

Comparison of agrarian political parties in selected Central European states after 1989

Srovnání agrárních politických stran ve vybraných zemích střední Evropy po roce 1989

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Abstract: This study deals with the founding and development of agrarian political parties and movements in selected post-communist states (with the emphasis put on the Czech party system in the early 1990's). The topic is discussed from the point of view of classic political science theories, namely the historical conflict approach of Stein Rokkan and Seymour Martin Lipset, complemented with Derek Urwin's theory regarding emergence of agrarian parties as a means of defense of country against urbanization. The results of research into the urban – rural cleavage and its influence on the genesis of agrarian political parties in selected post-communist countries after 1989 seem to support the above mentioned theories (even though those were originally formulated for a much earlier period when the Western party systems were first coming into existence. These can be applied also to the Czech environment, where several profession-based political parties were established in the early 1990's, some of which were concerned with the defense of peasants' and farmers' interests. The attempts to create profession-based parties in the Czech political system were destined to fail for several reasons. The first was a striking ideological profiling of the bipolar party spectrum, causing general parties to pick up the themes and voters concerned with economic recession, and radicalization of electorate. The second reason lied in the diminishing numbers of potential voters, a result of agriculture modernization and general urbanization of society, which caused that the city-country conflict was reflected in the election results only marginally. The result was similar to other post-Soviet states, with a specific exception of Poland: agrarian parties and movements lost their former influence.

Key words: comparison, Central Europe, post-communist society, agrarian political parties, populist politics, rural cleavage, party system

Abstrakt: Tématem této studie je vznik a vývoj agrárních politických stran a hnutí ve vybraných postkomunistických státech pohledem klasických politologických teorií, zejména historicko-konfliktního přístupu Steina Rokkana a Seymoura Martina Lipseta, doplněného teorií Dereka Urwina o vzniku agrárních politických stran na základě obrany venkova před urbanizací. Výsledky zkoumání rozporu mezi městem a venkovem a jeho působení na genezi agrárních politických stran ve vybraných postkomunistických státech po roce 1989 potvrzují závěry uvedených teorií (ačkoliv byly formulovány původně pro období, kdy západoevropské stranické systémy teprve vznikaly), podle nichž vznik a úspěch agrárních politických stran podporuje zejména specifická struktura zemědělského vlastnictví s převahou malých hospodářství. V tomto případě se agrární strany profilovaly jako důrazní „obránci“ rolnických a zemědělských zájmů s výrazně populistickou rétorikou, zaměřenou zejména proti dopadům ekonomických reforem a otevírání trhů. Jiným potvrzeným teoretickým předpokladem pro vznik agrárních stran je tvrzení, že se agrární formace ustavily na základě kulturního rozporu mezi městem a venkovem, v tom případě je možné hovořit o znovuoživení tradičního rozporu příznačného pro většinu zemí východní Evropy. Uvedené teoretické teze platí také pro české prostředí, kde na počátku devadesátých let vzniklo několik stavovských politických stran, jejich programem byla obhajoba zájmů zemědělců a venkova. V tomto období se uskutečnilo několik neúspěšných jednání o vytvoření jednotné agrární strany, která by navázala na tradici historické Republikánské strany zemědělského a malorolnického lidu. Vzhledem k výchozímu kolektivistickému charakteru zemědělské oblasti sehrály vedle republikánsko-agrárních stran významnější úlohu politické strany a hnutí zastupující družstevní sektor. V červnu 1992 se jejich představitelé dostali v rámci účelového politického hnutí (Liberálně sociální unie) do Poslanecké sněmovny, stejný výsledek však již v nových volbách nedokázali zopakovat. Pokusy o vytvoření stavovsky orientovaných stran v českém prostředí byly odsouzeny k nezdaru z několika hlavních důvodů. Vedle výrazné ideologické profilace bipolárního stranického spektra a s tím souvisejícího přebírání tematických okruhů a středových voličů všelidovými stranami, které souviselo s hospodářskou recesí a radikalizací voličů, měl na tomto neúspěchu vliv zejména pokles vhodné voličské základny v důsledku modernizace zemědělství a celkové zásadní urbanizace společnosti, v jejichž důsledku se rozpor město–venkov promítl do volebního chování pouze okrajově.

Klíčová slova: komparace, střední Evropa, postkomunistická společnost, agrární politické strany, populismus, rozpor město–venkov, systém politických stran

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this contribution is the foundation, development and comparison of agrarian political parties in selected post-communist states (Polish, Hungarian, Slovak and Czech examples) from the point of view of classic political science theories.

