



Political Parties - Species on the Brink of Extinction

Recently, a news appeared in the Swedish TV, stating that 4 new local political parties have appeared on the political scene, apart from the 8 ones existing already. In Czech Republic, according to information available at the Ministry of Finance, there are 21 parliamentary parties, 16 non-parliamentary, and 12 dissolved. On the local level, there are 18 movements and parties. To the activities of these organizations, the State has recently contributed by more than half a billion crowns. How long shall this go on?

At the time when the first political parties began to appear – late eighteenth century – western societies were much more simple than now – hereditary aristocracy, town dwellers, peasants. There were no big media, the public had only the source of information supplied by the elites. In spite of it, a revolutionary idea prevailed – equality of citizens and their representation in elected bodies. This was the principle on which there emerged political parties, institutions as close to democracy as technically possible at that time. However, representation by political parties was not, is not, and cannot be real democracy. Each party tries to promote the interests of a particular citizen category, even to the detriment of other categories. The representation process takes place on the basis of shady structures inviting to corruption. At present, the information revolution taking place thanks to the internet and other electronic channels makes it possible for anybody to get the same information as his/her representative in Parliament. At the same time, society disintegrates into a multitude of minor groups generating interests which coincide only partially. In such a milieu, representation by parties is increasingly obsolete and dysfunctional. People begin to demand representation in single-mandate election districts and the possibility to dismiss any representative if a majority of voters participating in a local referendum demand it. Increasingly, in various countries, groups and individuals emerge putting forward such demands and claiming a change of Constitution. As far as I

DEMOCRACY



know, so far, demands to adopt a new, Citizens' Constitution has been raised only in three proposals put forward in Czech Republic. However, inevitably, this demand will spread into other countries as well.

The members of established structures, however, still depend on the traditional structures for maintaining a luxury life style. Inevitably, they will do their utmost to preserve these structures. At first, they will keep silent about the problems of party representation. They have an almost unlimited access to the media and therefore, to begin with, we have to expect

years of silence. However, growing problems will enforce a growing attention. Then comes distortion and depreciation, lies.... However, if humanity is not doomed to become extinct, real democracy will prevail at the end. States must be administered for the benefit of the vast majority of citizens, not to the detriment of this majority and for the benefit of small minorities as now. We should be grateful that destiny permits us to take part at least in the beginning of this upheaval, perhaps the greatest in history.

INTERNATIONAL

Czech Republic

A new website, to be placed permanently on the web:

Citizens for Constitutional Reform Introduction to a New Draft

by Eng. Z.Trinkewitz (excerpt)

Czechs, citizens!

A quarter century ago, you rose *en masse* against the rule by a party of ignorant neo-stalinists and their unprincipled, careerist pack, who, contrary to the progressing democratic development in the whole eastern bloc, consisting of soviet satellite regimes, tried to maintain their dictatorship in Czech Republic, even if it was not possible.

Together, you entered the streets and squares, and by a general strike, you manifested a resolution to get rid of the dictatorship exerted by the Communist Party, if absolutely necessary even by means of revolutionary violence. Your common resolve and will got the upper hand and until the ordinary election, you entrusted the task of governing to representatives of well-established organizers of the upheaval composed of constitutional bodies of personalities devoted to democracy and justice.

You expected that the new democratic regime would get rid of all unlawful and evil abuse, as well as of all unsuitable, antidemocratic and immoral individuals and institutions inside our country and would put into leading positions capable, creative forces and leading personalities, active in our economic and legal system and culture.

Unfortunately, our common expectations have been disappointed!!!

The political thinking of the West is dominated by the unshakeable (?) belief that western political systems, based on the reign by political parties, are the only possible form of *democracy*, i.e. rule by the people. According to this ideology, nothing better can exist. This is one of the greatest deceptions in history, similar to the medieval doctrine declaring that the rulers leading the states had received a mandate from God.

Rule by parties can never be democracy. Each party defends the interests of a certain category of citizens, inevitably to the detriment of other categories. This system is a competition of various categories and especially of politicians who use this system to climb to power and fat benefits.

Real democracy must be based on election of persons, not organizations. Each citizen must have the same opportunity

to participate in political processes, be it by election of representatives, by referendums, or by participation in public debates. And above all: Each citizen must have the right and possibility to participate in voting on Constitution drafts. In the current mock-democratic system, Constitution is foisted upon citizens without their participation and assent. Obviously, such a Constitution lays power into the hands of politicians, not citizens!

