

Dk - DIALOG

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

Introductory word

In this issue, you can find the report about the course of the VIIIth General Meeting of the Democratic Club. The important information for all Democratic Club members concerns the Dk mission, its efforts and actual activities. The Democratic Club supports democracy and has very important activities: its regular meetings, official positions, Dk-Dialog and democratic seminars. We believe in democracy and in its diffusion all over the world. We are convinced that despite some hot academic debates on the concrete historical and cultural roots of the modern democratic institutions, democracy should present a universal historical challenge to all humankind, derived from the humanistic tradition of the enlightenment and the idea of human rights. There is no modernity outside democracy and this claim is not an expression of Western imperial ethnocentrism, but the formulation of the basic and fundamental condition of human dignity and being in our modern global world. It is important to remember and defend this idea against all contemporary attempts and temptations to revitalize old traditions of tribal particularism, fundamentalism and false authenticity of local oppressions in the guise of new ideologies. Democracy is not unlimited tolerance; democracy is a political procedure to decide what should be tolerated as a part of modern humanistic society. Therefore, democracy should be selective in relations to different cultural values of societies whose members wish to share our common way of life and political space.

In the English version of Dk-dialog we publish mostly translations from the Czech issue, but also original contributions. We would be glad if these were more frequent: you are welcome on our pages.

Ivo Budil

I - Official Views of the *Democratic Club*

The Democratic Club Position No. 58

On Generality of the CR Parliament Elections

One of the important features of parliamentary elections in the advanced democratic States is the principle of generality of these, i.e., of the right of all citizens to participate that can only be limited by age and a possible loss of the civil rights or legal incapacitation. However, in the Czech Republic, participation in the elections is made practically impossible to a relatively large number of citizens who find themselves on the Election Day abroad at places distant from the seats of CR diplomatic missions. Most of the advanced democracies have already ruled this problem, which besides the tourists on vacation trips also concerns persons on business trips, working stays etc., simply by introduction of the postal voting method. In the Czech Republic such an institution, has not yet been introduced.

The Democratic Club encourage our legislature to remove this significant deficit before the next Parliament elections through the enactment of postal voting. This way, not only will the important democratic principle be satisfied, but also a solution of the long-term problem of low voter turnout can be solved. As a model solution for the process of the bill or a statutory provision formation, similar laws from the advanced democratic Countries can be employed, those having election systems similar to that of Czech Republic.

We realize that the postal vote can facilitate attempts at electoral frauds, too. However, we do not suppose, the legislature to be entitled this way to exclude de facto a number of citizens from participation in the elections. We consider it purposeful, too, for the members of Parliament to make themselves familiar, during the bill formation, with the ways in which fraud attempts can be prevented in the advanced democracies and to take into account the possible application of these in the Czech Republic.

Prague, November 14, 2014

The Democratic Club Position No. 59

On the Problem of Police Wiretaps and Publishing of the Contents of These

In 2014, especially in connection with investigation of the persons acting in the case of Mr Nečas and Mrs Nagyová, public concern has arisen within a major part of our public due to the wiretaps of suspect persons and persons acting in clarification of possible criminal activities of those.

The Democratic Club is fully aware of the fact that examination of the contents of communication between potentially suspect persons can become an important and in many cases necessary way towards solution of criminal activities. However, it is necessary to secure that the information obtained is made available only to those authorities, who act in the criminal proceedings. To the public then in such extent only that becomes a part of the court records. The decision on this belongs to the court only. According to the law, when offering information to the public as it concerns their own activities, the authorities acting in criminal proceedings must take care not to endanger clarification of the facts important for the criminal proceedings, not to publish data on the persons participating in the criminal proceedings that do not directly connect to criminal activities, and not to violate the principle that, until the suspect person is pronounced guilty, he/she against whom the criminal trial is being conducted cannot be seen as the culprit.

The Democratic Club is alarmed by the fact that these claims are by far not satisfied. The media keep publishing citations from the wiretaps whereby the process of investigation is affected as well as the public opinion. By deliberate selection from the wiretaps obtained, public opinion can be manipulated and reputation even of those who have not committed any wrongful act can be violated. Such improper publication can affect the election results, too, and the composition of legislative bodies. It is clear at the same time that leakage of the wiretap contents could not happen without participation of some staff members of the wiretapping bodies.