European agrarian parties and movements as political representations of peasants' interests came into being especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their foundation was the result of the political mobilization of the country connected with industrialization process and with institutional changes, particularly with the suffrage expansion. Although these processes can be considered in all-European framework, in some countries political parties did not occur, in parts of others they were not in an influential position and somewhere else they became very important political forces. The regime collapse of one party and the following democratic reforms in the states of the former Soviet bloc became the reason for the genesis (or reconstruction) of various size and type party systems. As a part of some of them, also political parties and movements that declared their support to agrarianism and to the representation of interests of peasants and the country came into being. Their foundation was connected with a number of historical and contemporary circumstances. Agrarian parties and movements held an important position in some countries before the World War II – and because of that, it was possible to expect attempts to restore them or at least to use the symbols connected with their legacy. Other factors included economic reforms mostly of neo-liberal character (accompanied by the change of ownership forms) and their impacts on farmers and country inhabitants. In this connection, it is possible to take into consideration culture changes and efforts to reconstruct idealized national communities.

CLASSIC THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO AGRARIAN PARTIES FOUNDATION

The historical and conflict approach of Stein Rokkan and Seymour Martin Lipset (Lipset, Rokkan 1967) is probably the most famous one among the possible theoretical political science approaches to political parties foundation and to party systems genesis. The basis of this approach is the assertion that the main party formations in European countries were formed as a result of so called cleavages, deep structural conflicts in single societies. The above mentioned political scientists identified four main cleavages that consequently formed European

party systems. The first group included the cleavage of centre – periphery (peripheral versus dominant culture) and a religious cleavage (state versus church) that came into being as a result of national revolution, it means within the process of a modern nation formation based on a dominant culture (and the resistance against this movement). The second group encompassed the rural (or land versus industry) cleavage (primary versus secondary economy) and a class cleavage (employees versus workers), established in connection with the industrial revolution.

On the basis of West European party systems comparison, the mentioned political scientists proposed the theoretical scheme of their genesis. With regard to previous findings, they defined four basic conditions for independent agrarian political parties foundation:

- cities and industrial centres were still relatively weak and less numerous at the time of the decisive expansion of the suffrage
- a decisive part of country population worked on small or medium-size holdings that were either owned or rented (the institutional form of the tenancy was such that the leaseholders were not dependent on big landowners)
- there were important cultural differences and a considerable economic conflict as for agricultural production between the country and cities
- the influence of Catholic Church was weak.

This approach to the formation of agrarian political parties was looked into by Derek Urwin in the study on the causes and forms of agrarian political behaviour (Urwin 1980). Agrarian political parties foundation was described by him as a top form of country political mobilization, as the reply to the free market economy penetration to the country and related social and economic changes. He did not refuse the studied conclusions, he just pointed out that besides Scandinavian countries, strong agrarian parties had come into being in most countries of East Europe where they had played an important role in political systems by the forties of the 20th century although it is clear that the conditions of their foundation were different from those in Scandinavian countries. Owing to this fact, he decided to study the foundation and the development of agrarian parties in European countries by the prism of social and economic conditions of the country. Urwin's work is a detailed comparative research of the rural cleavage and the conditions that influenced its depth, the timing and the skills to be the social basis for agrarian political parties formation. According to this conception, the basis of their foundation is "the defence of the country against the city" with substantially different situation in Western and Eastern Europe. Agrarian parties in Western Europe came into being on the basis of the economic interests defence of inde-

¹ Because of practical reasons we use for this type of political parties, the single term agrarian parties that are perceived neutrally, although as we can see later, the used attribute implied historical reminiscence to the pre-war republican party in the Czech context and became one of the substantial features for self-determination of a part of professionally oriented political parties.

pendent peasants within free market economy and they grew out of interest associations and unions. City elite was formed mostly by bourgeoisie. On the contrary, East European agricultural structure was formed by small holdings ensuring a mixed production of life necessities of the peasants and their families. This structure came into being mostly as a result of land reforms after the multiethnic empires collapse at the end of the World War I. Land reform in East European countries resulted from political mobilization of the country initiated by the city elite in their efforts to reach national independence (compare Hroch 1986).

The city elite in East European countries was formed by clerks, lawyers and intellectuals, it means classes that were dependent on government sources. An accompanying feature was clientism and the increase of bureaucracy that caused economic (tax) requirements on peasants. Country inhabitants view of the state apparatus (and also of city environment) was therefore connected with disbelief and grudge that were strengthened by the different cultural orientation of the city elite. The rural cleavage was deeper here, political mobilization of the country (originally within the national movement) came into being later and that was the reason for establishing strong agrarian parties defending the country against city "infection", so particularly against the penetration of market economy and social relations connected with it. Agrarian parties had the tendency to create their own ideology in which the peasantry was introduced as an original national core, living in idealized village communities and keeping traditional values. Interest or economic organizations of peasants came into being mostly together with agrarian parties or were founded in their framework later, moreover they were important rather as supportive organizations of parties than as primarily economic associations.

