

Dk -Dialog

Vol. XVII, No. 1 (English version)
Prague, December 2010

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 its official views. The English version is published irregularly, usually once or twice a year. Only one issue was published in 2010. The main aim of the English edition is to provide information about the *Club* activities and especially its official views for *Club's* members who do not read Czech. The translations from the Czech issues have on occasion been published previously, but we prefer original contributions.

Dear colleagues,

You have been informed in the last issue about simplification of payment of membership fees. As for 2010 and 2011 it was fixed at the same amount as in 2009. Minimal member's fee for economically active members is CZK 300 (i.e., 20 USD), for economically non-active (students, retired people, economically non-active women with children, etc.), is only one half of this sum, i.e., CZK 150 (10 USD). Members who would like to receive all issues of *Dk-Dialog* by post (i.e., the Czech version), will pay an additional CZK 100 (i.e., 8 USD). The postal charges are relatively high, especially to foreign countries. We would like to stress that these values are the minimum possible fees, and we urge readers with individual financial means to consider a larger amount.

The payment form is included, which can be used only in Czechia. The IBAN number is at the end of this issue for members who pay by a bank order. We also accept cash included in letters (we will confirm the acceptance by sending the receipt in the nearest mail).

The VIth Generally meeting of the *Democratic Club* took place on 21 November 2009. The new directive bodies of the *Club* were elected. The information about this meeting is included in this issue of *Dk-Dialog*. As in the previous directive bodies, no members from abroad are represented (with one

exception; a Mongolian member currently living in Prague was elected as alternate member of central committee). Members from countries where local *Dk* organizations do not exist have to pay the Member's fees directly to Prague. A new website of the *Democratic Club* has been created: <http://www.demokratickyklub.cz> or <http://www.dklub.org>

I - Official Views of the *Democratic Club*

Position of the *Democratic Club* No. 46

Concerning Prague City Council elections and a new law on elections of representatives in municipalities and districts

Elections for Prague representatives are drawing near. The representatives are being elected according to the law concerning elections for municipal representatives. The present City Council has 70 members elected in one election region. We learned recently that a bill which with the present distribution of political power is almost certain to be approved. The bill would divide Prague into more election regions, very likely seven. That means that in each election region only ten representatives would be voted for. That could mean that parties receiving less than 10 percent of the votes would not be among city representatives of Prague. This in turn might result in a decrease of opinion plurality among Prague representatives.

The present election laws require a five percent limit out of all delivered votes in order that the candidates for parties and movements may be elected as representatives of their respective municipality. By introducing election districts in Prague, the limit would be artificially made higher, thereby disqualifying smaller political parties from taking part in making decisions in the capital's politics.

It is for this reason that the *Democratic Club* recommends that PCR members modify the law so the town or community, as well as the districts in local elections, would always form only one election region. The *Club* also recommends abolishing the five-percent limit in elections to municipal or regional town councils. An alternative to preventing modification of election districts appearing as favourable for present majorities might be introducing a new law to modify the number of constituencies, but on the condition that this would be practicable not sooner than the next following elections.

The *Club* believes there is no reason to divide the regions of Prague, cities and communities into election districts, since inhabitants in cities and communities usually turn either to a concrete person, mayor or representative, or select from among the representatives whom they had elected in these elections.

For smooth functioning of regions, towns and communities it is not necessary that local councils should form a firm majority. On the contrary, larger opinion diversity in regional and town councils would be a positive contribution to manage regional problems, as the respective representatives would better reflect the needs of their constituents. Simultaneously, it would afford an opportunity to gain political experience within a wider range of candidates. Moreover, experience shows that when decisions are made on local level, consensus is reached more easily.

Prague, March 17th 2010.

