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# 14 Czechoslovak parliamentary elections 1990: old patterns, new trends and lots of surprises

*Petr Jehlička, Tomáš Kostecký, Luděk Sýkora*

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The Czechoslovak parliamentary election of June 1990 was one very important event in the post-communist development of state and society after the November 1989 upheaval. On the basis of the results, the federal parliament and both (in the Czech and Slovak republics) national parliaments were formed in a fully democratic way for the first time since 1946. Thus, the 1990 elections allowed further legal steps towards the re-creation of a democratic society of the Western type. Czechoslovakia had already been a democracy before World War II and, with some exceptions, was again a democracy for a short time after the war. The Communist coup in February 1948 transformed the country into a non-democratic 'people's republic'.

In the interwar years, 1919–1939, Czechoslovakia was the only stable democracy in Central Europe, holding regularly-scheduled elections. The electoral law was based on the proportional representation (PR) system and this electoral system has now been restored in a very similar form. In addition, some of the important pre-war political parties survived the communist regime and others were founded again in the wake of its 1989 defeat. These continuities offer the researcher the chance to study the similarities in voting patterns in Czechoslovakia, before and after the communist period.

This chapter begins by providing general information on the Czechoslovak elections. Against this background, some of the most interesting results of the 1990 elections are presented in detail and are interpreted with reference to the historical roots of contemporary voting patterns and in terms of relations between the present voting patterns and the geography of social, economic and cultural phenomena in the country.

## **The political context**

The surprisingly rapid withdrawal of the communists from the Czechoslovak Government started already in December 1989, immediately after the 'Velvet Revolution' of the month before and political events culminated in the elections of June 1990. The 'Government of National Understanding' was set up as the beginning of a transition period in December 1989. The Communist Party occupied only a minority of the ministerial posts in that government. The remaining posts were given to Civic Forum and The Public Against Violence (based on major opposition groups against the Government before November 1989) and to two historical parties, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party and the Czechoslovak People's Party, both of which had survived the forty-two years of one-party rule as satellites of the Communist Party. The formation

of this new federal government effectively brought the communist monopoly of political power to an end.

The election by parliamentary deputies of Alexander Dubček (leading figure of the 1968 Prague Spring) as Chairman of the Federal Assembly and of Václav Havel (a founding signatory of Charter 77 and a well-known dissident) as President followed at the end of 1989. In his very first speech in office, President Havel emphasized the need to hold free elections in Czechoslovakia. A further reduction of the role of the Communist Party resulted from co-optation of primarily non-party people to the three parliaments in order to replace former Communist deputies. Hence, non-communist majorities were established in both federal and republic parliaments. Czechoslovakia thus became the first country in Eastern Europe in which the organisation of free and competitive parliamentary elections was supervised by the opposition and not by a still-ruling Communist Party (Wightman, 1991).

The structure of contemporary elected bodies was created in October 1968 when the Law of the Federation was approved by the Czechoslovak parliament. In accordance with the federal arrangement of the state, one federal and two parliaments for the republics were founded. The Federal Parliament, called 'Federal Assembly', still has the greatest legislative power. It is composed of two chambers (the Chamber of the People and the Chamber of Nations) with equal rights and responsibilities and each have the same number of members, 150. Members of the Chamber of the People are elected in the whole of Czechoslovakia proportionally to the population of both republics. Consequently, there are approximately twice as many representatives from the Czech Republic as from the Slovak Republic in this chamber. The Chamber of Nations consists of two sections of the same size (seventy-five seats); members of one section are representatives elected in the Czech Republic and members of the other section are elected in the Slovak Republic. In effect, this is similar to the US House of Representatives, based on population, and the US Senate, based on area, with the same number from each place without regard to the size of the place. But to prevent domination by the much larger Czech population, all constitutional laws and other important laws must be approved in both sections separately; Czech representatives simply cannot outvote Slovaks. Besides the Federal Assembly, there are two parliaments for the republics called the Czech National Council and the Slovak National Council. The Czech National Council has 200 members and the Slovak National Council has 150 members. The division of powers between the Federal Assembly and the National Councils is determined by constitutional law.

After the revolution of November 1989, it was generally seen as necessary to change the majority electoral system (only one seat in each electoral district) that was used in the quasi-elections during the communist rule. A new electoral law prescribing a system of proportional representation was approved by the Federal Assembly on 27 February 1990, after several round table meetings of the Communist Party, the Civic Forum, the Public Against Violence and some smaller parties who were the former satellites of the Communist Party. For several reasons, there was a broad consensus concerning the introduction of the PR system. It appealed to the Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence as likely to provide a fairly accurate reflection of the real state of political opinion after forty-two years of communist regime. It was also argued that a majority system would probably produce an undesirable two party structure (Civic Forum together with the Public Against Violence versus the Communist Party). For the Communist Party and its former satellites, a PR system implied more chances to

have at least some parliamentary representation. Moreover, a PR system had been used both in pre-war Czechoslovakia and in the 1946 elections.

The electoral law instituted twelve multi-member electoral districts. Names of candidates were listed on official ballot papers in accordance with a party's proposal. Every voter had in fact three votes, two for the two chambers of the Federal Assembly and a third one for his/her National Council. As a change to the pre-war electoral law, a possibility of indicating preferences was introduced; voters could mark from one to four candidates' names on every ballot paper. If any candidate received more than 10 per cent preferences, he/she was shifted to the top of the list. In order to avoid a high degree of party fragmentation, so typical of the Czechoslovak parliament before World War II, a legal threshold was approved. To be represented in the Federal Assembly, a party needed to obtain at least 5 per cent of the votes on the territory of at least one republic. Thus, the hurdle differs from the German case, where a party needs 5 per cent nationally. For representation in the Czech National Council, at least 5 per cent of the votes was necessary; for seats in the Slovak National Council, 3 per cent of the votes was sufficient. It was further determined that parties with more than 2 per cent of the votes in either one of the republics would receive 10 Czechoslovak crowns (\$1 = approximately 30 crowns) for every vote from the government. It was simultaneously made possible for the parties to borrow money from the state to finance their electoral campaign.

### **Historical background**

The 1990 elections were the sixth free elections in more than seventy years of Czechoslovak history but the first after forty-two years of communist rule and it was forty-four years since the last free elections in 1946. The first general election took place in 1920 and the next pre-war elections followed in 1925, 1929 and 1935. The electoral system of the first Czechoslovak republic was essentially very similar to the present one; it was also a nearly pure PR system. The most important difference with respect to the present situation was the existence of the single parliament composed of the House of Representatives (300 seats) and the smaller Senate (150 seats). Members of both chambers were elected in the whole of Czechoslovakia proportionally to the population of the respective historical lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia). Usually about twenty political parties took part in the elections; the most important parties are listed in Table 14.1.

Conditions changed considerably after World War II, when the influence of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party in Czechoslovak politics increased. The participation of political parties in the 1946 elections was restricted in accordance with the Košice Government Programme (1944), based on Communist Party proposals. This was accepted by the Czechoslovak government in exile and served as a basic programme for the first post-war government. Only four parties could participate in the Czech lands or in Slovakia. The Communist Party ran in both parts of Czechoslovakia, but the rest of the party spectrum was different. While in the Czech lands, three historical parties, namely, the Czechoslovak People's Party, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party and the Czechoslovak Social Democracy ran against the communists, in Slovakia, non-communist forces were represented by newly established parties (the Democratic Party, the Freedom Party and the Labour Party).