After the World War II, the difference between West European and East European party systems deepened as a result of different political development. Scandinavian agrarian parties were transformed into middle all-people political parties and they held an important position which was not dependent on professional, gradually decreasing election base. On the contrary, this process was not enabled to agrarian parties in Middle and Eastern Europe that were in opposition to starting communist regimes and they were gradually wound up (in the post-war Czechoslovakia, the agrarian party was not renewed) or changed into satellite political parties without substantial influence (Rychlík 2000).

After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the historical and conflict approach (the theory of cleavages) started to be used for the interpretation of coming into being post-communist party systems. The basic problem of this application was the relevance of historical divisions that enabled the foundation of party systems of given countries before the World War II. The views of political scientists of the significance and the forms of cleavages in

post-totalitarian societies go from the theory on "freezing" constitutive cleavages and their back revival from the end of the eighties, when the original historical cleavages are given the full relevance also for post-communist party systems (Kunc 2000), to entire refusal of this theoretical approach (Hloušek 2000). The majority of authors espouse the approach that it has sense to use Lipset's and Rokkan's conception but with the traditional clause concerning the necessity of adjusting to local conditions (Kopeček 1999, Novák 1997).

In general, the view that the first and basic cleavage within these societies was the conflict between the communist regime and its opposition (former state versus civic society) is accepted. On its basis, the wide opposite movements pushing through the transition to democratic political system came into being. However, they were not stable and soon started to divide according to other conflict lines. Single post-communist party systems started to differentiate in the next period – the basic cleavages stating their characteristics were social and economic cleavage and the cleavage of centre – periphery. For agrarian political parties, the traditional rural cleavage was of a constitutive significance. It was clearly stated to be secondary and unimportant in most of proposed theoretical conceptions on the cleavages structure in post-totalitarian European societies. On the other hand, political scientist Klaus von Beyme remarked that this conflict line had played a more important role in post-communist societies (despite the large industrialization and urbanization) than in West European countries (Kopeček 1999). Moreover, it is clear that it is not possible to judge the influence of this cleavage only mechanically and to deduce its small importance from the fact that a clearly identified agrarian party did not become the decisive political force in any of the former countries of the Soviet bloc. From this point of view, the study of factors that influence institutional expression of mentioned theoretical approaches can be inspirational.

RURAL CLEAVAGES IN THE POLISH SOCIETY

The basic example of the agrarian political party allegiance after the year 1989 is represented by Polish environment, where agrarian political subjects reached the most significant position in the system of political parties in the state that had participated in the former Soviet block. At the beginning of the ninetieth, *Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe)* won a big success. This party was established in 1990 by joining *Polish People's Party – Restoration (PSL – Odrodzenie)*, *Polish People's Party – Wilanów*, (which was established with the aim to continue the pre-war agrarian movement), and several other farmer's groups mainly coming from the independent trade-union movement *Solidarity (NSZZ "Solidarność")* (Kubát 1998). As a successor of *United People's Party (Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe)*, one

of the satellite parties existing till the year 1989, *Polish People's Party* inherited its organization structure with 170,000 members and it became the biggest Polish political party. Since the very beginning, this left-wing party was profiled as a protector of farmers' interests and it heavily stressed patronage and subventions for agricultural enterprising. In the social sphere, it acted as a pro-church subject to attract electors' attention (Jednaka 1995). The emphasis on farmers' interests representation and defence of agriculture, which was represented as a field of the basic significance (neo-agrarian programme), led to a tension among the fractions, one of which represented big producers' interests and the other one represented farmers and agricultural workers' interests. (Dawisha 1997). In the year 1991, in the first completely free elections into the Seim, *Polish People's Party* got 8.67% of votes. It became the fourth strongest Polish political party and under the rule of Waldemar Pawlak tried to make use of its pivot position. The top of its influence was reached in the year 1993, when it won the second place in the elections with 15.4% of votes. After that success, it formed a government coalition with *Union of the Democratic Left* (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*). The elections in 1997 meant a drop-out with 7.31% of votes, though the situation became more stabilized thanks to the party-representatives in the following elections four years later (8.98%) (Granberg 1997).

