

Dk -Dialog

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(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 in general and to oppose all anti-democratic attempts to subvert the established order. The *Dk* publishes a Czech version of *Dk-Dialog* several times a year. The English version is designed to inform readers about the activities of the *Dk*, in particular its official views. The English version is published irregularly, usually once or twice a year. However, no issue was published in 2011. The primary purpose of the English edition is to provide information for *Club's* members who do not read Czech about the *Club's* activities and chiefly its official views. The translations from the Czech issues have on occasion been published previously, but we prefer original contributions for the English edition.

I. Official Views of the Democratic Club

Position of the Democratic Club No. 48

Concerning the activitie of members and supporters of radical parties and movements in the executive sphere

During the second half of February 2011, news media reported intentions of the Minister of Education to appoint as his first deputy a person who, in previous elections, led a list of the radical National Party in the region of Vysočina and who in his statements aroused the suspicion of supporting xenophobic and racial ideas. The Democratic Club vigorously defends the free exchange of opinions. But it also strenuously believes that persons with radical and extremist views must not hold leading positions and functions in the executive branch of a democratic state. Furthermore, the Club believes that would mean a violation of all tolerance that would eventually threaten the democratic character of the state. For that reason, we accepted and support a similar statement made by Prime Minister Petr Nečas, and we expect that the appointment will be withdrawn. At the same time, we are disconcerted that the President of the Republic has been backing a controversial candidate and who has expressed inadequate criticism of some citizens who had refused

appointment to a high position. It is the duty of democratic-minded citizens to oppose persons of suspicious ideas and of a democratic government. Such persons must not be allowed to influence the country's education's system, in particular because it is a very critical and sensitive sphere. Historically there are a number of examples when the inaction of citizens in similar situations resulted in endangering democracy or even in establishing undemocratic regimes.

Prague, March 13, 2011

The Democratic Club Standpoint No. 49

On the question of the restitution of Church property

We have always considered and continue to support at least a partial recompense of the property confiscated by the previous regime to the Churches, a necessary component of the society transformation after November 1989. An equitable adjustment of property relationships between Churches, Orders and Congregations and the State has been considered since November 1989. A necessary presumption not only for the proper legal solution of property relationships but also for an objective recognition of the economic independence of the Churches, *sui generis*, by the State is required. We are stating here with regret that even after more than 20 years from the appropriate laws acceptance the CR Parliament have failed to demonstrate good will and courage sufficient to reconstitute their property to Churches, church organizations and associations even though such a procedure is the most just form of "privatization" of the property confiscated by the monstrous totalitarian regime, and moreover to moderate disruption this has caused the religious groups.

Therefore, we welcome the consensus declared by Government Parties on the proposal of agreement reached after the long negotiations and reciprocal concessions by the Commission composed of representatives of both the State and the Churches in the matter of the Act on Churches Property Restitution. But at the same time, we are alarmed by the voices heard again, even from the Government Parties, casting doubt on the restitution.

One of the restitution opponents' arguments is the question of ownership of the property. It is an established fact that the property, before its confiscation by the Communist regime, had been owned by the Churches. Therefore it is necessary to return it to rectify the injustice caused by the confiscation and to make the full development of the Churches life possible at the same time, since these are an important component of and promote civil society.

Another argument of the opponents currently is the the country's strained State budget. This argument appears to us as a "populist" one and deeply amoral at the same time since there is no acceptable argument against the redress of criminal consequences. This overlooks the fact that the financial part of the

compensation is to be distributed over an extended period of time, hence with only a minimal effect on the Budget.

Therefore, we hereby ask Czech Parliament Members to settle the Churches' property restitution by using their vote in accordance with the Coalition agreement.

Prague, June 4, 2012.

II. DEMOCRATIC CLUB (DK) QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (05)

Why democracy and democratism have to be distinguished

The Democratic Club (Dk) differentiates between democracy and democratism in its Idea (see the Summary Information on Dk), its Ideation Basis (see the Application for Membership form), and in its Statutes as well. In the Dk Idea then it is explicitly stated that, democracy is not the same as democratism. A question then arises: is this distinction to be taken perhaps as a play on words and concepts only, or does it have a practical material importance as such?