Table 14.1 A classification of major parties according to the left-right dimension in Czechoslovakia 1920–1992

Time period	Communists	Left	Centre	Centre-Right	Separatist
1920	Communists (#a)-13-10-10)b)	Social Democracy (26-9-13-13) socialists	national democracy (6-5-5-6)	republican/agrarian (14-14-15-14)	Hlinka's party (4-7-6-7)
1925		(8-9-10-9)		People's party (8-10-8-8)	
1929		German Soc. Dem. (11-6-7-4)	German agrarians (4-8-5-2)	Sudeten German party (#-#-#-15)	
1935					
1946	CR <sup>c</sup> SR <sup>c</sup>	Social Democracy (16) Labour Party (3)	socialists (24) Freedom party (3)	People's party (20) Democratic party (62)	
1948-1989			Communists + satellites Freedom Party and Slovak Revival Party in Slovak Republic		
		Socialists and People's Party in the Czech Republic			
1990	Communists (13,13)d)	Social Democracy (4,2) socialists (3,0) agrarians (4,2)	Civic Forum (50,-) PAV (-,32) KDH (-,18) Coexistence (-,9) greens (3,3)	KDU (People's) (9,-) Democratic party (-,4)	Slovak national (-,11) Moravians (9,-)
January 1992 <sup>e</sup> -	CR	Social Democracy (13) Liberal Social Union (5)	OH (4)	ODS (21) People's Party (5) ODA (4)	
-SR	Democratic Left (10)	HZDS (27)	KDH (15) Coexistence (4)	ODU-VPN (4) Democratic party (3)	Slovak national (10)

Notes: Electoral results in parentheses are in percentages of total votes.

a) the party did not exist; b) electoral results in (1920-1925-1929-1935); c) CR – Czech Republic, SR – Slovak Republic

d) electoral results in (CR, SR); e) public opinion poll (*source*: Hospodářské noviny, 29.1.1992)

Source: Federal Statistical Office (1920-1946); Svobodné Slovo (11.6.1990), Vol. XLIV, No. 135, p. 1. (1991); Hospodářské noviny, 29.1.1992 (1992)

With one slight exception, all four Czech parties participating in 1946 ran in all pre-war elections as well as in the 1990 elections. (The communists did not participate in the 1920 elections because the party was only founded in 1921). We call these parties 'historical' and their electoral results can therefore be compared very precisely over time. But one should keep in mind that the remainder of the party spectrum changed considerably over time. The analysis of the long-term (from 1920 to 1990) continuity of voting in Slovakia can be focused on the communists only, because no other party was present there also in the pre-war period, in 1946 and in 1990. However, it is possible to recognize two main political streams in the history of Slovak politics. The first one represents forces which have always claimed the autonomy or independence of Slovakia and the other consists of pro-Czechoslovak parties there. A comparison of voting patterns of both camps provides interesting results.

The participation of the Czech historical parties in the six free general elections enables us to establish whether there is a regional continuity of voting in the Czech lands during the entire existence of independent Czechoslovakia. The most intriguing aspect is obviously the more than forty years gap between the elections of 1946 and 1990 and its influence on the voting patterns. Jehlička and Sýkora (1990) attempted to answer whether 'the several decades gap between the 1990 election and the last election that can be considered free (1946) . . . did not obliterate the local cultural and social climate in certain regions, which is the basis for the preservation of the continuity of support for the historical political parties in the Czech lands'. They demonstrated a certain stability of regional voting patterns. The present contribution additionally includes an analysis of the historical roots of Slovak politics and also provides an evaluation of the 1990 election as a whole against a historical background.

### General electoral results

The 1990 elections created a solid basis for a pluralist democracy in Czechoslovakia. They took place without serious incidents. An extremely high electoral turnout (more than 96 per cent of those eligible to vote) confirmed the legitimacy of the elected bodies. This very high participation in free elections can partly be explained by a great desire of the people to choose their own future, partly it could be understood as a consequence of a massive campaign in the media, and by most political parties, against non-participation.

Although sixty-six political groupings passed the legal requirements for registration as a political party, only twenty-three of them were registered for the elections. Furthermore, one of those (the Organization of Independent Rumanians) dropped out three weeks before the election day. Eleven parties put up candidates throughout the whole of the country and others formed separate Czech and Slovak organizations within similar sections of the political spectrum. Thirteen of them got more than 2 per cent of the votes in at least one of the republics; these parties are listed in Table 14.2. Eight of them crossed the 5 per cent threshold and as a result entered the Federal Parliament. The Czech National Council was composed of four parties and the Slovak National Council of seven parties, though some of them still preferred to call themselves movements, rather than see themselves as part of the establishment. All parties that gained seats in the Czech parliament did so in the Federal Assembly as well. On the other hand, two Slovak parties (the Greens and the Democratic Party) that managed

to get over the 3 per cent limit for the parliament of the republic did not succeed in passing the 5 per cent limit for the Federal Parliament.

It is possible to distinguish some groupings among the political parties and movements running in the elections. A special category are the two movements, Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence, that apparently carried the banner of the November revolution and won the elections. Historical parties such as Social Democracy, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party and the (Slovak) Democratic Party tried to resume their pre-communist traditions and on that basis ran their electoral campaign. Yet, they generally did not get as many votes as expected. Although the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia played a special role in the elections, it is considered as a historical one as well as the Christian and Democratic Union, a coalition with the historical People's Party as the main component. Sizable support for ethnic and separatist parties and movements surprisingly allowed their entrance to the parliaments and drew attention to an increasingly important feature of the multi-ethnic character of the country in the contemporary Czechoslovak political scene. The post-material politics represented by the Green Party also managed to get into a parliament (Slovak

**Table 14.2** Results of parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia 1990

Party	Federal		Assembly		National councils	
	Chamber of People in CR	in SR	Chamber of Nations in CR	in SR	Czech	Slovak
1.	53.15	—	49.96	—	49.50	—
2.	—	32.54	—	37.28	—	29.34
3.	13.48	13.81	13.80	13.43	13.24	13.34
4.	—	18.98	—	16.66	—	19.20
5.	8.69	—	8.75	—	8.42	—
6.	7.89	—	9.10	—	10.03	—
7.	—	10.96	—	11.44	—	13.94
8.	0.08	8.58	—	8.49	—	8.66
9.	—	4.40	—	3.68	—	4.39
10.	3.10	3.20	3.44	2.58	4.10	3.48
11.	3.77	2.58	3.99	2.10	4.11	2.51
12.	3.84	1.89	4.17	1.51	4.11	1.81
13.	2.75	0.06	2.89	0.06	2.68	0.03
14.	3.25	3.00	3.90	2.77	3.81	3.30
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.00

*Notes:* CR – Czech Republic, SR – Slovak Republic. Party codes: 1. Civic Forum (OF); 2. Public Against Violence (VPN); 3. Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC); 4. Christian Democratic Movement (KDH); 5. Christian and Democratic Union (KDU); 6. Movement for Self-Governing Democracy - Society for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS); 7. Slovak National Party (SNS); 8. Coexistence (coalition of national minorities) & Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement; 9. Democratic Party (DS); 10. Green Party (SZ); 11. Alliance of Agrarians and Countryside (SZV); 12. Social Democracy (SD); 13. Czechoslovak Socialist Party (CSS); 14. Other parties.

*Source:* Svobodné Slovo (11.6.1990), Vol. XLIV, No. 135, p. 1.

National Council) and their results in some environmentally-damaged regions were also substantial. There were two other parties that got considerable support - the Christian Democratic Movement and the Alliance of Agrarians and Countryside. Among the smallest parties that got less than 2 per cent of the vote, the most interesting were a Friends of Beer Party (a similar party ran in Poland in 1991) and the core of an extreme right-wing party.