Position of *Democratic Club* No 47

Concerning the request of the president of the Czech Republic concerning redefinition of the standing of the Constitutional Court

On September 7th, 2010 the president of the Czech Republic delivered a speech in which he, among other things, requested redefinition of the position of the Constitutional Court in our constitutional system because, in his opinion, it usurps greater jurisdiction than it is justified. Having examined the articles of the constitution defining the position of the Court, *Democratic Club* arrived at the conclusion that these articles do not give the Court more jurisdiction than necessary to fulfill its function of explaining the constitution and maintaining a balance between the accepted legal acts and the Constitution. In this way it secures a balance between the three components of the democratic power which is common within developed democracies. At the same time we do not believe that any of the decisions, so far accepted by the CC, may have transgressed the rights which had been entrusted to it by the constitution.

The president's request to respect the authority of "the Parliament as a sovereign power and primary source of any further power within the state – including executive and judicial power", interferes with the principle of the people's sovereignty in a democratic state as well as with the principle of separation and balance of the three components of power, the enforcement of which is generally considered a condition of democracy. We are convinced that to recede from the present level of authority of CC would mean breaking the balance between legislative, executive and judicial power, thus undermining the

liberal character of Czech democracy. For these reasons we call upon the parliamentarians and senators of the Czech parliament not to accept the president's suggestions to redefine the standing of CC.

Prague October 6, 2010

II - *Democratic Club (Dk)* in questions and answers (04)

Why does *Dk* concentrate on questions of procedural [political] democracy?

The previous question and answers (03) was explained what is characteristic for procedural (political) democracy. From the terminological point of view, it ought to be said that if in this or other texts there appear terms *procedural* and *political* possibly in brackets, it only has an instructive meaning; the expression *procedural* is more exact, while the expression *political* is generally more comprehensible (although less precise, because even fulfilling special economic, social, cultural, ecological, etc. interests is political in nature).

The *Democratic Club* doesn't question the meaning of material democracy, which means fulfilling the mentioned special interests of people; for a real existing democracy cannot contain its material quality, as it is unthinkable that sovereign people who are in power should conscientiously govern otherwise than for their own good. Material democracy is therefore the effect of *procedural democracy*; therefore the procedural effect has a determining position in a real existing democracy.

The fact the *Democratic Club* concentrates on the effect and quality of procedural (political) democracy does not imply that it ascribes it a determining position in a real existing democracy. Nevertheless once it is admitted as a part of its activity economic questions (taxes), social (income, pensions, etc.), cultural (theatre, school-leaving examinations, etc.), ecological (different kinds of energy, heating, etc.), it could not keep its present nature. It would resemble the role of different political parties and their conflicting interests. Should *Dk* arrive at some solutions, they would always more or less resemble those promoted by some political party, and in connection with this the *Club* would get diverted into the left or right stream of the political spectrum.

The *Democratic Club* concentrates on questions of procedural (political) democracy, which follows from its mission, and that is to support democratism in human society from its position of a specific civil organization, that is to say it is neither a political party nor one pressing some partial special interests.

Josef Srbený

Information from the VIth General meeting of the *Democratic Club*

The VIth General meeting occurred 21st November 2009 in Prague. After the necessary committees were elected (mandatory, nomination, election and selection), the resigning functionaries reported on past activities of the *Club* since the Vth General meeting in 2006. The *Club's* president Božena Škvařilová spoke in particular about the conference organized to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the *Club*.

The *Democratic Club* was founded on 28 September 1948 and the conference was re-established on 26 September 2008. The main topic of the conference was **Freedom and Responsibility**. Proceedings were published in 2009 (in Czech) and are still available for interested *Dk* members or other persons. The conference was opened by Božena Škvařilová as a then president of the Organizational Committee. The first three contributions were devoted to the history of the *Club* presented by members of the first founding committee in 1948, Jan Srnec (*Gratia et laudatio*), Josef Srbený (*Sixty years of Democratic Club*) and Zdeněk Pavlík (*60 years from the foundation of the Democratic Club*). To the main topics of the conference were devoted contributions of Václav Frei (*Freedom and responsibility – values, which complemented each other*), Ivo. K. Feierabend (*Freedom: its content and reach*), Martina Klicperová-Baker (*Attitudes of Czech public towards democratisation and freedom*), Miloslav Bednář (*Freedom and responsibility as essence of the problem of spreading democracy over the world*), Luděk Rychetník (*Legitimacy of the democratic government*), Ondřej Wagner (*Responsibility in democratic society*) and Marie L. Neudorflová (*Problem of basic values in a liberal democracy*).

