

Dk -Dialog

Vol. XV, No. 1 (English version)
Prague, April 2008

This *Bulletin* is for the internal purposes of the *Democratic Club*.

The *Democratic Club (Dk)* is a non-partisan political organization whose aim is to support democracy and democratism in society and to oppose all anti-democratic attempts to subvert established order. The *Dk* publishes the Czech version of *Dk-Dialog* (several times a year). The English version is designed to inform readers about activities of the *Dk*, especially about its official views. The English version is published irregularly, usually 1 or 2 times a year. Only one issue was published in 2007. The main aim of the English issue is to provide information for *Club's* members who do not speak Czech about the *Club* activities and especially about its official views. The translations from the Czech issues are sometimes published, but we prefer the original contributions.

INVITATION

The *Democratic Club* organizes a conference at the occasion of its 60th anniversary on the main theme
Freedom and Responsibility
(History, present and future of the *Club*; responsibility as the precondition of freedom, democracy and democratism)

The one day conference will take place on **September 26, 2008** in Prague 1, Jungmannova street 17 (building of CEVRO); the working languages are Czech and Slovak, English is allowed, but no translation is expected; PowerPoint projection will be available. There is no registration fee; expenses will be covered by voluntary gifts (to be sent to the account of *Dk*, variable symbol 99). If the expected cash amount would be collected, proceedings of the conference will be published consequently. Coffee during the pauses and light refreshments at noon will be available.

Completed applications should reach the secretariat of the *Democratic Club* (by post or by e-mail) before **September 5, 2008** (the form of application is attached to this issue of *Dk-Dialog* - in Czech only - or is available on the Web sites of

the *Club*; there are name, surname and the title of expected contribution – if any).

I - *Democratic Club (Dk)* in questions and answers

A new section was introduced in *Dk-Dialog*. You can send questions on which you would like to receive answers.

(1) Why an organization of the *Dk* type?

People usually know only political parties which have concrete political aims. These parties usually take part in political cooperation or even in fights with other parties, the result being always a compromise, which means only a partial attaining of the aim. That is practical democratic polity. Yet *Dk* is a political organization which doesn't seek a share in public power; rather it tries to see that as much as possible the democratic elements get installed in practical politics. The resulting satisfying condition of practical policy is called *favourable level of democratism*.

In a democratic state the level of democratic structure (level of democratism) may fall down to the point of endangering the democracy itself. Maintaining and enhancing the measure of democracy requires guarantees. Bearers of these (beside democratic-minded individuals) are, in particular, organisations which support the growth of democratism. This role should belong mainly to democratic political parties. Nevertheless these concentrate on special interests (economic, social, cultural, ecological etc.) while political democracy they usually understand as means and space for strengthening and broadening their part in political and public power. Further there are (beside democratic political parties, local authorities, unionists and church organizations) various civil organizations or clubs, which are partially apolitical (e.g., clubs of gardeners, chess players, etc.), which can hardly be considered as guarantees, and partially political, that is such that want to influence the direction and use of political power. Most of them have similar interests (economic, social, cultural, ecological, and only a fraction of them turns their attention to the level of procedural (political) democracy. Yet this group is of extraordinary significance and cannot be substituted. To this group belongs *Dk* and here you can find the answer to the question about the meaning of organizations like *Dk*

It is obvious that *Dk* doesn't aspire to a monopoly position. Yet the situation is such, that organizations aiming for quality of political democracy generally pay attention only to partial, though important, questions (e.g., protection of human rights, direct or representative democracy). It is typical of *Dk* that the object of its attention and activity is the complete problematic of procedural (political) democracy of the given social system.

II - Official Views of the *Democratic Club*

(37) On the Appeal for civil disobedience in connection with the introduction of co-payments for health care

In connection with the current reforms of health care, which include required co-payments for medical care to doctors, hospitals as well as in pharmacies, a group of celebrities including several members of the Czech Parliament called on citizens to disobey the law. The law was also challenged at the Constitutional Courts.

The *Democratic Club*, while not considering the merits of the co-payments, believes that any defiance of valid laws and public appeal for such defiance is an attack on democracy. We believe that a precondition of the democratic system is compliance with laws by all citizens including those who do not like one or the other law. Unacceptable also is the reference by the authors of the appeal to the case currently awaiting a decision by the Constitutional Court. As long the Court has not ruled on the constitutionality of the law, the law is valid and every citizen is required to obey it. We consider it especially deplorable that the authors of the appeal were joined by members of the Parliament, who should be an example in respecting for the laws of the land.

