

**A Nation of Sceptics?  
The Czech EU Accession Referendum of 13-14 June 2003**

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*Seán Hanley\**

*Abstract*

*The Czech Republic's referendum on accession to the European Union was held on 13-14 June 2003 was the seventh of nine held in candidate states due to join the EU on 1 May 2004. Despite the presence of two strong eurosceptic parties and the perceived euroscepticism of Czech public opinion, the pro-accession camp scored a convincing victory. The article analyses the historical, political and institutional context of the referendum and the campaign. It concludes that despite high elite contention over the EU and the overwhelming resources advantage of the 'Yes' camp, Czech voters were minimally influenced by the campaign. Rather, they took their cue from longstanding positive linkages of 'Europe' with democracy, market reform and Czech identity.*

**Introduction**

The Czech Republic's referendum on accession to the European Union on 13-14 June was the seventh of nine held in candidate states due to join the EU on 1 May 2004. Despite the presence of two strong eurosceptic parties and the perceived euroscepticism of Czech public opinion, as elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the pro-accession camp scored a convincing victory. More than 77 per cent of those, who voted supported accession. This article surveys historical, political and institutional context of the referendum and analyses both the course of the referendum campaign and the strengths and weaknesses of the 'Yes' and 'No' camps. It concludes that despite high levels of elite and party contention over accession in 1990s and a huge imbalance in the campaign resources of 'Yes' and 'No' camps, Czech voters appear to have been minimally affected by campaign effects. Rather, it is

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suggested, most took their cue from the positive linkage of 'Europe' with democracy, market reform and Czech identity.

## **Background**

### *Europe and Czech national traditions*

As Ghia Nodia suggests, contending geo-political and 'civilizational' alignments have been an integral part of the politics of most small Central and East European societies since at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continue to be so today.<sup>1</sup> In the Czech case, despite the existence of a minority Slavophile tradition looking to Russia, the dominant alignment historically has been to link the Czech lands with Western democratic states. This stance, often contrasted by Czech thinkers with the imperial and authoritarian traditions of the Austro-German world, was given practical expression after 1918 in the foreign policy of the newly independent Czechoslovak state, enjoying the support of all Czech parties, with the exception of the Communists. However, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this orientation was discredited or displaced as a result of externally influenced regime change. The August 1938 Munich Agreement, which resulted in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany with the acquiescence of Great Britain and France, prompted a rethinking of this alignment. Ideas developed by Czech and Slovak politicians during and after the Second World War instead stressed the role of a restored Czechoslovakia as a 'bridge' between the USSR and the West and as part of an anti-fascist bloc of Slav nations. The establishment of communist one-party rule in Czechoslovakia February 1948 took this shift in Czech European alignments to its logical end, incorporating Czechoslovakia into a set of socialist bloc institutions centring on the USSR. Czechoslovakia's position within this bloc was largely taken for granted by both opponents and supporters of the regime until the mid-1970s, when dissident Czech

intellectuals both in exile and within Czechoslovakia started to stress the distinct character of 'Central Europe' as a region, which was 'politically Eastern, but culturally Western'.<sup>2</sup>

*'Europe' in Czech politics*

After the collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia in the 'Velvet Revolution' of November 1989, the traditional Western and West European orientation of the Czechs was emphatically reinstated. Indeed, in the post-communist context, the 'return to Europe' came to refer not only to a geo-political shift but became a synonym for modernization, democratization and market reform. Unsurprisingly, therefore membership of the European Community (later, the European Union) has been a key priority for all mainstream Czech parties and governments since 1989. However, despite widely shared pro-Western orientation, from the mid-1990s European integration and EU accession became increasingly divisive issues in Czech party politics. This was largely due to the 'Thatcherite' eurosceptic positions taken up by the main Czech centre-right party, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) of Václav Klaus, the dominant partner in the 1992-7 centre-right coalition government formed shortly before the negotiated break-up of Czechoslovakia. Such divisions initially emerged in clashes between Prime Minister Klaus and then President Havel. While President Havel embraced European integration as an expression of shared values and advocated a foreign policy of global engagement, Klaus saw the EU as over-bureaucratic and economically restrictive, defining Czech interests more narrowly in terms of economic prosperity and maintenance of sovereignty.<sup>3</sup>

By the late 1990s, as the Civic Democrats began to decline as a political force, their policies on Europe were also being challenged by both the opposition Social Democrats and its own liberal and Christian Democratic coalition partners. Klaus's party finally lost office in 1997 when a major party financing scandal prompted its partners to abandon it. The Czech

