

**Paper prepared for the Second General Conference of the European Consortium
for Political Research, Marburg, 18-21 September 2003.**

Section 16 – Central and East European Politics

Panel 5 – Centre-Right Parties in Post-Communist Central Europe

Explaining The Rise (and Decline?) of the New Czech Right

Seán Hanley
School of Slavonic and East European Studies
University College London
United Kingdom
s.hanley@ssees.ac.uk

Please do not cite without the author's agreement

The author would like to acknowledge receipt of a British Academy travel grant to attend this conference.

The Rise (and Decline?) of the New Czech Right

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the origins, development and comparative success of the Czech centre-right, synthesising and summarising earlier research and relevant literatures, to facilitate comparison with other centre-right formations in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It will focus principally on the political fortunes of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) founded by former Czech Prime Minister (and current President) Václav Klaus. The paper initially gives a brief overview of the position of the Civic Democratic Party in Czech politics since its foundation in 1991. The paper then reviews a number of factors commonly used to explain party (system) formation in the region as they relate to the case of the Czech centre-right. These include both structural-historical and cleavage explanations and factors related to political dynamics and political choices after 1989. Such 'political' factors include the process of crafting political parties in the immediate post-transition period; institutional design; party institutionalisation; the repercussions of the success (or failure) of transformation policies. As recent discussion has suggested that such factors are frequently underestimated in comparative analyses of post-communist politics in favour of regime legacy-based explanation,¹ they are explored at greater length. For reasons of space the paper does not discuss issues of definition and measurement of the (centre) 'right' in CEE, which I have discussed at some length in a previous paper.² For the purposes of this paper, I take political 'success' to mean office-holding and vote maximisation, which is a prerequisite of office holding.

The Rise and Decline of the Czech Right

The Civic Democratic Party (ODS) has been the principal party of the centre-right in the Czech Republic since its formation in early 1991 on the basis of the free market, anti-communist right wing of the Civic Forum movement that oversaw Czechoslovakia's transition to democracy in 1989-90. ODS is closely identified with its charismatic founder, the former Czechoslovak Finance Minister (1990-92) and former Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus, who led the party from its foundation until December 2002, when he stood down to contest the Czech Presidency.

In the early-mid 1990s the ODS was the dominant force in Czech politics and the lynchpin of the 1992-7 centre-right coalition governments that negotiated the division of Czechoslovakia in late 1992, implemented many key policies of post-communist transformation in the Czech Republic. However, by mid-1990s it became increasingly clear that, rather than producing the post-communist economic miracle some had anticipated, the policies of the Klaus government had created an under-regulated, under-capitalised, inefficient private sector, dominated by politically connected, rent-seeking groups. The resultant economic malaise both undermined the party's reputation as a reformist force and aggravated tensions with its junior coalition

¹ See, for example, K Williams, A Szczerbiak and B Fowler (2003), *Explaining Lustration in Eastern Europe: A 'Post-Communist Politics' Approach*, Sussex European Institute Working Paper No. 62, March.

² S Hanley, 'Getting the Centre-Right Right in Post-Communist East and Central Europe', paper presented to an informal seminar at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, 23 June 2002, forthcoming as Sussex European Institute Working Paper.

partners, the social-market oriented Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and the neo-liberal Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA).

Table 1: Election Results to Lower House of Czech Parliament 1992-2002

Party	% vote	Seats /200	% vote	Seats /200	% of vote	Seats /200	% of vote	Seats /200
	1992	1992	1996	1996	1998	1998	2002	2002
<i>Civic Democratic Party (ODS)*</i>	29.93	76	29.62	68	27.74	63	24.47	58
<i>'Coalition'</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.27	31
<i>Freedom Union (US)</i>	-	-	-	-	8.60	19	-	(9)
<i>Christian Democratic Union- Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU- ČSL)</i>	6.28	15	8.08	18	9.00	20	-	(22)
<i>Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA)</i>	5.93	14	6.36	13	-	-	-	-
Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)	6.54	16	26.44	61	32.32	74	30.20	70
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)**	14.04	35	10.33	22	11.03	24	18.51	41
Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR- RSC)	5.98	14	8.01	18	-	-	-	-
Society For Moravia and Silesia - Movement For Self-Governing Democracy (HSD-SMS)	5.87	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liberal Social Union (LSU)	6.52	16	-	-	-	-	-	-

Results show parliamentary parties only. Centre-right parties italicised

*Joint list with Christian Democratic Party (KDS) in 1996

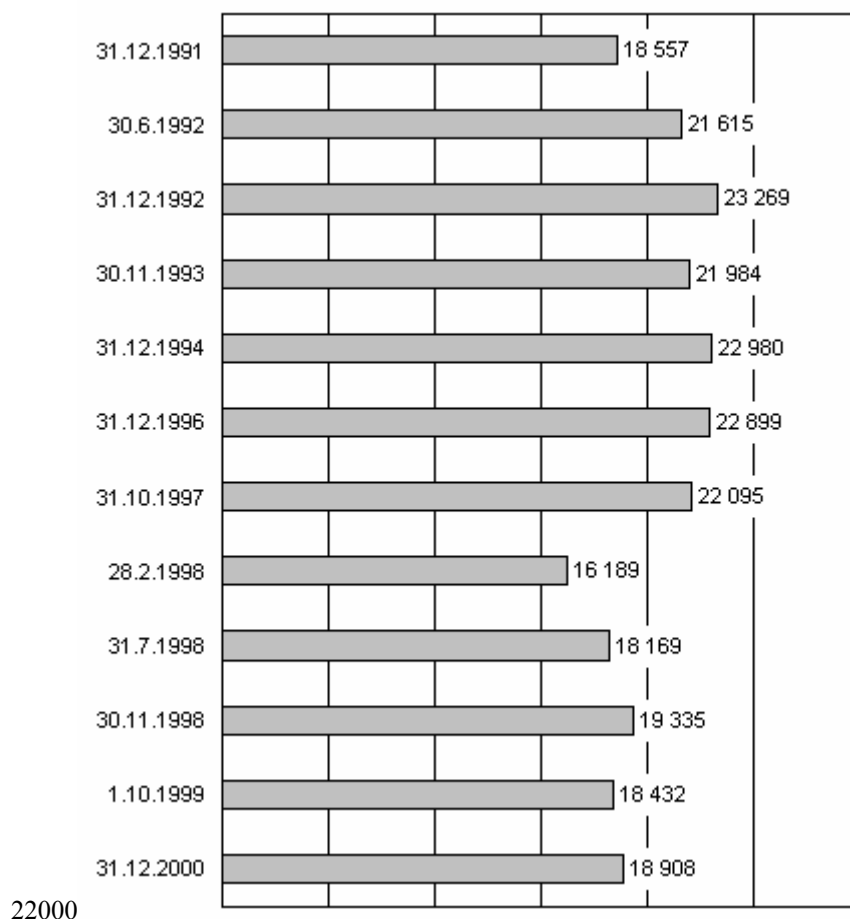
**Left Bloc coalition in 1992

Such criticism intensified when the ODS vote remained virtually static at 29.9 per cent in the June 1996 parliamentary elections and the centre-right coalition narrowly failed to retain its parliamentary majority, continuing as a minority administration 'tolerated' by the opposition Social Democrats. In November 1997 the incipient crisis facing ODS was brought to a head by a party financing scandal that led to the collapse of the Klaus government. Klaus's alleged complicity in the scandal prompted his coalition partners to withdraw from the government and caused a split in ODS itself, when senior figures in the party called his integrity and political judgement into question (the so-called 'Sarajevo Assassination').³ However, at a special congress in Poděbrady in December 1997, Klaus - who claimed to have been unaware of the irregularities - was able to mobilise grassroots support to resist pressure for his resignation by a decisive majority. His defeated opponents, a significant section of ODS's parliamentary and party elite, left to found a new party, the Freedom Union (US) in February 1998. In early parliamentary elections in June 1998, despite recovering much apparently lost support, ODS was out-pollled by the Social Democrats, who became for the first time the largest Czech party. Although centre-right parties of the outgoing coalition regained a theoretical parliamentary majority, such were the tensions between ODS and its former allies, that Klaus unexpectedly opted to allow a minority Social Democratic government under Miloš Zeman to take

³ Those in question were Jan Ruml, the Interior Minister, and Ivan Pilip, the Finance Minister. Klaus was attending a conference in Sarajevo at the time the remarks were broadcast.

office, on the basis of a written pact (the so-called ‘Opposition Agreement’).⁴ After losing office, Klaus’s party attempted to realign itself by combining its traditional neo-liberal demands with some more overtly conservative and nationalist themes such as defending national interests against the EU, restricting immigration and resisting German demands for the revision of the legal status of the ‘Beneš Decrees’ expelling Czechoslovakia’s ethnic German population in 1945-6.⁵

Figure 1: ODS Membership 1991-2000



Source: *Deset let ODS*, www.ods.cz

Despite growing public dissatisfaction with its cartel-like character, the ‘Opposition Agreement’ endured until scheduled parliamentary elections in June 2002. These were won by the Social Democrats under a new leader, Vladimír Špidla, the current Prime Minister. Špidla abandoned cooperation with the ODS to work with the smaller ‘Coalition’ grouping uniting the liberal Freedom Union and the Christian Democrats, who became junior partners in a coalition government with a narrow parliamentary majority. The 2002 election results seemed to mark the failure of ODS’s post-1997 realignment. Internal recriminations focused on Klaus, whom many powerful

⁴ In January 2000 the pact was revised as a result of disagreements on its implementation and a new document (the ‘Patent of Toleration’) was signed.