The second significant agrarian political subject is at present *Self-defence of the Polish Republic* (*Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*), which was founded in 1991 as a protest farmers' movement. The name of this political party calls back reminiscence of "self-defence committees" conception directed against the government power developed by opposition initiatives in the seventies. In spite of that heritage and the fact that *Self-defence* continued with protests organized by the *Farmers' Solidarity* (*NSZZ RI "Solidarność"*), its main feature was above all a populist and anti-politic rhetoric. In 1992, *Self-defence* organized lots of protest actions and its leader Andrzej Lepper became famous for his radical speeches. In 1993, *Self-defence* lost in the competition with *Polish People's Party*, whose accession into the government coalition institutionalized promotion of farmers' interests and calmed down protests of farmers. The new development did not come before the end of the four-year right-wing government, when the left-wing Lepper's movement got 10.2% of votes in the elections into the Seim and it became the third strongest Polish political party.

The Polish agrarian political allegiance was strongly influenced by the fact that the collectivisation attempt in the communist Poland practically failed. In the beginning of the nineties, there was only about one fifth of land in the state ownership for that reason. More than that, the most of Polish agriculture was represented by small farms (producing for private consumption above all). The percentage of people working in agriculture reached 27% in

this period, which was the highest rate in the whole Europe. The difficult situation for farmers in the nineties was mainly a consequence of the neo-liberal economic reform. Its major result was the price decline of agricultural products and the rise of costs. The big number of private farmers could not also rely on the temporary protection of the disintegrating cooperative farms. One of the indirect consequences of the economic transformation was an attempt to get the state patronage. It could be seen at increasing number of protest actions. The Polish agrarian formations significantly stressed "defence" of farmers against transformation impacts for these reasons. There is one more remarkable fact. In spite of a good organization structure and an attempt to follow the pre-war political tradition, *Polish People's Party*, though trying to represent the country as a whole, was partly suppressed by Lepper's *Self-defence*, which impersonated protests of small farmers by its populist style (Granberg 1997).

RURAL CLEAVAGES IN THE HUNGARIAN SOCIETY

Another example of a specific profilation of the contradiction of town – the country is represented by Hungary, where *Independent Farmer's Party* (*Független Kisgazda Párt*) established, (actually reestablished), in the year 1988 with the link to the significant political party of the pre-communist era became the main agrarian power. In its programme, it supported farmers' enterprising and reprivatization of land, reservation to processes of integration and defence of the country values (Benda 1998). In the first elections in 1990, Farmers' Party won the third place (11.73 % of votes) and entered into the government coalition with József Antall as a leader. In the period when the coalition of "broad opposition", (besides small farmers and the main pillar of the former opposition – Antall's *Hungarian democratic forum* (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*) also *Christian democracy* (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*) participated in it, started to split, the head of Farmers' Party became populist József Torgyan (Dawisha 1997). In the elections in 1994, *Farmer's Party* got the fourth place with 8.82 % of votes; the third place with 13.15 % of votes in 1998 meant the return to the government for them, that time together with *Young Democrats* (*Fidesz: Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Magyar Polgári Párt*) and *Hungarian Democratic Forum*. In the elections in 2002, *Farmers' Party* did not succeed. The number of votes was even not sufficient for the party to get to the Parliament.

We can see a continuity in a remarkable Fidesz's shift from the liberal pro-West reflection of the contradiction town – the country in the Hungarian society had other connotations in comparison with Poland. Although collectivization in Hungary was made (about 80% of land was transferred to "socialized" sector), small farming was allowed and the space for private business was increasing. In the nineties, there was neither law for land restitu-

tions nor any form of cooperative farm disintegration, though it was possible to purchase state land. The result of this communal transformation was that the structure of agricultural production was approaching to the Western model more than in Poland. The evidence of the mentioned difference is the fact that a great part of Hungarian farmers were specialized to market production at the beginning of the nineties (Granberg 1997). The factor that contributed to the success of *Farmer's Party* was the revival of the traditional conflict line of the Hungarian politics (noticeable in the national sentiment and defence of Christian and traditional values), that splits urban and rural social milieu. The position of *Farmers' Party*, which was trying to be a follower of the pre-war representative of the country, strengthened only in opposition and on the contrary, co-existence in coalition with the similarly oriented party (*Hungarian Democratic Forum* 1990–94, *Fidesz* 1998–2002) weakened it to a great extent. Orientation to national and traditional values in the years 1998–2002, and in the decline of *Independent Farmers' Party*, whose bad luck in the elections of 2002 caused that rural voters were overtaken by coalition *Fidesz – Hungarian Democratic Forum* with Victor Orbán as a representative.

RURAL CLEAVAGES IN THE SLOVAKIAN SOCIETY

An interesting case for the research of the contradiction town-the country is represented by the Slovakian milieu where after the year 1989, no significant agrarian formation did appear. At a simplified view it would be possible to state that the urban-rural conflict did not play any important role. But if we consider election behaviour of rural and urban voters in 1992 to 1998, it is obvious that the Slovak political parties got divided into a group with the election background in towns and into political powers with the election basis in the country. The representatives of the latter ones were *Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko* and *Slovenská národná strana*. In the elections in 1992 and 1994, the rural part of the Slovak society won against the town part that was more traditionally orientated. Thus it is possible to state briefly that although the rural cleavage was not institutionally expressed by any important agrarian formation, it contributed significantly to the profilation of the Slovakian agrarian system (Kopeček 1999). On the contrary, in the framework of the Czech political system there were many agrarian parties and movements, but that visible result of the mentioned contradiction did not play there such an essential role as in the Slovakian case.