Republic's accession negotiations were therefore largely conducted by a minority Social Democratic government, formed after early elections in 1998. However, domestic debate on Europe was still driven by the growing euroscepticism of the Civic Democrats, who, in opposition, moved from a critique of the EU as stifling free markets towards one emphasizing the defence of Czech national interests against German-inspired eurofederalism.<sup>4</sup> In June 2002 parliamentary elections, which were again won the Social Democrats (ČSSD), resulted in the formation of a coalition government with a slim majority between ČSSD and the liberal Freedom Union and the Christian Democrats. A common commitment to rapid Czech accession to the EU and a rejection of the Civic Democrats 'euro-realism' was a key factor unifying for parties otherwise divided over fiscal and social policy. However, the election result was widely interpreted as indicating that European questions, stressed by the Civic Democrats but not other parties, lacked salience for a Czech electorate preoccupied with more traditional issues of living standards and wealth distribution.

A secondary factor explaining the emergence of 'Europe' as a contentious issue is the presence in the Czech party system of two sizeable radical parties hostile both to the EU and to the wider pro-Western orientation: the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) and far-right the Republican Party (SPR-RSČ). For much of the 1990s these parties' combined support represented about a fifth of Czech voters. Although the Republicans disintegrated as a political force and dropped out of the Czech parliament in 1998, since 1999 the Communists have made significant gains, benefitting from the disillusionment of some Social Democrat voters. The June 2002 elections thus saw the Communists increase their share of the vote to 18.5 per cent.

*'Europe' and Czech public opinion*

The fragmentary data on public opinion available from the communist period suggest that from the late 1960s onwards Czechs became increasingly sympathetic to the pro-Western orientation and value system of pre-war Czechoslovakia.<sup>5</sup> After reliable opinion polling resumed in the Czech lands in 1990, polls consistently recorded clear majorities in favour of entering the EU. Despite a slight decline, by the late 1990s polling suggested a well established pattern of opinion: 40-50 per cent of the Czech electorate appeared to favour EU membership and 20-25 per cent to oppose it, with the remainder undecided or not intending to participate in a referendum on accession. Excluding the traditionally eurosceptic Baltic states, these levels of support ranked the Czech Republic as one of the candidate states, where such support for EU entry was weakest and opposition highest. Indeed, the Czechs' reputation as nation of eurosceptics in part explained the scheduling of the Czech accession referendum as seventh of the nine to taking place in 2003. To some extent, the relative weakness of pro-EU sentiment can be explained as part of a general trend for support for EU membership to be weaker in states closest to accession and higher in states, where accession was a distant prospect.<sup>6</sup> However, it also seemed linked to specifically Czech factors. The success of the Communists and Republicans in mobilizing significant anti-reform electorates appeared to have created a core bloc of anti-EU voters. The coherent and well-established eurosceptic discourse of the Civic Democrats may have had some impact on public opinion, although as Klaus's party overtly never opposed entry this is difficult to quantify. Both EU *Eurobarometer* research in candidate states and Czech polling suggests that the key factors motivating Czechs rejecting EU membership were economic concerns over its personal impact on them, manifested in concerns over possible rises in the cost of living or increases in unemployment. Concerns that the Czech Republic would have 'second class' membership in the EU – often linked by respondents with likely restrictions on Czechs' right to work in

the other EU states – emerged as a secondary factor. Concerns over possible threats to the Czech national identity and way of life appear a relatively minor preoccupation (see figure 1).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

As elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, support for entry in the EU and trust in its institutions in the Czech Republic was higher amongst younger, more educated, urban voters and those employed in the private sector, and lower among older, less educated voters and residents of small towns in rural areas.<sup>7</sup>

Czech public opinion was also characterised by persistently low levels of interest in and knowledge of the both EU and the enlargement process, providing further evidence for its low salience as a political issue at *mass* level. According to Eurobarometer data, in May 2003 at the height of the referendum campaign, 60 per cent of Czech voters felt poorly informed about enlargement and Czech Republic's own accession.<sup>8</sup> However, this finding is seemingly explained by the fact that 79 per cent took little or no interest in news about the EU, one of the lowest levels of interest for any accession state.<sup>9</sup> This may reflect low levels of trust in both Czech state and the EU as sources of information about European integration.<sup>10</sup>

In political terms, this pattern translated into overwhelming support for accession from supporters of centre-right free market parties including, significantly, Klaus's Civic Democrats, and more narrower majorities in favour among supporters of the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats. The only party the majority of whose supporters rejected EU membership was the Communists, whose electorate appeared overwhelmingly opposed to accession.<sup>11</sup> Detailed polling in May 2003 on attitudes towards the EU and the accession referendum for the official information campaign identified several distinct groups in the Czech electorate: a group of 'active supporters of the EU' highly likely to participate in the referendum, which totalled 42 per cent of respondents, and was disproportionately male,

middle-aged and politically right-wing; a group of 'opponents of the EU' totalling 17 per cent of respondents; a group of voters, who were 'equivocal, but interested in the EU', which totalled 16 per cent of respondents and contained disproportionately large numbers of women, manual workers and Social Democrat voters; a group of 'hesitant supporters of the EU' totalling 9 per cent, which was largely female and included disproportionate numbers of right-wing voters and residents of small towns; a group of 'equivocal voters, uninterested in the EU' (9 per cent); and a group uncertain whether they would vote (7 per cent).<sup>12</sup>