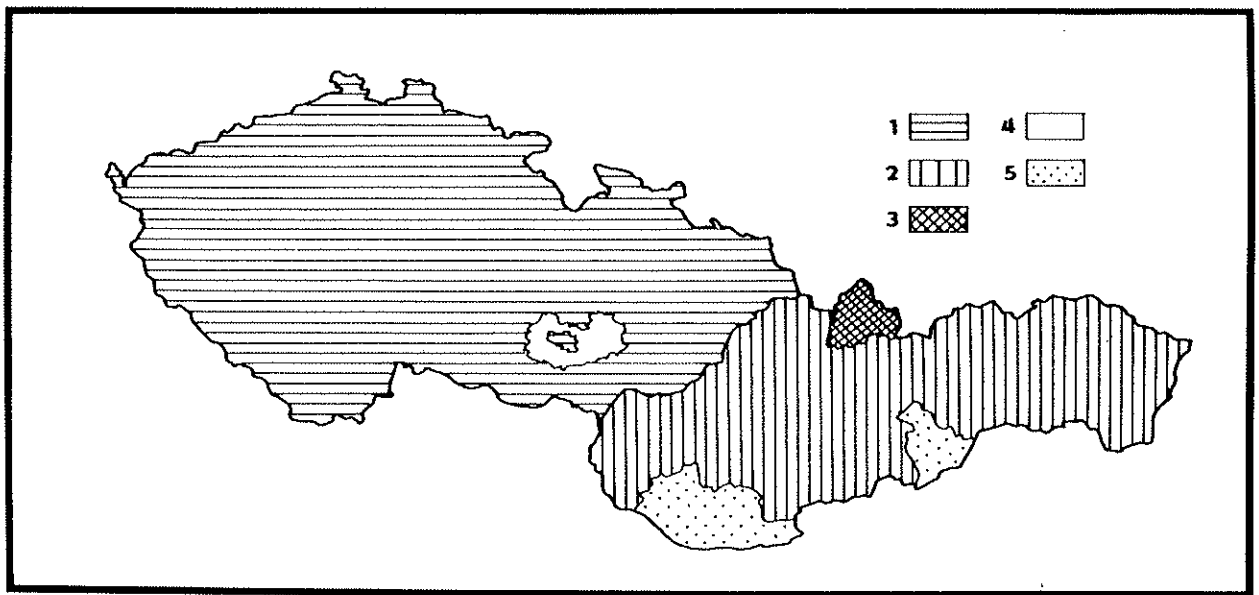
### *Movements*

Civic Forum and Public Against Violence were established in November 1989 as loosely-organized movements that united all colours of democratic opinion from reform communists to the right-wing oriented political forces. Their representatives led the revolution, initiated the negotiations with the Communist Party and took crucial steps in pre-election governments and parliaments. The movements were identified in the public mind as guarantors of the return to pluralistic democracy, private ownership and a market economy. They entered the elections with the advantage of their prominent role in the 'Government of National Understanding' in the six months up to the elections and with the presence among their members of some of the best-known artistic and political personalities in Czechoslovakia. Their role was seen as the united opposition to the Communist Party and the elections were viewed as a referendum for or against totalitarianism. The electoral campaign slogan 'Parties are for party-liners, Civic Forum is for everybody!' expressed the general feature of the movements, which was the great variability of ideas under one umbrella with the overthrow of the communist regime as its main task.

Anti-communist feeling found expression in a generally high level of support in the whole country (Figure 14.1). Nevertheless, some interesting differences in the levels of voting support showed a tendency towards increasing the vote percentage for Civic Forum with increasing size of the commune. This occurred in all regions. The spatial pattern of the election returns shows that Civic Forum won its highest support in the cities and suburbs of large cities. The best example of this was Prague and its surroundings. The geographically-different rates of support for Civic Forum in the 1990 election can perhaps be best explained by considering the movement as the diffusion of an innovation touching the different parts of the settlement system sequentially both in a vertical manner (hierarchical diffusion) and in a horizontal direction (neighbourhood diffusion) from the centre. The implication of these processes is that historical parties that had their core strength at the top of the urban hierarchy and its surroundings had most difficulty in competing with these new (only since 1990) movements.

### *Czech historical parties*

The four Czech historical parties usually gained more than 40 per cent of the votes in the Czech lands before the war and they got almost 100 per cent in 1946 because of the restricted electoral participation of parties. Their share of the vote in the Czech Republic in June 1990 was 29 per cent. Only two historical parties gained support comparable to what they received in the past. The Communists received



**Figure 14.1** Winning parties according to districts: 1) Civic Forum, 2) Public Against Violence, 3) Christian Democratic Movement, 4) Movement for Self-Governing Democracy – Society for Moravia and Silesia and 5) Coexistence and Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement

even more (13 per cent) than they usually did before the war (about 10 per cent). The People's Party, who in 1990 overwhelmingly dominated the coalition of the Christian and Democratic Union (KDU) got 8 per cent in 1990 against approximately 9 per cent before the war. The other two historical parties gained only one third of votes that they did before 1948. The Socialists received about 3 per cent of the vote and the Social Democrats 4 per cent (compare these numbers with those in Table 14.1). Successful or not, the regional continuity of voting survived the communist period as Figure 14.2 shows (Jehlička and Šýkora 1991). This figure portrays on the one hand the regions with continuous high support in the core areas of the respective political parties (dark shading) and, on the other, the areas where parties have traditionally had the lowest support (cross-hatched). Core areas were defined as the areas where the respective parties were most successful in every election. (For a detailed description of the methodology, see Jehlička and Šýkora, 1991.)

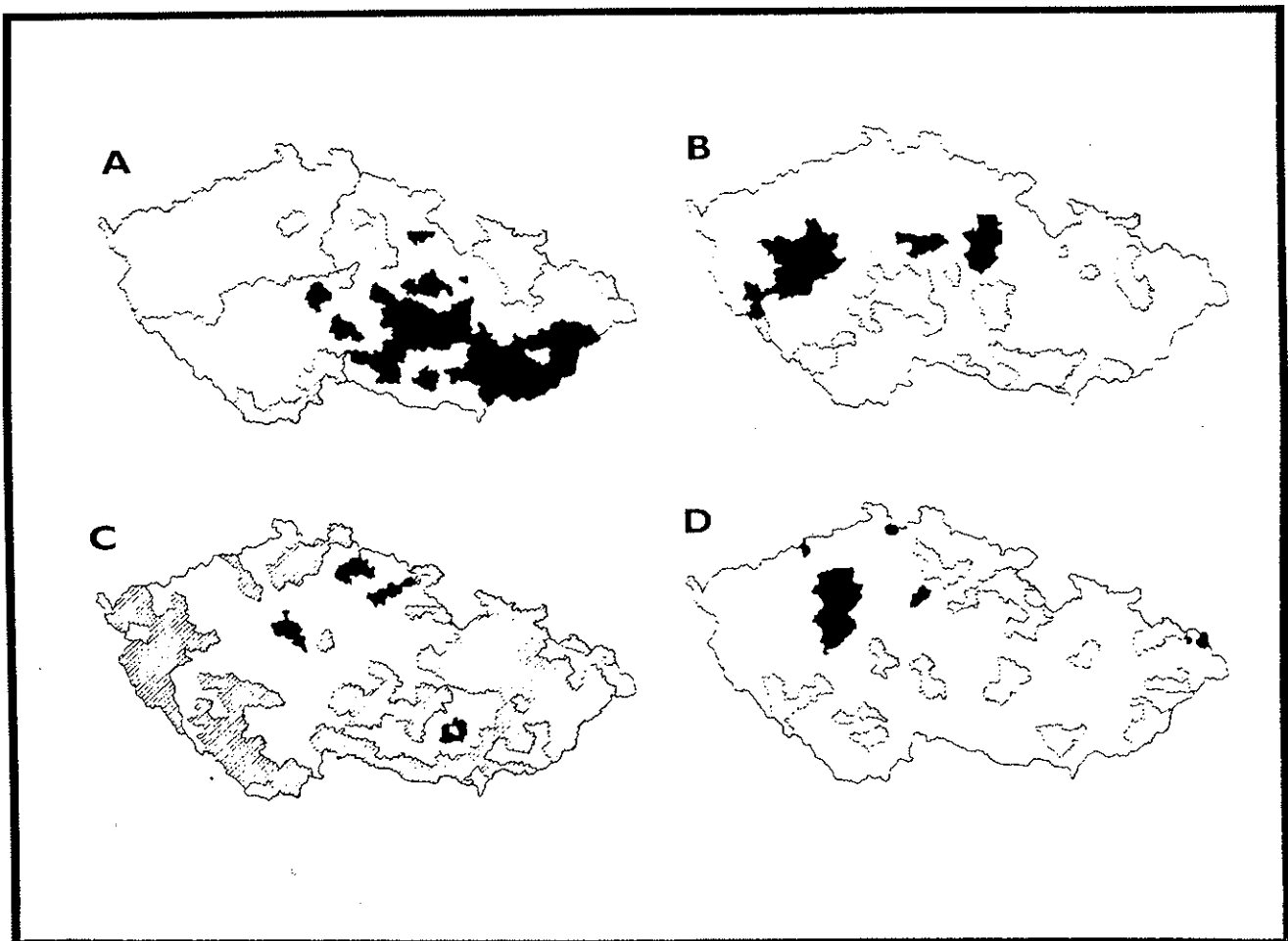
In 1990, by far the largest number of votes for the KDU (Christian and Democratic Union) was won in south Moravia. This region always was a traditional stronghold of the Czechoslovak People's Party representing the backbone of the Christian and Democratic Union. The analyses of the 1990 elections showed a negative correlation between the divorce rate and the support for the KDU, confirming the expected positive relationship between religiosity and support for the KDU (Blažek and Kostecký, 1991). The pro-KDU vote per centage generally increasing with decreasing population size of the municipality. The People's Party retained its traditional core of voters among the Catholics in the south Moravian countryside.