The Democratic Club therefore consider it necessary for the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme State Prosecutor and other participating bodies, to check whether the laws applicable are sufficient for the prosecution of persons facilitating the leakage of information from the wiretaps, whether sufficient efforts have been applied in order to identify persons guilty of the leakage and whether wiretapping has been only applied in such cases where it was quite necessary and where it was ordered by the court. In any cases of improper action(s), suitable legislative changes are needed and corresponding labour law and criminal consequences drawn against those guilty of the current situation.

Prague, January 6, 2015

The Democratic Club Position No. 60

On the need for Consistency in the Formulation of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic

The Democratic Club notes that during nearly the entire post-November period, the position of the Government and President Zeman manifested significant differences in the formulation of their approaches to certain foreign

policy issues. Those differences were greatly intensified after the last presidential election and the subsequent outbreak of the Russian military action in eastern Ukraine. The Government position was moderate in supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but the President's statements increasingly supported the position of Russia. Such a contradiction makes Czech foreign policy incomprehensible and cannot assure its allies a perception of the Czech Republic as a reliable partner.

The Democratic Club believes that the President who, as specified in the Constitution, is part of the executive power, should express decisions made by the Parliament which represents the Government of the Czech Republic. Therefore, it asks the President of the Czech Republic to reconcile or harmonise his observations with the government position and thereby comport himself with the dignity his office requires. We also ask the deputies and senators of the Parliament to put the President on notice that his views are not acceptable and take steps to ensure that these requirements be strictly carried out.

The Democratic Club is particularly concerned about the President's statements that ignore the Russian violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine in direct contrast to the approach of the EU and NATO, of which the Czech Republic is a member. At the same time, some statements of the Government attempting to mitigate sanctions against an aggressor, and which in advance refuses to supply defensive weapons for Ukraine should diplomatic solutions fail, can hardly bring peace and democracy in Europe. We ask the Czech Government to fully respect our country's membership in EU and NATO, the major result of actions in November 1989.

In our Position No. 57 of September 28, 2014, we expressed the necessity for unity among all EU countries in adhering to the resolutions and their realisation, recognizing that our country contributed to their establishment.

Prague, March 8, 2015

The Democratic Club Position No. 61

On the Issue of Mass Immigration into the EU Countries

Steadily increasing flow of illegal migration has long been directed into the EU countries. As shown by the available data, it is not just about people threatened by persecution or war events, but also, perhaps above all, a large-scale economic migration. It is to be feared that Europe would not be able to handle this stream, and because of it would find itself in situation difficult to solve, which would paradoxically hurt also migrants themselves. In addition, there is a danger that in some countries their democracy, culture and traditions may be threatened.

We therefore recommend that the representatives of the Czech Republic in the European Council and the European Parliament demand the introduction of effective measures against illegal migration, especially enforcing the protection of the external borders of the Union (while we welcome the opinion of the government of the Czech Republic on this issue), and allow immigration only to persons threatened by political repression, or who find themselves in extraordinarily difficult humanitarian situations, and based on credibly substantiated request. It is recommended that the Union should learn from Australia, which faces similar problems, but so far is able to provide optimal scope and structure of immigration.

Even if such measures are adopted, however, the European Union must still address the problem of those who have already succeeded or who will succeed in reaching the territory of the Union. This is in particular the case of countries of Southern Europe. We believe that it cannot be required that these migrants become a burden only for these countries, and it is therefore imperative that EU countries fairly divide them. An equitable solution should take into account not only the size and population of individual countries and their economic power, but also the numbers of migrants already adopted in recent years and potential contributions to the protection of the EU's borders, which have been provided or are being provided to those countries. Conditions and situations in different EU countries vary considerably. The wave of immigration into Europe however rather increases, and for now it is difficult to predict its mitigation. It concerns the whole of Europe, and therefore it is necessary that all EU countries contribute to its solution in solidarity. The manner of their involvement needs to be discussed and possibly such a discussion should be initiated. Adopted compromise solutions must be fulfilled by all Member States.

Prague, September 19, 2015

II - Articles, Dk Activities

Information from the VIIIth General Meeting of the Democratic Club

Report about the course of the General Meeting

The VIIIth General Meeting occurred on November 28th, 2015 in Prague 2, Jungmannova street 17 (CEVRO Institute). The deliberation was conducted by Soňa Chalupová instead of Pavel Černý who apologized. This change was arranged during the waiting on the quorum. The session started with the programme approving; the meeting also approved J. Nováková as a recorder.