Polling in candidate states has tended to focus on measuring support for (or opposition to) EU entry and general attitudes towards the EU, at the expense of views concerning the future direction of the EU or specific aspects of integration. This has made it difficult to assess public support for the more nuanced eurosceptic positions of parties such as the Czech Civic Democrats. However, the limited evidence available suggests little overt support for the ODS's anti-integrationist, quality-before-speed-of-accession positions among more mainstream Czech voters. Thus, in both October 2001 *Eurobarometer* polls large majorities of Czech respondents were willing to accept European level decision making across a large number of policy areas and wished to see their country make more rapid progress to the EU accession.<sup>13</sup> More recent polling has indicated that Czechs are less inclined to trust the EU and more sceptical of steps towards further political integration such as defence and foreign policies or the creation of a European 'Foreign Minister' than citizens of many other accession states. However, large majorities of Czech respondents trust the Union and favour such steps. Moreover, in all cases the minority actively distrustful or opposed rarely exceeded the level of 20-25 per cent, the figure consistently recorded for outright opposition to EU membership.<sup>14</sup>

There seems to be similarly limited and inconclusive evidence concerning the importance of Czech-German relations in shaping Czech voters' perceptions of accession and the EU. As



noted, there has been a strong, although sometimes submerged, tendency historically for Czechs to view their relationship with Europe in terms of the Czech relationship with Germany and the German-speaking world.<sup>15</sup> Both the radical left and right and, more recently, the mainstream centre-right Civic Democrats have their linked reservations about EU accession with the supposed preponderance of German interests in the Union in their electoral campaigning. During the 2002 election campaign, at least two polling organisations attributed falls in the percentage of respondents supporting EU entry to the re-emergence of the Beneš Decrees as an election issue and its linkage with EU accession.<sup>16</sup> A TNS Factum poll of June 2002 even suggested that a majority of Czechs would reject EU membership if accession was made conditional on the abolition of the Beneš Decrees.<sup>17</sup> However, polling by the CVVM in the same period suggested that even in historically sensitive regions bordering Germany and Austria, social and economic concerns heavily outweighed concern about the Decrees and German influence among opponents of accession.<sup>18</sup>

### *Constitutional and legal framework*

Both historically and in the post-communist period Czech political elites have been deeply resistant to referendums and other forms of direct democracy. In post-communist Czechoslovakia legislation provided for referendums in only two restricted contexts: 1) local referendums on altering the boundaries of communes and other local matters and 2) a 1991 Constitutional Law allowing referendums on the principles of any new Czech-Slovak constitutional settlement. However, when in mid-1992 Czech and Slovak elites decided to divide Czechoslovakia, they passed new legislation, avoiding the holding of a referendum.<sup>19</sup> The 1992 Czech Constitution, hastily adopted during the months preceding the break-up of Czechoslovakia, made a limited, theoretical provision for referendums (and other forms of direct democracy) subject to the passing of a constitutional law (requiring a qualified

majority).<sup>20</sup> In the mid-1990s, therefore, Czech law contained no provision of any kind for national referendums.

For much of the 1990s, debates over referendums in the Czech Republic were embroiled in a broader dispute over the role of civil society in democratic politics. Many mainstream forces, including President Havel, the Social Democrats (ČSSD) and small centre-right parties such as the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) and Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) saw referendums as a legitimate and desirable means to promote citizen participation. The Civic Democrats, however, opposed them on principle as undermining ‘standard’ West European style parliamentary democracy. For precisely this reason, the Communists favoured referendums as a supplementary democratic mechanism appropriate to ‘self-governing socialism’. In the course of the 1990s, there were more than a dozen unsuccessful attempts in the Czech parliament to legislate for referendums, some trying to introduce the referendum as a general institution, others to legislate only for a referendum on EU accession. The resultant political deadlock appeared to threaten the prospect of any referendum on accession taking place. However, a constitutional act providing for a referendum on EU accession (Constitutional Law no. 515/2002), but not on any other issue, was finally passed in October 2002 with near unanimity using accelerated procedures. The act stated that parliament’s normal powers of decision and treaty ratification on accession were to be replaced by a referendum. The question put to voters was to be ‘Do you agree with the Czech Republic becoming a member state of the European Union according to the EU-Czech Republic Treaty of Accession?’.<sup>21</sup> Accession would be approved if supported by a simple majority of all those voting. Despite the efforts of ODS legislators to insert one, unlike in neighbouring Poland and Slovakia, there was no minimum turnout requirement.<sup>22</sup> The referendum was to be officially called by the President within 30 days of the signature of the Treaty of Accession. As in Czech parliamentary elections, voting was to take place over two days with the