AGRARIAN PARTIES IN THE CZECH POLITICAL SYSTEM

In the late eighties and early nineties, there sprang up a slew of political parties, some of which presented them-

selves as defenders of rural and agricultural interests, that is as trade union political parties (Fiala 1998). Despite their endeavour, albeit with various emphasis, to continue in the traditions of the historical Agrarian Party of the First Republic, in reality they represented the interests of various socio-professional groups within Czech agriculture. A conspicuously characterising difference was reflected in the stance of individual agrarian parties towards the course of agricultural transformation, which enabled the operation of new enterprising groups and changed its collective character (Blažek 2002).

According to this criterion, which was not entirely applicable, especially in the early nineties, it is possible to categorize the political parties and movements, originating along the classical urban-rural cleavage, into two groups:

- a) republican-agrarian, presenting themselves as representatives of interests of the emerging layer of private farmers, and
- b) collective-oriented, which originated amongst collective farmers whose interests they tried to represent.

Justification of this chosen characterization is confirmed by the names of these political parties. The first group of parties emphasized their attributes such as agrarian, republican or peasant. Collective oriented parties used within their names the attribute farmers, reminiscing discussions of the exile government about the future form of the post-war political scene. According to the unrealized ideas of Edvard Beneš, the new farmers party should by this name differentiate itself from the Agrarian Party of the First Republic (Rokoský 1998).

First republican-agrarian parties were established towards the end of 1989. From the initiative of Václav Davídek, the first steering committee of the *Svobodná rolnická strana* was established on December 14th, 1989 in Prague. The declaration of this new party was signed by Vladislav Hlávko, Oldřich Slíva, Jan Janáč and Václav Davídek. The next meeting of this party took place in Brno, where it was decided by vote, that the new party would return to the First Republic tradition and bear the name *Republikánská strana československého venkova*. In no time some personal conflicts surfaced in the steering committee and, after the departure of Oldřich Slíva, who preferred the republican tradition, Vladimír Hlávko asserted himself and became the representative of the original *Svobodná rolnická strana*. Just before the June elections in 1990, this party joined together with the *Československá strana lidová*, *Křesťansko-demokratická strana* and the *Křesťansko-demokratické hnutie* to form a movement called *Křesťansko-demokratická unie-Československá strana lidová* (KDU-ČSL) (Pospíšil 1994). The political platform of KDU-ČSL indicated the attitude of the parliamentary majority towards agricultural transformation. This platform defined that the Collective was “a free union of owners and its basis is private agriculture”. After elections, this platform became an integral part of all right-wing political parties' programs (Čmejrek 1997).

The group around Oldřich Slíva founded another party, which was registered by the Ministry of the Interior as *Republikánská strana československého venkova*. Radim Donát was elected its chairman. Despite its later separation from the collective political parties, this party ran for the June 1990 elections jointly with them as *Spojenectví zemědělců a venkova*. At the beginning of the nineties, the party tried unsuccessfully to form a unified agrarian party, with the participation of representatives of *Svobodná rolnická strana*, *Československá zemědělská strana* and *Republikánská strana* in exile, with Vladimír Dostál as its leader since 1984. Last but not least, the party initiated the inception of the *Svaz vlastníků půdy* and later the Agrarian Chamber.

Independently from the above-mentioned parties, in mid-December 1989 a new party arose, the *Československá republikánská strana zemědělská měst a venkova*. Half a year later, it ran for elections in the framework of *Občanské fórum* (OF) as the *Agrární strana při OF*. Later, under the leadership of Miloš Vaňura, it changed its name to *Agrární strana České republiky*. In the above-mentioned parliamentary elections in June 1990, it obtained financial means for further activities which were not manifested (Pospíšil 1994). At the beginning of 1990 two other political parties, representing regionalized rural areas, were established: *Strana českého venkova* and *Strana moravského venkova*, which, similarly to the *Agrární strana České republiky*, did not participate in the unification process.

The results of the first post-November parliamentary elections in June 1990 did not show, owing to its plebiscite character, (*Občanské fórum* versus Communist Party), what kind of response there was amongst voters to the republican-agrarian parties. Only the communal elections in November 1990 demonstrated that the support for agrarian parties was marginal. More notable results were registered only by the collective political parties, *Československá strana zemědělská* (1.52%) and *Politické hnutí členů JZD* (0.93%).