Other contributions touched on various aspects of the main topic. Miroslav Novák discussed the problem of voting rules (*From post-election myths to red morrows forever*), Jiřina Šiklová spoke about the normalization period (*How the research of public opinion was carried out during the normalization period*); authors following contributions included in proceedings mentioned different questions or their own memories, such as Václav Novotný (*Democracy in Europe*), Jan Friedlaender (*Contribution to discussion*), Olga Pujmanová Stretti (*JUDr. Jan Jína: 1890-1962*), František Čadek (*How I enter the Democratic Club*), František Filaun (*František Filaun commemoration*) and Ladislav Háva (*President Beneš liability for the origin of February 1948 events*).

Božena Škvařilová spoke further about problems activities of the *Club* and urged members to help. Also other resigning functionaries mentioned passed activities of the *Club*. Zdeněk Pavlík reminded common actions with the Museum Kampa where we inaugurated a cycle of lectures under the title *Czechoslovak democrats*. The first lecture was devoted to Jan Mládek and the second to Ladislav Karel Feierabend. Jan Friedlaender informed members of the activity of the political committee and the accepted official positions of the *Club*, and Vladimír Šust spoke on the elaboration and approval of organizational rules for the work of the central committee and executive board of the *Club*.

František Filaun reported on the financial situation of the *Club*. Since the last General meeting 262 082 CZK was accepted from members (we do not have other sources) and total spending was 251 001 CZK. From this sum the 35 per cent was spent for rent of the premises, 23 per cent on disbursement related to the conference including publication of proceedings, 18 per cent was for publication of *Club's* bulletin *Dk-Dialog* and 15 per cent for postal dues. The remaining nine per cent was spent on telephone and banking dues, and various materials (covers, papers etc.). The audit report was presented by Hubert Maxa, president of the audit committee. Other members present at the meeting took part in the discussion. Among them were Ladislav Háva, Jiří Jelínek, Jan Müller and Milan Zapletal.

Since the last General meeting several members passed away. Participants of the meeting paid honour to them: Edith Adams (USA), Tomáš Bernkopf, Vlasta Gardavská, Karel Haas, František Charvát, Karel Janoušek, Milan Jersák, Kalev Katus (Estonia), Eva Kundrátová, Jiří Laube, Eugen Matijenko (Russia), Zdeněk Rýšavý, Jan Svoboda, Zdeněk Strmiska (France) and Cyril Šimek.

Resolution of the VIth General meeting of the *Democratic Club*

I The general meeting

- 1/ confirms the report of the resigning Dk committee presented by Božena Skvarilova, Zdeněk Pavlík, Jan Friedlaender and Vladimír Sust,
- 2/ approves the economy report presented by František Filaun;
- 3/ approves the reports of the resigning audit committee made by Hubert Maxa;
- 4/ acknowledges the report of the mandatory and electoral committee.

II The general meeting assigns the Central Committee, after having it first discussed with the executive council, to deal with the following problematic items:

- 1/ call a meeting of the newly-elected Central Committee by the end of January, 2010;
- 2/ prepare member meetings, especially making sure of technical equipment and moderating;
- 3/ pay attention to the contents of *Dk-Dialog*, its distribution and dissemination outside the *Club*;
- 4/ consider *Dk* activity abroad;
- 5/ by way of amendment the 9th summarized information prepare the 10th summarized information within half a year;
- 6/ question of engaging new members in *Club's* activity;

7/ ensure the continuation of the *Democratic seminar*, which deals with questions of democracy and democratism; for this purpose to organise lectures and conferences;

8/ with the help of the political committee prepare a continuation of Questions and Answers about the *Democratic Club* aimed at creating a collection;

9/ continue the series on Czechoslovak democrats in cooperation with the Museum Kampa;

10/ discuss problematic spheres separately according an order chosen by Executive Board at individual meetings of Central Committee, without connecting the themes, always on the basis of dispatching beforehand material presented to the Executive Committee; this will come out from an analytical appearance of a working group installed for this purpose;

III. The General meeting recommends the newly elected committee to:

1/ strive diligently to gain new members, especially among young people;

2/ consider using the Web pages in addressing the general public;

3/ consider publishing the *Club's* positions and opinions outside *Dk Dialog* in the public press.