President determining the exact dates of polling. Any person entitled to vote was entitled submit legal objections to the validity of the referendum to the Czech Constitutional Court within ten days of the end of polling. If EU membership was rejected, the Law allowed for further accession referendums to be held. However, no referendum on EU accession on the same conditions as those rejected could be held for two years.<sup>23</sup>

### **The referendum campaign(s)**

The Czech referendum campaign was initially overshadowed by the war in Iraq, but by mid-February the accession referendum was becoming a dominant theme.<sup>24</sup> However, it was domestic political dispute appeared to have the most significant potential impact on the campaign. The governing coalition's determination to reduce the ballooning Czech state budget deficit, standing at 6 per cent of GDP, to 4 per cent by 2006 led it to propose a package of tax increases and cuts in public spending, including spending on welfare benefits.<sup>25</sup> Unsurprisingly, the proposed measures led to strained relations with the trade unions and aggravated tensions between Prime Minister Špidla and the more etatistic wing of his own party.<sup>26</sup> Despite a traditional lack of labour militancy in the Czech Republic, in the run up to the referendum several groups of public sector employees threatened strike action.<sup>27</sup>

The election of Václav Klaus as President by the Czech Parliament in February 2003 was both an unexpected development and a further complicating factor for the referendum campaign. Intriguingly, Klaus owed his narrow victory to support from Communist deputies and dissident Social Democrats, attracted by his defence of the legality of the post-war 'Beneš Decrees' deporting Czechoslovakia's 2.5 million strong ethnic German population<sup>28</sup> and a shared dislike of the political course of Prime Minister Špidla. Klaus's election was a severe blow to the centre-left government, whose inability to unite behind a single presidential candidate highlighted both its own fragility and the deep internal divisions within

the Social Democratic Party, prompting Prime Minister Špidla (successfully) to seek a new vote of confidence in parliament. Although, it was initially expected that the referendum would take place on 15-16 June, President Klaus eventually fixed polling for 13-14 June. This reflected both the Czech tradition of holding national elections over a Friday and Saturday and concern on the part of politicians that polling over a Sunday and Monday would depress turnout.

### *The 'Yes' campaign*

The official 'Yes' campaign was run by the Communication Strategy Section (OKS) of the Czech Foreign Ministry, which had also been the main agency co-ordinating accession negotiations and pre-accession preparations. Although official information programmes about the EU had been operating since 1997, the OKS was founded only in 2000 and a full scale campaign was not decided upon by the government until September 2001. The OKS's budget and activities were thus restricted until mid-2002, when the Foreign Ministry passed from the control of the Social Democrats to that of the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL).<sup>29</sup> Both the overall campaign strategy and individual aspects of the campaign were then put out to tender to private firms. The winning campaign strategy was devised by a non-profit organisation named 'European Integration', especially founded to bid for the campaign by a number of advertising professionals.<sup>30</sup>

The campaign, which began in mid-February after being formally approved by the cabinet, was largely based around conventional advertising. 40-45 per cent of its 200 million crown budget was set aside for TV, press and billboard advertising and the production of leaflets and other publicity materials – the campaign sought to ensure that a leaflet explaining accession was delivered to every Czech household. Publicity materials were also distributed through libraries and branches of the main Czech banks and insurance companies. The

campaign also set up a telephone information line, reported to have answered several hundred thousand enquiries,<sup>31</sup> and an internet site – [www.euroskop.cz](http://www.euroskop.cz). A further 40-45 per cent of the budget was allocated to support smaller projects in the regions and projects by NGOs. This included 20 million crowns for the functioning of twenty Regional European Information Centres, which were to liaise and coordinate activities with the EU Delegation, regional authorities and NGOs. The remaining 10-20 per cent of the budget was to be used to promote the accession of the Czech Republic in the existing 15 member states.

