including relevant sections of the constitution, the election laws and laws regulating political parties, the political parties and their programmes, the social and political characteristics of candidates for parliament, and the election results – state and regional, social, structural and attitudinal characteristics of voters from pre- and post-election surveys, and the formation of government.

The book originated in co-operation with several scholars from the related fields – sociology, political sociology, political science, political geography, history and legal science. Chapters were drawn from original historical materials produced immediately after 1990, accentuating the historical aspects and extending the historical perspective to long before 1990 into the period prior to the communist take-over, and make use of the available documentation and the broadest possible data base.

In the first chapter *Czechoslovakia: The General Context of the 1990 Election* – Ivan Gabal recalls the events of November 1989 and subsequent development, the new course of foreign policy and security, economic policy, and the preparation of the first democratic election after forty years of the non-democratic regime. He sums up many politically significant facts of the 1990 period.

Eva Broklová – the author of the second chapter – *Historical Roots for the Restoration of Democracy in Czechoslovakia* – concen-

trates on the First Republic, its Constitutional Chamber based on political and constitutional postulates of democratic constitutions, the legal background having roots in the Austro-Hungarian empire, the political system, electoral law and main political cleavages, and the parties and programmes.

Lubomír Brokla a Zdenka Mansfeldová are the co-authors of the fourth chapter *A Short History of the Czech and Slovak Parties*. The chapter reminds us of the history of political parties existing during the period 1946-1989, the existence of the ‘National Front’ formed by six existing parties under the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the role of the National Front in the establishment of totalitarianism. The leading role of Civic Forum – the heterogeneous political subject that was united in opposition to the Communist Party is mentioned there along with the role of other parties in that period.

In *Candidates in Czechoslovak Parliamentary Election in June 1990 – Their Structure, Views and Attitudes* – Vladimír Rak analyses the occupational and demographic structure of candidates in the first free Czechoslovak elections, their expectations of elections results, views of the political and economic situation, development and problems faced by the society, views of Parliament, its work and its relation to other institutions.

In the chapter *Political Climate Before Elections – Attitudes, Preferences, and Expectations of the Czechoslovakian Public* Marek Boguszak, Vladimír Rak and Ivan Gabal focus on the formation of the party structure and the support of individual parties, the development of the main election issues, the formation of the new political structure and the determination of political attitudes.

Political and Legislative Conditions for the Creation of a Democratic Political system was written by Zdenek Jičínský. It describes the process of the establishment of the political system in 1990, encompassing the leading ideas of that time, legal acts concerning political parties influenced by these ideas, and the author’s explanations of both.

Ivan Gabal in *Election Results and Government Formation* sums up the results of the 1990 Elections to both Chambers of the Fed-

eral Assembly and both national parliaments - the Czech and Slovak National Council, and the formation of coalitions and the government. Tomáš Kostelecký in *Results of the 1990 Election in a Regional Perspective* analyses the results of parliamentary elections on the level of both parts of federation and on level of districts.

Although the book is dedicated primarily to the first democratic elections in Czechoslovakia and the shaping of the political system, it sometimes (in the first chapter) refers to many facts, that are redundant for the 1990 elections but rather more important for the explanation of the 1992 elections. These facts of secondary importance are the source of a number of inaccuracies taken from the many lay debates during in years 1990-1992. The first inaccuracies are concerned with economic terms used by the author of the first chapter. Among the politically significant facts it is included that: "The macro-economic and monetary approaches, which governed the policy of Civic Forum and thus the federal and the Czech governments, ignored geographical and regional specificities, structural differences between the Czech and the Slovak economies..." (p. 23). Monetary policy together with fiscal policy are parts of macro-economic policy. Monetary policy is based on the money supply, interest rates and credits, and could not be a structural policy - by nature it ignores geographical and regional specificities. Also, among politically significant facts it is stated that: "Problems with implementing the federal budgetary, monetary and restrictive policy in Slovakia led the reformist, mostly monetary economists in power to gradually adopt the variant of 'either a strong federation or a split'" (p. 23-24). In addition to fiscal (that were by the author called budgetary) and monetary policy he creates "restrictive policy". Here it is necessary to note that both fiscal and monetary policy may be restrictive or not, but "restrictive policy" does not represent a special category of macro-economic policy. It might be discussed whether the government's fiscal policy was desirable or not and how much it was influenced by monetarists, but the central bank's monetary policy had to be the same for the whole federation.

Otherwise there arises the serious question 'a federation or not'.

The second inaccuracy deals with the long lay debate on the federation. The new budget design for the year 1990 modified money flows to both countries. This fact led Slovak politicians to call for a separation of macro-economic policy. For example, they demanded three banks of issues. One functioning state always means one monetary and fiscal policy (i.e. income side of fiscal policy - uniform taxation). The separation of central banking and the complete separation of fiscal policy leads naturally to separation of countries. Otherwise, two macro-economic policies in one country would become a dangerous source of macro-economic instability (there is no difference here in the opinions of monetarists, Keynesians or others). The images of macro-economic policy among Slovak politicians were, among other things (finally codified in the Slovak constitution), the cause of the political separation of the federation.

The third inaccuracy appeared in the chapter dedicated to political parties. The chapter indicates how much the existence and role of extremist parties (KSČM and SPR-RSČ) in the society was underappreciated by social and political scientists. The Communist Party (KSČ) in 1990 is described as progressive left, in favour of a democratic, human and socially-just society. In fact, it probably was and its the most significant successor still is a very extreme left-wing party with an extremist programme inspired by communist ideology (they do not hide their preferences for a different regime, social equality, opposition to EU and NATO). The Communist Party is a party with a loyal electorate of the same ideological orientation and attitudes. From 1990 until today communists has adopted the role of a parliamentary opposition party and plays the game of parliamentary democracy.

The Republican Association-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ) in 1990 is presented as successor to the Republican Farmer's Party of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia. In fact, SPR-RSČ never maintained the tradition of Republican Farmer's Party and probably never presented itself as a successor to it. Their label may be inspired by western repub-