The main feature of the 1990 election results of the communists is their relatively even spatial distribution, both in terms of regional variation and by communities of different sizes. That is contrary to the traditional support pattern of the communists, that used to peak in the industrial regions to the west of Prague (Jehlička and Šýkora, 1991; see Figure 14.2). To some extent, the election results in 1990 were more



favourable to the Communist Party than might be expected. One of the possible explanations of the even spatial distribution is the layer of nomenclature cadres formed in the course of the forty years of communist control in all the regions. This resulted more generally in a certain proportion of the population in all regions drawing benefits from the communist regime. The hypothesis that the Communist Party was supported in 1990 by a large part of the former and present-day state apparatus (at least at the lower levels) is verified by the significantly higher vote for the Communists in the capitals of districts, compared to the Communist support in towns without such administrative status.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Party was in the past the typical urban, central left-wing party of the middle class in Bohemia. The socialists always emphasized the traditions of the Czech nation and of Protestantism. The dramatic decline of the support for this party in the 1990 elections compared to their pre-war strength resulted from an unattractive campaign which excessively stressed the traditional outlook of the party. This included a narrow class orientation to the 'middle class' which had nearly disappeared



**Figure 14.2** Czech lands: core areas, where parties were the most successful in every election studied (shaded), and marginal areas, where parties have not gained at least the average support in any of the elections studied (hatched): A) People's Party, B) Social Democracy, C) Czechoslovak Socialist Party and D) Communist Party

Source: Jehlička and Sýkora 1991

under the Communist regime and could not re-establish itself during the few months since the November 1989 upheaval. The party apparently won only votes from those, presumably the elderly, who remembered its pre-war fame.

Three parties existed during the communist period with the People's Party and the socialists surviving as satellites of the Communist Party. Thus, they had already created a party structure and had a certain amount of party members. On the other hand, the Social Democrats were only re-established in the beginning of 1990. They did not succeed in either creating a serious political programme or in rallying supporters around the party. Moreover, some well-known personalities promoting Social-Democratic ideas were listed on the Civic Forum ballot and this considerably diminished the electoral support of the Social Democrats. However, the party's old western and eastern Bohemian strongholds re-emerged in the voting returns; they gained somewhat greater support than they had before 1948 in the North Bohemian coal basin (north of Prague).

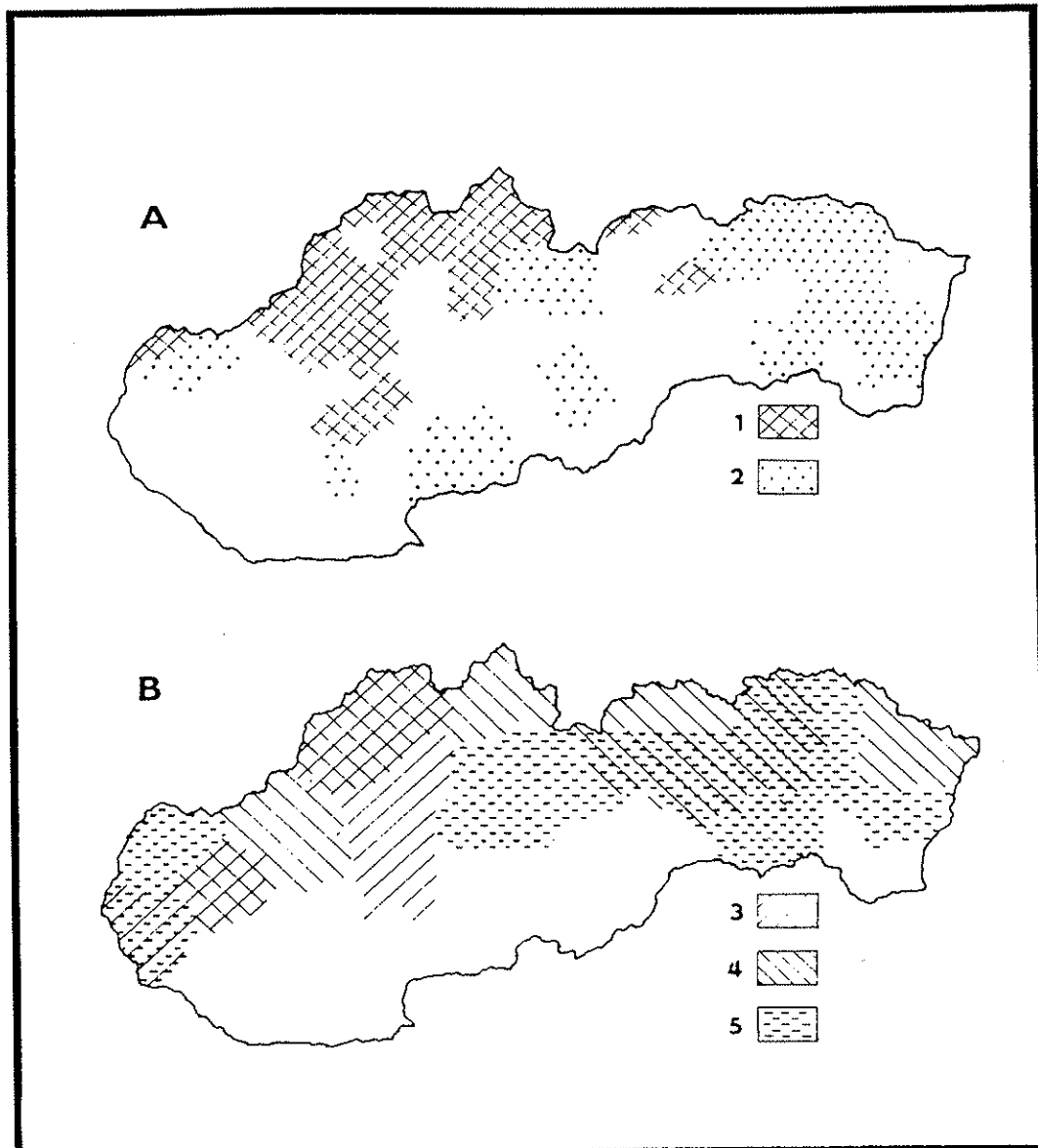
### *Slovak historical parties*

The Slovak situation was much more complicated than the situation in the Czech lands. Apart from the Communist Party, no other Slovak political party with an uninterrupted electoral history exists. Social Democracy did not take part in the 1946 elections. The Democratic Party is only a fairly recent party, contesting the 1946 elections.