We had presentations of guest organizations with ideas similar to those of the Democratic Club: Masaryk Association, Association of Edvard Beneš, Association of Viktor Dyk and Emil Hácha. Anna and Jaroslav Krejčí Foundation, and the National Club in Prague. These associations have specific ideas and purposes.

We received information about the members who had passed away since the VIIth General Meeting three years ago and present participants honored them by a minute's silence. There were members who had passed away (following in alphabetical order): *Jan Bartoš, Eva Bártová, Oldřich Černý (Švýcarsko), George Demko (USA), František Filaun, Ema Gottwaldová, Antonie Hančíková, Vladislav Hanák, Karel Harada, Jiří Homola, Alena Hromasová, Ljuba Kaňoková, J. F. Kinda (Australie), Josef Kůstka, Jaroslava Kuklíková, Blanka Malá, Jan Petránek, Zdeněk Suda (USA), Karel Šimandl, Enrico Todisco (Itálie), Vjačeslav Vinogradov, Alex Wynnyczuk (USA), Louisa Zaccpálková.*

Then the General meeting continued by election of necessary commissions: mandatory (colleagues (col.) Wagner, Jirásek, Müller), electoral (col. Plzáková, Šešerínac, Polesová, Kyzrová) and for draft resolution (col. Friedlaender, Pavlík, Kaprasová).

The meeting continued with the report of the Club's president Miroslav Novák, and of the chairman of Club's political committee Jan Friedlaender. Zdeněk Pavlík spoke as a political consultant and emphasized the Dk mission. The financial report and the report of the revision commission were presented. Adaptations of Club statutes, to accord with the new code of civil law, were approved.

Miloš Havelka presented the lecture, "Thomas Hobbes and the Revelation of the Future."

The discussion continued during and after refreshments (prepared by the Ethnocatering), with the following speakers: col. Šenarová, Neudorflová, Strauch, Nováková. You will find the Democratic Club announcement in this issue, concerning the possibility of actual discussions within the Democratic Club.

The presented reports were approved in the following stage of the meeting. The electoral commission announced the result of election of the Club's Central Committee and of the Club's Central Auditing Commission. Of 92 voting members, 34 were present. The presented draft resolution of the VIIIth General Meeting was accepted.

From contributions of participants

Miroslav **Novák** spoke about the difficult situation of the Club at the beginning of his presidency and informed on the successful activities - regular

meetings and the issuing of official positions on political problems of the country. He sees the rejuvenation of the membership as a main task for the future. We are an association with the aim to support democracy and democratism through official statements. He also expressed gratitude to CEVRO Institute for providing the Club with premises for meetings and secretariat.

The president of the Club's Political Commission, Jan **Friedlaender**, summarized the work of the commission. Ten official statements were issued this year, 2015. They were all published in Dk-Dialog (both in Czech and English versions), as well as various reactions to them (only in the Czech version).

The political consultant, Zdeněk **Pavlík** stated: the Democratic Club supports democracy and has very important activities: its regular meetings, official positions, Dk-Dialog and democratic seminars. He spoke on three members that passed away: Josef Srbený, František Filaun, and Zdeněk Suda.

Results of election of the Central Committee and Central Audit Committee

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

to Central Committee: Branislav Bleha (40; 11-12), Ivo Budil (57; 4); Pavel Černý (40; 11-12); Jan Friedlaender (63; 2); Philip Armin Hainz (50; 6); Soňa Chalupová (53; 5); Petr Jirásek (46; 9); Zdeněk Kalvach (49; 7); Josef Kandert (36; 14-15); Ludmila Kaprasová (36; 14-15); Jiřina Kocourková (60; 3); Edvard Outrata (41; 10); Zdeněk Pavlík (77;1); Ivan Vávra (38; 13); Ondřej Wagner (47; 8); **as alternates to Central Committee:** Petr Hlaváček (34; 16-17); Magdalena Mikesková (34; 16-17); Ivan Sládek (30; 18); Křesimir Žigić (27; 19); Lukáš Kovanda (26; 20);

to Central Auditing Commission: **Břetislav Fajkus (50; 4);** Hubert Maxa (62;1); Leona Stašová (54; 2-3); Jiřina Šleichrtová (54; 2-3); Jiří Vavřinka (49; 5); **as alternates to Central Auditing Commission:** **Václav Kotyk (30; 6);** Petr Neugebauer (26; 7)

The voting of the Dk president

At the first meeting of the Central committee on 8th December 2015, Ivo Budil was elected as the president of this Club, and Pavel Černý and Josef Kandert as two vice-presidents.