Prague, February 15, 2008

(38) On the Disturbances in Tibet

The *Democratic Club* has been alarmed by the events in Tibet in March this year. According to available sources a peaceful protest by the Tibetan monks accompanied by the spontaneous demonstration by the general public was brutally suppressed by the Chinese army and police.

We reject the claim by the Chinese officials that the disturbances were instigated by the “Dalai Lama’s conspiratorial ring” and other foreign forces. We understand the disturbances to have been is an expression of despair caused by continuous suppression of national and religious identity of the Tibetan nation lasting half a century. Such suppression is in conflict with even minimal understanding of human rights and freedoms.

We call on our government as well as governments of other democratic countries and international organizations to use all available means to pressure Chinese government to 1.) Allow an international investigation of those disturbances that resulted in loss of life, 2.) Release all those who used peaceful protest which is an internationally guaranteed human right to express demands, and 3.) Start a meaningful dialog with the Tibetan people and their freely elected representatives.

Prague, April 15, 2008

III Original contributions

A Note on Democracy and Democratic Political Thought

Ivo K. Feierabend

I wish to start with the insights of J.S. Mill in his *On Liberty* and to adapt his notion of individuality: The individual human being is the most complex, wondrous and precious creation of this universe. Therefore, democratic thought must focus on him, her and them. His and her dignity should be the fulcrum of democracy. And so individualism, in the elevated sense, is the **first trait** of democratic thought, the crown jewel of democracy. President Masaryk would have agreed. He told Karel Čapek: “the most profound argument for democracy is the belief in the value and spirituality of the human being”.

Obviously then, democracies cannot allow for tyrannical government to oppress the individual in any way. Hence, the **second trait** is limited government. Governmental power can be tamed by the constitution and the laws. Such is the case in the *constitutional democracy*. Hobbes and Locke were the first among the moderns to dismiss the divine right of kings to govern and postulated the “social contract“, the original constitution, if you will, that the people contracted themselves. The second important limitation on the exercise of power stems from the civil society. There power is diffused among the myriad of autonomous groups, so none can have it all, since “absolute power corrupts absolutely”, as Lord Acton said, and total power in addition mass murders (Rummel, 1994). Democracy amidst pluralistic society is the *pluralist democracy*. Power in *laissez-faire* competition creating countervailing powers in the civil society, is the safeguard of the freedom of the individual, minority rights and the right of the political opposition to challenge the government of the day. In the muddle of the pluralistic society civil rights and liberties, all of them, and that of the opposition to gain the reigns of government, should prevail.

Hence liberty is the **third trait** of democratic thought, heralded in 1776 by three justly famous liberal documents: *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine and the American Declaration of Independence.

Since the individual, he, she and they are so important and free who else should govern than he, she and they? The term democracy means the rule by the people. **Popular sovereignty** then is the most salient trait and constitutes the *populist democracy*. Democratic institutions rest upon free, universal elections, elective parliaments, the executive and the judiciary. Rousseau understood well the notion of popular sovereignty and his “*volonté générale*“, the will of the people, was formulated as the sole basis of legitimate government.

Since all the individuals are to participate in governing, they must be deemed to be equal in some sense. Hence equality is the **fifth trait of democracy**. Dahl (1971) in one of his essays suggested that democracy can be defined as a system where each individual has equal eligibility to vote and to hold office. But of course, all the other traits must intervene, and much more, to make it so. Indeed, social democrats and liberals interested in the welfare state, postulate more than just political equality as the necessary condition of democracy. Democracy in a society of haves and have-nots is hard to sustain and as Aristotle observed will lead to unjust, perverse polity. Hence equality of opportunity if not of results also in the economic, social and cultural sphere is the basis of *social democracy*.

And finally, let me point to a largely neglected **trait of democracy**, *pax democratica* internally applied. Kant formulated “the democratic peace” originally to fit international relations and recently it was hailed as the first discovered law in political science (Russett, 1993), namely, “democracies never make war on each other“. However, the peace applies to national politics, as well. In this view robust democracies are the systems that abhor violence and institutionalize peaceful conflict resolution. They count ballots, not bullets. Democracies use the least coercive force of all systems (Feierabend & Feierabend, 1966) they are not killers (even in wars they kill less), dictators are the killers and totalitarians are the megakillers (Conquest, 1999) to say nothing about the destruction of other values. Curiously, the empirical evidence for this stunning internal and international *pax democratica* is much better than the theories that try to explain it. This is a failure of democratic thought.

