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DIFFICULTIES OF THE FIRST STAGE OF STATE-BUILDING IN THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS: FROM THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE TO THE EU

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Abstract. The countries of the socialist bloc, after the collapse of the latter, set a course for building their sovereign and democratic states. Such countries were the Czech and Slovak Republics, especially new challenges arose after their separation from each other in the form of a «velvet divorce» in early 1993. A number of difficulties faced by the political elites of these two states lay primarily in the economic plane, which in turn led to socio-political and socio-economic transformations. Such changes required knowledge and experience among the political elite, because it was before it, as the main subject of state formation, that the difficulties of the transformation period arose, which it had to solve. During the study of this problem, comparative and system analyses were used. According to the results, it is worth noting that the difficulties in both countries were caused by both subjective and objective factors.

Key words: state, transit, transformations, elite, reform, democracy, market.

Introduction. The development of sovereign states after their declaration of independence has, on the one hand, a number of positive aspects related to the realization of one's own will in the socio-political, socio-economic, cultural, etc. spheres, which are implemented by the elite taking into account national interests, and on the other, a number of risks that manifest themselves at the very beginning of the creation of new states and the implementation of progress towards democracy and a market economy. The latter especially arise in the conditions of the transit of newly proclaimed states from the conditions of authoritarian regimes, in particular the Soviet model, towards Western-style democracies, as well as from a planned to a market economy. The corresponding risks facing national political elites lead to the adoption of both constructive (successful) and destructive (unsuccessful) decisions that have tactical or strategic consequences for a certain industry or the entire country as a whole. All this entails corresponding transformations in the social, political, economic, etc. spheres of the new states. Accordingly, such changes do not occur without taking into account the problems and errors in the actions of the national political elite, which in its overwhelming majority are descendants of the previous, in this case, the Soviet, regime. However, the elite's awareness of the need for change and the willingness to implement reforms in the new, capitalist system leads both to the forcing of each of the chosen directions of state policy, and to the problems associated with such radical progress. Such processes are especially taking place in the post-socialist space, in particular in the countries of Eastern Europe, because the previous system with its centralism and command-and-administrative methods in the economic sphere of society had a certain inertia and significant consequences for a number of republics. One of them was the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, which emerged in a new form after the «velvet revolution» of 1989 and existed until the complete separation of the two peoples (Czechs and Slovaks) of their national independent states (until the end of 1992).

The official separation of both peoples into their own nation-states took place on January 1, 1993, after which separate Czech and Slovak Republics appeared on the political map of the world. Each sovereign state followed its own path in its development. However, the strategic course of both was the construction of democratic and legal states with a market economy. Such an important, complex

and ambitious direction became the only correct one given the then geopolitical realities (in the period after the end of the Cold War), as well as given their geographical location in Eastern Europe, which, after the declaration of independence by the states of the former socialist camp, massively chose the course of democratization, westernization and the market. It was this course, due to all the difficulties of this transit, that led to both a number of problems and successful results, in particular the accession of these states to the European Union.

Historical aspects of the formation of statehood in the Czech Republic were studied by J. Zinko, S. Kalytko, O. Kravchuk, I. Pop (Narysy, 2017) and a number of other scholars. Slovak history, in particular the modern period, has become the object of research by M. Kril (Kril, 2006). Political aspects of state-building decisions are reflected in information sources of official state authorities, in particular the government (Spysok, 1993); (Spysok, 1998); (Spysok, 2002) and the parliament (Istoriia, 2004) of the Czech Republic, as well as the corresponding structures of the Slovak Republic (Stručná, 2019); (Slovak, 2019). Also important for understanding the peculiarities of the political systems of both countries was the study of the Constitutions (Konstytutsiia Ceskoi, 1992); (Konstytutsiia Slovatskoi, 1992), adopted on the eve of the division of both countries.

The **aim of the article** is to identify the main difficulties that arose before the Czech and Slovak Republics at the first stage of their state-building progress in the period from independence to accession to the EU.

The **task** was to analyze the state-building path in the Czech and Slovak Republics, identifying those problems that prevented them from quickly and qualitatively implementing the necessary reforms for the development of sovereign, democratic states with market economies.

The **research methods** were a comparative and systematic analysis of the processes of state-building progress, identifying the main difficulties in each of the mentioned countries-comparisons, as well as the principle of historicism.