At least one serious, well thought-out draft of a Citizens' Constitution exists already. Citizens, demand that this draft be presented for referendum!

Three principles on which a truly democratic Constitution could and should be based:

1. Parliamentary elections must take place in single-mandate election districts. The candidate elected in such a district must not represent any party, only the citizens resident in that district.
2. Any unimpeachable adult person should have the right to stand as parliamentary candidate without the support of any organization. The support of a few grass-root citizens should be sufficient.
3. It should be possible to recall anybody any time from the office of MP if a more than 50% majority in the district in question demand it.

The chief principles of a systemic development towards a DD Constitution

During all these years, Czech Republic has staggered without any statehood and economic concept, without a vision of further development in the rapidly changing world and its alternating ("democratically" elected) political leaderships focus mostly on the struggle for preserving their power positions and the benefits they produce.

The established, in Parliament represented political parties, who need to gain electors in elections for representative bodies, do not put forward their **election programs** so as to produce radical systemic changes with the view of solving the problem of long-lasting and deepening lagging of Czech Republic behind comparable European states, but mainly **building on populist promises concerning non-systemic partial problems**.

We believe that measures which aim at solving partial problems belong to the programs of representative bodies in regions and communities; **Systemic and international political problems belong to the agenda of the Parliament – House of Commons and Senate.**

The program of the way leading towards a Constitution based on Direct Democracy is a synoptic list of the most important systemic changes which the citizens will have to push through:

To demand preparation of a new Constitution of Czech Republic based on the chief principles of direct democracy, namely

Direct election of members of representative bodies in single- mandate election districts of residents and chairmen or the highest state institutions and offices

Recall of elected representatives and state officials by referendum at any time

Passive eligibility of all qualified citizens for all functions

The Subsidiarity Principle -decision-making at the lowest possible level of community, region and state

The Referenda System – Obligatory

(i.e. About the Constitution and its amendments, about international contracts etc, according to the Article 2 (2) of the Constitution

Proclaimed by State organs, needing authorization by the citizens

Proclaimed owing to the public, supported by a prescribed number of voters

The results of referenda are not subject to any further approval - all decisions by elected representative bodies and organs are subject to public control

After a nation-wide discussion, the **Constitution draft** is subject to a nation-wide referendum. For this purpose it is necessary to approve, as soon as possible, a law concerning realizable referenda without any unrealistic participation and quota and demand that the result be approved by any "higher" authority.

abolition of the law of political parties and their inclusion in other citizen associations. At the same time, their financing from the State budget will be abolished.

Prohibition of any further changes of the valid Constitution of Czech Republic according to shifting ideas emerging in Parliament. Above all, it should be inadmissible to transfer sending Czech army to foreign missions from the Parliament to the Government of Czech Republic

Requirement that the current state of the European Union, caused by the dysfunction of the Lisbon Agreement, be transformed, since it threatens the Union by dissolution. The way to do that should be an adoption of a Constitution transforming the Union into a federation of equal member states on the principle of subsidiarity

UK

On 18 October, **INIREF** wrote:

Monbiot comes out as a real democrat!

George Monbiot, a well known critic of prevailing politics and pro-environment activist, has "outed" himself as a democrat! A rare bird among British journalists. In today's Guardian newspaper (seen on-line) he proposes that we in the UK should introduce elements of citizen-led direct democracy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/18/referendums-bad-press-fix-britain-more-of-them-participatory-democracy>

Here are a few quoted snippets from his article:

"You lost, suck it up: this is how our politics works. If the party you voted for lost the election, you have no meaningful democratic voice for the next five years. You can go through life, in this "representative democracy", unrepresented in government, while not being permitted to represent yourself.

Even if your party is elected, it washes its hands of you when you leave the polling booth. Governments assert a mandate for any policy they can push through parliament. While elections tend to hinge on one or two issues, parties will use their win to claim support for all the positions in their manifestos, and for anything else they decide to do during their term in office."

"Political control under this system is so coarse and diffuse that democracy loses all but its crudest meaning"

{Monbiot proposes} "three models that we could draw upon."

"The first is the Swiss system. There, the people vote in about 10 or a dozen referendums a year, clustered into three or four polling days, challenging federal laws or proposing constitutional amendments. Referendums are triggered when someone can gather enough signatures. These plebiscites foster a strong sense of political ownership: people perceive that government belongs to them. This might explain why, in its survey of 40 nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development discovered the Swiss had the highest levels of trust in government. Far from causing voter fatigue, the process stimulates a rich culture of engagement, debate and persuasion. Across the year, about 80% of the electorate vote in referendums."

