

## Two Cheers for Czech Democracy\*

SEÁN HANLEY\*\*

### Abstract

The paper discusses the state of Czech democracy and current research agendas on democracy in the Czech Republic, focusing in particular on the role of political parties. It considers Czech democracy both in relation to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and in the light of the evolving relationship between CEE and Western Europe. It suggests that current CEE states such as the Czech Republic gradually approximating to models of West European-style party politics may need rethinking. It then examines democracy in the Czech Republic in relation to debates on democratic “backsliding”, arguing that in the Czech cases the principal “backsliding” risks lie less in the rise of authoritarian populists than a potential crisis of democratic representation driven by perceptions of corruption. The paper concludes with some suggestions about future avenues for research on Czech and CEE democracy.

**Keywords:** Czech Republic; Central and Eastern Europe; democracy; political parties

DOI: 10.5817/PC2014-3-161

*“So two cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it admits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough: there is no occasion to give three.”*  
E.M. Forster, “What I Believe”

### 1. Introduction

Some years ago I attended a conference on democracy in Europe and ended up talking to a very prominent specialist on Russian politics. We had an interesting conversation, but at one point in the evening he turned to me and asked in a slightly worried tone if I realized that the Czech Republic didn’t really matter very much. I appreciated the advice – and I understood it: small, slightly peripheral countries are often considered marginal in comparative politics. They lack inherent geo-political importance and, as Barrington Moore (1966: xxiii) argued, their politics tend to be driven by – or copied from – stronger powers beyond their own borders.

\* This paper is revised version of a keynote speech given at the 10th Czech Political Science Symposium, Brno, 3 April 2014.

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# The Break Up Of Czech Democracy

**Otto Friedman**



## **The Break Up Of Czech Democracy:**

The Break-up of Czech Democracy Otto Friedman,1971

*The Break-up of Czech Democracy* Otto Friedman,1950

When Democracy Breaks Archon Fung,David Moss,Odd Arne Westad,2024 This is an open access title available under the terms of a CC BY NC ND 4.0 International licence It is free to read on the Oxford Academic platform and offered as a free PDF download from OUP and selected open access locations Democracy is often described in two opposite ways as either wonderfully resilient or dangerously fragile Both characterizations can be correct depending on the context When Democracy Breaks aims to deepen our understanding of what separates democratic resilience from democratic fragility by focusing on the latter The volume's collaborators experts in the history and politics of the societies covered in their chapters explore eleven episodes of democratic breakdown from ancient Athens to Weimar Germany to present day Russia Turkey and Venezuela Strikingly in every case various forms of democratic erosion long preceded the final democratic breakdown Although no single causal factor emerges as decisive linking together all of the episodes some important commonalities including extreme political polarization explicitly anti democratic political actors and significant political violence stand out across the cases Moreover the notion of democratic culture while admittedly difficult to define and even more difficult to measure may play a role in all of them Throughout the volume the contributors show again and again that the written rules of democracy are insufficient to protect against tyranny While each case of democratic decay is unique the patterns that emerge shed much light on the continuing struggle to sustain modern democracies and to assess and respond to the threats they face

*The Breakup of Czechoslovakia* Robert A. Young,Queen's University (Kingston, Ont.). Institute of Intergovernmental Relations,1994

**Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times** Nancy G. Bermeo,2020-06-16 For generations influential thinkers often citing the tragic polarization that took place during Germany's Great Depression have suspected that people's loyalty to democratic institutions erodes under pressure and that citizens gravitate toward antidemocratic extremes in times of political and economic crisis But do people really defect from democracy when times get tough Do ordinary people play a leading role in the collapse of popular government Based on extensive research this book overturns the common wisdom It shows that the German experience was exceptional that people's affinity for particular political positions are surprisingly stable and that what is often labeled polarization is the result not of vote switching but of such factors as expansion of the franchise elite defections and the mobilization of new voters Democratic collapses are caused less by changes in popular preferences than by the actions of political elites who polarize themselves and mistake the actions of a few for the preferences of the many These conclusions are drawn from the study of twenty cases including every democracy that collapsed in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution in interwar Europe every South American democracy that fell to the Right after the Cuban Revolution and three democracies that avoided breakdown despite serious economic and political challenges Unique in its historical and regional scope this book offers unsettling but important lessons about