There are innumerable definitions of democracy. **The Democratic Club** defines **democracy** (for the practical delimitation purposes of its own sphere of actions) as the **government of the people** by which the people is understood to be the entirety of human individuals living within a given territory regardless of their gender, race, language, nationality, etc. (see the *Dk* documents mentioned above and also the Question and Answer [03]). **Democratism** is defined then, in this connection, as the **entirety of the partial elements (features) typical for democracy**.

In order to simplify the explanation, such a system is to be questioned here, which **is democracy** already. Even then, the concept of „entirety of partial elements” is not definite enough as such. To make it more definite for ourselves, we have to remember that, in a concrete case of a system being the democracy, the elements of democracy applied have their concrete extent, their concrete composition and their concrete intensity. In considering the **extent, composition and intensity**, we can speak about the **measure of democratism** (understood, the measure of the democratism elements applied). It can be said, hence, that within the system given, being a real democracy, the measure of democratism is lower or higher. We have to realize, too, that the measure of democratism as a whole, as well as in its partial components, tends to fluctuate.

As it appears from the above, the concept of democratism is connected with assessment of the quantitative aspects of democracy. According to this approach, within a democracy there is a **larger or smaller portion of democratism**, while **democracy itself either exists or not** (there is no third way). (This approach is not obligatory in the sense of preventing anyone to

speak of a given concrete real democracy assessing it as a strong, mature, stable one, or in the opposite sense, as a weak or unstable one, etc.)

Distinguishing democracy from democratism can have an entirely practical impact: such a distinction presumes **to assess democracy** not globally, but rather **classified (analytically) according to separate elements**, which invites an establishment of practical **programmatic targets** regarding how much the postulate of their positive presence, intensity and function is being satisfied in each of the elements assessed.

Josef Srbený, August 2008

Message of the United Nations Secretary-General for International Voluntary Day

Beginning with the words “We the peoples”, the United Nations Charter reminds us that crafting solutions to global challenges is a job not only for Governments but for people, communities and civil society.

On International Volunteer Day, we recognize the dedication of volunteers, their admirable spirit of service, and their wide-ranging efforts to promote the goals of the United Nations.

With the world population having surpassed seven billion this year, we must tap every person’s potential to help others. Everyone *can* make a difference. Volunteering does matter.

All over the globe, millions of volunteers are helping to advance sustainable development and peace. This engagement takes many forms: volunteering organizations, individuals working on their own in their communities, and service with us and our partners as UN Volunteers.

This year’s first-ever *State of the World’s Volunteerism Report* showcases the impact that volunteers have made. I congratulate the UN Volunteers programme and commend the many millions of volunteers working for sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, environmental preservation, and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

With passion and commitment, they are helping to show how volunteering can change the world. As we mark International Volunteer Day, I encourage policymakers to do even more to support and welcome volunteerism, and I urge everyone to consider what they can do to join the movement.

5 December 2011

Ban Ki-moon

III. SELECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

IS IT DEMOCRACY, TOO?

A renowned statesman, Winston Churchill, observed, "It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried". This statement has been repeated often and, recalling our own experience, we can agree! But we are not going to be worse than other democratic states and having our own extensive bitter experience with the „leading role“ of one political party, we can claim „Long Live Democracy!“

Anyway, during the totality times the Leading Party permanently misused the word Democracy, hence, many a simple citizen became convinced that, yes, and we have a democracy, namely, the "People's Democracy" and the best on Earth. But 41 years later everything changed with the "Velvet Revolution" so called the Velvet since no blood was no shed – only the the political situation was reversed; it was in fact a coup d'état.

The democracy which followed became a real one, including freedom and responsibility as its inseparable ingredients. Indeed, we can now criticize failures in the management of public life freely and we fully enjoy this freedom.