On 30 October, **INIREF** wrote:

Brexit: referendum on negotiated terms. Opinions and Official Petition UPDATE

Editorial, The Independent on-line 25th October 2017

"Politically, the UK cannot be pulled out of the EU without Parliament at least agreeing to the terms (and, much better, those being referred to the British people in a final referendum)."

Article:

A vote on Brexit. in Parliament or in the country, is more important than the timing

The Guardian, opinion of Hugo Dixon, 30th Oct. 2017

".... if public opinion turns decisively against Brexit, not holding a referendum would tear the country apart. If the Tories pressed on with Brexit after the will of the people had changed, as it became clear what a horrible mess we were getting into, the country would be apoplectic."

Article:

Is a second Brexit vote possible? Yes – if the people want it

UPDATE, 30th October 2017

Petition: Hold a referendum on the final Brexit deal

We, the undersigned, call upon HM Government to give the people of this country the final say on the Brexit deal negotiated by the UK and EU. This would be done through a referendum that would take place prior to the April 2019 exit date. (For more detail go to Petition web site).

Sign this petition

127,950 signatures

GERMANY

On 3 September, *INIREF* wrote:

Direct democracy in Germany no longer taboo

A general election will be held in late September this year 2017. Many citizens and also political pundits assess the electoral contest and the campaigns of the various parties to be rather boring. A major reason for this is that the conservative christian democrats (one branch the CSU in Bavaria, another the more-or-less united CDU in the rest of re-united Germany) are likely to remain in power, after around 12 years of dominance in government. Related to this is another – for many less than exciting – probability, that the presidential-style prime minister (Kanzler or Kanzlerin) will, whatever the success or failure of political parties other than hers, continue to be Dr. Angela Merkel, leading her party the CDU.

A few election themes, issues on which the major parties have relatively minor disagreement, have cropped up, but none seem to hold potential for major changes in voting behaviour. Ms. Merkel's party block CDU/CSU is heading for around 40% of votes, her main rivals and current coalition partners the Social Democrats SPD will struggle to reach 25%. Several smaller parties across the political spectrum are predicted to take around 8% each. A large number of electors say that they have yet to decide how to vote on 24th September.

One theme with potential to produce substantial political change has lurked under the surface of public discourse so far in this elections campaign. It is the proposal, to introduce some elements of citizen-led direct democracy for central government of the German federation. This proposal has for years been supported in opinion surveys by a large majority of voters. Those political parties which may support this reform include the Social Democrats SPD, the Greens, the Free Democrats (liberals) and in a game-changing salto the Christian Social party of Bavaria (sister party in chancellor Merkel's CDU/CSU block). There is a reasonable chance that there could be enough MPs (Mitglieder des Bundestages) in the the next federal parliament, who support the introduction of citizen-led direct democracy, and can provide a constitution-changing majority for this reform.

It may be the case that some of the (around 50% according to some pollsters) undecided electors/citizens/voters have noticed their chance to improve the quality of politics by giving their vote to MPs who will support the introduction of more citizen-led direct democracy. Many have probably not noticed or considered this matter: The main-stream media commonly suppress or openly denigrate citizen-led direct democracy so active citizens and independent campaigns are called upon to spread objective information about it. One such campaign is run by the member organisation Mehr Demokratie.*

* The active reform group Mehr Demokratie (More Democracy) has over 10.000 members and is supported by numerous other organisations. Hundreds of thousands of citizens have supported their campaigns and over five million signatures have been collected for their proposals.

Campaign for direct democracy in Britain
Citizens' Initiative and Referendum I&R ~ GB
<http://www.iniref.org/> Link to site index
Contact: info@iniref.org

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On 20 June, Mr. **Ero Liivik** informed us that in March, he defended his doctoral thesis "Otseedemokratia Estis: õigussotsioloogilisi aspekte" ("Direct Democracy in Estonia: Legal Sociological Aspects") in the Council of the Institute of Social Studies..

Summary: (excerpt) The valid Constitution lacks the institution of popular initiative, whereas only the Riigikogu can initiate popular vote. Within the past 15 years in the framework of direct democracy discourse, the most significant was the debate of popular initiative carried out in 2003-2008, launched by the opposition. Substantial arguments for and against popular initiative were expressed in the course of discourse. The discourse was assessed by parties involved in the context of law and beyond, as an indicator of Estonian parliamentary culture. Summing it up, principles of majoritarian democracy prevailed over deliberative democracy.

Merry Christmas and a happy new DDD Year !

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