The campaign was officially titled an ‘Information Campaign’. It would, Communication Strategy officials insisted, provide a balanced picture of the advantages and disadvantages of accession. In practice, as government politicians conceded –<sup>32</sup> and as was readily apparent from its mission statement and campaign materials whose logo was the word ‘Ano’ (‘Yes’) with the final letter taking the form of the EU symbol – its goal was to deliver a vote for accession.<sup>33</sup> The campaign was timetabled into several phases: 1) a first phase concentrating on providing information concerning accession that citizens lacked; 2) a second phase (beginning in early May) stressing the benefits of EU membership; and 3) and a final two week long media-led drive to maximise turnout at the referendum itself and 4) a follow-up phase thanking voters for supporting accession. Campaigning in the national media centred around typical individual citizens from small-medium European states, which had joined the EU in previous enlargement waves, a strategy intended to humanise apparently distant and anonymous European institutions. Billboard advertising featured a Portuguese fisherman, an Austrian pensioner and a Spanish bus driver, TV advertising an Irish IT consultant, a Finnish manager and a Greek café owner. The campaign slogan was ‘Welcome to the Community’. However, the core of the campaign, particularly its printed materials and the regional and NGO projects and events, was to address the Czech public’s concerns about the impact of accession on everyday life and stress the benefits it would bring ordinary people.<sup>34</sup> Leaflets

stressed the economic benefits EU membership would bring the Czech Republic, such as lower unemployment, lower prices and better quality products,<sup>35</sup> the new rights Czechs would acquire to travel, work, study and do business throughout the EU,<sup>36</sup> the benefits of the Euro for both Czech businesses and individuals,<sup>37</sup> the financial support already provided to the Czech Republic by the EU,<sup>38</sup> and the minimal impact that EU regulations would have on traditional Czech food products and delicacies.<sup>39</sup> A particular concern was to reach difficult-to-access-groups where concern over the impact of accession was highest and support for EU membership and likely referendum participation lowest. Such groups included the elderly, rural residents employed in agriculture, housewives, disabled people, and Roma. Many regional events targeted students and young people, local business, political and administrative elites, and professional groups such as doctors, engineers and teachers, influential in local communities. The campaign strategy laid great stress on tailoring the content, volume and channel of information to particular groups and on the need to reach ‘opinion leaders’ within them.<sup>40</sup>

Smaller, separate ‘Yes’ campaigns were launched by a number of civil society organisations and political parties. The Catholic Church formally endorsed accession at the start of the campaign and called on Catholics and other voters to support it. Major Christian denominations also facilitated the distribution of a 200,000 copies of a special booklet, issued by the official information campaign, which stressed that the EU had a spiritual and moral dimension – an acknowledgement that some Christians had concerns that accession would promote moral permissiveness.<sup>41</sup> Despite its growing opposition to the governing coalition’s austerity plans, in April the principal trade union federation (ČMKOS) launched its own pro-EU campaign, calling a series of regional meetings<sup>42</sup> and distributing an *Employees’ Guide to the EU* to members. The Unions stressed that accession would lead to a growth in wages, purchasing power and productivity and ensure high standards of labour protection.<sup>43</sup>

Most pro-EU NGOs functioned purely at local or regional level. However, the ‘Yes for Europe’ campaign, a group supported by leading figures from the Czech intelligentsia and cultural elite, including former President Václav Havel, gained some degree of national prominence, organising, amongst other events, a pro EU concert in Prague’s Wenceslas Square on the eve of polling. Of the three political parties in the governing coalition, only two, the Christian Democrats and the Freedom Union (US) organised separate party campaigns.<sup>44</sup> The dominant coalition partner, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), considered a separate campaign unnecessary, although it did use its traditional May Day gatherings to support accession. Given its limited resources and organisation, perhaps unsurprisingly the Freedom Union’s campaign consisted largely of a single national launch event. However, the Christian Democrats invested significant resources into a party campaign, producing a range of pro-EU materials for their own supporters, which adapted official campaign materials to address economic concerns more directly. The party’s national and regional headquarters were reported to be hives of activity during the weeks leading up to the referendum.<sup>45</sup>

### *The Civic Democrats: ‘Yes, but...’*

Despite pioneering an assertive eurosceptic discourse and enjoying growing opinion poll leads in early 2003, the accession referendum campaign found the centre-right Civic Democrats divided and ambivalent over EU membership. The party’s poor showing in the 2002 election had prompted Václav Klaus to announce that he would not stand for re-election as chairman of his party in order to campaign for the Czech presidency (due to be vacated by Václav Havel in January 2003).<sup>46</sup> In December 2002 the party congress unexpectedly, elected Miroslav Topolánek, a pragmatic politician with a strong regional power base, as Klaus’s successor. However, Jan Zahradil, the principal architect of its ‘eurorealist’ thinking

on European integration, was elected to the influential new position of ODS First Deputy Chairman and continued as its principal foreign affairs spokesman.

