

Abstract

The presented dissertation focuses on the large-scale privatization in Czechoslovakia in the early 1990's, on how it was pushed through and why. It analyses the political conflicts over its eventual form and means of realization, and reconstructs the contemporary expectations concerning the future development. It also pays attention to the roots of the 1990's conflicts in the relevant economic disputes of the previous decades.

The dissertation identifies an establishment of a new type of liberal political language as a key moment for the implementation of a large-scale privatization. For the new political language, which can be labelled as "market without adjectives" (or "attributes"), the privatization was a flagship policy and it encompassed its key ideas. The language of market without adjectives was defined in a strong opposition to the principles of the so-called "economic democracy", which had been popular among the members of the Czechoslovak dissent, the numerous supporters of workers' self-governing bodies and some economic experts.

The attempts to implement the principles of market without adjectives occurred during several political conflicts the dissertation tries to analyse. The delimitation of space for democratic decision making was one of them, with the liberal economists arguing it to be restricted to the political area only, and not to the economic institutions (e.g. enterprises). Another one, concerning the future structure of the privatization institutions, saw the liberal economists trying to minimize the influence of the contemporary economic bureaucracy and professional organizations (unions). In this case, their action was motivated by their fear those institutions could possibly reject the idea of large-scale privatization.

The liberal economists also tried to push through the principles of market without adjectives during the conflicts over the restitution of nationalized property to the original owners and over the possibility of preventing the so-called dirty money being used to acquire property through the privatization. Another case, analysed in the dissertation, is the effort made by the liberal architects of the voucher privatization to prepare people to become the shareholders of the privatized enterprises. Their ambitions met with a different degree of success in the particular conflicts, but the

political thinking of market without adjectives was undoubtedly a formative influence for the whole of Czechoslovak privatization.

The dissertation also analyses the thinking of the experts and politicians dedicated to different forms of economic democracy and their mostly unsuccessful attempts to push them through politically. It argues the ideas of economic democracy often served as a reference for the supporters of the different forms of the employees' privatization, rejection of which was caused by several factors. A spontaneous public protest against the unrestrained asset stripping performed by state managers and the ability of the supporters of the market without adjectives to link their concept of distributional justice to the values of the recent revolution and to the ethos of "national unity" ("national understanding") were undoubtedly among them.

The promotion of a privatization according to the principles of market without adjectives caused opposition not only among the Czech leftist opposition, but also among the Slovak nationally orientated experts and politicians. After the economic recession in early 1991, the idea of following a particular Slovak way of reform and privatization gained popularity even among the political subjects and agents that had not previously opposed the federal policy. The upcoming conflict between Slovak and federal government was averted by a reconstruction of the Slovak government; the way it had been performed was nevertheless considered controversial and contributed to the loss of the Slovak economic liberals in the 1992 elections.