Difficulties of the Czech path of statehood at the first stage. After gaining independence in the Czech Republic, the parliament, which was elected in 1992, continued to function. Given the fact that, according to the Constitution adopted in 1992, the Czech Republic is a parliamentary republic, therefore, the political architecture in the legislative body (the Chamber of Deputies consists of 200 people) is decisive in the formation of the executive branch of power - the government. It was this last parliamentary convocation, still joint with Slovakia with the legislative body, later became the first separate term in the Czech Republic with the beginning of the new year 1993 (Istoriia, 2004). Thus, in the architecture of this parliamentary convocation there were the following factions of political parties: «Civil Democratic Party - Christian Democratic Party» (with 76 seats); «Left Bloc» (35 seats); «Liberal Social Union» (16 seats); «Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party» (16 seats); «Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party» (15 seats); «Movement for Self-Governing Democracy - Union for Moravia and Silesia» (14 seats); «Union for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia» (14 seats); «Public Democratic Alliance» (14 seats) (Přehled, 1992). The parliamentary coalition majority was formed by the right-center factions, which elected a new government headed by V. Klaus, which exercised its powers until new elections to the Chamber of Deputies (Spysok, 1993). It was on the government of Prime Minister V. Klaus that the entire burden of responsibility for the transition to democracy and the market in the new first stage of the Czech Republic fell. In addition, the president of the republic continued to be the head of the state still united with Slovakia, who was re-elected by the parliament on January 26, 1993, namely V. Havel.

The new Prime Minister V. Klaus and his government received a country with significant problems in the economic and social spheres, which they inherited from the previous socialist past (primarily due to the ineffectiveness of management under the «socialist system»), as well as from the joint federation with Slovakia. After all, on the one hand, in 1989-1990 after the «velvet revolution» the then sub-Soviet regime was replaced by a fairly sovereign, but joint with Slovakia, but with the

center in the Czech capital Prague, and on the other hand - each of the parties believed that the other had more benefits from such a joint stay in one state (Czech Socialist Federal Republic). Prague, as a large administrative center with a great history, became in this situation a kind of metropolis in such an «equal» federation with the Slovaks, which did not satisfy the interests of the political elites of the latter. The Czechs themselves, believing that the break with Slovakia, which in their opinion consumed more than it produced goods and services in the total GDP of the country, would be better off living in their own separate national state. Therefore, such a kind of «slope divorce» had the desired consequences for both of them.

The Czech government officials under the leadership of V. Klaus decided to carry out further management of their own national economy through complete liberalization of the economy, believing that the market should fix everything and it would put everything in its place. Obviously, in such a sharp and radical way it was impossible to miss the stage of «shock therapy», which would significantly affect the purchasing power of the country's citizens due to high inflation rates. Since many post-socialist countries (Poland, Hungary, the Baltic countries, etc.) adopted this phase of economic liberalization, the Czech Republic had to come to the market in such a harsh «shock» way. However, the Czech state, in the form of the government headed by V. Klaus, distanced itself from the effective and balanced regulation of these mechanisms of transition to the market, and this led to unforeseen negative consequences for the entire socio-economic sphere of Czech society. Ultimately, such a policy of free price release led to corresponding negative political sentiments in society, both towards specific government officials and towards the authorities as a whole. At the same time, those dozens of laws that were adopted by the parliamentary majority on the initiative of the V. Klaus government were quite ineffective.

A side effect of the lack of effective state regulation in the context of the transition to the market was the emergence of so-called «financial pyramids» in which citizens invested their savings, counting on quick and high dividends. Such fraudulent analogues of the banking system led to losses of funds by depositors. In particular, the so-called «Harvard Fund» deprived 40 thousand depositors of funds in the amount of 13 billion crowns, and another – in the amount of about 15 billion crowns (Narysy, 2017: 289). All this was a consequence of the fact that the government of V. Klaus did not privatize the banking system of the Czech Republic in order to prevent the transfer of national banks to the ownership of foreign companies, but kept the relevant banks under state control. It was these banks that provided loans for the purchase of state-owned enterprises in the context of privatization, which led to the accumulation of significant debts to such financial institutions. The accumulated debts of borrowers to the national banking system were not returned and this created a financial crisis throughout the country, which resulted in the bankruptcy of the respective banks. If the government of V. Klaus agreed to carry out the bankruptcy procedure for small banks, then it tried to save them for large ones by putting them up for sale to foreign investors. However, the latter did not want to buy large national Czech banks with existing debts, because the total amount of loans provided was about three annual budgets of the country. This state of affairs led to the fact that the government was forced to invest an amount of over 600 billion crowns to save these banks, which was about 60% of the annual budget of the Czech Republic at that time (Narysy, 2017: 289).