⁵ See S Hanley, *Royal Institute of International Affairs/ Opposing Europe Research Network Election Briefing no. 5: Europe and the Czech Parliamentary Elections of June 2002*, July 2002 <http://www.riia.org>

regional ODS organizations had come to consider an electoral liability, rather than an asset. In October 2002 Klaus announced that he would not stand for re-election as ODS chairman at the party's December 2002 congress, ostensibly to facilitate his campaign for the Czech presidency due to be vacated Václav Havel in February 2003. In his place the congress unexpectedly elected Senator Miroslav Topolánek, a pragmatic politician with a strong regional power base in the industrial city of Ostrava, as Klaus's successor. The election of Klaus as President by a joint session of the Czech Parliament in February 2003 with the support of Communist deputies, attracted by Klaus's resolute defence of the Beneš Decrees and promise to normalise relations with their party provided a further political surprise. Although an apparent boost for ODS, some have argued that Klaus's election was more a personal triumph for Klaus and his informal team of advisers.⁶

Overall, the success of the Civic Democratic Party appears to represent an intermediate case between those of centre-right formations neighbouring Poland and Hungary. ODS has avoided the organisational and electoral fragmentation and collapse of the centre-right in Poland, despite two electoral defeats and one major internal party crisis. However, equally it has failed to gain the levels of support or consolidation of the centre-right achieved by Hungary's FIDESZ through alliance building and absorption of smaller organisations. Indeed ODS's support in parliamentary elections (to the lower house) has steadily *declined* from a peak of 29.62% in 1992 to 25% in 2002 (see table 1).⁷ However, despite the decline in its national electoral fortunes and loss of office nationally, ODS is well represented in local and regional government and plays a key role in governing large municipalities, such as Prague and Brno, and regional authorities elected for the first time in 2000, where the ODS holds a majority of the governorships (*hejtmanství*). This reflects its success in building and maintaining a national organisational network with a presence in most population centres. ODS membership peaked at 22,000 in the mid-1990s (see table 2), declining sharply after the party lost office, before recovering to its current level of just under 19,000 (see figure 1). Finally, it should be noted that the volatility of the Social Democrats' support during both their the Zeman and the Špidla administrations (1998-2002, 2002-) has seen the Civic Democrats take substantial leads in opinion polls. However, even sympathetic observers concede, since the 2002 election and the departure of Klaus, the party has appeared ideologically and politically disunited and its future direction and role in Czech politics are currently uncertain.⁸

Cleavages, Historical Pathways and the Right

The Historical Weakness of the Czech Right

As Czech political scientists have noted, Czech party development before 1938 broadly conforms to the pattern of cleavage-based party formation postulated for

⁶ See J Urban, 'The Making of a Czech President', *East European Perspectives*, vol. 5, no. 8, 16 April 2003, <http://www.rferl.org/eepreport/2003/04/8-160403.html>

⁷ ODS's highest national vote was 33.9% in the ballot to the lower house of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly in 1992.

⁸ See, for example, B. Pečinka, 'Komentář: ODS mezi stagnací a růstem', *Proglas*, 2001/4 and 'Budoucnost české pravice', *Proglas*, 8/2002, pp. 11-13.

Western Europe by Lipset and Rokkan, albeit in a way strongly crosscut by the struggle for Czech national self-determination and the belated formation of the Czech (oslovak) national state in 1918.⁹ However, the social forces that formed the bases of the traditional Right in many European countries, such as conservative aristocratic landowners and the Catholic Church were politically weak or absent in the Czech case. The (re)emergence of the Czechs as a political nation from early 19th century onwards largely excluded the aristocracy from the Czech nation, identifying this key social force as pro-Habsburg interest. Similarly, the Catholic Church, although institutionally and numerically dominant in the Czech lands, came to be viewed as pro-Austrian body, ambivalent or indifferent to the aspirations of the nation for political and cultural self-determination. Key figures such as Masaryk argued that Czech national traditions were essentially rooted in Protestantism and its Hussite precursor. Finally, in contrast other societies in Central Europe, the dominant discourse of Czech nationalism remained liberal-democratic and progressive well into the 1930s, keeping Catholic conservative and integral nationalist milieux intellectually and politically marginal.¹⁰ Moreover, political forces that might have coalesced into a broad conservative or liberal Czech 'right-wing' were impeded from doing so by the prominence of the 'National Question' in Czech politics. The conservative landowning and liberal middle class elites, which formed the first Czech political parties in the mid 19th century onwards created 'national' formations primarily defined as vehicles for achieving national autonomy. By late 19th century, however, the modernisation and differentiation of Czech society coupled with progressive extension of the franchise saw the dominant nationalist National Liberal Party (the 'Young Czech' party) challenged by the rise of class- and interest-based parties.¹¹

The Czech party system, which formed in the last quarter of the 19th century and remained 'frozen' until the demise of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1938 was both fragmented and significantly shaped by issues of nation- and state building. This was reflected in the governing coalitions in interwar Czechoslovakia, which, although shifting in ideological composition,¹² tended to oppose 'state-forming', Czech-based parties to German and Slovak parties critical of the new state, rather than blocs of left or right. The 'right wing' of this historic Czech party system was thus represented by an array of parties with different historical and social roots, a pattern of party system development, which, to some extent, paralleled that in Scandinavia.¹³ The three most

⁹ See, for example, L Kopeček, 'Aplikace Rokkanovské teorie cleavages na české politické strany na počátku éry masové politiky', *Středoevropské politické studie*, 4 (2-3), Spring-Summer 2002, www.iips.cz. See also V Hloušek, 'Koncept konfliktních linií ve střední a jihovýchodní Evropě', *Středoevropské politické studie*, 4 (2-3), Spring-Summer 2002, www.iips.cz. An additional peculiarity is the highly unusual presence of both a Catholic and an agrarian party in the pre-1938 party system.

¹⁰ Two significant examples include the Catholic-oriented current of thought associated with Josef Pekař (1870-1937) and the group of right-wing nationalist intellectuals around the interwar journal *Fronta*. See M Havelka (ed.), *Spor o smyslu českých dějin* (Prague: Torst, 1997), pp. 7-43 (preface) and P Pithart, 'Kavalír Josef Pekař' and '„Fronta“ proti Hradu' in his *Dějiny a politika* (Prague: Prostor, 1990), pp. 71-104 and 105-164.

¹¹ B Garver, *The Young Czech Party 1874-1901 and the Emergence of a Multiparty System*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1978).

¹² As, for example, with the formation of the so-called Gentlemen's Coalition (*panská koalice*) in 1927-8 which excluded left-wing parties (and included German Christian Socials and Agrarians).

¹³ See G M Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. A key

significant of these were: Czechoslovak National Democracy, formed in 1918 from the merger of a number of the declining traditional nationalist groupings; the Catholic-based People's Party, whose support was restricted to rural Catholic regions of South Moravia and East Bohemia¹⁴; and the Agrarian Party, which had emerged as a political forces in the early 20th century from a number of political organisations representing agricultural interests. Of the three the Agrarians came closest to being a broad party of the right and, in mid- 1930s, even adopted a conscious strategy of creating a right-wing conservative bloc. However, these efforts met with little success and, despite being the largest party for much of the inter-war period, the Agrarian vote never exceeded 15%.