As far as the Communist Party in Slovakia is concerned, two main areas of high support were revealed by the 1990 elections. These were identical with the old pre-war Communist cores (Jehlička, Kostelecký and Šykora, 1991). One of them in south-eastern Slovakia is an ore-mining area. It is not without significance that this region, near the Hungarian border, lies just opposite the strongholds of the Hungarian Communists (see the following chapter by Zoltan Kovacs)

Besides the communists, some traces of historical continuity can be revealed, although less precisely. The pre-war Hlinka's Slovak Peoples Party strongly emphasized religion (Catholic), autonomist and nationalist elements and its main programme point was the struggle for the separation of Slovakia; this party was mostly supported in north-western Slovakia. It is in this same territory that both the Slovak National Party and the Christian Democratic Movement gained considerable support in the 1990 elections (Figure 14.3). The former overtly demands the immediate independence of Slovakia from the federal republic; the latter is oriented towards the Catholic population, stressing its preference for independence in less extreme terms. However, a strong nationalistic wing exists inside the Christian Democratic Movement as well.

The pro-Czechoslovak parties in Slovakia before the war, wishing to remain in a united federal republic, represented the opposition to Hlinka's Party. The Republican Party of Agrarian and Smallholders was most important among them. Its Slovak electorate was concentrated in East Slovakia and in the Protestant regions of Central Slovakia. These territories are approximately the same ones, where the Democratic Party (DS) in 1946 and the Public Against Violence (VPN) in 1990 gained most of their votes. The DS won the post-war elections in Slovakia (60 per cent), defeating the Communists there though the Communists were winners in the Czech lands with 40 per cent. In 1990, however, the DS attracted the votes of only 4 per cent of the Slovak electorate, barely sufficient to enter the Slovak National Council.



**Figure 14.3** Slovakia: Regions with the highest support for selected parties: A) parliamentary elections 1925-1935, B) parliamentary elections 1990; 1) Hlinka's Slovak Peoples Party, 2) Agrarian Party, 3) Slovak National Party, 4) Christian Democratic Movement and 5) Public Against Violence

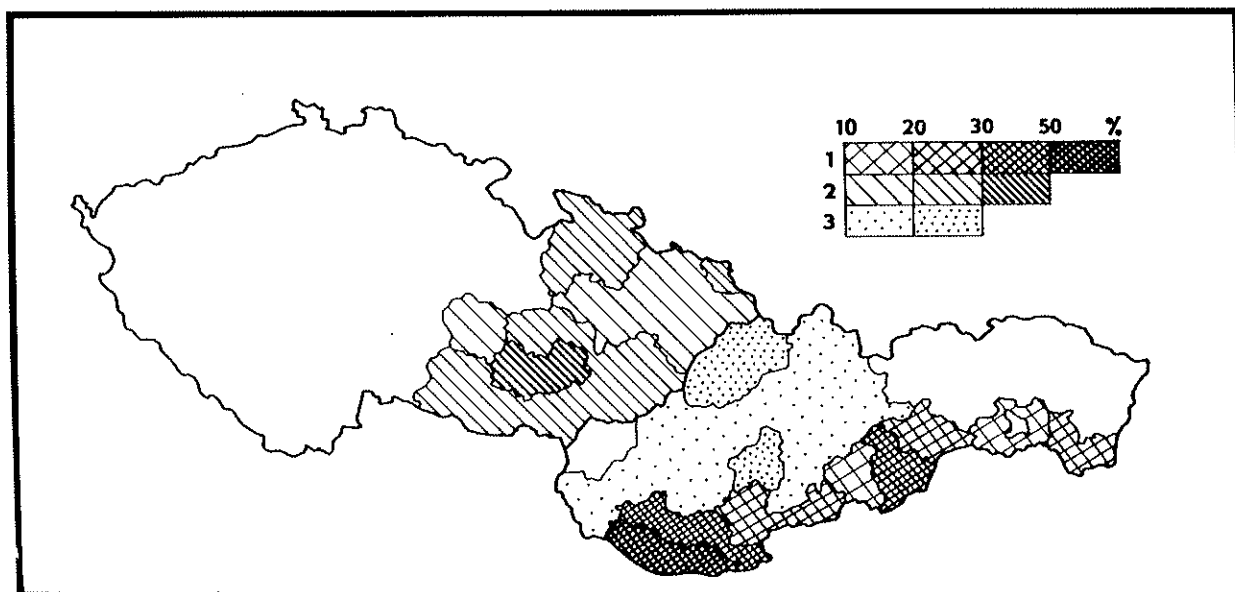
From the historical point of view, it is possible to distinguish very roughly three general political orientations of the Slovak voters in three geographical zones:

- North-western Slovakia represents both the historical and present strongholds of the separatist forces (the Hlinka's Party before the war and the Slovak National Party and the Christian Democratic Movement in 1990);
- Eastern Slovakia always was and is again the most 'pro-Czechoslovak' part of Slovakia (the Agrarian party at the time of the first Republic to 1939 and the stronghold of the VPN in 1990); and
- Southern regions settled by the Hungarian minority, who always expressed their own interests in elections.

*Ethnic and separatist parties and movements*

The elections revealed the strength of a seemingly new issue in Czechoslovak politics that could threaten the future of political democracy or even the survival of Czechoslovakia as a state. Three ethnic-based and ethnic-appealing parties managed to get representation in the parliaments. The Slovak National Party (which wants an independent Slovak state), the Movement for Self-Governing Democracy – Society for Moravia and Silesia HSD–SMS (asking for autonomy of the Moravian lands, the eastern half of the Czech Republic), and Coexistence (a coalition of national minorities but in reality drawing most of its support from the Hungarians in southern Slovakia) got into the parliaments (Figure 14.4).

The strength of the Slovak National Party, which won 11 per cent of the Slovak vote for the Federal Assembly and 14 per cent for the Slovak National Council, was totally unexpected. The concentration of its supporters close to the border with the Czech Republic corresponds well with traditional preferences. The voting pattern of the Society for Moravia and Silesia is very interesting as the party wants the territorial lines to be re-drawn on the basis of ethnic self-definition. There were North-Moravian and South-Moravian regions within the administrative structure of the (pre-1990) Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, but their administrative borders did not exactly coincide with the historical Moravian–Silesian lands. The regional (provincial) authorities were abolished in 1990 and the restoration of Moravian autonomy became the main political aim of the Society for Moravia and Silesia party. Support for the Society for Moravia and Silesia party represented well over 20 per cent of the electorate in Moravian regions. The regional differences in the proportion of votes of the HSD–SMS are large; the party came in first in two of twenty-five districts in Moravia. The percentage of votes, where it contested seats, varied from 0.2 per cent (East Bohemia) to 33.5 per cent (district of Vyškov near the Moravian metropolis of Brno). The centre of support for this regionally oriented party is the town of Brno and its surroundings (see Figure 14.4).