Despite this, by 1995 the situation in the economy had gradually stabilized, completing the difficult transition period and moving on to, albeit insignificant, growth in the main macroeconomic indicators.

In addition, the Czech Republic has never received loans to «third world» countries since Soviet times in the amount of 450 billion. crowns, including from the Russian Federation (out of 100 billion crowns, only about 25 billion were returned in the form of obsolete military equipment in the late 1990s (Narysy, 2017: 288). It is obvious that these funds could have been used to rebuild the country's economy in the conditions of the crisis that existed at that time, but the government was never able to convince the borrowers to return the funds provided.

The first parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic at the level of the Chamber of Deputies were held on May 31 - June 1, 1996. The following political forces entered the parliament: «Civic Democratic Party» (68 seats); «Czech Social Democratic Party» (61 seats); «Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia» (22 seats); «Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party» (18 seats); «Association for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (18 seats); Civic Democratic Alliance (13 seats) (Volby, 1996). The center-right parties received the majority of seats and, in cooperation with the Social Democrats, formed a corresponding government headed by the current Prime Minister V. Klaus. It is worth noting that the majority was very unstable and most often situational, since in fact it had 99 deputies out of 200 members of the corresponding Chamber.

The new government continued the market transformations adopted through a policy of liberalization, since its leader V. Klaus was a supporter of precisely such methods of economic transit of the country. Already in November of the same year, the first elections were held to the upper house of parliament – the Senate, which began its activities for the first time, since this institution was provided for by the Constitution adopted in 1992. The Senate consists of 81 deputies and performs mainly control and constituent functions (amend the Constitution, consider and approve the state budget and laws adopted by the Chamber of Deputies, etc.) (Konstytutsiia Ceskoi, 1992).

The new/old government inherited both some of the problems of its predecessors and already positive solutions, especially considering that the prime minister of the country, albeit under a new political architecture in parliament, continued to be the same V. Klaus, and the president – V. Havel.

The Czechs inherited the problem of the Sudetenland region, since on the eve of World War II this region was annexed by Nazi Germany to its Reich and Germans moved to it. After the deoccupation of this region and the final defeat of Germany in World War II, the new government evicted a significant number of Germans to their new territories, which led to certain social and demographic problems. The communist government in post-war Czechoslovakia in every way opposed its policy to the Germans, especially in the context of their responsibility for World War II and support for Nazism. In the end, although this issue was raised at the highest level, in particular by the President of the Czech Republic V. Havel, but it never found support among the broad masses of Czech society and remained unresolved in terms of compensation for losses between the German and Czech sides. A number of problems associated with the transformation period in the economic sphere, as well as a scandal regarding the financing of the coalition leader party (the Civic Democratic Party) and the consequences of the flood led to a political crisis that occurred the following year (1997) after the parliamentary elections. As a result of the socio-political and economic crisis, the government of V. Klaus resigned, after which a new temporary non-party government was formed on January 2, 1998, headed by the former chairman of the National Bank of the Republic J. Tošovský (Spysok, 1998). At the same time, presidential elections were held (January 20, 1998), which again became the incumbent head of state – V. Havel.

In June 1998, the second parliamentary elections to the lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, were held. According to their results, the following political party factions were elected to the legislative body of the Czech Republic (in order of increasing representation): «Freedom Union» (19 seats); «Christian Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party» (20 seats); «Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia» (24 seats); «Civic Democratic Party» (63 seats); «Czech Social Democratic Party» (74 seats) (Volby, 1998). After the elections, a political alliance was formed between the main political forces in the Chamber of Deputies, as a result of which a new government was formed in July 1998, headed by the leader of the Czech Social Democrats, M. Zeman, who served for the next four years (until July 2002).