After the collapse of democratic interwar Republic following the 1938 Munich Agreement, attempts by some figures from the interwar 'right' to create an authoritarian pro-German Czech corporate state through the creation a Party of National Unity (SNJ)¹⁵ further weakened and discredited it. As elsewhere in Europe, the perceived collaboration of traditional right-wing parties in the 'Second Republic' (1938-9) and the Nazi-controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939-45) was one factor prompting the Czech electorate to swing markedly to the Left after 1945. Moreover, even in the short democratic interlude before the communist takeover in February 1948, two of the three historic 'right-wing' parties - National Democracy and the Agrarians - were banned for alleged collaboration.¹⁶ After 1948 official communist historiography continued to assimilate the historical Czech 'right' to Fascism and reactionary foreign rule. Official media also broadly applied the label 'right-wing' after 1968 to proponents of radical reform and dissident critics of regime.¹⁷

Post-Communist Cleavages and Historical Pathways

Despite the survival of a small number of historic parties able to draw on organisational, socio-cultural or cleavage continuities, few emerged as more than minor actors in East European party systems after 1989. Attempts to apply Rokkanian perspectives and methodology. making initial presumptions of continuity with the pre-communist past therefore floundered, as it became clear that the passage of time and

difference, however, was the divided nature of the Czech Left, which reflected the divisive effect of the National Question and strength of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

¹⁴ See Les Blackwood, 'Czech and Polish National Democracy at the Dawn of Independent Statehood 1918-1919', *East European Politics and Societies*, 4 (1990), pp. 469-488; Milan E. Hapala, 'Political Parties in Czechoslovakia' in M Recheigl jr. (ed.), *Czechoslovakia Past and Present* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 124-140; Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974, pp. 95-113.

¹⁵ Jan Rataj, *O autoritativní národní stát: ideologické proměny české politiky v Druhé republice 1938-1939*. (Prague: Karolinium, 1997).

¹⁶ The People's Party was allowed to contest the (free) elections of 1946 along with three left-wing parties (the Communists, National Socialists and Social Democrats). The elections were won by the Communists, who polled 40% of the vote in the Czech Lands. After 1989 it developed into the Christian Democratic Union (KDU-ČSL) discussed elsewhere in this paper.

¹⁷ Further confusion was caused by the use of the term 'conservative' to describe Communist opponents of reform.

the extensive social and political engineering of communist regimes had largely severed the historical continuities visible in Western European party systems.¹⁸

On the Czech right, Catholic-oriented People's Party (KDU-ČSL) was the only historic party to gain representation in Czech and Czechoslovak parliaments elected after 1990 by drawing on clear historic bases of support.¹⁹ However, despite an impressive record of office holding (1992-8, 2002-), a pivotal role in the party system and repeated, and partly successful, efforts to broaden its appeal (see below) KDU-ČSL has remained a 'small' party in Paul Lewis's sense of the term.²⁰ Some observers, have suggested, however, that the concentration of support for Klaus's ODS in larger towns and cities in the West of the Czech Republic (Bohemia),²¹ parallels that of inter-war parties such as National Democracy and the left-liberal National Socialists. However, detailed analysis of voting patterns, identified no strong correlation, and found that ODS support (in 1992) most strongly correlated with broad pro-reform vote for the Civic Forum movement in 1990.²² Such broad parallels may therefore reflect more the underlying structural and geographical advantages of certain localities (e.g. structure of the local economy, proximity to Germany), which mark them out as economic 'winners' both before and after the communism.

Subsequent comparative analyses of the origins of party competition in CEE after 1989 therefore focused on the nature of communist regimes and post-communist transformation processes. Perhaps the most influential of these has been devised by Herbert Kitschelt and his collaborators. Kitschelt initially devised a generic model based on responses to marketisation, which anticipated a pro-reform 'right' combining social and economic liberalism would compete with a socially authoritarian, nationalistic 'left'.²³ However, the limitations of this model in explaining the diversity of national outcomes, led him to subsequently reformulate this as a comparative model, which de-emphasised the politics of marketisation and transformation in favour of regime legacies and state-society relationships reflecting varying levels of socio-economic modernisation in pre-communist East and Central European.²⁴

¹⁸ M Cotta, 'Building party systems after the dictatorship: the East European cases in comparative perspective' in G Pridham and T Vanhanen, (eds.), *Democratisation in Eastern Europe: domestic and international perspectives*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, pp.99-128

¹⁹ On the left the Communists (KSČM) were the only other significant 'historic' party to succeed in this way. See T Kostecký, P Jehlička and P Sýkora, 'The Czechoslovak parliamentary elections of 1990: old patterns, new trends and lots of surprises' in John O'Loughlin and Herman van der Wursten (eds) *The New Political Geography of Eastern Europe*. London: Belhaven Press, 1993, pp. 235-254

²⁰ See P G Lewis, 'Small Parties in the New Party Systems of New Central European Democracies', Paper presented at the Second General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, Marburg, 18-21 September 2003.

²¹ B Pečinka, 'formování české občanské pravice', *Proglas*, 5-6/2000, p. 6.

²² T Kostecký, 'Economic, Social and Historical Determinants of Voting Patterns in the 1990 and 1992 Parliamentary Elections in the Czech Republic', *Czech Sociological Review*, vol.2, no. 2, Fall 1994.

²³ H Kitschelt, 'The Formation of Party Systems in East-Central Europe', *Politics and Society*, vol. 20, no. 1, March, pp. 15-19

²⁴ H Kitschelt, 'The Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions', *Party Politics*, vol.1, 1995, pp. 447-72.

In states such as Hungary and Poland, argued Kitschelt, the incomplete nature of pre-communist social modernization and the coercive nature of subsequent communist modernisation led to the conservation of populist, ruralist and conservative discourses and debates. These constituted a cultural and ideological reservoir for reconstituting the right after 1989, but preserved the historical division with liberals committed to free markets and lifestyle pluralism. The lack of social support for communism in such semi-modern societies, Kitschelt argues, created weak 'national-accommodationist' ruling parties, whose successors initiated and embraced economic reform after 1989, blurring the socio-economic dimension of left-right competition. The pre-communist social modernity of the Czech Lands, by contrast, left traditional and rural sectors politically and socially marginal, but sustained a powerful mass labour movement, which gravitated towards communism after 1945. This, Kitschelt argued, produced a 'bureaucratic-authoritarian' form of communism averse to any element of market reform. Left-right division after 1989 would, therefore, centre on distributive issues concerning the role of the state or market, producing a free market, liberal-conservative centre-right, whose outlook contrasts sharply with that of its Hungarian and Polish equivalents.

There is significant empirical evidence to confirm Kitschelt's thesis that left-right competition would revolve around a single axis of socio-economic conflict determined by post-communist marketisation, rather than historically-rooted value cleavages. Analyses of political space in the Czech Republic on both the elite and the mass level have repeatedly stressed the dominance of this issue dimension.²⁵ Left-right self-placement by the Czech electorate since 1990 has remained relatively stable, with most voters in the political centre and overall distribution skewed towards the right.²⁶ Other studies have found that in the course of the 1990s, voting for parties of the right and self-placement on the 'right' by Czech voters became more closely linked with more meritocratic notions of social justice, an above average tolerance of inequality and commitment to market forces.²⁷

This has been underpinned by growing correlation between social class and party choice. Thus although the Civic Democratic Party and other (neo-)liberal groupings on the Czech centre-right draw electoral support from a range of social groups, there

²⁵ See G Evans and S Whitefield, 'The Structuring of Political Cleavages in Post-Communist Societies: the Case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia', *Political Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1998, pp. 115-39; H Kitschelt, Z Manfeldová, R Markowski and G Toka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation and Inter-party Collaboration*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; K Vlachová, 'Levice a pravice v České republice v letech 1996-2000' in Z Manfeldová and M Tuček, *Současná česká společnost*, Prague: Sociologický ústav, 2002, pp. 254-70; K Krause, 'Once More unto the Breach: The Politics of Cleavage in Slovakia and the Czech Republic', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the APSA, Boston, 29 August – 1 September 2002. However, more recent data from the period following the signing of the 'Opposition Agreement' suggests a possible weakening of this uni-dimensionality. See Vlachová, 'Levice a pravice'.

²⁶ and P Matějů and K Vlachová, 'Values and electoral decisions in the Czech republic', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 1998, vol.31, no.3, pp. 249-67.