IV. The General meeting appeals to all members of the *Club* to:

1/ apply their personal views in *Dk-Dialog* and in *Club* discussions to help cultivate the *Club's* position on democracy and democratism;

2/ through their activity, help establish co-operation with the public media, and thus increase popularization of the *Club* and its ideas in society;

3/ address their nearest public, especially the young people, find further members and rejuvenate the *Club* and its organs.

V. The general meeting urges members to send a message of greeting to colleagues Josef Srbený and Vaclav Frei.

Results of election of the Central Committee and central audit committee

According to the report of mandatory an election committee composed of the following members was elected (in alphabetic order; the first figure is the number of votes, the second figure is the order):

to Central Committee: František Filaun (62; 3), Jan Friedlaender (64; 2), Milada Horáková (35; 13), Soňa Chalupová (53; 4), Zdeněk Kalvach (34; 15-16), Jiřina Kocourková (35; 14), Miroslav Novák (40; 11), Zdeněk Pavlík (72; 1), František Povolný (37; 12), Luděk Rychetník (51; 5), Jan Srnec (47; 8), Božena Škvařilová (49; 7), Vladimír Šust (34; 15-16), Marek Tietze (51; 6), Ivan Turnovec (45; 9) and Ondřej Wagner (41; 10);

as alternate to Central Committee: Savina Finardi (30; 18-20), Martin Finek

(31; 17), Boris Vaňo (30; 18-20), Dašdavaa Žargalsajchán (30; 18-20);
to Central Audit Committee: Miroslava Mašková (50; 3), Hubert Maxa (75; 1), Magdalena Mikesková (49; 4) and Eduard Souček (53; 2);
as alternate to Central Audit Committee: Bohuslav Pospíšil (43; 5-6), Jitka Štolbová (43; 5-6).

III - Selected contributions

From democracy to. . .

As long as the world was divided into two camps, each of which being ruled by its own superpower who set the rules, and having its own enemy, everything was simplified. The West propagated individual human rights (freedom of movement, freedom of speech, establishing societies, etc.), the East suppressed individual freedom and protected class collectivism. As the substitute for freedom, the right to work and fundamental social security were offered. The fall of Communism brought about a structural change of all the international politics. The former polarisation and the order connected have been converted into chaos. Theoretically, there is the agreement now upon what is a democratic government and what are the fundamental human rights, nevertheless, keeping to these means a problem. Many regimes present themselves as the democratic ones, even when practicing authoritarian measures. This holds for most of the post-Communist states, our Republic inclusive,

The basic problem of the contemporary democracies is an abundance of norms; the decision taking which is entrusted to a small group of people (Representatives and Senators) is not fully professionally qualified. The party-representative democracy is not a citizen-democracy; the proportion of party members among the citizens of the Republic is about 10 percent. Moreover, intra-party politics are not democratic either; parties are being managed by their secretariats and the party member basis does not perform most decision making. The administrative management is still authoritarian. The elected state administration appropriates more and more decision making power without being responsible for their own wrong decisions. Moreover, the cast of “professional” politicians do not realize they are accredited only to lead society and propagate the citizens’ needs. The current crisis in the Social Democratic Party as well as in Civil Democratic Party (both with largest number of representatives in the parliament) is a typical example.