Beside the absence of local political organizations, prominent personages and financial means, the lack of success was also due to the loss of the conscious historical connection to the pre-war agrarian politics among most of the public. On top of this, republicanism became an attribute of a different political stream. Another principal reason for failure is to be seen in the decrease in the number of voters, quite different from the pre-war conditions.

In the second half of 1991, negotiations about unification of republican-agrarian political parties began, from the initiative of the representatives of *Republikánská strana československého venkova*. By its unification with *Strana českého venkova* (January 4th, 1992), there emerged a new political party *Agrární republikánská strana*, headed by Radim Donát. Finally in July 1992, the congress of *Svobodná rolnická strana* decided on unification with *Agrární republikánská strana*. Both par-

ties accepted a new name, *Česká a moravská agrární strana*, with Jiří Dušek as its chairman. One of its representatives, Otakar Kokeš, explained in his article written shortly after unification, why the *Zemědělská strana* led by Trnka, which actually ceased to be agriculturally and/or rurally based at the moment it became part of *Liberálně sociální unie*, did not join the integration process. In the unions' program, there remained little space for the rights and needs of rural people and agriculture. By liberalism obscuring its left-wing tendencies, leading towards full preservation of totalitarian Communist Legacy (Kokeš 1992)

In the following years, *Česká a moravská agrární strana* participated on candidate rosters of other political parties without success. In the communal elections in 1994, former weak voter support for all agrarian parties was confirmed, weakening even more in 1998. At the end of the nineties, *Česká a moravská agrární strana* returned, in its quest for differentiating itself from *Agrární strana České republiky*, towards its historical name *Republikánská strana zemědělského a malorolnického lidu*. In its program, it concentrated on criticising the ruling parties for insufficient efforts in settling accounts with the communist past. In the agricultural arena, it demanded a revision of property transfers of collectives, strong protective measures for local markets, and stood as a representative of private farmers' interests and a defender of collective farming.

In the post-November period, besides republican-agrarian parties, whose names pointed towards the tradition of the agrarian party from the First Republic, there also arose a number of republican parties. This attribute, though, referred to a political stream with no tradition on the domestic scene. Founders of these parties were inspired by the American and French republican parties (Mareš 2000). A prominent position among these parties was gained in the subsequent years by a group centered around Miroslav Sládek, representing *Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa* (SPR-RSČ). In the Czech environment, republicanism became synonymous with populist anti-establishment extreme right-wing, drawing from Western ideals.

Even though the party professed its allegiance to the tradition of the First Republic Agrarian Party, they had very little in common, and the only reason for its stance was to attract more voters. The republican-agrarian form of political parties originating along the classical urban-rural cleavage was not sufficiently strong to reach and remain in the parliamentary structure and was soon obliterated.

Cooperative political parties and movements have played a more significant role in the Czech party system. The first appeal to create a political party supporting cooperative movement was noticed at the beginning of December 1989, at the 11th Congress of Cooperatives (JZD). The foundation congress of the *Československá strana zemědělská* (ČSZ or ZS) took place on the 13th

January 1989. As a party leader, there was elected František Trnka. Another party established in the same political environment was the *Politické hnutí členů JZD*, further on known under the name *Hnutí zemědělců* with the chairman František Melich (Kříž 1995). But František Trnka's personal relation to the cooperative complex of Slušovice was soon sharply criticized by the agrarian section of the *OF*. This was one of the reasons why its representatives appeared as independent candidates in the *Spojenectví zemědělců a venkova* (SZV). Its founders took advantage of the liberal rules of the election law as a result of which it was possible to create a political subject, where a number of different political parties could be represented: *Československá strana integrace*, *Republikánská strana československého venkova*, *Strana moravského venkova*, *Hnutí za rovnoprávné postavení žen v Čechách a na Moravě*, *Hnutí důchodců za životní jistoty* and *Celostátní aktiv občanů*.

Even if this purpose-built movement, according to the pollster, should have overcome the 5% limit for ingression to the parliament, it did not succeed to enter the representative institutions, they got only 4% in the elections to the Federal Parliament and the Czech National Council. This was due to the failure of the surprisingly strong support of the regional-nationalist orientated *Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii – Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko* (HSD-SMS). Even if the SZV received 6.5 % in the West-Bohemian region, in the north of Moravia it got only 2% which was quite unexpected (Krejčí 1992).