²⁷ See P Šimoník, 'Politické spektrum v České republice', *Sociologický časopis*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1996, pp. 457-70 and K Vlachová, 'The Crystallization of Political Attitudes and Orientations', in J Večerník and P Matějů (eds), *Ten Years of Rebuilding Capitalism: the Czech Republic after 1989*, Prague: Academia pp. 251-272 K Krause, 'Public opinion and party choice in Slovakia and the Czech Republic', *Party Politics*, 2000, vol.6, no.1, pp.23-46; K Vlachová, 'Party identification in the Czech Republic: inter-party hostility and party preference', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2001, vol.34, no.4, pp. 479-499.

has been a clear tendency for better educated, more urban and more prosperous groups of 'transition winners' to back them.²⁸ This contrasts markedly with the position in states such as Hungary and Poland, where little such correlation appears to exist. However, as Czech sociologists have noted, the image of the Czech electorate (or any substantial section of it) as an island of unremitting pro-market enthusiasm is misleading. Rather, research has suggested, the emergence of a 'right-wing' electorate to a considerable extent reflected the crystallization of a distinct left-wing electorate and occurred against a background of a general decline in pro-market orientations reflecting a move from 'enthusiasm to sobriety' among voters regarding both socio-economic transformation itself and personal situations in the emerging market society.²⁹

However, structural-historical analysis of the type undertaken by Kitschelt and his collaborators has a number of limitations. Although it enables us to explain how and why left-right competition in the Czech lands after 1989 largely revolved around the relative importance of the state and the market, it does little to account for the strength of the free market Czech New Right after 1989 or for its subsequent decline from the mid-late 1990s. Moreover, like many accounts of party formation in Western Europe, structural-historical approaches largely avoid consideration of the strategies and interaction of political actors, the uncertainty of outcomes and the problems of political organization and party institutionalization. This is unsatisfactory both from a theoretical point of view and because it makes it offers little real insight in recent strategic choices of the Czech centre-right, which seem to defy this logic, such as the decision of the Civic Democrats to co-operate with left-wing parties to conclude the 'Opposition Agreement' in 1998 or ensure the election of Václav Klaus as Czech President in 2003.

Political Crafting and the 'Transition from Transition'

As Milada Anna Vachudova suggests, the rise of moderate centre-right parties in CEE is closely related to the strength and nature of organised opposition during the late communist period.³⁰ In the Czech case, for example, the intellectual origins of the post-communist Czech right can be traced to the reaction of dissident and technocratic counter elites to Czechoslovakia's 'Prague Spring' and its suppression after the Soviet-led invasion of 1968. From the early 1970s, for example, the group of intellectual dissidents around Pavel Bratinka and Daniel Kroupa were exploring American neo-conservative ideas and in the 1980s clandestinely established contacts

²⁸ See, for example, P Matějů and B Reháková, 'Turning left or class realignment? Analysis of the changing relationship between class and party in the Czech Republic 1992-1996', *East European Politics and Societies*, Fall 1997, vol.11, no.3, pp. 501-542 and B Reháková, 'Social Stratification and Voting Behaviour' in Večerník and P Matějů (eds), *Ten Years of Rebuilding Capitalism: the Czech Republic after 1989*, Prague: Academia, 1999, pp. 228-250 and K Krause, 'Once More unto the Breach'.

²⁹ Vlachová, 'The Crystallization of Political Attitudes and Orientations', p. 271. See also J Večerník, *Markets and People: The Czech Reform Experience in a Comparative Perspective*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1996, pp. 217-39.

³⁰ M Vachudová, 'Right-Wing Parties and Political Outcomes in Eastern Europe', paper presented at the APSA annual meeting, San Francisco, 2001.

with a number of leading Western (neo-)conservative intellectuals.³¹ The Bratinka-Kroupa grouping subsequently crystallised into a right-wing ‘civic current’ within the Movement for Civil Liberties (HOS) formed in 1987 by leading figures within Charter 77. In December 1989 Bratinka and Kroupa co-founded the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) as a Western-oriented neo-liberal, neo-conservative party. ODA members initially gaining office through their party’s inclusion in the Civic Forum movement but it later won election to the Czech(oslovak) parliament(s) independently in 1992 and 1996 and was a junior partner in the 1992-7 Klaus governments.

This underlines the importance of considering the *strategies of counter-elites* outside (or marginal to) the communist party-state during late communism³². It remains an open question, for example, why under late communism in the Czech lands, dissident and technocratic counter-elites – both those ‘right-wing’ and those (better known) anti-political thinkers such as Havel - sought to radically rethink traditional political paradigms or import new ones from the West, whereas in other states in the region there were clear intellectual and philosophical continuities the pre-communist period.

However, although Bratinka and Kroupa and their co-thinkers helped establish some of the intellectual tenor of the post-communist Czech Right, a more significant group of actors for party building on the Czech Right after 1989 were neo-liberal technocrats. In late communist Czechoslovakia, critically minded technocrats holding posts in official research and financial institutions formed a ‘grey zone’ between a hard-line regime with little need for or interest in them and independent organisations such as Charter 77, whose criticism was open and explicit. Of key significance was a narrowly generationally defined group of economists, which included Václav Klaus as well as a number of other subsequently important figures after 1989, who were from even by the late 1960’s not only rejected reform communist notions of ‘socialist market’ but were gravitating from the Keynesian neo-classical synthesis to neo-liberalism of the Austrian and Chicago schools.³³ Figures from this group not only acted as an intellectual reservoir and conduit for ideas and policies that would define the Czech right, but important political actors in creating its key political vehicle, the Civic Democratic Party.

Civic Movements and Party Formation

This suggests that it is of equal or greater importance to consider political and organisational strategies adopted after 1989. In this respect, the period between transition from the old regime and the establishment of a relatively predictable, ‘normal’ competitive party system can be seen as a crucial critical juncture, where the actors’ strategies can affect the successful or unsuccessful formation of political parties to the maximum extent. As moderate centre-right parties in CEE are typically the ‘successor parties’ of opposition movements, the break-up of the broad civic movements formed in 1989-90 as broad coalitions for regime change appears as a key

³¹ See P Oszlly (ed.), *Podzemná univerzita* Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 1993 and B Day, *The Velvet Philosophers*, Oxford: Claridge Press, 2001.

³² I use the term ‘late communism’ loosely to refer to the period 1968-1989. In the Czech case this largely coincides with the period of ‘normalisation’.

³³ This is confirmed by comparison of memoir material. For an extended discussion, see S Hanley, *The New Right in the New Europe? Unravelling The Ideology of “Czech Thatcherism”*, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1999, vol. 4, no. 2.

moment in the formation (or non-formation) of a broad centre-right. Much of the literature on civic movements emphasises their ephemeral nature and the difficulty of transforming them into lasting political structures, citing their political breadth, loose organisation and anti-hierarchical culture as key obstacles.³⁴ However, the emergence of a broad Czech party of the centre-right with a nationwide organisational network, such as the Civic Democratic Party, arguably reflects the success of political entrepreneurs in achieving just such a transformation of the disintegrating Civic Forum movement in 1990-1.³⁵ Indeed, it can be argued, that without crafting such a political transformation, the Czech right would today be defined by the pattern of fragmentation among small, fractious, elite dominated formations still characteristic of the Polish right.³⁶

Civic Forum (OF) was formed in Prague on 19 November 1989 as an *ad hoc* committee-like grouping for variety of counter-elites and opposition groups, bringing together Prague-based dissidents, representatives of striking actors and students, and social scientists and economists from the 'grey zone'. As mobilisation increased and the regime ceased to resist, local civic fora were created across the Czech Lands and by early 1990 the movement was a powerful, if loosely structured, national organisation heading a transitional government. In the succeeding months, the Forum formalised its organisational structures and identity, seeking to reconcile the horizontal, spontaneous, non-ideological movement character typical of its foundation during Velvet Revolution with the demands of office-holding and contesting parliamentary elections in June 1990. The movement's overwhelming victory in these elections and the expectations that the elected Czechoslovak and Czech government it headed would rapidly deliver coherent reform, exacerbated these contradictions and facilitated the explosive emergence of internal divisions.