civil society and regime change and about the paths to democratic consolidation today      The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe Karen Dawisha, Bruce Parrott, 1997-06-13 Edited by two of the world's leading analysts of post communist politics this book brings together distinguished specialists on the Baltic states Estonia Latvia and Lithuania Poland the Czech Republic Slovakia and Hungary The authors analyse the patterns of post communist democratization in these countries paying particular attention to the process of party formation electoral politics the growth of civil society and the impact of economic reform on the emergence of interest groups Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott provide theoretical and comparative chapters on post communist political development across the region This book will provide students and scholars with detailed analysis by leading authorities plus the latest research data on recent political and economic developments in each country      20 Years since the Fall of the Berlin Wall Elisabeth Bakke, Ingo Peters, 2011-01-01

Hauptbeschreibung On 9 November 1989 the Berlin Wall was opened signalling the beginning of the end of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe By 1990 free elections had been held in most countries in the region Forty in some cases fifty years of communism had come to an end However the revolutions of 1989 were not uniform processes the starting points were different the trajectories were different and outside Central Europe even the outcomes of the transitions from communism were different The fall of communism also caused the Soviet empire to crumble and the Soviet Union itself fell apart in December 1991 as did Czechoslovakia in 1993 and Yugoslavia in a gradual process that was to last from 1991 to 2008 This book originated in a conference held in Oslo 11-13 November 2009 arranged by the E.ON Ruhrgas scholarship programme for political science and commemorating the 20th anniversary of the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe The 16 chapters take stock of developments after 1989 with special emphasis on the causes and effects of the transitions including the processes of state unification and separation that followed in the wake of the revolutions The book is divided into four main parts regime transitions from communism state unification and separation party system continuity and change since 1989 in Germany the Czech Republic Hungary and Poland and on the effects of German unification on external and internal German relations The geographical scope thus varies from chapter to chapter but the main emphasis is on Germany and its closest Central European neighbours Elisabeth Bakke is Associate Professor at Department of Political Science University of Oslo Ingo Peters is Associate Professor at Department of Political and Social Sciences Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science Freie Universität Berlin      Three Generations of European Constitutional Courts in Transition to Democracy Francesco Biagi, 2020-01-02

A comparative perspective of role played by three generations of European Constitutional Courts in the process of transition to democracy      **Political Parties and Democracy** Kay Lawson, 2010-07-20 Native scholars explore the relationship between political parties and democracy in regions around the world The development of political parties over the past century is the story of three stages in the pursuit of power liberation democratization and de democratization Political Parties and Democracy is comprised of five stand alone volumes that probe

the realities of political parties at all three stages In each volume contributors explore the relationship between political parties and democracy or democratization in their nations providing necessary historical socioeconomic and institutional context as well as the details of contemporary political tensions Contributors are distinguished indigenous scholars who have lived the truths they tell and are thus able to write with unique breadth depth and scope They show the parties of their respective nations as they have developed through history and changing institutional structures and they explain the balance of power among them and between them and competing agencies of power today

**Committees in Post-Communist Democratic Parliaments** David M. Olson, William E. Crowther, 2002 The former Communist countries of Eastern Europe provide a treasure trove of data on the development of democratic institutions The contributors to this volume use the recent experiences of these countries to identify how the various committee systems are structured and tie the relative strength of the committee system in each country to the relative strength of its legislature A uniform theoretical framework connects the work of each essay and ties the parts into an informative whole Comparative analysis based on seven indicators of institutionalization suggests that the committee systems of Hungary Poland and the Czech Republic are more institutionalized than those found elsewhere Bulgaria is a middle case while the parliaments of Moldova Lithuania and Estonia are the least Of the indicators stability in committee membership and extent of committee activity are among the most important for post communist parliaments in their first decade This examination of legislative committees in their beginning stages suggests that the processes of institutionalization are sequenced expertise in a policy sector is the basis of both the assertion of jurisdictional autonomy by committees and the motive for party control of their membership and officer positions Basic to these developments however is the emergence of a stable and consistent structure of the committee system as a whole More broadly committee attributes are closely linked to the condition and functioning of both parliamentary party groups and the government

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