The conception of the transformation of agriculture was the principal contradictory issue in the first parliamentary elections in 1990. The discussion became to be visibly personified as it consisted in mutual attacks between the State Secretary for Agriculture, Bohumír Kubát, defender of the radical transformation of cooperatives, and representative of the ČSZ, František Trnka, who defended the interests of the cooperative movement. The right wing parliamentary party with the assistance of the *Koalice na podporu radikální reformy v zemědělství*, associating different pressure groups of interests, succeeded in pushing through an amended version of the original governmental Law on land. This law is known under the name of "3T" because of its authors (Tyl, Tlustý and Tomášek). The liberal version of the law which did not count with the existing form of cooperatives launched considerable criticism from the representatives of the cooperative movement. In spite of the fact that the law has soon been amended, the rhetoric of the ČSZ remained considerably radical with regard to the continually decreasing economic indicators of the agrarian sector.

In the second half of 1990, a new coalition was being formed, involving three extra-parliamentary political parties: *Zemědělská strana* (ČSZ), *Československá strana socialistická* (ČSS) and *Strana zelených* (SZ). Representatives of *Hnutí zemědělců* also appeared on the list of

candidates of this subject, *Liberálně sociální unie* (LSU), registered on the 6th December 1990. As a chairman of LSU, there was elected the chairman of ČSZ František Trnka, Ladislav Dvořák and Karel Mucha became vice-chairman. Before election, this election purpose built coalition was re-registered as a political movement with regard to the 9% closing limit, and presented itself as a over-roofing right-centrist political subject. Before the new electoral law was passed, even the nationalist-orientated HSD-SMS started negotiations with LSU about its ingression, but in the end it presented its candidates separately. In its election programme, LSU called for equality of different property forms, in a similar way as the social democrats. This attitude was in contradiction to the rightist parties, who preferred a profound privatization and restitution.

From the point of view of the ideological orientation of the voters, LSU represented "an ideal coalition" in the parliamentary elections in 1992, as the different political parties belonged to diversified political focus points: SZ represented voters gathered around post-material environmental values, ČSZ represented professional interests of farmers and the country. ČSS emphasized social issues. Electoral movement succeeded to engage a part of country voters unsatisfied with the governmental policy and at the same time unwilling to lean towards the historical left. Pragmatic junction with the SZ brought voters interested in environmental programmes. In the political spectrum, after its admission to the parliament (in the Czech National Council it gained 6.52% votes), LSU temporarily occupied the position of the left-center (Krejčí 1994).

Results of sociological researches demonstrated, that LSU was elected especially by farmers and the preference votes indicated as well, that it was the ČSZ which helped to overcome the 5% closing limit for the ingression to the parliament.

The election movement gained most votes in East Bohemia, South Bohemia and North Bohemia, on the other hand, it was the least successful in Prague and (the same happened two years ago) in North Moravia. With regards to the disintegration of the Federation, election results in the Czech National Council were essential – LSU was able to get major representation here, thanks to the candidature of the leading representatives of ČSZ (Krejčí 1994).

Soon after election, the heterogeneity of this purpose-built movement came out, when some deputies left its joined club. Another weakening point was the decision of ČSS to change its name to *Liberální strana národně sociální* (LSNS), as a result of which its deputies formed their own parliamentary club. The leaders of LSU started to collaborate with the Social Democrats (ČSSD), which presented itself as a centrist party. In March 1993, František Trnka, Miloš Zeman and Jaroslav Vlček announced the establishment of the common shadow governmental cabinet within the framework of

so-called Realistic block. A few months later, as a result of an enforced legal transformation of the purpose election movements into political parties with individual membership, the original LSU definitely fell apart. After the National Socialists, who became independent, SZ made the same at the end of 1993.

At the end of April 1994, the leadership of LSU announced its departure from the Realistic Block and the beginning of its integration to *Českomoravská strana středu* (ČMSS), which arose after the disintegration of HSD-SMS. The chairman of the parliamentary deputies club of ČMSS, Rudolf Opařil, has conditioned the creation of a new centrist party to the termination of the cooperation of LSU with ČSSD, the leadership of which started to criticize the government coalition from the left-populist positions. Both parties established contacts with *Svobodní demokraté* (former *Občanské hnutí*) as well. Though they agreed on a joined election coalition in the Prague municipal elections, in the end, the leadership of *Svobodní demokraté* denied to take part in the forthcoming integration. In December 1994, the common congress of LSU and ZS decided to establish a new coalition under the name of *Českomoravská unie středu* (ČMUS), the party chief of which was elected Jan Jegl (ČMSS) and the first deputy chairman Radek Navrátil from the Agrarian Party. In the next period, the *Křesťansko-sociální unie* joined them in a free coalition as well. In the Prague congress of those 4 parties, they agreed on their integration into ČMUS, which became a party with individual membership. In the elections to the Parliament in 1996, a new conflict line in the agrarian sections of the political parties programmes was formulated: the extension of the government regulations in the agrarian sector and the protection of the national market. The representatives of ČMUS expressed their support for more extensive subsidies and for the maintenance of the existing condition of the Czech agriculture: "The world is heading for large scale production. Small enterprises play only complementary role in the world's food production".