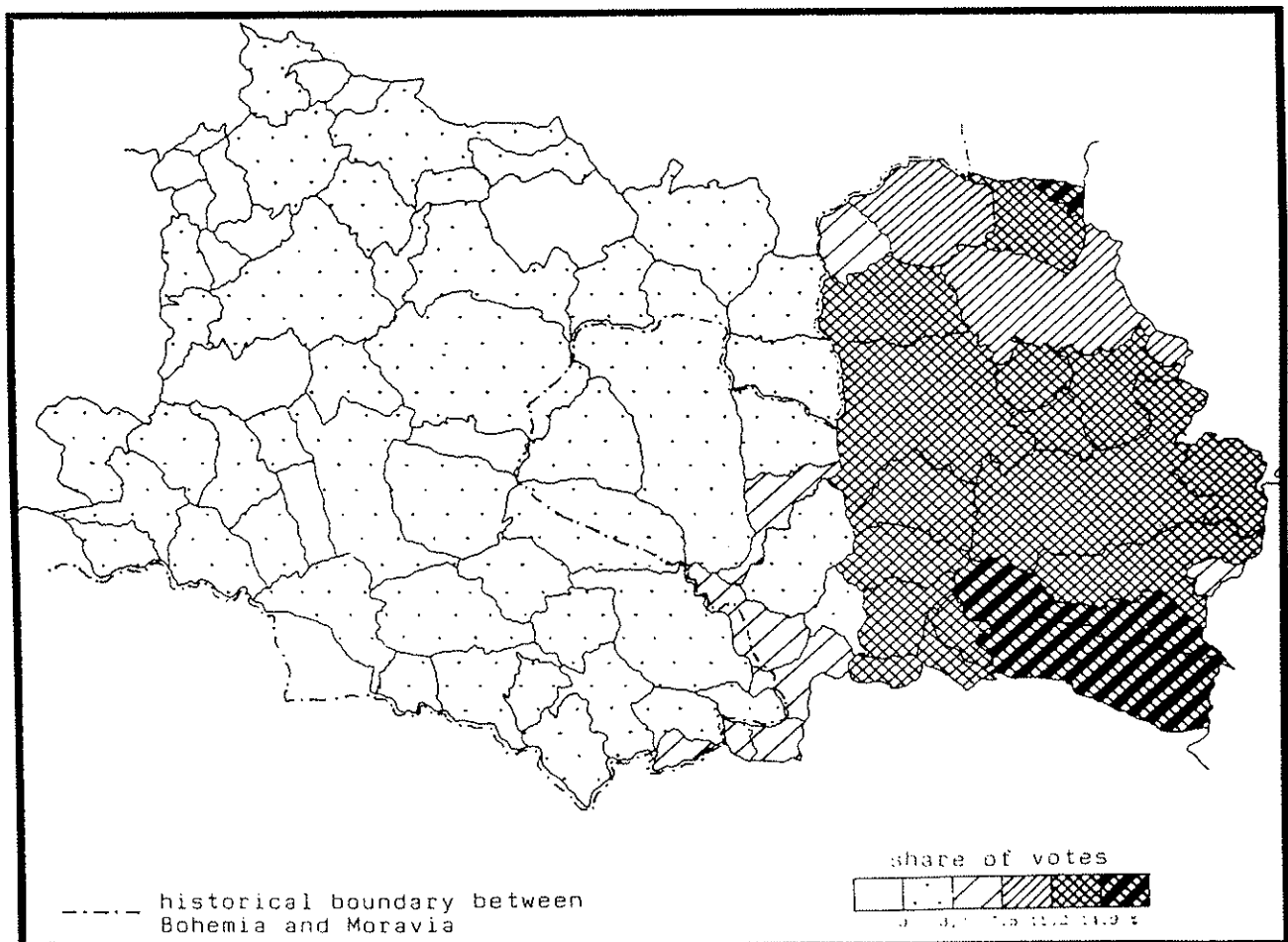


**Figure 14.4** Electoral results of 1) Coexistence and Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, 2) Movement for Self-Governing Democracy – Society for Moravia and Silesia and 3) Slovak National Party

The main issues in the HSD–SMS election programme (and almost the only ones) were the restoration of historical lands. In particular, they wanted the establishment of the Moravian-Silesian Land as a large administrative unit with its capital Brno combined with a considerable degree of self-government. They also wanted a new administrative system that would return the former district offices to most of the former district capitals. Statistically significant higher percentages of HSD–SMS votes were found in towns which in the former (pre-1989) administrative system were the locations of the district offices and which, in the administration reform in the early 1960s, had lost their status. A large number of electors evidently gave their votes to the HSD–SMS in the hope that this would result in benefits for themselves and their place of residence.

HSD-SMS voters were also aroused by the historical awareness of being ‘Moravians’, understood as part of the Moravian-Silesian Land (abolished in 1949) and, at least by some of them, as part of the ‘Moravian nation’. The HSD-SMS support was particularly evident in the present-day districts that are divided by the former historical land border into a Czech part and a Moravian part (see Figure 14.5). This territorial division apparently resulted in a kind of frontier mentality.

The election results of Coexistence are shown in Figure 14.4. Their strongholds are



**Figure 14.5** Electoral results of the Movement for Self-Governing Democracy – Society for Moravia and Silesia in district Svitavy by communes

situated along the border with Hungary and in some electoral districts, the party obtained more than 50 per cent of all votes. Although Coexistence supported a federal system for the republic and had no separatist ambitions, there is a considerable link between the party and national minority interests. In the case of Coexistence, it represented rather a reaction to potential Slovak nationalism and provided a possibility of setting up a legal means of self-defence.

### *The Greens*

The Green Party represents the 'new politics' in Czechoslovakia. It was the first political party established after the student demonstration of 17 November 1989, that set the 'Velvet Revolution' in motion. First reports about the Greens were published before the revolution was over. However, the very beginnings of the party are obscure and some participation of the former Secret Police, trying to capitalize on the strong ecological awareness of the Czechoslovak population, is generally suspected. After December 1989, the Green Party had to exert a great effort to eliminate the Secret Police influence.

As regards the electoral results, the Greens gained much less support than was anticipated on the basis of pre-election polls. Six seats (3.5 per cent of votes) achieved in the Slovak parliament was their only success. The regional differentiation of the Greens, support indicates the close relation between the devastation of the environment and the votes for the party (Jehlička and Kostecký, 1991). The Greens won most votes in the most environmentally deteriorated north-western districts of Bohemia. Their lowest support came from south Moravia (the region of great influence of the People's Party and the Moravian autonomist movement), in north Slovakia (stronghold of the Christian Democratic Movement) and in south Slovakia, settled by Hungarians.

In most parts of the country, the Green Party's votes rose with the size of municipality. In the most devastated areas, however, practically no difference existed in the level of support of the Green Party between municipalities of different sizes. In other words, the ecological interest in this area is no longer just an urban phenomenon. Ecological problems are more and more reflected in the political mood of rural areas as well (Jehlička and Kostecký, 1991).

### *Other parties*

We consider the Christian Democratic Movement and the Alliance of Agrarians and Countryside as newly emerging parties which gained considerable support and have not been examined yet. Opinion polls preceding the elections indicated the Christian Democratic Movement as a favourite in Slovakia but the party gained less support than had been expected. The party political programme emphasised Christian (mainly Catholic) values and Christian morals. The economic part of the programme supported a transition to a market economy stressing the social aspects of reform.

The Alliance of Agrarians and Countryside represented left-wing views, especially from the agricultural cooperative sector. The strongest group within the coalition was the Agrarian Party which had been formed immediately after the November 1989 revolution by managers of some of the larger cooperative farms, fearful of the consequences it would have for the agricultural sector.