As Hadjiisky's research has impressively demonstrated, these concerned not only ideological and differences over the pace of market reform, decommunisation or the constitutional relationship of Czechs and Slovaks, but also conflicts between organisational interests within the Forum.³⁷ Principal among these were (1) growing pressures from OF's full-time paid regional officials and elected representatives to recognise and institutionalise them as political professionals; and (2) discontent amongst grassroots activists that their views were (especially on decommunisation) were not represented by the movement's ex-dissident leaders. Such tensions were

³⁴ Y. M. Brudny, 'The Dynamics of "Democratic Russia", 1990-93', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 9, 1993, pp. 141-70; S. M. Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); T. Grabowski, 'The Party That Never Was: The Rise and Fall of the Solidarity Citizens' Committees in Poland', *East European Politics and Societies* 10,2, 1996, pp. 214-245;

³⁵ A point made by both observers sympathetic to the party such as Pečinka, 'Formování české občanské pravice', and others such as P Dimun, 'Vznik stran na půdě OF', *Listy*, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 23-7 and John K Glenn, 'Parties Out of Movements: Party Emergence in Postcommunist Europe', In J A Goldstone, (ed), *States, Parties and Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 23-7.

³⁶ See S. Hanley, 'Are the Exceptions Really the Rule? Questioning the Application of 'Electoral-Professional' Type Models of Party Organisation in East Central Europe', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 453-479

³⁷ M Hadjiisky, *La fin du Forum civique et la naissance du Parti démocratique civique (janvier 1990 - avril 1991)*, Prague: Documents du travail du CEFRES no. 6, 1996 and 'La démocratie par le marché. Le cas des pays tchèques (1989-1996)', *Politix*, 1999, No.47, pp.63-88. In English see her 'The Failure of Participatory Democracy in the Czech Republic', *West European Politics* 24:3 (2001): 43-64.

expressed from mid-1990 in the emergence of a 'right-wing' within the movement initially articulated by Bratinka and Kroupa's Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) demanding rapid economic reform, radical decommunisation and resistance to Slovak demands to greater autonomy for Czechoslovakia's two national republics.

However, leadership of the 'right' was rapidly taken over by Federal Finance Minister Václav Klaus, whose unexpected election as Chairman of Civic Forum in October 1990, marked the rise of the 'right' as a majority coalition of dissatisfied, anti-communist grassroots activists, neo-liberal technocrats with a background similar to that of Klaus, and a right-wing dissident intellectuals not attracted by groupings with dissident roots such as ODA or the Christian Democratic Party (KDS) of Václav Benda. Klaus's project to transform the Forum into an ideologically and organisationally well-defined party of the centre-right oriented towards electoral competition and the delivery of a programme social and economic transformation, rather than citizen participation, although not realised as envisaged, led to the movement's break up in February 1991 and the foundation of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) two months later.³⁸ ODS took over the bulk of the Forum's assets and organisation at local and regional level and much of its network of full time officials, as well subsequently (in 1992) as attracting 55% of its voters.³⁹ In successfully drawing (and transforming) both the resources of Civic Forum and its political mission as a vehicle for post-communist transformation, Klaus's ODS thus established itself as the dominant force on the centre-right, seeing off not only small ex-dissident parties such as ODA and KDS, but also rivals threatening to create establish an alternative, Christian Democratic, or populist anti-communist, Czech right, such as the People's Party (KDU-ČSL) or the radical right Republicans (SPR-RSČ).

The creation in ODS of such a broad and diverse coalition, albeit on smaller scale than that of OF itself, and its transformation into a durable political party represented a significant and unusually successful piece of political crafting. To some extent this was facilitated by circumstances traceable to the nature of the outgoing communist regime and mode of transition: the fact that Civic Forum was a unitary organisation, rather than a (more fragile) coalition of more or less developed opposition groups; the 'advantage of backwardness' enabling Klaus and others to learn from the break-up of Solidarity in Poland in mid-1990; the (perceived) pressing nature of economic reform in Czech lands; the presence of a cohesive second counter-elite 'grey zone' of neo-liberal economists unco-opted by the regime; the numerical weakness of the dissident movement and consequently large number of grassroots Civic Forum participants with no ties to it and in search of political identity. Other elements may have simply been fortuitous. However, arguably in analysing the successful foundation and duration of ODS as a major party three 'political' factors require consideration: charismatic leadership, the role of ideology and the role of parties as vehicles for political transformation.

The 'Klaus Phenomenon'

³⁸ Hadjiisky, *La fin du Forum civique* and 'La démocratie par le marché'.

³⁹ P Fiala, M Mareš and P Pšeja 'The development of political parties and the party system' in J Večerník and P Matějů (eds), *Ten Years of Rebuilding Capitalism: the Czech Republic after 1989*, Prague: Academia, pp. 273-4, IVVM data cited p. 279.

Many discussions of the Czech right, and indeed Czech politics generally, tend for to pragmatic reasons, to focus on Václav Klaus, often in juxtaposition to Václav Havel.⁴⁰ However, as Haughton suggests in his work on Slovakia, the role of charismatic individuals in post-communist politics is both dangerously overstressed empirically and worryingly under-theorised.⁴¹ Social and political contexts are often neglected, while the real and undoubted role of charismatic leadership in the formation of new parties is not rigorously analysed.

Despite its democratic and representative mechanisms, which sometimes checked Klaus on internal matters, ODS was from the outset politically dominated by the charismatic and forceful leadership of its founder. In April 1991, Miroslav Macek, an ODS Deputy Chairman commented that ‘...it is a peculiarity of the party [ODS] that today it stands and falls with the personality of Václav Klaus,⁴² ‘the party Chairman is not selected. He simply exists. (...) He is simply there and we all know it’.⁴³ Eleven years later, on the eve of Klaus’s departure as leader, when many in the party had come to view him as an electoral liability, one of his colleagues conceded that Klaus’s moustache and glasses were as much, if not more recognisable, as symbol of ODS, as its official logo.⁴⁴ It has been widely observed that the self-confident, formal, well-dressed, tennis playing Klaus personified (and was projected as personifying) the political optimism and impatience of the Czech centre-right of the early 1990s as well as its belief in professionally administered market-led solutions.

However, perhaps the best clue to understanding the role of charisma in relation to centre-right party formation are Klaus’s own comments after being elected OF Chairman in October 1990, that he wished to be ‘the symbol of a programme not yet written’.⁴⁵ Charismatic leaderships provide a personal and immediate focus for identification by members and voters at a time when political programmes are likely underdeveloped, voters may still face cognitive difficulties choosing between parties and programmes and loyalty to newly formed organisations is inevitably weak. It seems necessary, however, that charismatic leaders should be committed to developing organisation. In many instances, where charismatic leaders were available in CEE as potential founders for pro-reform. (neo-)liberal parties, they were hostile to establishing well institutionalised party structures, often preferring to create looser support structures or rely on institutions, such as the Presidency, as party substitutes.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ See, for example, K. Williams, ‘National Myths in the New Czech Liberalism’ in G. Hosking and G. Schopflin (eds), *Myths and Nationhood* London: Hurst, 1997, pp. 132-40 or P. Bugge, *Czech Perceptions of the Perspective of EU Membership Havel vs. Klaus*, Florence: European University Institute Working Paper RSC no. 2000/10 2000 and S. Saxonberg, ‘Václav Klaus: the Rise and Fall and Re-emergence of a Charismatic Leader’ *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1999, pp. 391-418. Saxonberg appears to attribute the political success of ODS almost exclusively to Klaus’s charisma and political acumen.

⁴¹ T Haughton, ‘Facilitator and impeder: the institutional framework of Slovak politics during the premiership of Vladimír Mečiar’, *Slavonic and East European review*, 2002, vol.81, no.2, pp.267-290

⁴² D Šrámek, ‘Chceme vrátit lidem naději’, *Fórum*, 17/1991, p. 2.

⁴³ ‘One man party?’, *Lidové noviny*, 22 April 1991.

⁴⁴ Petr Nečas, then an ODS Vice Chairman, currently First Vice Chairman of the party. ‘Tvář s brýlemi je vedle ptáka cenným logem’, *Právo*, 22 June 2002.

⁴⁵ ‘Václav Klaus: Jakou roli bude hrát?’, *Infórum*, 44/90, 17 October 1990, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Václav Havel, Lech Walesa and Boris Yeltsin are examples. See Fish, *Democracy from Scratch* and Grabowski, ‘The Party That Never Was’.

Centre-Right Politicians as Ideological Entrepreneurs

As I have argued previously,⁴⁷ in new democracies succeeding communist regimes that suppressed the public sphere and monopolised political discourse, the re-establishment of new ideological discourse of left and right is important because securing long-term *consent* by a range of social groups is a newly important aspect of holding power. Secondly, a functioning democracy requires not only the creation of new institutions but also of new understandings of politics and new political identities to provide a meaningful framework for political action. The weaknesses of civil society and well understood interests gives ideological constructions a particularly important role in orienting such action in the early post-transition period.