It was during the presidency of V. Havel and the prime ministership of M. Zeman that the Czech Republic, together with Poland and Hungary, became full-fledged NATO member states (March 12, 1999). In general, this government did not have any special problems (both in economics and pol-

itics) in managing state affairs during this period, so this Cabinet served its full term, until the next parliamentary elections.

In July 2002, the next elections to the lower house of parliament were held. According to their results, the following political party factions entered the Chamber of Deputies: «Czech Social Democratic Party» (70 seats); «Civic Democratic Party» (58 seats); «Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia» (41 seats); «Union of Freedom – Democratic Union» (31 seats); «Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party» (20 seats) (Volby, 2002).

With these results of the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic, the party-leader of the race (namely «Czech Social Democratic Party») forms a government for the second time, headed by V. Špidla (Spysok, 2002). The very next month after the formation of the government, he was faced with a difficult task, namely to solve the problems associated with a significant flood in the country, which caused damage in the amount of more than 3 billion dollars. (Narysy, 2017: 295).

Already in early 2003, presidential elections were held, according to the results of which former Prime Minister V. Klaus became the head of state. It was during his term that the Czech Republic became a full member of the European Union on May 1, 2004.

Features of the Slovak practice of state-building progress. Slovakia separated from the state common with the Czech Republic (CSFR) and has been a sovereign state since January 1, 1993. According to the adopted constitution, Slovakia is a parliamentary republic (headed by the People's Council of 150 deputies), under which the government is formed by a majority vote in the legislative body.

Back in June 1992, elections were held in Slovakia, according to the results of which the following political parties gained the most support: «Movement for a Democratic Slovakia» (74 seats); «Party of the Democratic Left» (29 seats); «Christian Democratic Movement» (18 seats); «Slovak National Party» (15 seats); «Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement» (14 seats) (Slovenska, 1992).

Thus, the first government was formed by a mono-coalition majority, as a result of which the Prime Minister of Slovakia was V. Mečiar. The President of the Republic from the beginning of 1993 became M. Kováč. The political confrontation that arose between President M. Kováč and Prime Minister V. Mečiar led to the resignation of the latter. Under these conditions, a temporary Cabinet was created headed by V. Moravčýk.

The first parliamentary elections to the Slovak parliament were held in the fall of 1994. According to the results of these first parliamentary elections, the following political party factions entered the People's Council: «Movement for a Democratic Slovakia» (61 seats); «General Choice» (18 seats); (17 seats); «Christian Democratic Movement» (17 seats); «Democratic Union (Slovakia)» (15 seats); «Association of Workers of Slovakia» (13 seats); «Slovak National Party» (9 seats) (POČTY, 1994).

According to their results, a coalition was formed around the leader of the race («Movement for a Democratic Slovakia») and, accordingly, a government headed by the former leader – V. Mečiar, who holds power until the next parliamentary elections in 1998. His rule had quite authoritarian features, in particular, such methods as blackmail and pressure were used against political partners (Kril, 2006: 230). This led to dissatisfaction both within the parliament and among the broad public with the policy of V. Mečiar.

The adoption by Slovakia of the law on the state (Slovak) language in 1995 caused considerable indignation on the part of the Hungarian minority, which lives in the south of the country and constitutes 10.8% of the total population, which gave the latter grounds to defend their rights, including at the political level in the form of the so-called «Hungarian coalition». Finally, the relevant law was adopted in 1999, in particular, the language of national minorities had the right to be used in parallel with the state language in places where the latter densely live in an amount of more than 20% of the total population of the corresponding region (Kril, 2006: 235).

The economic and political upheavals of the transition period were reflected in the mood of society, in particular in relation to the head of state. Thus, in May 1995, the parliament did not change the

decision to dismiss President M. Kováč, who was able to complete his term by March 1998. During this period, the acting president was the current Prime Minister V. Mečiar, who continued to exercise his rule using authoritarian methods, which caused indignation both from society and the international community, in particular from the EU. Such methods of rule by V. Mečiar pushed Slovakia away from future membership in this Union, in particular, the latter even suspended negotiations on the first country's accession to it.