The Civic Democrats' referendum 'campaign' was officially launched by Miroslav Topolánek in a keynote speech in mid-February and concluded with the party's annual ideological conference in May, which was entirely devoted to the EU. Topolánek suggested that the arguments in favour of accession only narrowly outweighed those against<sup>47</sup> and that, although he expected ODS supporters to vote 'Yes', accession could not be regarded as an issue above party politics, because ODS endorsed EU membership for reasons other than those of the Social Democrats.<sup>48</sup> As the above suggests, the ODS accession 'campaign' was largely confined to internal party discussion and criticism of political opponents. It undertook virtually no organised national or regional campaigning directed at voters in connection with the referendum.<sup>49</sup> Most strikingly, ODS failed to make any formal appeal to party supporters to vote 'Yes' until two hours before polling was due to begin on 13 June, when Jan Zahradil issued a press release urging them to do so on the grounds that the Czech Republic would be better able to defend its national interests from within the Union.<sup>50</sup>

ODS argued that it was unnecessary for the party to pro-accession campaign, given that the overwhelming majority of its supporters were known to favour EU membership. Moreover, it claimed, the pro-accession campaigners were missing the point that the *form* of the EU mattered far more than mere accession to it. The bombastic official 'Yes' campaign, it claimed, was wilfully obscuring both the costs and benefits of accession and the future of the Union. However, the growing trend towards the EU becoming 'a centralised European superstate' dominated by larger nations urgently required the formulation of a 'Czech policy' to assert and defend national interests.<sup>51</sup> The party, therefore, demanded that a second referendum should be held in 2004 over any proposed EU Constitution.<sup>52</sup> If such new arrangements were too federalist, Jan Zahradil suggested, ODS would not recommend its



supporters to ratify them.<sup>53</sup> A number of ODS figures, including its Interior and Trade spokespersons Ivan Langer and Martin Říman one of the authors of its keynote 2001 *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism*, Miloslav Bednář - who described a 'Yes' ballot as a 'ticket for the Titanic' - publicly opposed accession,<sup>54</sup> a divergence from party policy that its leader seemed to accept with equanimity.

***President Klaus: 'No comment'***

In his first weeks as President Klaus sent mixed signals regarding the EU. In early April on a visit to Poland, Klaus emphasised that he saw 'no alternative' path for the Czech Republic other than membership of the EU, given the country's geographical position.<sup>55</sup> He also insisted on his right as head of state to be one of the three Czech co-signatories of the Athens Treaty of Accession later the same month. However, other interventions by the new President were more controversial. Klaus continued to air his well-established 'eurorealist' stance on European integration. Klaus thus told *Die Zeit*, during an official visit to Germany, 'a marriage of convenience, not a love match', also expressing scepticism about the feasibility of a European foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> In an eve-of poll newspaper interview, he also repeated his doubts over the viability of both democracy above the level of the nation-state and the eurozone, criticised Czech intellectuals who, he claimed, saw EU membership as a panacea for all social and political ills and expressed regret that Czechs had not had longer to enjoy the national independence regained in 1989.<sup>57</sup> Klaus also re-engaged with the Beneš Decrees issue, conceding that they 'unacceptable from today's point of view', but refusing to contemplate compensation for or negotiations with Sudeten German groups.<sup>58</sup> He did not, however, link the issue to EU accession as he had done in the 2002 election campaign.<sup>59</sup>

The President also repeatedly and publicly clashed with government politicians over European integration. His remarks to journalists after the Athens Treaty signing, that joining

the EU involved a calculation of costs and benefits, one of the costs being loss of national sovereignty, provoked Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda to retort that, if given by a law student in an exam, the President's views would be failed.<sup>60</sup> Similarly rancorous exchanges were reported at the meeting of Czech party leaders called by Klaus to discuss accession in May. He also publicly criticised the 'Yes' campaign for trivialising accession, failing to spur any serious debate and wasting public money.<sup>61</sup> More significantly, Klaus declined to publicly advocate a 'Yes' vote - or to say how he would be voting in the referendum, justifying his stance as necessary to underline the political neutrality of his office and confining himself simply to an appeal to citizens to vote in the referendum.

### *The Communists: 'No, but ...'*

Although bitterly opposed to Czech membership of NATO, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) was more divided and ambivalent towards the EU. While some in the party saw the EU simply as a vehicle for German-dominated big business, others felt that its social and regulatory policies and emerging democratic institutions, made membership of the EU preferable to likely domination by US interests and transnational capital outside the Union.<sup>62</sup> Communist differences over EU membership quickly become aligned with deeper divisions in the party over strategy and provoked rare public arguments between Communist leaders.<sup>63</sup> The KSČM, therefore, deliberately postponed adopting an explicit stance on accession until March 2003. On 8 March the majority of the KSČM executive opted for a 'moderate no' position of 'not recommending' EU membership, a decision confirmed two weeks later by its Central Committee.<sup>64</sup> The KSČM justified its qualified rejection of EU membership on the grounds that the terms of entry – and in particular the balance of agricultural subsidies and regional aid and power of the EU bureaucracy – were unacceptable, that the Czech Republic was unprepared for the rigours of the Single Market and that the