Politicians in early post-communist politics can be seen not only as political entrepreneurs, but also as ideological entrepreneurs. In the Czech context, right-wing political entrepreneurs such as Klaus succeeded in framing both a new discourse of political organisation and of post-communist transformation, which grounded imported New Anglo-American Right ideas in a Czech post-communist context.⁴⁸ Both served to reinforce the support, cohesion and power of ODS and the right delegitimise opponents on the centre-left. The ideological discourse developed by ODS can be viewed as an innovative synthesis of Hayekian neo-liberalism and aspects of Czech nationalism.

It argued that the free market, political parties, ideologies of left and right and Western international institutions were 'tried and tested' and 'standard' forms of organisation, which could and should be radically and quickly re-established in the Czech lands. Opponents on the centre-left, who wanted a greater role for social movements and civil society in the political system or for a greater role the state in economic reform, environmental protection or cultural policy were, it was argued, consciously or unconsciously, seeking 'Third Ways' between Soviet-style communism and the West European mainstream, echoed the failed reform communist programme of the 1960s. This new right-wing Czech discourse, while arguing that it was ideologically conservative, was, moreover, self-consciously radical, even 'revolutionary', in both its desire to break with the (communist) past and its disdain most traditional pre-communist Czech thinkers and parties as provincial and/or collectivist in outlook.⁴⁹ Such neo-liberal conservatism stressed its links with the past, by suggesting in a non-specific way that affinity with the free market was rooted in the Czech national character and tradition.

However, after 1997 ODS's ideological discourse strongly incorporated the notion of 'national interests' as well as traditional Czech nationalist paradigms. This is most clearly illustrated by the party's growing tendency in the late 1990s to view European integration in terms of a clash of German and non-German interests.⁵⁰ A veiled anti-

⁴⁷ S Hanley 'The New Right in the New Europe? Unravelling The Ideology of "Czech Thatcherism"', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1999, pp. 163-89

⁴⁸ On organisational ideology see also Hadjiisky, *La fin du Forum civique*.

⁴⁹ As Kieran Williams notes, Klaus did make some sporadic attempts to incorporate traditional Czech national symbols and myths into its ideology. K. Williams, 'National Myths in the New Czech Liberalism,' in G. Hosking and G. Schopflin eds., *Myths and Nationhood* London: Hurst, 1997, pp. 132-40

⁵⁰ Its April 2001 *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism*, for example, attempts to align ODS's preferred (neo-liberal) model of European integration with the Czech nation tradition, claiming that liberal-

German undercurrent can be detected in many ODS statements on European integration during the 1990s. Indeed, to a considerable extent, the party's identity as an 'Anglo-Saxon' neo-liberal conservative party, rather than a Christian Democratic party on the model of the German CDU or the Austrian OVP, was an assertion of Czech national identity and independence against the dominance of Austro-German influences in Central Europe.⁵¹ As I have suggested elsewhere, such ideological shifts within ODS were directly related to the waning of the big political issues of post-communist transformation and the party's loss of credibility as vehicle for successful transformation.

The Right as Vehicle for Modernisation and Technocratic Efficiency

A stress on ODS as the party of political professionalism and business-like efficiency, originated as a reaction against the ethos of non-bureaucratic, non-professional, informal civic participation prevalent in Civic Forum. Such thinking came to permeate both the party's internal ethos and external rhetoric. Petr Havlík, the first Chief Secretary of the ODS's Head Office put it the party would 'remove all irrationalities and revolutionary habits and gradually establish a good system of a professional standard. (...) We are building an enterprise (*podnik*) on a green-field site and our shareholders are our members.'⁵² This extended to a broader conception of the party as being primarily a means-to-an-end, an efficient co-ordination device linking people – and above all, political elites and rank-and-file activists and voters - who shared common goals and interests.⁵³ The end was the social and economic transformation of Czech society, which as the 1992 ODS programme noted was 'beyond individuals, ... it requires the institutionally based co-operation of people with common interests and a similar way of thinking, people who believe in the same values. the bases of such co-operation are political parties.'⁵⁴

There is a sizeable literature on economic and social transformation in the Czech Republic in 1990s.⁵⁵ Much of it highlights the limitations, contradictions and

nationalist thinkers of the 19th century such as Havlíček, Palacký and Masaryk were 'strikingly close to Anglo-Saxon liberal-conservative thought'. This claim implicitly associates what Czech historiography had traditionally seen as its antithesis - authoritarian, centralising German designs for hegemony in Central Europe.

⁵¹ See, for example, ODS's internal analysis of its prospects after the June 2002 elections, M. Beneš, 'Volby PS PČR 2002 - analýza volební kampaně ODS

materiál pro Výkonnou radu ODS, www.ods.cz

⁵² 'Vážení přátelé', *Bulletin ODS*, no. 11, 15 May 1991. Klaus used very similar language in speech to first regular ODS Congress, Plzeň, 22-23 November 1991, where he described ODS organisation as a 'rational system' based on rules and mechanisms. *Sobotní telegraf*, no. 27, 4-10 December 1991, p. 1.

⁵³ See article 2 of the ODS Statutes on the function and role of the party. *Stanovy ODS*, Prague: ODS, 1991. The same article appears in all subsequent ODS Statutes.

⁵⁴ *Svoboda a prosperita*, Prague: ODS, 1992, p.2.

⁵⁵ For example, P Rutland, 'Thatcherism, Czech-style: Transition to Capitalism in the Czech Republic' *Telos*, no. 94 (1992-93), pp. 104-129; Stephen Holmes, 'The Politics of Economics in the Czech Republic', *East European Constitutional Review* 4 (1995), pp. 52-5; M Dangerfield, 'Ideology and Czech Transformation: Neoliberal Rhetoric or Neoliberal Reality', *East European Politics and Societies*, 11, 1997, pp. 436-467; Mlčoch L, *Zastřená vize transformace*, Prague: Vyšehrad, 1997; D Stark and L Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1998; H Appel and J Gould, 'Identity politics and economic reform: examining industry-state relations in the Czech and Slovak Republics', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2000, vol.52, no.1, pp.111-132; H Appel, 'The ideological determinants of liberal economic reform:

unintended consequences of the coupon-based privatisation programme of the 1992-7 Klaus governments and, in particular, its failure to create effective ownership structures. Others have noted its neglect of both legal and regulatory frameworks and failure to reform and decentralise public administration. Others have contrasted ODS's strident neo-liberal rhetoric with the reality of strong state influence in the economy, an extensive welfare state, and the continued regulation of rents and utility prices. Explanations for the such an uneven policy performance have included a dogmatic belief in market forces, the simple pragmatism and electoral self-interest of the party of Klaus and his party; or, alternatively, their submerged nationalism and commitment to Czech state; the constraining legacies of a social liberal compromise forged under the 1990-2 Civic Forum-led government; the need to accommodate managerial lobbies and networks; and the blocking of policy learning processes as a consequence of stable, majority government.

Leaving aside, however, the debate over the dynamics of and constraints on the Klaus governments' policies, it is clear that the political fortunes of ODS were closely linked with its (perceived) ability to act as a vehicle for successful post-communist transformation (and an initial lack of credible alternatives on the Czech centre-left). Post-communist transformation can be viewed as part of broader process of modernisation, overcoming the limitations of the stalled 'mis-modernisation' of the communist period. The comparative literature on CEE political parties has typically viewed reformed communist successor parties in states such as Hungary and Poland as agents of technocratic modernisation, whose renewed political appeal was partly based on political professionalism and technocratic efficiency. In the Czech case, however, it seems that it was Right that (re-)invented itself by embracing socio-economic modernisation and transformation, rather than seeking uncomfortably to reconcile them with an interpretation of regime change as return to traditional moral and national values, as conservative-national or national-populist centre-right did in Hungary and Poland.⁵⁶

Institutions and Institutionalisation

Electoral Systems, Electoral Strategy and Strategies for Party System Redesign

Although some writers stressing regime legacies dispute its importance,⁵⁷ institutional choice – and, in particular, the choice of electoral system – is widely considered a crucial influence on the formation of both parties and party systems in new

the case of privatization', *World Politics*, 2000, vol.52, no.4, pp.520-549; H Appel, 'Corruption and the collapse of the Czech transition miracle', *East European Politics and Societies*, 2001, vol.15, no.3, pp.528-553; M Orenstein, *Out of the Red: Building Capitalism and Democracy in Postcommunist Europe*, Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2001; J Terra, 'Political Parties, Party Systems and Economic Reform: Testing Hypotheses Against Evidence From Postcommunist Countries', *Sociologický časopis*, 2002, Vol.38, No.3, pp.277-296.