However, there is another and a more general, omnibus failure. The six traits of democracy are not strictly compatible, they contradict each other. If one is pursued to its extreme some other trait or traits will be violated, disappear and democracy may fail. And thus, if we say with Rousseau “all the power to the

people”, this imperative will collide with limited government and indeed with liberty. It may result in the “tyranny of the majority” that Madison feared in the *Federalist Papers*. On the other hand, if the liberal principle is exaggerated, will not the lucky, the bright and the ruthless accumulate so much wealth and power as to outdistance and oppress the less fortunate and violate the egalitarian precept of democracy? But if equality is strictly enforced by public authority “life, liberty and property” (Locke) or “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Jefferson) of the individual citizen may be curtailed.

And furthermore, if the illiberal character of the unwashed masses leaves democratically much to be desired, in the opinion of the truly evolved democratic individuals and elites -- so some undesirable illiberal democracy of Zakaria (2003) is to be avoided -- such wise leaders (better Masaryk than Pinochet) should take the reign in their own hands and wait for the people to mature as we wait for the children to grow up and mature. This kind is the tutelary *democracy* which violates the trait of popular sovereignty and with it the *populist democracy*. And besides beware who is to guard the guardians? If the constitution is overly favoured in a *constitutional democracy*, and indeed, the U.S. Constitution is a venerable, even a sacred object and in the hands of lawyers in general and in particular in the hands of eight men and one woman appointed for life to the Supreme Court. This makes popular sovereignty in America and often other democratic traits occasionally rather weak. Do we want the nine justices to stop the electoral recount and thus in fact appoint the U.S. president, as was the case in 2000?

If special or mean interests lobby and finance elections, their selfish interest may prevail over the more general interests and the general will of the people may be violated. In this sense President Eisenhower warned the American nation in his farewell address, before the oligarchic power of the “military industrial complex“. And think about Chamberlain in Munich in 1938 vs. George W. Bush in Iraq. Is the failure of a **martial, imperialist democracy** better than a **pacifist one**? And why did the Czechoslovak democratic leadership during the Third Republic stick to parliamentary peaceful conflict resolution and consequently in February 1948, succumbed to the *putsch* of the rogue, totalitarian Communist Party, which enslaved the Czechoslovaks for two generations?

Democratic political thought is very unsatisfactory when one seeks a coherent ideology, to say nothing about an infallible one. Democratic political thought is a pattern of disparate traits contradicting each other in a search for equilibrium in concrete democratic, political systems. Perhaps this is a virtue no matter how inconvenient. Ideological states played havoc with the 20th century and democratic states in the end saved the century and perhaps mankind. This

does not mean that democracy is an easy sell. In addition to the muddled democratic thought, politics is too complex especially in democracies to have a popular appeal and besides all politics is about conflict which is not attractive. Political alienation is more likely than democratic enthusiasm.

Bismarck said that ordinary people should not know what goes into salami and politics. It would discourage them. And Churchill defined democracy as the worst of all governments ...then he paused and added ... with the exception of the rest. What is it that makes democracy possible and even attractive? The high culture of political thought is of course appealing to the cognoscenti. But what about the rest of us, who prefer folk and pop culture? Political socialization under felicitous conditions would be the best prescription, but that may be hard to attain. Masaryk thought that it would take two generations (50 years) to firmly internalize democracy in the nation. In this regard let me suggest a triad of cultural psychological recourse that may be of help and gather the necessary energy to sustain democracy: *civic culture*, *civility* and *civic nationalism*.

Civic culture (Almond & Verba, 1963) is the internalized pattern of attitudes “the habits of the heart“ of de Tocqueville, on the part of the people and their leaders, that corresponds to the six outlined traits of democracy. It is the love of freedom, respect for equality and for the dignity of the individual human being. It is the political virtue of the good citizen, informed, respecting the laws of the democratic polity and participating in political life. *Civility* comprises the ordinary virtues of citizenship. Among its attributes are honesty, rectitude, tolerance, fairness, empathy and sense of community and work ethics.

Civic nationalism, in addition to its nationalist passion is imbued with the just mentioned civic culture and civility so that the citizen, the democrat and the patriot, become the same person. Civic nationalism is the guardian angel of democracy. I believe that Masaryk with his advocacy of the Czechoslovak nation (not just the Czechoslovak state) was partial to civic nationalism. His dedication to civic culture, and above all civility, is beyond question. He used to say and admonish: “nebát se a nekrást” (don’t be afraid and don’t steal) and “proč se neřekne pravda?” (why not tell the truth?).