Ralf Dahrendorf, the sociologist and rector of the St. Anthony’s College in Oxford, told Polish newsman Jacek Zhakowski in 1996: “We had our dream and you (understood as the Poles but it holds for all post-Communist nations as

well), had your own, too. When you look at our European dreams more attentively, you find out that the dreams were negative ones, in effect. You dreamt of a world free of censorship, of queues, of political police, free of barbed wire borders. You did not dream of poverty, of unemployment, of big social distinctions. You dreamt of an ideal world which, of course, never actually existed. We also dreamt of such an ideal world. The difference was that, we trusted we were going to create it one day, while you – being closed behind the Iron Curtain – trusted, it really existed....“ I want to say this openly. Great new problems are standing in front of us Europeans – economic, social and political as well – and these are forcing us to thoroughly reevaluate our ideas.

Social policies of the developed European states created a specific model of an average citizen, an individual engaged in his/her own well-being and comfortable life, who does without, some willing to voluntarily dedicate anything to his/her own community and to suffer any risks (not economic ones, but the political as well). In a consumption society nobody is willing to sacrifice his/her life for the defense of the others. The consumption cult and the social state made dependent slaves of sorts out of many people. It is a tragedy that there are leftist politicians who are not in a position to understand this and who would like to further on limit civic initiatives by their own decision making. The socialist idea of well-being is about re-distribution of income, in other words of money from the taxes, “solidarity” supplied by richer ones to those poorer, in order to help them. At the same time, the tax handed out as support to the unemployed, sick and old, starts to exceed the limits of availability on the side of productive workers. State budgets become indebted.

Social promises cannot be satisfied, they are becoming more and more expensive. Numbers of the people who do not create any value are growing and their requirements as it affects state guaranteed levels of living are very high. The growth of productivity means only that a much smaller number of people produce more, the differences in income are unbearably large and they increase in time. Anyway, this does not create resources for support of all the social requirements. As long as less people produce more means more people do not produce anything, hence, they need social support. Those who participate in the hard competition struggle are not interested in any social solidarity. They need financial resources for the growth of their firms. Individualism suppressed the idea of common interest. Competition became the value suppressing solidarity and social links that are at the basis of a social state. The global economic competition of the last twenty years – among the economic systems the states, the big corporations – on the one side proved the disability of Communist regimes and brought about their fall. Nevertheless, at the same time it shook the whole system of values and democratic Europe’s model of living. Social connections are being destroyed and that is endangering future development.

A citation for the conclusion: “Animals hunt as long as they are hungry. Otherwise, zebra and antelope feed quietly next to overfed lions. Groundless killing and spread of suffering not connected to food consumption is an exclusive specific property of man.” (Stanislav Lem, 1994)

Ivan Turnovec

Is our Czech democracy developing

or stated differently: Is our present Czech society a riper democracy than it was in early nineties of the previous century? Hasn't it withered in a sort of pragmatic routine which can be explained as it suits itself? I feel that after reading the last October copy of *Dk-Dialog*, many of us have begun to feel rather uneasy about the present state of our society. I felt that the members of the *Democratic Club* deliberated and discussed democracy on a rather academic level. It was wise but often quite distant from the real state of the society.

I am a protagonist of Masaryk's idea of democracy, and I see democratic institutions the only means which will help raise the general quality of the society and life of each individual. Philosopher V. Belohradsky recently expressed the view that most people nowadays understand democracy only as elections. If we consider what had preceded last parliamentary elections, the way the results were treated, we can't help feeling that our democracy is not developing, or only very slowly. Even the communal elections indicate a lot. First of all, people are not very interested in elections. Does it then mean that in a democracy the majority reigns? Thus in communal elections in one town (Ceská Lípa) only 28% voters appeared at municipal elections. The situation in many other towns was similar or even worse. Can we just say that those 72% have bad luck by absenting themselves from elections? Shouldn't we ask why it is so? Can democracy work when only a handful of individuals represent the will of the people? The victors of these elections, who will be deciding the fate of a town of forty thousand, got only nine percent of all possible votes.