⁵⁶ In this sense, the Czech Right can be seen as paralleling its ideological models on the British New Right. Much of the British politics literature of the 1980s on 'Thatcherism' suggests that, despite its conservative social policy agenda, the Conservative Party of Margaret Thatcher should, be regarded primarily as an agent of market-led modernisation. See S Hall and M Jacques (eds), *The Politics of Thatcherism*, London : Lawrence & Wishart; S Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, London: Verso, 1988.

⁵⁷ Kitschelt et al, *Post-Communist Party Systems* pp. 35-6, 157-96, 218-9.

democracies. In the Polish context, for example, it seems arguable that the highly proportional form of PR in use before 1993, may have served to further fragment an already divided centre-right by providing weak incentives for party consolidation. Since the fall of communism, parliamentary elections to the lower house of the Czech parliament have been used proportional representation based on closed party lists, large multi-member electoral districts and a 5% threshold for representation.⁵⁸

There are few strong institutional effects visible in the case of the Czech right. Arguably, while erecting barriers to the continued viability of some tiny ex-dissident groupings, the Czech electoral system did permit the continued parliamentary existence small parties of the centre-right, such as the Christian Democrats, Civic Democratic Alliance (1992-98) and Freedom Union (1998-). It has also made the launch of small radical anti-communist formations a viable proposition, as with the far-right Republicans (SPR-RSČ) who broke into parliament in 1992 and the more, moderate Democratic Union founded in 1994, which polled 3% in 1996, depriving the Civic Democrats of crucial votes. The Czech electoral system may, therefore, have blocked the type of consolidation of a single the centre-right bloc with 40-45% support seen, for example, in Hungary, which uses a mixed, more majoritarian electoral system.

From the early 1990s, Václav Klaus and the Civic Democratic Party embraced the model of a bi-polar two party system, which, they believed, would initially be dominated by the right, but which would allow for the alternation of centre-right and centre-left blocs in governments. Addressing his party's December 1996 conference Klaus took comfort from the fact that, although the election result had been disappointing, the consolidation of the Left around the Social Democratic Party had 'made Czech politics more transparent ... marginal and poorly defined parties have disappeared. The elections have proved ... that there are two basic paths, two basic visions (...) represented, on one hand by ODS and, on the other by the Social Democrats.'⁵⁹ The Social Democrats (ČSSD) also increasingly came to share this view of party competition. However, despite the trend towards a bi-polar system of competing left and right blocs, which contrasted with the historically familiar Czech pattern of broad 'national' coalitions, elections in 1996 and 1998 failed to create stable majority governments of right or left. As noted, this elections resulted in pragmatic co-operation, rather than competition between ODS and ČSSD.

One important aspect of the 'Opposition Agreement' signed by the two parties in July 1998 (and its successor the 'Patent of Toleration') was the introduction of a more majoritarian voting system for parliamentary elections.⁶⁰ Such an electoral system was explicitly intended to increase the representation the two largest parties at the expense of smaller competitors, in effect creating a two-party system.⁶¹ ODS

⁵⁸ The 1992 Constitution of the Czech Republic contains an article specifying that PR is to be used for elections to the lower house of Parliament, and a majoritarian system for elections to the Senate.

⁵⁹ Speech to 7th ODS Congress, Brno, 7 December 1996. Reprinted in V Klaus, *Obhajoba zapomenutých myšlenek*, Prague: Academia, 1997, pp. 110-20. Citation p. 116.

⁶⁰ Article VII of the Agreement specified that constitution amendments and other legislation would be passed within 12 months to 'reinforce the importance of the results of competition between political parties in accordance with the constitutional principles of the Czech Republic'. 'Smlouva ODS a ČSSD o vytvoření stabilního politického prostředí v zemi', *Lidové noviny*, 10 July 1998, p.2. .

⁶¹ 'Zeman je skutečný politik, kterého odmítám podceňovat', *Lidové noviny*, 10 July 1998, pp. 1 and 5. Citation, p.5.

initially preferred a simple majoritarian system on British lines. However, under pressure from the Social Democrats and – after the November 2000 Senate elections - unable to command the constitutional majority needed to overturn the constitutional requirement to use PR for the lower house- the two parties agreed on a less proportional form of PR, whose effect would be similar. However, although passed in both houses of parliament, the Constitutional Court ruled the law unconstitutional on 24 January 2001.⁶² A second electoral law reducing the proportionality of the previous system only slightly (by increasing the number of electoral districts from six to fourteen) was passed in January 2002.

The Rise and Decline of the Czech Right as Problem of Institutionalisation

A newly founded political party can essentially be regarded as an organisational solution to a collective action problem, in which participants (members, voters) exchange resources (financial, material, technical, time) in order to generate political outcomes that would not be achievable individually. A party becomes organisationally stabilised relatively quickly when such resource flows and exchanges are regularised and settle into some kind of equilibrium.⁶³ In the longer term, however, members and voters may begin to identify with the party to such an extent that the party is seen as an *end in itself*, leaving behind the instrumental goals of its founders and initial supporters. Such a process – and the air of permanence and durability it produces – is widely termed institutionalisation.

As noted above, ODS's formation (and its own view of its formation) was as a rational response to the problem of co-ordinating and mobilizing political support for free market reform and other policies. By the mid-1990s ODS had (seemingly) delivered these public goods and had at the same time *stabilised* itself organisationally, acquiring enough votes and resources to sustain itself and maintaining a rough balance between its different internal interests and elite groups and between the leadership and the grassroots. However, despite generating electoral support and a degree of voter identification unusual for a 'new' party in East and Central Europe, the party could not be regarded as institutionalized in the sense described above. ODS's internal party crisis of the mid 1990s, which culminated in the split of 1997-98 represented a breakdown in the institutionalization process. Rather than outgrowing its charismatic founder, the crisis saw the reassertion of Václav Klaus's personal authority and prominence⁶⁴ allowing him to develop his personal policy agendas (on, for example, Europe) without being checked by the rival elites. In choosing to support Klaus almost regardless of the circumstances of the funding scandal or the party's record in office, the majority of ODS members in effect chose to make the party a formation based increasingly on a bond of trust with its

⁶² M Klíma, *Kvalita demokracie v České republice a volební inženýrství*, Prague: Radix/Marshall, 2001, pp. 108-122.

⁶³ See A. Panebianco, *Political parties : organisation and power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); J. A. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); J. Hopkin, *Party Formation and Democratic Transition in Spain*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999)

⁶⁴ A 2002 ODS election poster reinforced this theme in the slogan 'Stop the Socialists! The Nation Backs Klaus'. Some ODS activists are reported to have displayed only the top part of the poster, obscuring the second slogan.

charismatic founder and leader. This view was summed up in exaggerated form in the chant militant Klaus members who gathered outside ODS headquarters during a crucial meeting of its Executive Council that 'Klaus is ODS!'

Strategies of Social Representation – Civil Society and the Middle Class

Social interests, both interest groups and individual voters, can also be seen as party 'participants', whose support is exchanged for the party's political outputs (policies). However, the precise nature and form of this party-society relationship varies both between party systems and individual parties. ODS's founding vision conceived of itself programmatically-oriented, office-seeking party with an electorally mediated relationship to individuals and groups in society, rather than Civic Forum's 'corporatist' desire to substitute for an absent civil society, has defined its approach to social representation since its foundation.

Although aware that ODS was as much a coalition of interests as a community of shared beliefs,⁶⁵ both Klaus personally and ODS paid little attention to defining the party in relation to external or social interests. Like other 'civic' parties - Civic Forum, Civic Movement, the Civic Democratic Alliance, ODS viewed social, denominational or class interests as threatening the general ('civic') interest of society as a whole. Whilst acknowledging and recognising the existence of interest groups such as trade unions, employers' organisations, or the Church in civil society, ODS has implicitly argued that such groups did not or should not have any direct relationship with politics or political parties⁶⁶ leading to repeated clashes with President Havel and the liberal centrist Czech intellectuals over the role of civil society. Suggestions by Czech sociologists, concerned at the rigidity of the Czech Republic's social structure, that public policy should help foster a Czech middle class – a demand articulated politically by the Freedom Union – were dismissed by ODS on similar grounds as a 'Marxist' argument.⁶⁷ Rather than appealing to structural-social interests, ODS thus sought to mobilise broad popular support on the base of a programme of social transformation and (latterly) the defence of 'national interests'. ODS viewed civil society and the 'civic' as meaning above all the free interaction of individual citizens, rather than creating structures of civic association, which it viewed as a veiled form of corporatism.⁶⁸ The party-society relationship was to be seen as individualised and electorally mediated.