Executive Council

At the first meeting of the new Executive Council, the composition of the Executive Council was approved: the Council consists of 5 members, Ivo Budil

as the president, Pavel Černý, Philip Hainz, Jitka Nováková, Milan Zapletal as members.

Resolution of the Eighth General Meeting of the Democratic Club

General Meeting

I. approves the Report by the outgoing Dk Committee as presented by Miroslav Novák, Jan Friedlaender, Zdeněk Pavlík, and the Report on the Dk economy prepared by Jana Procházková and the Report of the Central Auditing Commission prepared by Hubert Maxa. It takes due note of the Report by the Mandate and Election Committee;

II. assigns the Central Committee to deal, after preliminary consultation with the Executive Council and employing the Council, with the following problem areas:

- 1) to convoke a meeting of the newly elected Central Committee not later than one month after the General Meeting;
- 2) to pay attention to member meetings, especially as to technical conditions and moderation;
- 3) to pay attention to the contents of the Dk-Dialog, its distribution and supplies outside the Club;
- 4) to consider a gradual transition of the Dk-Dialog to the electronic form;
- 5) to deal with the foreign Dk activities;
- 6) to consider a regular new pronouncement of the fundamental Dk documents;
- 7) to continue with the Democratic Seminar and to expand the discussion on democracy and democratism and its quality factors employing the Seminar; to apply lectures, too, to this end, round tables and conferences;
- 8) to prepare continued Questions and Answers on the Democratic Club employing the Political Commission with the aim of editing a Collection of Papers;

III. recommends to the newly elected Central Committee to deal, according to the merits of the occasion, either using its own powers or, employing the Executive Council,

- 1) to maximize the efforts in recruiting new members, especially among the youth, and in involving them in the Club activities and functions;
- 2) to consider employing the Club website for addressing the public; to set up a paragraph at the same, referring to the Club's current activities;
- 3) to try and publish the Club standpoints in the public media;
- 4) to establish the function of a Secretary within the Executive Council and also the function of a recorder;

- 5) to define the number of Central Committee Members at 15 on the outcome of the elections, the number of Candidates at 5 and the number of the Central Auditing Commission members at 5 with 2 candidates;

IV. calls on all the Club members,

- 1) to contribute to the opinion clearing as concerns democracy and democratism within the Club, as well as in Club discussions, by asserting their own views;
- 2) to try and co-operate with the public media and to contribute this way to a higher popularity of the Club and its views in the public;
- 3) to facilitate recruiting new members and rejuvenation of the Club and its managing bodies, by means of addressing the members' milieu, especially the youth.

Announcement for Members who want to be (more) active

Everybody who wants to discuss Democratic Club activities, to bring new opinions and suggestions, let us know please as soon as possible at dklub@volny.cz, preferably by the end of March, and we can inform you via e-mail on new prepared Positions and other topics and expect your feedback.

Announcement concerning the Dk-Dialog Distribution

Everybody who wants to receive the Dk-dialog via e-mail and who doesn't want to receive the printed copy, please inform us at the address dklub@volny.cz. It is possible to read it on the Club web sites and to print it from them, too.

Redaction

Modern Democracy and Racial Imagination - An Essay

Hardly any concept has so strongly influenced modern history as the racial breakdown of the humanity. We can say without exaggeration that the concept of race has changed the history of the world. The advent of racial doctrine in the nineteenth century after its spreading from professional and academic circles into the broader strata of the population, added to the interethnic relations an entirely new quality, consisting in an extreme escalation of mutual hostility. The fate of racial anthropology as it was practiced in Nazi Germany was decided by the outcome of World War II. Given the seriousness of the issue, it is therefore somewhat surprising that currently there does not exist in world literature any professional work devoted to the issue of the origin and evolution of racial thinking, which is one of the reasons why in this context many myths, stereotypes or misconceptions persist that are often undignified in the academic environment.