Expectations to form a strong centrist party, in the elections in June 1996, were too ambitious (0.45% votes). At this time, KDU-ČSL and ČSSD were perceived by the Czech public as the main protagonists of the agrarian interests. The election programmes of these two parties became closer as regards to governmental intervention policies, while ODS acted as the main representative and defender of private farmers. As compared with the Polish or Hungarian environment, where voters, who did not agree with the governmental policy, were engaged by populist agrarian parties, in the Czech environment political subjects outside the mainstream political spectrum, the Communists and SPR-RSČ took advantage of the discontentment of some parts of countryside inhabitants (Machonin 1996).

Another important factor was the withdrawal of the support of the cooperative movement from ZS and *Hnutí*

zemědělců, as the new space they helped to form in the parliament to push through their interests, in the previous voting term, did not bring any significant changes. Though the cooperative movement achieved the legislative initiative, it did not succeed in breaking through the parliamentary majority. In the second half of the nineties, the representatives of the *Českomoravský svaz zemědělských družstev* got closer to the Social Democracy. This for example became evident when the chairman of the union, Jan Fencel, who had been a candidate of LSU in 1992, became a member of ČSSD. On the other hand, the representatives of private farmers interest organizations started to support ODS (Blažek 2002).

CONCLUSION

When summarizing the results of investigation of the rural cleavages and its influence on the origin of agrarian political parties in selected Central European states after 1989, it is in principle possible to confirm the presupposition that this conflict line had a constitutive potential, even if it did not lead to the origin of independent agrarian political formations. Moreover, Lipset's, Rokkan's or Urwin's conclusions are confirmed (although they were originally formulated for a time period, when the West European party systems only originated), according to which the origin and success of the agrarian political parties is supported by a specific structure of agrarian ownership with prevailing small farms. In this case, the agrarian parties profiled as strong defenders of agrarian and agricultural interests with a distinct populist rhetoric, directed against the impact of economic reforms and opening of markets (an example is the activity of the Polish movement *Samoobrona*). Another confirmed theoretic presupposition for the origin of agrarian parties is the statement that agrarian formations were set up on the basis of cultural cleavage between town and country, in this case it is possible to speak about reviving the traditional cleavage typical for most countries of the former Soviet Union.

As the Hungarian environment showed, the success of agrarian parties can be distinctly limited by the competition of other parties, taking also the side of the defenders of national and traditional values. In this connection, the Slovak party system is interesting, in which the distinct cleavage town – country polarized two groups of political parties, but gives no origin to the elective successful agrarian political subject.

It is possible to state that the newly established agrarian parties and movements in post-communist states had a strong tendency to pursue organizationally or at least symbolically the successful pre-war political parties of this orientation. Poland represents an interesting exception, where, on the contrary, one of the agrarian parties originated as a successor of satellite parties (typical was its program appealing to the interest of agriculture as a

whole and a restraint in the state – church relation). Elsewhere, successful political subjects presenting themselves as defenders of the agrarian sector in the followed post-communist states did not emerge, another exception was only the temporary success of the ČSZ.

The shown theoretical theses are also valid for the Czech environment, where at the beginning of the 1990's several corporative political parties originated, the program of which was the defence of interests of agrarians and the country. In this period, there were lead several unsuccessful negotiations about forming a comprehensive agrarian party, pursuing the tradition of the historical Agrarian Party.

According to the initial collectivist character of the agricultural sphere besides the republican-agrarian parties, the political parties and movements representing the co-operative sector played an important part. Their representatives got in the framework of the specific political movement LSU into the Chamber of Deputies in June 1992, but they were not able to repeat the same result. The effort concerning participation of the representatives of the ZS at the creation of a central political party (ČMUS) was not successful.

Attempts to form corporative orientated parties in the Czech environment were a failure due to several main reasons. Besides the distinct ideological profiles of the bipolar party spectrum and the overtaking of thematic circle and voters of all-people parties, which was connected with the economic recession and radicalisation of voters, this failure was influenced especially by the decline of a suitable voters' basis in consequence of the modernization of agriculture and on the whole the basic urbanization of society, in consequence of which the rural cleavages showed in the elective behaviour only at random. Similar as in other states of the former Soviet block with the specific Polish exception, the agrarian political parties and movements were marginalized in the 1990's. The role of the representatives of socio-professional agricultural groups were here taken over by the economic interest organizations the representatives of which began to carry through their interests by the means of non-corporative political parties.

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Arrived on 7th November 2002

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