Mirošov, July 2007

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III Abridged texts of selected contributions

Democracy in the Czech Republic compared to other states in the world

Author: Zdeněk Pavlík (*Dk-Dialog* 7-8 / 2007)

In the daily press we can read that the Czech Republic belongs to countries with a relatively good level of democracy. The daily *Metro* says that the level of democracy in CR is better than that in England or France (6.9. 2007). In *Lidové Noviny* of the same day they say that according to a British study there is more democracy in the CR than there is in Poland. This information is based on a study by the *Economist Intelligence Unit* (EIU) which has calculated the so-called index of democracy. Efforts to measure democracy are not new, only the methodology is new. Best known is the method introduced by an American organisation, the *House of Freedom* in the second half of the last century. It is based on the average of indexes which have values from 1 to 7 and are formed by two groups: political freedom (10 index numbers) and civic freedoms (15 index numbers). This index has been available since the seventies of the last century and has often served to analyze relations between democracy and different economic and social variables. It has been also used for a small number of countries for insight into the history of democracy in 19th century.

Apart from that the *House of Freedom* uses a limited index which is being labelled as electoral democracy. Here democracy is based on common basic characteristics which can be expressed in the following way: the position of the political power is fulfilled by means of regular, free and just elections among the competing political parties. At the same time it is ensured that the government can be called off by elections. For this purpose there have to exist several independent political parties (1), universal suffrage (2), regular elections based on secret ballot, reasonable safety of the voting act and the absence of massive cheating (3) and for large political parties the opportunity to approach their

voters by means of the media in an open election campaign (4). In 2005 the *House of Freedom* evaluated 122 countries, out of which 89 were classified as free.

There exist a number of other concepts of measuring democracy which have narrower or broader definition. The narrower one is in keeping with Robert Dahl's concept. Instead of democracy (which he considers as ideal) he speaks about existing polyarchy which the existing world democracies are only just approaching. According to Dahl polyarchy has to fulfil 8 conditions: Almost all adult citizens have the suffrage (1), almost all adult citizens have the right to be elected (2), political leaders have the right to strive for votes (3), the elections are free and just (4), all citizens get the opportunity to create political parties or organizations or to enter them (5), all citizens are free to express their political opinions (6), various information about political questions exists, the approach to them is guaranteed by law (7), governmental policy ought to express the voters' will (8).

Democracy index of the organization EIU calculates that measuring political and civil freedom is not broad enough and doesn't include a number of aspects which are characteristic and important from the point of view of fulfilling the democratic ideals. It is based on 60 indicators which are divided into five groups. In the first group are the indicators concerning the election system (12), in the second one are the civic freedoms (14), in the third functioning of the government (9), in the fourth is political culture (8), and in the fifth is the participation of the citizens in political life of the country (17). The indicators are expressed by questions to which there must be an unambiguous answer. That means Yes (1) or No (0). In most cases there is admitted an answer which avoids these strict answers and is evaluated as 0,5. The resulting index for the whole group and then for five groups together (a complete result) is the unweighted average for individual indicators. It actually is a dichotomic system (i.e., a system with double option), in most cases mollified by a third possibility. Generally it is a problem of quantification in the process of learning objective reality, and thus we get to the complex and fundamentally philosophical problematic in the relation of quantity and quality. If knowledge is one of the basic qualities of man which originates from human curiosity and is enabled by mental abilities of people, then the methods of this learning are formed gradually. Man first perceived the neighbouring reality as a whole, later isolated individual objects, was able to represent them and formed abstract terms for them. Man first recognized different qualities in reality and only by higher abstraction he specified quantity which was hidden in the original quality. Qualitative specification of individual phenomena is catchable in their relative stability and dissimilarity from other phenomena. The differences of qualities create infinite diversity of the world; no thing can loose its quality without

loosing the identity in itself. Quantitative specification of phenomena (size, number) makes them on the other hand comparable, as it expresses their appearance. Quantity, contrary to quality, expresses the outer character of phenomena and processes and is therefore separable from them.

In individual spheres of human cognition quantification has a different position. It is comparatively hard to be applied in social disciplines. By quantification we usually mean assigning numbers to given phenomena or processes. But quantitative and numerically expressed isn't the same thing. From qualitative cognition we only gradually proceed to quantitative cognition. The more complex (complicated) is the reality, the more difficult is the transition. Democracy is undoubtedly a definite quality which differs from other forms of government or political arrangement of the life of the society. It is a complex concept where it is rather difficult to imagine its quantitative level without performing operationalization of this concept, i.e., forming indicators which express definite items and can be quantified, the complex being called democratism. It starts from the idea that individual items are of different significance for democracy. This is true especially from the fact that some can exist before the existence of democracy itself, or outlive it (e.g., after a political putsch) and consequent establishment of a totalitarian or authoritarian regime.