future shape of the Union was still uncertain,<sup>65</sup> but did not rule membership ‘in a longer term perspective’.<sup>66</sup> Communist campaigning against EU membership was incorporated into the party’s extensive programme of May Day activities. As with its election campaigning, its anti-accession activities were based upon grassroots activists, who distributed some 360,000 leaflets.<sup>67</sup> In June the party also announced that it would mobilise members in every polling district in the country to act as election monitors in order to prevent ‘manipulation’ of the result.<sup>68</sup>

### ***The ‘No’ campaign: Enter the far right***

The most visible and active ‘No’ campaign (‘No to the EU’) was a loose alliance of small, previously obscure right-wing groupings and activists. Its main components were: Citizens Against the EU, an organization formed by several small groups with an overt neo-fascist orientation;<sup>69</sup> the National Party (NS), a small, newly formed far-right party seeking to use the referendum campaign as a platform for its own launch; the Eurosceptic Alternative (ESA), a Brno-based group with an anti-communist, neo-conservative outlook; the Faithful We Remain (*Věrní zůstaneme*) committee of Dalibor Plichta, which took a traditional, anti-German, Czech nationalist position; and the Euro-Objective (*Euroobjektiv*) group, about which little information is available.

The ‘No’ campaign had limited resources – its most active component, the Eurosceptic Alternative grouping, for example, was reported to have only approximately 150 active supporters. One of its most insistent demands was, therefore, that it be allocated state funding to put the anti-accession case, the sum requested being variously reported as 5, 25 or 100 million crowns.<sup>70</sup> In early 2003 members of the ‘No’ campaign appear also applied for a grant from the official information campaign’s funding for civil society groups. However,

this application was turned down, ostensibly because it was drawn up in an unprofessional manner.<sup>71</sup>

The 'No' campaign strategy, therefore, appears to have been to develop and co-ordinate a network of local grassroots campaigns. Guidelines published by the Eurosceptic Alternative (EAS), for example, recommend leafleting, the holding of public meetings and debates, events targeted at local media and the use of sympathetic local artists and intellectuals to add credibility to the campaign. It also suggested that where possible anti-EU campaigners gain access to discussion events organised by the pro-EU official information campaign. Throughout the referendum campaign, the websites of the EAS and the National Party provided full and up-to-date coverage of anti-EU events and initiatives. The National Party also made extensive use of e-mail to contact presumed sympathisers both in the Czech Republic and abroad. 'No' campaigners also attempted to organise a number of high-profile national events. In February 2003 it organised an International Eurocritical Congress in Prague, billed as an international symposium of activists and intellectuals opposed to the EU. It also organised a demonstration in Prague on 15 March 2003, a date chosen for its symbolism as the anniversary of the annexation of the Czech Lands by Nazi Germany in 1939. The 'No' campaign also attracted some interest from both print and broadcast media, which offered a limited platform for anti-EU viewpoints.

However, the campaign drew little support. The Eurocritical Congress attracted only 100 delegates, only one of whom came from abroad (a member of the No to the European Union movement of Lithuania) and the 15 March demonstration was attended by only 50 people.<sup>72</sup>

The campaign leaders' claim that they had distributed 20,000 leaflets in Prague, a city with a population of some one million, also indicates the limits of the campaign. Reports of other anti-EU events elsewhere in the Czech Republic in both mainstream media and on Czech anti-EU websites suggest that these were similarly scattered, small scale and few in number.

Despite differences of emphasis, reflecting the different ideological strands within the campaign,<sup>73</sup> its arguments against accession centred on three key points:

- 1) that the EU was a ‘bureaucratic colossus’, which would suffocate the Czech Republic with ‘socialist’ bureaucratic regulation – a point emphasised by the campaign logo, a hammer and sickle intertwined with the EU symbol;
- 2) that EU accession would mark an unacceptable loss of Czech national sovereignty, comparable to previous periods of external domination by Austria, Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union; and
- 3) that the Czech economy was strong enough to withstand international competition outside the Union and could, if necessary, negotiate bilateral trade arrangements with it on the Norwegian or Swiss model.<sup>74</sup>