⁶⁵ In December 1990 Klaus recognised that the future ODS would not attract support in abstract ideological terms, but would be 'a party, which would bring its members together primarily on the basis of their political interests.' V Klaus, 'Projev na pracovním setkání Občanských fór v Olomouci dne 8.12.90' in *O tvář zítřka*, Prague: Pražská imaginace, 1991, p. 204.

⁶⁶ On this see the 1995 long-term statement of ODS principles *Politický program ODS*, Prague: ODS, 1996, pp. 14-15

⁶⁷ P Matějů, 'The renewal of the middle class and its political circumstances' in J Večerník and P Matějů (eds), *Ten Years of Rebuilding Capitalism: the Czech Republic after 1989*, Prague: Academia, pp. 207-227 and J Večerník 'Střední vrstva v české transformaci', *Sociologický časopis*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1999, pp. 33-52. Večerník helped draft the Freedom Union's first (1998) programme and Matějů served as a deputy in parliament and Deputy leader of the party.

⁶⁸ On this see, *Politický program ODS*, Prague: ODS, 1996, pp. 11 rejecting 'a corporatist or syndicalist state' of 'corporations and institutions which are under the control of particular groups of citizens' and Klaus's numerous writings.

As in other post-communist CEE societies, the Czech Republic's post-privatisation economy was dominated by complex patterns of state, institutional, and cross-ownership with no a distinct property-owning capitalist elite or identifiable middle-class, which might provide a clear social constituency for a centre-right party. This left ODS reliant on public funding and other state resources⁶⁹ and a loose social and electoral constituency of 'winners' in transformation, which included powerful rent-seeking groups with a vested interest in partial market reform.⁷⁰ By 1996, only a few months before the funding scandal that saw ODS ejected from office, the party's Executive Vice Chairman (later to stand trial over the scandal) described elite-grassroots relationships in ODS to the party's congress in classically stratarchical terms: ordinary members, if politically active at all, were largely absorbed in local parish pump politics and uninterested in national politics, often using the party's local branches as little more than vehicles for personal or local interests.⁷¹ Internal critics started to address the problem of ODS's relationship with its social base. In the aftermath of the 1996 election, for example, the then Foreign Minister and ODS Deputy leader Josef Zieleniec argued that the party needed to undergo a process of 'broadening out' (*rozkročení*) its base by becoming a more open and pluralistic formation with significant centrist and Christian democratic elements and establishing links with local communities and civil society.⁷² However, with Zieleniec's departure from office in October 1997 and the outflow other critics during the split of 1997-8, ODS's realignment took a different course of pragmatic co-operation with the left, strident campaigning centred on Klaus and an ideological shift towards defending 'national interests'.

The Future of the Czech Right

The poor performance of parties of the liberal and neo-liberal centre-right, including both ODS and the Freedom Union (US) seemed to herald a period of crisis, fragmentation and realignment for this once dominant bloc. The enhanced position of historic parties committed to some form of social market, such as the Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and Communists, seemed to mark a reversion to the corporatist, state-centred Central European traditions characteristic of the Czech lands, leading some ODS leaders to anticipate that their party would be out of office for a prolonged period.⁷³ Although these pessimistic judgements were revised in the light of ODS's strong performance in the November 2002 local elections, it was still widely accepted by ODS leaders that the extraordinary period of transformation politics was drawing to a close, weakening the party.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ C. O'Dwyer, 'Runaway State Building: the Development of Political Parties and States in Contemporary Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic', paper presented at the 7th Annual Northwest Regional Conference for Russia, East European and Central Asian Studies, Evergree State College, Olympia, 14 April, 2001.

⁷⁰ See Hellman, 'Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Post-Communist Transitions', *World Politics*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 203-34.

⁷¹ L. Novák, 'Odcházím s pocitem, že jsem se vždy o slušné řešení alespoň pokusil', *Bulletin ODS*, 18/1996, p 9

⁷² J. Zieleniec, 'ODS by už neměla znít jen jedním hlasem, říká Zieleniec', *Mladá fronta Dnes*, 5 August 1996

⁷³ See, for example, interview with ODS Deputy Chairman Jan Zahradil in *Lidové noviny*, of 18 June 2002, who has predicted that ODS would be out of office for at least two parliamentary terms (8 years).

⁷⁴ See, for example, interview with Klaus, 'Hvězdnou érou mám zs sebou', *Právo*, 23 July.

Activists and commentators on the right have suggested a number of responses to the perceived crisis of the centre-right. Some have advocated a return to radical anti-communism, while others have seen the adoption of a socially conservative agenda reappropriating the them of law and order and legality ‘stolen‘ by the left.⁷⁵ Interestingly, both ODS in its 2002 programme and Václav Klaus personally have explored the theme of restricting (potential) immigration and avoiding the social costs of multi-culturalism, although there seems to have been little wider debate on the issue.⁷⁶ Some within ODS have expressed concern that the party may lose any well defined ideological character and may simply become a coalition of local politicians and business interests. Recent Czech media reports have suggested that Miroslav Topolánek is essentially seeking to balance out all major organisational and regional interests in the party, rather than undertaking major new ideological initiatives and that new ODS policy – such as the recent proposal for a single flat rate social benefit for all economically inactive citizens – is currently being driven by individual ODS Shadow Ministers.⁷⁷ There has also been discussion of ODS’s relationship with both the electorate and other parties. Many have suggested that the Opposition Agreement of 1998-2002 was at best an unfortunate episode and at best a strategic error and that the party should return to a clear policy of opposition.⁷⁸ There has also been limited debate about ODS’s social support. Petr Nečas, an ODS Deputy Chairman and leading voice on ODS’s (neo-) conservative wing, in particular, has suggested that the party needs to transform itself into a broad ‘People’s Party’ by adopting a clearer social agenda to avoid the impression that it was a party representing mainly the powerful, rich and successful.⁷⁹

Conclusions

The Civic Democratic Party (ODS) is the most significant centre-right formation in modern Czech political history. However, despite recent attempts to ground itself more solidly in traditional nationalist paradigms, the party has little intellectual or political continuity with the fragmented historic Czech right of the pre-1938 party system. Rather, its origins can be traced to the reactions of specific Czech counter-elites to the collapse of the reform communism in 1968 and the 1969-89 ‘normalisation’ period and subsequently – in combination with other groups– to the challenges of post-communist transformation. However, political strategy and contingent choices in the period 1990-2 seem to have played an important role in its successful formation.

The origins of ODS as an engine of post-communist transformation seem to have left it peculiarly vulnerable to ideological exhaustion and crises of party identity as a period of more ‘normal’ party competition replaced one dominated by the fundamental choices of transformation, which served previously as a basis for

⁷⁵ See, for example, report on the Where is the Right Heading? Conference held in Brno in September 2002.

⁷⁶ See *Volební desatero ODS 2002*,

www.ods2002.cz/ods2002/asp/textv.asp?CatID=8gSovakP&catP=5&textID=3 and V. Klaus ‘Co s přistěhovalectví?’ *Lidové noviny*, 18 February, 2003

⁷⁷ L Bek, ‘Topolánek nezvládl sjednotit ODS’, *Právo*, 5 September 2003, p. 1

⁷⁸ For example M Gregr ‘Dost bylo statovorne ODS!’, *Právo* 19 June 2002.

⁷⁹ P Nečas, ‘Kde je a kam směřuje ODS’, *Týden*, 4 December 2000 and ‘Základní teze k budoucímu směřování ODS’, 2 December 2002, www.ods.cz

mobilisation. Although we should approach the stereotype of a Czech 'social democratic tradition' with caution, research suggests that the social constituency for a strongly free market centre-right bloc is sizeable, but possibly limited in its ability to sustain a strong centre-right bloc in the longer term. Moreover, as criticism following Miroslav Topolánek's recent statement that ODS would call a vote of confidence in parliament to bring down the divided governing coalition suggests, the model of bipolar left-right competition and alternating majorities of left and right promoted by ODS in 1990s seems difficult to realise in Czech conditions. ODS's difficulties in winning allies on the liberal centre and right and its resultant pragmatic co-operation with the Social Democrats and more limited, but very public, co-operation with the Communists suggests that the historic Czech pattern of left-right collaboration over 'national' issues may be reasserting itself.