

Cleavages and Ideological Blocks in the Czech and Slovak Party Systems after 1989

This work brings knowledge from the comparison of the Czech and Slovak party systems. Based on long-term monitoring of the development in the field we attempted to point out its relevant characteristic. We compare the ideologically compatible blocks and political parties. Determinants of the formation of Czech politics were ethnical homogeneity, long tradition of secularization in the Czech Lands and domination of a single (socio-economic) cleavage line. The political development in Slovakia was influenced by the unsolved national question (position of Slovakia in a multinational state), ethnical heterogeneity, greater importance of Christianity and religion in the society and many other factors. Consequently, the formation of Slovak politics was characterized by multiple complicated and specific features. In the Czech Republic, two major blocks formed first: the civic non-socialist block represented mainly by the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), and the socialist block represented by the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), which corresponds to the domination of the socio-economic cleavage line. The minor poles are mainly parties with the communist identity (as a result of the concentration of the radical left and „nostalgic“ electorate and protest potential of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia – KSCM) and Christian Democratic identity (addressing the catholic minority in the Czech secularized environment, with the pivotal role of the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party, KDU-ČSL). In Slovakia, party system formation went through several phases. As specific cleavage lines played the crucial role in the first phase, substantially different types of political parties (Movement for Democratic Slovakia – HZDS, Slovak Democratic Coalition – SDK) gained the leading positions compared to the Czech Republic. The second phase has been characterized by the consolidation of the socio-economic cleavage line with subsequent formation of the socialist (SMER) and non-socialist (Slovak Democratic

and Christian Union – SDKU, Christian Democratic Movement – KDH, Party of the Hungarian Coalition – SMK) blocks. Nevertheless, the specific elements of the Slovak party system (HZDS, Slovak National Party – SNS, SMK) continue to be of political relevance. Although in both of the republics the political development was determined by some common and universal factors (economic and social problems), such specific factors as the general nature of the political environment, impact of personalities and cooperative-competitive relations contributed to divergent political development of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.