From the historical perspective, racial thinking is a relatively new phenomenon that was practically born only at the turn of the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. Previous centuries did not know it. Antique, medieval and most early modern writers believed that the nature of the human body is purely caused by climate and natural environment. In the eighteenth century, Europeans noticed that large migrations, movements of human populations between continents and various climatic zones, have no major impact on their appearance and physical and mental disposition. The human body began to be regarded as something very resistant and constant defying natural external influences with the nature directly affecting the historical fate of the populations concerned. In this sense, orientalist and traveller Constantin Volney wrote shortly before the French Revolution, that European and Asian nations have their history inscribed on their faces.

At the end of the eighteenth century, under the influence of developing and increasing authority of natural sciences, racial classifications of humanity were coming into fashion. The first known racial breakdown was published already in the late seventeenth century by François Bernier, a French doctor who worked for many years in India at the court of the Great Mughals, but the most famous was Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, whose classification of human races from 1775 involving Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, Malay and American races is, with some modifications, still used today.

In principle, scientifically relevant efforts to divide humanity into distinct groups, based on biologically-defined and hereditary character, becomes racism or racial ideology when the mentioned intraspecific classification is used to promote or justify social hierarchies and the reproduction of social, political or economic inequality; that is, when the socio-cultural sphere is reduced to mere somatic aspects. The system of racial hierarchy, as occurred in the western visions in the first decades of the nineteenth century, represented the global metaphor of the world created by Western colonial expansion. Remarkable unevenness of global economic development, wealth in dynamic cities of the Anglo-Saxons, stagnation in commercial centres of the Mediterranean, the Orient and Latin America, and prehistoric backwardness in the interior of Africa, together with the results of war conflicts, represented strong argument in favour of the fundamental differences in racial dispositions, the benefits of racial purity and lethality of racial mixing. Race had become a privileged tool of knowledge and understanding of the dramatic changes occurring in the world at the beginning of the modern age. At the same time, the idea of race and racial hierarchy represented a great challenge for the rising Western democratic order, whose basic postulate, namely the equality of all people, was questioned by the language of science. Some authors believe that the idea of natural social inequality and social hierarchy, on which the political order of the *ancien régime* was based and which was refused by the French Revolution, found conservative patronage just in racial ideology. Darwin's friend Joseph Hooker wrote to Darwin in 1862 that he considers the book *On the Origin of Species* a persuasive defence

of the role of the aristocracy in history because he cannot imagine how a democratic or republican form of government could cope with the effects of natural selection.

Yet one cannot say that in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Europe had a boom of racial thinking. It was still a rather marginal intellectual tendency without significant representatives. An exception was a French socialist and disciple of Saint-Simon's, Victor Courtet, who in his book of 1838 envisioned a pan-European racial movement that would allocate again to each race a place that it "deserves" in the hierarchy of existence with regard to innate abilities and qualities. The second exception was a British politician and future Conservative Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, who was also a relatively successful writer. During his lifetime Disraeli published eleven novels, in which he has shown as one of the first that racial origin, in his case Jewish, can be a source of collective pride and historical aspirations. In his most important novels, the trilogy *Coningsby*, *Sybil* and *Tancred*, which he published in the forties of the nineteenth century, Benjamin Disraeli presented a racial interpretation of history based on Jewish racial superiority.

I consider the fifties of the nineteenth century as a decisive period in the intellectual history of the West, during which racial ideology was spread, which eventually resulted in the Nazi racial totalitarianism. Then a new intellectual world was born that biologized Western view of history and thus aligned with a natural process. It was probably a reaction to the results of the 1848 revolution, when the liberal nationalist directions suffered defeat, and in European political thinking the emphasis on hierarchy, fatalism and historical forces that are beyond the direct human control gained position.

Social Darwinism, with which Charles Darwin himself had little in common, opened the way not only to justify the domination over so-called lower inferior races outside Europe, but also for eugenic programs of racial ennoblement within the Western civilization itself. A key argument of the French critics of racism, social Darwinism and eugenics movement, Célestin Bouglé, Jean Finot and Julien Benda, the leading ideologues of the French Third Republic, was that if we were forced to choose between the political ideals of the Enlightenment and Enlightenment faith in science, then we should elect ideals. No highest authority and practical benefits that modern civilization draws from the natural sciences, should not tempt us to issue a technocracy that would, in order to increase the social efficiency, oppose the basic principles of democracy.