From our school times we know that power within the State should be distributed between legislative, executive and judicial power and all the three should be independent of each other. This mutual independence was adjusted by the Bolsheviks to their ideology because it did not suit their purposes. On the contrary, everything was dependent upon the will of *only* that Party and this way the Communist democracy served as a shield to hide the Party's vices. So, now we have a real Democracy being connected with freedom and the State power should be in the hands of responsible people (although not always, of course) However, there's one thing I do not understand. It is the political practice when the Parliament representatives or the Senate members are Party chairmen, Board of Directors members, City mayors, Regional council presidents (!!), and collectors of many other offices. It is similar to the miserable ancient times when Lydia Korabelnikova, the Hero, was capable of attending several "weaving looms" at the same time, when the Comrade Party Chairman was State President at the same time, as you remember. And he ruled everything.

In short, I suppose, decorating oneself by public (and even private ones, too) offices is a ghastly bad habit from the totalitarian times, and such a hybrid as Regional president to be Senate member or a Senate member to be Regional president, in other words, it was simply illegal that the executive power cross-bred with the judicial power. What would the Constitution Court say? By the way, a scrupulously performed office will be fully exhaustive, hence, a responsible individual should his/her Parliament, Senate or other seat simply be left to the others, at least until his/her office of Minister, Regional President, Mayor has expired, or vice versa, should not burden the legislative power by other commissions from the domain of executive power (or, God forbid, of the judicial power). Well, and the three components of State power would not interfere with one another.

When the clerical government was nominated in 2007, attention was paid that ministers should be strictly non-partisan. Easy support, my friend: deposit your Party card with the Party secretariat until you finish your ministerial office, then you can have it back. Isn't it kosher this way? It is not immoral *as such*, but *in another way*. **Isn't it disservice to the electorate?** Independent power unites, instead of distributing its own competence. Some companies do not permit their people to assume jobs with other employers. Not the case in politics! The Homo Politicus becomes an insolent parvenu and there is no one to teach him/her responsibility and humility. And straightaway those are the qualities needed by him/her at the time when he/she strips them off like a winter coat at the start of spring.

Dana Seidlová, September 2009

20 YEARS OF THE DEMOCRATIC CLUB ACTIVITIES IN THE FREE ENVIRONMENT

Having had 20-plus years of the existence of our freedom and democracy undoubtedly is a suitable time to contemplate where we have succeeded and where we have failed. The Democratic Club was founded 60 years ago and for more than 40 years it existed illegally. After November 1989 it gained its legal status and could rejoice over the satisfactory interest in its activities and its rapid growth at the beginning. But only several years of practical activities were enough to show that the expectation invested in it by the founding members conflicted with its ideation and the personnel structure.

First of all, we did not realize we had started to work politically within an environment quite different from the one in the pre-war First Republic. That one was founded with inhabitants knowing that nothing was free of charge; the people had to pay for everything. After four decades of life under Communist totalitarianism, the post-war generation became blinded in the ideated sense, on one hand, by the State educational system and on the other hand by the systematic socialist propaganda and the one-sided materialist explanation of the world and human society. Thus, they were spoiled by the inefficient, unrealistic Communist economics which promised everyone an easy life without much effort on their part.

Our the neighbouring Polish nation which realized and construed that, it was living in a post-Communist period (cf. Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Post-Communism – Birth of an Enigma, On the Powerful and the Powerless*) and that democracy also has its dark side (cf. Ryszard Legutko, *The Ugly Face of Democracy and Other Essays*). By contrast, our political scene tried to quickly copy Western structures and procedures that are capable, however, of a relatively successful existence within a more advanced society only, as compared with the current Czech one.

The principal error in the Dk activities was a belated realization of the current situation being different. A systematic research into the state of our society, with the aim of discovering its weaknesses and shortages, was not started, hence, the removal and redress of them was not addressed. However, it's not an irreparable error. It arose mainly from some underestimation of the hardships of democracy and from the problems connected with the redress of our post-Communist political reality.

These problems had their origin in the Communist control of the population mentioned above on the one hand, and also in the fact that Parliament parties were led by mostly selfish, ambitious but irresponsible people who considered themselves to be the elite. They "excelled" in unrestricted immorality and populism.

Our current task obviously should be strengthening the Dk and making it more effective. Both of these are needed permanently and we have to admit, we have not been consistently successful in their realizing our goals. One way to strengthen the Club vigorously recruit young members. Sadly, no acceptable method to this end been worked out thus far. Only one trial has been accomplished, promising an initial chance of success: the conference „Liberty and Responsibility“. But this experiment did change the situation, nor moreover, we have not done a post-conference detailed analysis of what had proved to be recommendable and what was not and why as well as what further procedure is to be applied in order to achieve our aim.