Many years after 1989, our country is not in good shape, both from the civic and political point of view. There are missing top-quality politicians on the highest posts as well as democrats and organizers in regional towns and in the country. Do any decent candidates have a chance to get through the entwined structures of rich and influential parties or to participate in them only if they conform and accept given conditions of the game? On different levels we can witness that what is most important for the majority of citizens, is being avoided or postponed. Becoming a politician means first of all excellent financial security, and in order to reach it one must promise and promise. Yet real politics needs many unpopular acts and approaches. And so years go by and hope fades

that elections will change anything and fewer and fewer people believe it ever will. Fewer people vote or are willing to engage themselves without expecting some benefits. Anybody striving for a working democracy must first of all try to improve the quality of both the citizen and the state. Unless this happens, democracy is endangered in spite of elections to come. Moral feeling always and everywhere must be required by individuals as well as the society without fail, and so is the qualification of those who want to decide on behalf of others.

There is a problem which we don't always realize, that very often the most substantial matters concerning us all are being decided not by elected politicians but by unelected bureaucrats who as unknown people sit in ministerial, district or municipal offices. They control the budgets they conceived. How many representatives are sure about the two million costs of a fountain repair or new children's climbing construction. Is the price correct? In this way and under the assistance of either communal or high-position politicians incredibly high commissions and kick-back services occur. When even members for special committees are chosen according to party membership, we are not far away from the model of party control over everything. It ought to be a priority task of the *Democratic Club* to deal with this actual potential perilous state of Czech democracy.

Zdeněk Pokorný

Some principles concerning written contributions in *Dk-Dialogue*

Lately contributions have appeared in the *Dk-Dialog* (hereafter, "*Dk-D*") which are not in keeping with the *Democratic Club's* mission.

Concerning the contents: *Dk-D* is published by the *Democratic Club (Dk)* to enable its members to exchange their views when they cannot take part in regular meetings of the *Club*.

The *Club's* mission has been specified as supporting democratism in organizing the state and the society and the activity of the political parties.

The topic of supporting democratism is very wide. It concerns the voting systems and problems connected with elections, defending civil and human rights and freedoms, rule of the law, fighting corruption and nepotism, defense of the democratic society against both internal and external enemies of the state and its democratic system. Another important topic is solving the balance of the three pillars of the democratic power. In keeping with the wide spectrum of the *Club's* concerns, other relevant social problems may be dealt with, as long as they are connected with the problems of democracy and democratism.

On the other hand, articles or papers cannot be published in *Dk-D*, which would propagate other than democratic structures of the state or which would interfere with democratism, political pluralism, free elections of representatives, human rights and freedoms and the law. Articles cannot be published dealing with subjects of disagreement between political parties. *Dk* is an non-party

political, civil organization and for this reason it cannot deal with social, economic, cultural, ecological or other similar questions in its bulletin, unless there is some connection with problems of democracy and democratism.

The decision, about whether and in what form the contribution should be published depends on the decision of the editorial board, which when finding it useful, may ask the political commission for its judgment. The editorial board is also free to ask for a commentary which would accompany a dubious contribution published in *Dk-D*.

Dk-D is destined for the members of the *Club*. Nevertheless it may publish also contributions of non-members (their status of a non-member will follow the author's name). Contributions from all of the *Club's* correspondents, both members and non-members, may be chosen, unless the author has explicitly stated that he doesn't wish the text published. Individual contributions express the opinion of the author and not that of the editors' or the *Club*. Political opinions of the *Club* are expressed only in the summary of its official (numbered) official positions (standpoint).

Style and size of the contributions. As the contributions are first of all supposed to take the place of a speech at the members' meetings, they ought to express simply the author's opinion of the current political situation in Czechia or in another country. They shouldn't try to imitate news articles, elaborate compositions, try to be ironic or clever or barely understandable political comparisons. It is not a place for philosophical, sociological, theoretical and other contemplations. Similar articles could prove useful in a *Democratic seminar* as irregular supplement of *Dk-D*. An individual contribution shouldn't exceed more than one or one-and-a-half pages. Again the editorial staff makes the final decision. The editorial board authorizes; the board is entitled to correct spelling or grammatical mistakes. Any other changes concerning language or contents must be consulted with the author.

These principles, published by the Executive Committee of *Dk*, were dealt with by the Central Committee on March 4th 2008.



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