Despite the large expansion and the influence of racial ideology, social Darwinism and the eugenics movement in the life of Western society in the early twentieth century, I am convinced that, like other extremist movements, these could not have been successful in such a degree as is known, for example, from the Nazi racial totalitarianism, if it were not for the collapse or discretization of traditional political order. But it was just the political collapse of Western

civilization in summer 1914 which gave them an unexpected opportunity to realize their visions.

Ivo Budil, April 2015

After the European Elections

They say that one of the characteristics of old age is that you know the answer to every question but nobody asks any questions. So I have asked myself one. Who or what would you like to be if you were not what you are. And the answer? I would like to be the one who invented democracy with universal suffrage. That man had to live in amazing human surroundings. Not only among his closest, but even in more distant strata of society and even in all his nation there had to greatly outweigh the people who tried to infiltrate all the major problems of society, who hated that some could acquire unearned benefits at the expense of others, who thanks to their knowledge refused unfulfillable promises, who honoured truth and morality, were acquainted with history and knew what needs to be avoided, who were eager for peace and knew that it can occur only when the legitimate demands not only of their nation but also of all the others were satisfied. The people who understood as well, that solidarity with your nation is noble under these conditions and only under them. Outside them, it becomes nationalism, which is probably the most effective weapon of mass destruction. Such people even knew that the implementation of good governance must be in many cases approached together and that it is a mistake to understand that full state sovereignty is an absolute value.

A man who lived in an environment very differing from that described above, could hardly get any democratic ideas.

The realization of these ideas after the first phase of the World War of 1914-1945 was tried by a Czechoslovak citizen, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi with his friends. They founded Pan-Europe, warmly supported also by T. G. Masaryk. Not to shift the boundaries, but to cancel them, that was their idea. They failed. Towards the end of the second phase of that war, which claimed almost 60 million victims, between the Western European Christian Democrats arose the idea of European integration, which has been brought with extreme difficulties through the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties to the stage that we could characterize as the "end of the beginning".

The legal form of this phase is the European Union, in whose parliament the elections were held recently. Let's deal at first with the turnout. It was, especially in the post-communist states, pitiful. The Czech Republic distinguished itself by second lowest participation. This proves that the vast majority of voters refuse to use the opportunities given to them by the democracy. They manifest lack of interest in European affairs and are able to swallow two

contradictory lies, namely that we live under the dictatorship of the Union and at the same time that the decision of EU bodies have no meaning for us.

The second negative result is a substantial strengthening of nationalist parties in some member countries. There is an evident extensive absence of the understanding that it was just the nationalism and its support from the superpowers which were responsible for the bloodbath brought by the 20th century. Xenophobia and racism are on the rise.

Immediately after the elections, some considerations could be heard recommending remedies for low participation and other defects, mostly in the line of the electoral system. Firstly, it was said that the participation in the elections should be compulsory, as it is the case in several Western states, and as it was the case in the first and third Czechoslovak Republic. This idea reveals an inability to understand that non-participation is not only a manifestation of laziness, but also a way of voting. But personally I believe in the hypothesis that the set of non-voters at least partially covers a set of those who know nothing about the matter because they are interested mainly in the information from the privacy of celebrities provided by gutter press. The presence of such people in elections can contaminate their results. Let us be grateful to them for their absence! In our country this certainly contributed to the fact that most of our 21 elected members of European Parliament are supporters of integration.

Another remedy, this time reportedly in order to achieve fairer results, demands that any quorum for the entry of a concrete subject into an elected body (5% in our country) should be abolished. Such a requirement (in combination with compulsory participation) can be often heard even in the Democratic Club. Long time ago, however, a well-known political scientist, K. Popper, drew attention to the fact that parties with minimal representation would thus gain political influence which does not correspond to the number of votes received. I heard an objection that there is a fair distribution of seats rather than influence. I believe, however, that people elect "their" parties just to strengthen their influence and not because of the furniture in Sněmovní street or in Brussels.

Personally, I have a suggestion for a remedy for greater participation (not only for elections). There is a consensus in the world among democrats that the elections should be universal, equal and secret. Ours are not universal, though. Voters who dwell on the day of elections outside the Czech Republic and not exactly in a place where the Czech Embassy has its location are deprived of the possibility of voting. All mature democracies have solved this by the possibility to vote by correspondence. Only for Czechs that's not good enough. And also for the Democratic Club in which the proposal of a Statement requesting this option was authoritatively rejected on the absurd grounds that this may violate secrecy of the elections. I guess that a more likely reason is probably the correct calculation that people who travel will not vote mostly for the only right party. The proposal will be submitted in the coming days once again.