We have paid more attention to the improvement of the Club. At the beginning of legal activities it was the series of lectures on democracy by Colleague Srbený that made the first positive impression and later on the activities by Colonel Rychetník, who was in charge of the Democratic Seminar, were positive attempts. However, his activities were not supported properly by the membership; hence, the Seminar series was concluded some time later. The last General Session of the Club was directed in a rather unusual way causing an impression that it was not quite clear to the Executive Council members how and where the *Dk* was to be guided to reach its aims. It seems there is even some personal disagreement and animosity among the Club leadership. Let us hope, the situation become critical and it can reach a productive solution.

Lumír Tuček, January 2010

THE REAL COST AND THE UNREAL PRICE

At the same time Karl Marx also said: real democracy and pseudo socialism. We now may say either about new social ideas in our world. Let's look first of all, at the United States: we see a new man as a president of the state and simultaneously we don't see any changes in the policy of the state. What we see is the old imperialism in the form of "American pie" ... [*Zdeněk: In my humble opinion, Obama is turning the U.S. into a socialist country; jn.*] Next, we

consider Europe: the new multi-cultural policy in the member countries and no culture is seen, but in official deeds we have the old traditionalism in the form of “European boat”... Then lastly there is, Russia: new liberal reforms in the economy of the state with no personal freedom but we see power in the bureaucracy; in other words, the old paternalism in the form of “Russian house”...

What’s going on in these paradoxes? We believe that the main reason most modern democratic ideas don’t have social efficiency is their enormous intellectual costs that that the states and their people can’t afford ... Look at the Bible: Jesus Christ wanted to feed his people with the help of only five loaves of bread and people believed him and went after him... So did Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia initially when they wanted to feed and house [or, provide shelter for the?] people but when they launched their revolution the Russian people were not satisfied. The USA and NATO are committing the same error in the Middle East now: when their aim was to be dictators, the people understood the task. When they began to make a “colour” revolution, global people had no desire for it except for the terrorists and the marginalized... Modern policy must be more moderate, we believe, by comparing its real social cost and unreal price the people must pay for its practical fulfillment. Otherwise democracy turns into an autocracy of adventurers.

Slava Zubakov (Kazan, Russian Federation).

What the author is asserting is that Karl Marx saw the difference between real democracy and pseudo socialism. And now a similar distinction applies to the new social ideas in the world. The present American President pursues the same old policies-- imperialism. In Europe the new multicultural policy is devoid of culture in the official deeds of governments--the old "European boat" persists. In Russia the new liberal economy is run by an autocratic bureaucracy.

A brief comment: Where does the author see the roots of the paradox? He saw a discrepancy between the unreal utopian goals (including those of Christianity) and reality. Now, of course, you can say that democracy is not a utopian idea (whether or not it is fully attainable -- regardless of the presence or absence of imperialism or other ills-- is a separate and also an empirical question) and so there is really no conflict -- which is not to say that imperialism or other negative policies should not be criticized.

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Kalev Katus (1955 – 2008)

Born October 29, 1955 in Tallin, Katus studied statistics at the university and then held various positions in the statistical service. After Estonia became independent he founded the Estonian Institute for Population Studies and Demographic Department at the Tallin University. His large scientific work and

lot of publications created the prestige of this Institute not only in Estonia, but throughout the world. But he devoted his activities primarily to the scientific work that interested him also in political events. With some reluctance, he accepted the idea of democracy and democratism propagated by Democratic Club and became a member in 1995. He attempted to disseminate the Club's position in Estonia, publishing substantial contributions about the crucial importance of objective statistics for a democratic society (Dk-Dialog VII/2, 2000, English version). His sudden death on June 11, 2008 in the age of 53 years (immediately before his presentation at the conference in Helsinki) was a great loss for Estonian scientific society, his family, his colleagues and friends and also for the Democratic Club.