For nine parties, support did not reach the 2 per cent threshold. Among these were two coalitions, the Free Bloc and the All-People's Democratic Party and the Association for the Republic—Republican Party of Czechoslovakia. These coalitions contained right-wing parties and ideologies strongly committed to private enterprise and in the case of the latter party, also to the repatriation of foreign workers (Vietnamese, Cuban, Polish) from Czechoslovakia.

## Discussion

The Czechoslovak parliamentary elections of 1990 were, in many respects, exceptional. The political spectrum was still somewhat unstructured and provisional. The elections were often considered in the voters' minds to be a referendum on the preference for the old state (the Communist Party) or an open society with a market economy, supported by Civic Forum and almost all the other parties and movements.

In some respects the voting patterns were surprising. After forty years of communism in Czechoslovakia, there were no official cleavages. In spite of this fact, we found in the case of political parties with an historical tradition that the regional patterns in the political orientation of the inhabitants appeared again. These regional loyalties were created even before World War II as a reflection of the then existing cleavages. In the case of the KDU which, like its pre-war predecessor the Czechoslovak People's Party, focused on the Catholic inhabitants, the continuity of regional patterns of political support is not such a surprise. In the regions with the highest percentage of active Catholics, the party preserved its position during the entire era of the communist rule without any great change.

Of much greater interest is the continuity of regions with the greatest support for the communists, because the population in the traditionally pro-Communist regions does not differ significantly from the population of the other regions by any readily measurable social or economic characteristics. It is clear that, in this case, the pro-Communist political orientation in the area to the west of Prague is not a reflection of some contemporary cleavages in society but that there are historical linkages that have become part of the regional identity similarly to the Catholic religion in south Moravia. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that both the Communist Party and the Christian and Democratic Union in the territories of their greatest support are rooted most deeply in the smallest villages where, naturally, traditions play a greater role than in towns.

Unlike the historical parties, Civic Forum did not resurrect any traditions directly. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that leaders of Civic Forum derived their politics from the tradition of the pre-war republic, particularly from the thoughts and ideas of T.G. Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, in office immediately after the state was created after World War I. However, the ideological diversity inside the former protest movement covered by an exceedingly unspecific programme, emphasizing as a matter of fact only the necessity of introducing a parliamentary democracy and a market economy, did not result in a stable electoral basis. In the course of the November 1989 resistance against the communist government, opposition was spreading from Prague to the whole of the country. The voting pattern of Civic Forum resembles the typical distribution of an innovation during the diffusion process. The post-election discord inside Civic Forum, and a relatively fast break-up into several clearly dis-

tinguished parties corroborates the fact that the Civic Forum never had (and could not have had) a stable electorate.

Despite a rather different situation in Slovakia, some features of the latest political development are similar to those in the Czech Republic. The electoral winner, the Public Against Violence, has undergone almost the same process of disintegration as the Civic Forum. Movements were a vital phenomenon of the transitional period but a natural differentiation of politics emerged after the election and caused a break-up of movements. This process tends to result eventually in a stable system of political parties and probably also in the creation of relatively stable regions, each with a specific 'political climate'.

Up to early 1992, a conventional party structure developed in each of the republics. Nevertheless, the composition of public support for the respective party groupings is considerably different in both parts of Czechoslovakia. While the strongest successor of the Civic Forum movement, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), promotes a conservative right-wing policy, a majority of the Public Against Violence supporters followed the leftist and nationally oriented Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) after the Civic Forum movement had become fragmented.

Besides the ODS, two other relatively important parties emerged from a Civic Forum dead body. One of them, Civic Movement (OH), keeps a loosely organized internal structure, defines itself as a centre party and has not targeted any specific population category. Nevertheless, some important personalities from government or in the parliaments play a key role in getting political support for the party. The second one, Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), is a liberal right-wing party, which addresses especially the intelligentsia. The political programme is similar to ODS and makes a potential coalition partnership between these two parties probable. The low general support of the ODA but the presence of some well-known personalities in this party further supports this assumption.

Already at the end of 1991, the primarily Czech ODA announced a pre-election coalition for the parliamentary elections in 1992 with Slovak Civic Democratic Union–Public Against Violence (ODU–VPN). As the name suggests, this latter party is one of the successors of Public Against Violence. As a liberal party, ODU–VPN has little support and it is derived particularly from the intelligentsia. The right-wing part of the political spectrum in Slovakia is also occupied by the Democratic Party which closely cooperates with (Czech) Civic Democratic Party (ODS). These cooperations among Czech and Slovak right wing-parties could create a strong backbone for a common state of both nations.

There are more than right-wing movements in Slovakia. A growing coalition of left and nationalist parties is concentrated around the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). This ethno-national tendency is further encouraged by considerable support for the Slovak National Party as well as for the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), the successor party of the Communists. The key role, however, is still played by the Christian Democratic Movement (KDU), the second strongest party in the 1990 elections in Slovakia. This party holds the Slovak prime minister post at the present time. The party balances Slovak politics between promoting either a common state or independent Slovakia as well as between either supporting radical economic reform or a slower process of 'specific Slovak' adaptation to new conditions.

In the Czech republic, the left is also getting stronger with the declines in the average standard of living and rising unemployment. Public opinion polls in 1991–92



show increasing support for Social Democrats. The newly established Social Liberal Union, a coalition of socialists, agrarian workers and greens, wants to get parliamentary seats too. In spite of some recent return of support, the Communist Party will probably play a marginal role only, because no other party will accept them as a coalition partner. Behind the current crystallization of both Czech and Slovak politics towards an internal balance in each republic, it is possible to detect an increasing threat of fundamental disagreement on the future development of the country. Parliamentary elections in the middle of 1992 will give one further answer on the hot issue of the relationship between Czech and Slovak politics and republics. However, it is highly unlikely that this issue will be resolved in one stroke. In what way the tensions between the two nations will be resolved is still highly unpredictable.

### **Postscript: the parliamentary elections in June 1992**

Voters in the 1992 parliamentary elections had to decide about the form of economic transformation and the future of a common state of the Czechs and the Slovaks. The turnout rate was 85 per cent, down about 10 points from 1990, but still much higher than in Poland or Hungary. The growing political diversity of the Czecho-Slovak society was mirrored in the developing structure of political parties before the elections. Only seven parties, from a total number of forty-two which ran for elections, had federal structures and participated in the elections in both republics. None of these parties received significant support in both parts of the country (see Table 14.3).

A strict division of the country into two parts (Czech republic and Slovakia) clearly appeared. The party pushing hardest for a sovereign Slovak state, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) won more than 33 per cent of the votes for the Federal Assembly and even more for the Slovak National Council. Slovak National Party (SNS) also polled strongly, suggesting that the idea of national sovereignty will have a convincing majority in the republic's assembly. The former Communist Party (Party of the Democratic Left—SDL) polled well in Slovakia, with more than 14 per cent. Therefore, the victors in Slovakia are essentially left-wing, and will not be likely to support rapid economic reform. The Christian Democratic Party (ruling political party before the 1992 elections) experiencing a split of the internal nationalist wing (Slovak Christian Democratic Movement—SKDH) in spring 1992 gained 9 per cent of Slovak votes. KDH together with Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDH—ESWS—MLS) are the only (Slovak) parliamentary parties supporting both the basic strategy of economic reform and a common state of Czechs and Slovaks.