According to the results of the September 1998 elections, the following political forces entered the People's Council of the Slovak Republic: «Slovak Democratic Coalition» (42 seats); «Party of Civic Understanding» (13 seats); «Movement for a Democratic Slovakia» (43 seats); «Party of the Democratic Left» (23 seats); «Hungarian Coalition Party» (15 seats); «Slovak National Party» (14 seats) (Sutovec, 2019: 267). This convocation of the People's Council formed a coalition of parliamentary factions and a new government headed by M. Dziurinda (Stručná, 2019). It was this government that began to actively implement market and democratic reforms in Slovakia throughout its term.

In January 1999, the parliament adopted an amendment to the Constitution of the Republic, according to which the country's president would be elected by voters at the national level. In May 1999, the first national presidential elections were held, in which former Prime Minister V. Mečiar also ran, but he was defeated, and R. Šušter won (Stručná, 2019). It was this government (parliamentary majority, government, and president) that, in its political synergy, pursued a course toward the European Union and NATO, implementing the democratic and market reforms necessary for this. In addition, in 1999, Slovakia received 4.5 tons of gold as a result of the division of property after the separation of the country it shared with the Czech Republic.

This situation in the political architecture continued until the next parliamentary elections in September 2002. According to the election results, the following political party factions entered the parliament: «Movement for a Democratic Slovakia» (36 seats); «Slovak Democratic and Christian Union» (28 seats); «Course – Social Democracy» (25 seats); «Hungarian Coalition Party» (20 seats); «Christian Democratic Movement» (15 seats); «Alliance of New Citizens» (15 seats); «Communist Party of Slovakia» (11 seats) (Slovenska, 2002). This convocation formed a parliamentary coalition and, accordingly, a government headed by the then Prime Minister M. Džurinda (Slovak, 2019).

The new government inherited a number of problems from the previous period, including the following areas: healthcare, judiciary, education, pensions, social sphere, etc. (Kril, 2006: 232). In addition, the implementation of rather harsh economic reforms by the government led to a temporary decline in the standard of living, and therefore increased negative social sentiments among voters. Against this background, the media also published the abuse of office by the Minister of Finance P. Rusko, which caused outrage and the removal of this official from office (Kril, 2006: 233).

In April 2004, the second nationwide presidential election was held in Slovakia, according to the results of which the incumbent head of state R. Šušter gave way to the former speaker of the parliament I. Hašparovych. It was during his presidency that the Slovak Republic became a full member of NATO on March 29, 2004, and a month later (May 1) – a member of the EU.

Discussion. Considering the peculiarities of the state-building progress of the Czech and Slovak Republics and the identified problems in this process, related to both subjective and objective circumstances of transit, it would be appropriate to consider such transformations in a number of post-socialist countries, in particular in the countries of Eastern Europe, especially those that became members in the same 2004 (Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, etc.). Such an extended comparative analysis would make it possible to consider the state-building processes in the countries of Eastern Europe with the identification of common between them, as well as distinctive difficulties, in particular in terms of the implementation of economic, political and legal reforms by national elites. There is also a need to outline the legacy left by the former USSR in these countries, with an analysis of its further role (burdensome or favorable) in the further state-building of these countries, in particular in terms of the development/decline of national economies.

Conclusions. Thus, during the implementation of the first stage of state formation in both republics there were both similar and different difficulties. The first ones include the objective conditions of the countries transit to a market economy through privatization, which led to mass dissatisfaction in society with this «shock» process. Distinctive phenomena in the state formation process were that the Czech Republic immediately lowered prices and later allowed banks to provide loans, which entailed their non-return and bankruptcy of many banks and financing of debts from the state budget. In addition, the Czech Republic inherited the problem of the Sudetenland, which to some extent affected relations with its largest neighbor, Germany, as well as the failure to repay a significant amount of foreign loans to «third world» countries. However, the resolution of economic and international challenges later made it possible for the Czech Republic to become a member of NATO (1999) and the EU (2004). In Slovakia, economic problems, unlike in the Czech Republic, were of the opposite nature, namely political. In particular, the autocratic style of government of Prime Minister V. Mečiar significantly hampered the development of both democratic and market processes in the country (in contrast to the liberal government of V. Klaus in the Czech Republic), which made it impossible to develop the country qualitatively in the first period, especially during his reign in 1993-1998. Only after V. left power Mečiar and the change of coalition and government to a pro-democratic one, the country embarked on a democratic path and later became a member of NATO and the EU.

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