Index of democracy can thus be called an *index of democratism* (or an index of the level of democratization). This way we could remove the illogicality of the mentioned index of democracy which measures the level of democracy even in countries like the Democratic Republic of Korea. The authors must be given the credit for the fact that out of 162 countries included (27 ministates were left out) only 28 were classified as full democracies according to the values of the calculated complex index, 54 as defective democracies, 30 as hybrid regimes and 55 as countries with authoritative regimes. The Czech Republic was placed as 18th in the first group of countries. This problematic is not only interesting, but also very important and naturally sufficiently complicated. I will deal with it later, in one of the next copies of *Dk-Dialog*.

IV Organizational information for Dk members

Changes in figuring out the membership fees

The present subscription fees do not suffice to cover the Club's activity, and consequently last year ended with a deficit of CZK 5 170. The Executive Committee has decided to adjust the fees since this year according to the

economic situation of the members which differs greatly. We have fixed three minimal fee amounts according to the gross personal income in the previous year including grants or pensions. The fees will be paid once a year – in spring according to the following scale:

Complete gross yearly income of 0 – 120 000 CZK	CZK	200
Complete gross yearly income over 120 000 CZK	CZK	500
Complete gross yearly income over 360 000 CZK	CZK	1 000

These rates have to be considered as minimal for a member to ensure the economic existence of Dk. It remains for the members to decide which way of payment to chose. A bank transfer is considered as the best. Beginning in January 2009, postal money orders will be sent once a year, usually in spring. Regarding the high rates in connection with money transfer, it is possible, though with some small risk, to enclose the money in a letter or to deliver it personally or by means of another member. In this case the receipt will be sent with the next *Dk Dialog* delivery.

Information on paying membership fees.

Bank account. For interstate payments: account of the payee 1923868339/0800

For payments from abroad:

IBAN CZ 76 0800 0000 00192386 8339 SWIFT GIBACZPX

Make sure to give as the variable symbol (VS) your **member number** (on your member's card and in right top corner of your mailing label).

Two scales of membership fees for members abroad are settled:

Members of the countries whose gross home income per inhabitant in the given country doesn't exceed 15 000 US\$ will pay:

When an income that will make one half of the total average yearly gross income in the given country	5 US\$
Within the total average yearly gross income in the given country	10 US\$
Markedly higher, e.g. 1 ½ than the average yearly gross income in the given country	20 US\$

Members from the countries whose gross home income per inhabitant exceeds in the given country 15 000 US\$, will pay in case of an income which will be:

One half of a total average yearly gross income in the given country	15 US\$
Within the total average yearly gross income in the given country	30 US\$
Markedly higher, e.g., 1 ½ than the average yearly gross income in the given country	60 US\$

The Executive Committee thanks to all members who fulfil regularly their membership obligation and so make possible the normal activities of the *Democratic Club*.

Демократиялық Клуб (ДК)

- Бұл* демократия мен демократизмді қолдау мақсатында құрылған заңды, партиялық емес ұйым (1948 жылы негізі қаланған, 1990 жылы заңдастырылған). ұйым демократиялық қоғамда саяси партиялар мен қозғалыстардың, болу қажеттілігін *түсінеді*;
- ұйым* саяси партиялардан тәуелсіз, демократиялық қоғамды қалыптастыруға септігін тигізу үшін заңды саяси ұйымдардың, болу қажеттілігін *мойындайды*;
- ұйым* мемлекет пен қоғам құрылымында, сондай-ақ саяси партиялардың іс әрекетінде демократиялық принциптердің, қалай іске асатынын *бақылайды*;
- ұйым* демократияға жат іс әрекеттердің кез келген көріністеріне *қарсы тұрады*;
- ұйым* демократиялық принциптер тұрғысында, ағымдағы саяси мәселелерге қатысты өз пікірін білдіреді және осы мәселеге қатысты, өз парақшаларын *таратады*
- ұйым* заманауи саяси мәселелерді талқылау үшін кездесулер мен лекциялар *ұйымдастырады*
- ұйым* өз мүшелеріне «ДК-Диалогты» (журналын) *шығарады*
- ұйым* өздерін белгілі бір саяси бағдарламамен байланыстырмай, мүшелеріне саяси өмірге белсенді қатысуға, мүмкіндік беруді *ұсынады*
- ұйым* өз мүшелеріне қандай да болмасын билік, тағайындаулар немесе ерекше ықылас пен қатынасты, қамтамасыз етуге *кепілдік бермейді*
- ұйым* белгілі бір партиядағы немесе қозғалыстағы мүшелігіне қарамай, демократиялық принциптерді қолдайтын кез келген азаматты, мүше болуға *шақырады*.



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