Otherwise, as regards the meaning of elections, it should be remembered that the European Parliament is designed to solve European problems. I hope that in the next elections there will already participate (also) some pan-European parties. Complete misunderstanding of the process of European integration was shown by Mr. Babiš, who urged the members of parliament elected in the Czech Republic to work unanimously, irrespective of their membership in this or that party. The real goal should be just the exact opposite, socialists should vote with other socialists, liberals with other liberals, etc. Our twenty-one members of parliament must not become a subdivision fighting for positions and the money for their national state. Strictly speaking, they should not form any subdivision whatsoever.

As regards the overall tone of the elections, I would like to note that despite all the negative phenomena, the pronounced majority in the EU and also in most member countries is on the side of European integration. However, it is unfortunate that some politicians whose legitimacy is derived from the number of votes, but much less from their wisdom, such as the French President, are beginning to call for at least partial disintegration of the Union. Why put pants down far ahead of the ford, why let the nationalist fascist minority win by fulfilling its requirements?

If this trend is not stopped, there will be also no fulfillment of dreams of Kalergi, Monnet and Adenauer about the end of the conflicts between European countries. Perhaps only then those last 14 soldiers (Factory for the Absolute by Čapek), who remain here will eventually understand that there is still something about that united Europe. But I would not bet much even on that.

Jan Friedlaender, May 2014

Events from the United Nations Department of Public Information, Non-Governmental Organizations

From concerts to interactive dialogues, book presentations and film screenings, we offer you opportunities to participate in the many special events and activities promoting the work of the United Nations. Explore this page regularly to keep yourself up-to-date on what's going on with the NGO community at the UN. Stay in touch as we update this calendar of events on a daily basis.

<http://outreach.un.org/ngorelations/calendar/events/>

Activities of the Democratic Club

The Democratic Club has three main activities. We consider the formulation of the official positions aiming to affect political life and public opinion as the first one. These positions are distributed to representatives of political bodies (president, ministries, members of parliament, and other high level officers), sent to mass media and published in Dk-Dialog for better orientation of members. The regular monthly meeting of members (regularly up to now only in Prague) is the second activity, usually with an opening theme and the discussion concerning also other topics of democratic relevance. We could mention some of them occurring during the last year. Statistics and Democracy (Iva Ritschelová), the Development of American Democracy (Jana Matesová), Problems of Electoral Systems with the Regard to Democratism (Zdeněk Pavlík), Fascism as the Democracy upside down (Stanislav Kubů), Problems of Contemporary Immigration to Europe (Jan Friedlaender, Zdeněk Pavlík, Ondřej Wagner), Czech Republic in the Global Economy (Jan Švejnar), and Democracy from the viewpoint of social anthropology (Josef Kandert). The publishing of the Dk-Dialog is the third main activity, contemporary three times a year. Its English version is published irregularly. The study of democracy and democratism belongs among other non trivial activities. ;

Redaction

Appeal to Members living abroad

We would be glad if you could acknowledge the receipt of the mail, e.g. by e-mail. We suppose so unless the mail is coming back, but we are not sure. Please, announce any change of your address to dklub@volny.cz.

Redaction

Did you know that...

...you can see Video Recordings of the 19th Forum 2000 Conference Democracy and Education, held on September 13–16, 2015 in Prague and other Central European cities, at: <http://www.forum2000.cz/en/web-tv/>

...the Council of Europe is the international European organization enabling the cooperation of member states mainly supporting democracy and the human and social law and freedom protection. In Czech, you can see Council of Europe information here: <http://www.radaevropy.cz/>, in English: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/home>.

...in July of 2015 it was already 600 years since the martyrdom of Jan Hus, who stands in Czech history as an example of the struggle for truth and moral credibility. These Celebrations of Hus, 2015 served as a reminder of the reform thoughts and the life struggle of such an extraordinary man. The celebrations took place on the 5th and 6th of July 2015 in the centre of Prague. The main podium was placed in the neighbourhood of the memorial of Jan Hus on the Old Town Square. More information: <http://www.hus-fest.eu/en/>

Jitka Nováková, October 2015

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