Josef Srbený (1928 – 2010)

A Personal Reminiscence

Josef Srbený, LL.D., was born March 12, 1928 in Horní Počernice, the last of four children in a blue-collar family. He took the high school-leaving examination in Prague 8 in 1947 and began his studies at the faculty of law of Charles University the same year. He successfully completed his studies there in 1951 and continued in postgraduate study of constitutional law from 1963-1968. Petitionary law was the subject of his doctoral thesis. He first worked in the state administration, then in the Prosecutor's Office focussing on the legislative process. After the 1989 "Velvet Revolution", he worked also in a research institution and he took part in preparing several legislative constitutional acts. He retired in 1994.

Already as a student, Josef was very seriously interested in political questions. Even before the end of World War II, he demonstrated his interest in the democratic operation of the state. After the war, he was actively engaged in political life and became member of one of the three non-communist parties permitted at that time, the National Socialist Party. Our friendship lasted during his entire life. We were ideologically very close and we followed with concern the politics of Communist Party which asserted its influence using unscrupulous means. We were young and without political experience. We had confidence in President Beneš that our democracy would survive. We were disappointed with the results of the parliamentary election in May 1946, but at the same time we believed that communists could not acquire majority in the next elections planned for May 1948. The non-communist parties obtained 60 percent of votes cast in Czechia and 69 percent in Slovakia in 1946 in spite of massive communist propaganda. They were losing voters especially after proclaiming the election slogan to gain 51 percent of the votes. We believed that certain restrictions which lowered the level of democratism would be removed after the new elections.

The communist putsch in February 1948 terminated the democratic evolution in then Czechoslovakia. We never doubted that this was a sudden, illegal and decisive change of government by force against democracy. We witnessed the creation of action committees, the roundup of prominent personalities and the militarization of workers militia already during several days before President Beneš signed the abdication of non-communist ministers. It is very probable that even if President Beneš had not signed the abdication, the communists were ready to take over by force. The consequence could have been a civil war for which the non-communist parties were not prepared. Josef was deeply affected by the communist putsch, which influenced his whole political life. We were persuaded that democracy would one day be restored, but we did not know when. The question aroused if we can help to this and eventually how. At the same time we were disappointed with the behavior of non-communist parties, their self-centeredness and irresponsibility. They were not good guarantors of democracy since they were interested mainly in partial aims and that democracy was possible (of which it is not necessary to devote attention and what was even possible to exhibit according to their interests). Political parties were often criticized, but their existence in democratic society is fortunately indispensable.

Josef discussed such questions with his colleagues; I would like to name a few among others: Jan Srnec, Jaroslav Suchý and Karel Vaněček. He came with the idea that the political parties should be supplemented by the political organization the main aim of which would be the defense, support and strengthening of democracy, eventually actions to its restoration. The idea was accepted and followed with the founding of the Democratic Club on September 28, 1948. In detail Josef described these circumstances in a commemorative contribution on the death of Jaroslav Suchý (Dk-Dialog 6/1996, Czech edition: To the untimely death before fiftieth anniversary of Jaroslav Suchý). In his precise narration, which shows his modesty, you could realize his fundamental contribution to this project, although he also appreciated the merit of other colleagues. He described additional details concerning the foundation of Democratic Club in his contribution to the Club's conference devoted to the 60th anniversary of the Democratic Club (Freedom and responsibility, Museum TGM Rakovník, 2009, Czech version).

The Communist Party established after the takeover unleashed political terror. Many anti-communist organizations emerged at that time, some or a majority of them were exposed and their members severely punished. The majority of them gradually disappeared. The fight against the communist regime was their common and unique aim. The purpose of Democratic Club was different. It saw its main aim to function in a democratic society as a complement to political parties. Opposing communists was the secondary aim which had to be adapted to circumstances. Therefore leaflets were soon abandoned and the main activity was devoted to personal communications and

to the analyzing of political situation and the elaboration of Club's idea. The acceptance of new members ceased in 1951 (there were 35 at the time). The Club had a collective leadership – a so-called presidium – and Josef Srbený was all the time its member (since its legalization in 1990 its president until 1992, when he left this position). Security was the responsibility of Jaroslav Suchý.