The Slovak results overshadowed the significant victory of the conservative Civic Democratic Party (ODS – 33 per cent) in the Czech republic. ODS and two other centre-right parties (Christian and Democratic Union and Civic Democratic Alliance) will form a majority in the Czech National Council pursuing rapid economic reform. The Czech left wing consists of Left Block (coalition of Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia with small Labour Party), Social Democracy and Liberal Social Union will have one third of the seats in the Czech National Council. Two other parties barely crossed the 5 per cent threshold and entered the Czech National Council. The results of the Movement for Self-Governing Democracy – Society for Moravia and Silesia (HSD—SMS) showed decreasing support for the idea of Moravian autonomy. On the other hand, surprisingly high support (6 per cent) for the Republican

**Table 14.3** Results of parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia in June 1992

Party	Federal		Assembly		National councils	
	Chamber of People in CR	in SR	Chamber of Nations in CR	in SR	Czech	Slovak
1.	33.90	—	33.43	—	29.73	—
2.	—	33.53	—	33.85	—	37.26
3.	—	14.44	—	14.04	—	14.70
4.	14.27	—	14.48	—	14.05	—
5.	—	9.39	—	9.35	—	7.93
6.	—	8.96	—	8.81	—	8.88
7.	7.67	—	6.80	—	6.53	—
8.	0.07	7.37	0.06	7.39	—	7.42
9.	6.48	0.36	6.37	0.34	5.98	0.32
10.	5.98	—	6.08	—	6.28	—
11.	5.84	—	6.06	—	6.52	—
12.	4.98	—	4.08	—	5.93	—
13.	—	4.86	—	8.09	—	4.00
14.	4.23	0.15	4.90	0.15	5.87	0.12
15.	4.39	—	4.74	—	4.59	—
16.	—	3.96	—	4.04	—	4.03
17.	—	3.95	—	3.66	—	3.31
18.	—	3.45	—	3.24	—	3.05
19.	12.19	9.58	13.00	7.04	14.52	8.98
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.00

*Notes:* CR – Czech Republic, SR – Slovak Republic. Party codes: 1. Civic Democratic Party - Christian Democratic Party (ODS-KDS); 2. Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS); 3. Party of the Democratic Left (SDL); 4. Left Block (Levy blok); 5. Slovak National Party (SNS); 6. Christian Democratic Movement (KDH); 7. Social Democracy (CSSD); 8. Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement-Coexistence-Hungarian People's Party (MKDH-ESWS-MLS); 9. Republican Party (SPR-RSC); 10. Christian and Democratic Union-People's Party (KDU-CSL); 11. Liberal Social Union (LSU); 12. Civic Democratic Party (ODA); 13. Slovak Social Democratic Party (SDSS); 14. Movement for Self-Governing Democracy - Society for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS); 15. Civic Movement (OH); 16. Civic Democratic Party (ODU); 17. Democratic Party-Civic Democratic Party (DS-ODS); 18. Slovak Christian Democratic Movement (SKDH); 19. Other parties

*Source:* Lidové noviny, No.133, 8 June 1992.

party (an extremely right-wing party with the full name of the Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia) shows hidden ethnic tensions (with the minority of Gypsies) within Czech society.

The federal ballots of two smaller Czech parties (Civic Democratic Alliance and 'Moravians') received less than the 5 per cent threshold of votes and therefore they will participate in national parliaments only. As a curiosity, Slovak Social Democrats, whose support did not reach the threshold for entering of Slovak National Council, will have seats in one of the Federal Assembly chambers. This 'relative' success was caused by the name of Alexander Dubček (Chairman of the Federal Assembly in

the 1990–1992 period and a well-known figure of the 1968 Prague Spring) listed on the top of the party ballot for the Chamber of Nations.

Four other parties, which aspired to parliamentary posts, but did not succeed should be discussed. The Civic Movement (OH) with some leading personalities of the 1989 revolution, and afterwards keeping important posts in the Czechoslovak political scene, such as the minister of foreign affairs, prime minister of the Czech republic and chairman of the Czech National Council, will have no member of parliament after the 1992 elections. The same fate as the OH came to two Slovak parties which participated in the Slovak government in 1990–1992: Civic Democratic Union (ODU, the successor of the 'revolutionary' Public Against Violence) and the Democratic Party which ran in coalition with Czech republic victor Civic Democratic Party. The split nationalist wing of the Christian Democratic Movement, i.e. the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement, did not succeed either.

The most important feature of electoral results in the Czech republic is strict right–left polarization and success for well-organized parties (ODS, communists). Liberal-oriented parties, either centre (OH) or centre-right (ODA), with almost no local organizations failed in spite of many well-known and popular personalities on their ballots. On the other hand, the sweeping victory of the left–national block and a total failure of right-wing parties show the political preferences of Slovaks for development in their country. In spite of the polarization of the political scene within the Czech republic, and polarization between Czech republic and Slovakia, the electoral results show the evident stability of party structures in comparison to the 1990 elections. The 'new' significant parties are either direct successors to Civic Forum (ODS, ODA, OH) and/or Public Against Violence (HZDS, ODU), or coalitions of parties well-known from the 1990 elections (LSU, Left block). And thus the parliaments will be formed by political orientations which already participated there during the 1990–1992 period. The only, and rather surprising exception, is a extremely right-wing party, the Association for the Republic–Republican Party of Czechoslovakia, which ran in the 1990 elections, but in June 1992 more than tripled its score.

From the geographical point of view, the electoral results of Czech historical parties fully confirmed the great stability of their voting patterns. All the parties did better in their traditional strongholds and failed in weak spots. An important feature of the 1992 elections is the development of town–countryside polarization in the Czech republic, with the urban population voting predominantly right and rural voters voting mostly left. The capital of Prague where two thirds of the population gave their votes to right-wing parties is a striking case. In spite of the one-sided victory of the left–nationalist block in Slovakia, the traditional geographical pattern is observable: southern regions settled by the Hungarian minority with its specific voting behaviour; eastern Slovakia with higher support for pro-reform and pro-federal central–right parties such as Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Democratic Party (DS–ODS), and Civic Democratic Union (ODU), as well as for left-wing parties (SDL, SDSS) pursuing the common state, and considerably less support for Slovak National Party, one third of the Slovak average; the Slovak capital of Bratislava with on the one hand the highest concentration of votes for nationalist-oriented parties (SNS, SKDH), and on the other hand significantly supporting liberal center-right wing parties with strong pro-federal orientation (DS–ODS, ODU); western and central parts of the country had average Slovak voting behaviour.

The future of the Czechs and the Slovaks now lies in negotiations between two victors (ODS and HZDS) on a possible governmental coalition on the federal level. Unfortunately, there are considerable disagreements. One of the major quarrels is over the presidential candidature of Václav Havel. He is widely perceived as a guarantor of the common state of the Czechs and the Slovaks. HZDS is against his candidature. Negotiations on the future form of the state and the power structures and policies within them ended in Autumn 1992 with an agreement to split the country into two states on 1 January 1993.

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**Belhaven Press**

(a division of Pinter Publishers)

25 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2E 9DS, United Kingdom

First published in 1993

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Co-published in the Americas by Halsted Press, an imprint of  
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 1 85293 259 7

**Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

The new political geography of Eastern Europe / edited by John O' Loughlin  
and Herman van der Wusten.

p. cm.

"Co-published in the Americas by Halsted Press, an imprint of John  
Wiley & Sons, Inc."

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-85293-259-7. — ISBN 0-470-21933-5 (U.S.)

1. Europe, Eastern — Politics and government — 1989—

I. O' Loughlin, John V. (John Vianney) II. Wusten, Herman van der.

DJK51.N49 1993

947.085' — dc20

92-36085  
CIP

ISBN 0 470 219 33 5 (in the Americas only)

Typeset by PanTek Arts

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd., Guildford and King's Lynn

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**Belhaven Press  
London and New York**

Co-published in the Americas by Halsted Press,  
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