The political situation during the forty years of communist rule underwent several periods without changing the main features of totalitarian regime (one party rule which prohibited legal opposition). The political processes in the first half of 1950's caused fear among people. I was in permanent contact with Josef and I remember that in 1956 we together heard about the Soviet invasion in Hungary. The renewal of democracy is postponed was his comment. We followed the changes in 1960's. The prime minister, Viliam Široký, was dismissed in the fall of 1963 for "political errors" and replaced by Jozef Lenárt. Alexander Dubček was elected as the general secretary of the ruling Communist Party in January 1968.

These events characterized changes of the political situation and further changes could have been expected. The members of the Club noticed these changes and took part in various activities in their workplaces. The question arose if the Club should openly declare its existence. The presidium of the Club especially influenced by the opinion of Josef Srbený and Jaroslav Suchý did not support such a decision. The main argument expressed by Josef was that the legal arrangement for the existence of such organizations did not exist yet and also that it was not possible to reveal previous Club's activities. This decision later proved to be reasonable taking into consideration that absolute power was still in the hands of Communist Party.

When I was leaving for a business trip to the United States on August 7th, 1968, I met with Josef and we discussed the future of the Club. The trip was scheduled for six months and we supposed then that after my return the situation would then be resolved and we could deal with the question of Club's legalization. The situation changed completely with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia two weeks later on 21st August, 1968. The Club activities returned to the previous status. I spent three years in the States and in the middle of 1971 I was confronted with the decision to go back or to emigrate. Among several reasons, including personal and work (I was an associate professor at the Faculty of Science, Charles University), the existence of the Club and my colleagues were not the least important reason for my return from abroad. I did not know how long the communists will be in power, I was not very optimistic concerning the future, but I was persuaded that my main responsibility was to rejoin my colleagues here.

After the period of so-called "normalization" when the Communist Party strengthened its power, various dissent activities emerged at the end of 1970's and in 1980's. Some Club members took part in them, but not the Club as such for reasons already explained. We had access to documents of Charter 77; we

copied and distributed some of them. We did not consider ourselves as dissidents, but we elaborated the Club's idea as a preparation for its legal functioning. Not only in the former Czechoslovakia, but even more in neighboring countries various signs predicted the end of communist rule. Economic reforms occurred in Hungary, workers' strikes in Poland (Solidarnocz) and even perestroika in the Soviet Union were occurring simultaneously. Finally the totalitarian system ended also in Czechoslovakia on November 17th, 1989.

The members of Democratic Club took part in founding the Civic Forums at their working places, some even initiated them. The inquiry was accomplished among members about the legalization of the Club. A decisive majority of members were for it. The still living members of historical committee met on January 13th, 1990 and e steps for the legalization were prepared. The historical committee was enlarged with new members and its first meeting was convoked on March 23rd, 1990 (members alphabetically: Eva Bártová, František Filaun, Jaroslav Hanzlík, Dušan Hendrych, Zdeněk Pavlík, Josef Srbený, Jan Srnec, Vladimír Urban and Karel Vaněček). The committee proclaimed the legality of Democratic Club as a Civic Association, accepted the first statutes and elected Josef Srbený as the first president of the Club. Josef resigned at the first General meeting in 1992 for health reasons. However his work for the Club continued up to his death on April 17th, 2010.

He was author or co-author of all the main documents of the Club. Already in 1990 the leaflet, *What is Democratic Club?* was published, followed by the brochure, *What is and towards what is striving Democratic Club?* Josef was main author of the *Club statutes* and of the *Aggregate Information about the Democratic Club* (up to now, nine issues have been published). He elaborated the direction *To the registered positions of the Democratic Club* (2005) and the same year the study, *To the problems of democratism*. He started elaboration of first questions for the cycle *The Democratic Club in questions and answers*. He was one of the most productive contributors to the Club's bulletin, *Dk-Dialog*.

Josef Srbený was deeply convinced democrat and all his work for the Club without any compensation. He was profoundly persuaded about the significance of the Club's activities for any society and he hoped that they would continue. His heritage is extraordinary and it will be fully acknowledged only in the future. The members of the Club have lost by his death an exceptional colleague.

Zdeněk Pavlík

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