A small number of more mainstream, cultural and intellectual figures publicly opposed Czech EU membership. Miroslav Ševčík, head of the free market Liberal Institute think tank opposed the EU’s regulatory burden; Michal Semín, a Catholic intellectual and head of the neo-conservative Civic Institute think tank was concerned that the Union would impose an agenda of ‘political correctness’ inimical to family values; and Ludvík Vaculík, one of the leading radical democratic writers of the 1968 Prague Spring and in the 1970s and 80s a leading dissident, opposed accession on the grounds that the EU was a technocratic ‘continuation of the status quo’, which would erode the sense of citizenship developing in small, historically established Czech communities.<sup>75</sup> Milan Knížák, the Director of the Czech National Gallery, as well as ODS Trade spokesman Martin Říman, were also reported as attending the launch of a collection of anti-accession jokes, cartoons and quotations, *No, No, No, the Only Positive Choice* published by a small fringe right-wing party, the Czech Right (*Česká pravice*).<sup>76</sup>

## **The results**

77.33 per cent of those voting supported accession, 22.67 per cent voted against. Those voting in favour represented 41.73 per cent of the total electorate. At 55.21 per cent the turnout was comparable with that in last year's general election (58 per cent). The results were broadly in line with pre-referendum polling, although as in other CEE accession states' turnout was lower and the majority in favour of accession higher than forecast. The 'Yes' vote represented 41.73 per cent of the total electorate – a percentage lower than in any accession referendum with the exception of that Hungary. As predicted by polls, support for accession was highest in Prague (80.47 per cent) and in the Zlín region (80.61).<sup>77</sup> Support for accession was lowest in the Liberec region in Northern Bohemia, where 73.82 per cent voted 'Yes' and 26.18 per cent voted 'No', a region with multiple social and economic problems, where parties of the radical left and far right have had strong electoral support. However, compared with variations in voting patterns in national elections, the accession vote was surprisingly geographically uniform.

## **[TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE]**

Exit polling by SC&C for Czech Television, based on responses from 12,500 voters,<sup>78</sup> also suggested relatively little variation in terms of social and demographic characteristics. There was little difference in support for accession among men (77 per cent) and women (78 per cent) and almost no difference between those living in urban areas (78 per cent) and those living in the countryside (75 per cent), reflecting the absence of a strong urban-rural cleavage in the Czech Republic. There was also little variation by age group, with support lowest among those aged 30 – 44 (75 per cent) and highest amongst 18-29 year olds (78 per cent) and, surprisingly, the over 60s (79 per cent). Although support for accession was correlated

with rising educational levels, here too differences were not large: while 73 per cent of those with only primary or vocational education supported accession, the figure for those with a high school diploma was 78 per cent and for those with higher education 82 per cent. The only significant variation by occupational group was the relatively low (65 per cent) support for accession among the unemployed. The only clear determinant of support for or opposition to accession appears to have been voters' party alignment. While voters for both ODS and the parties of the governing coalition overwhelmingly supported accession, a large majority (63 per cent) of Communist voters polled voted 'No' .

**[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]**

The Czech Constitutional Court received 28 objections to the validity of the referendum, some submitted by private citizens, some by leaders of the Eurosceptic Initiative and Citizens Against the EU. Most individuals' complaints concerned alleged technical irregularities, such as the size of the official stamp on ballot papers or the provision of pencils, not pens at some polling stations. The anti-EU activists, by contrast, claimed that the government's use of taxes paid by both supporters and opponents of accession to fund the pro-accession campaign violated the constitutional principles that power stemmed from the whole people and that minorities' rights should be protected. However, the Court rejected all the objections as either legally invalid or as mere polemic.<sup>79</sup>

## **Anatomy of a Referendum**

### *EU Accession as 'Return to Europe'*

The clear and consistent pattern of support for EU membership among the Czech public since 1989, reflecting a historically well-established identification with Europe and the West, is arguably the key determinant of the result of the Czech accession referendum. Although there was a slight upward trend in support for accession in the six months before the referendum,<sup>80</sup> any opinion poll since 1989 would have more or less accurately predicted the result. As such, the result provides further refutation of the 'Franklin thesis' which argues that EU-related referenda can essentially be regarded as 'second order election' in which voting correlates with partisan preferences for or against incumbent parties.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the 'civilizational' and regime-change related factors noted above, what is striking in the Czech case is *decoupling* of party preferences and preferences over accession. Despite the presence of a weak and increasingly unpopular centre-left government and weak and contradictory cues to support accession from Civic Democrat leaders, the overwhelming majority of the party's voters voted 'Yes', making up some 40 per cent of the overall 'Yes' vote. A similar decoupling is observable at civil society level in, for example, the trade unions' strong support for the accession campaign despite their escalating dispute with the government over Euro-related budget discipline.

### *Campaign effects...*

Given the settled pattern of public preferences for accession, there seems very little potential for campaign strategy and resources to influence the referendum outcome, but some potential to influence the proportion of the 'Yes' majority by winning marginal support and influencing turnout levels through the effectiveness in mobilising supporters. In simple financial resource terms, the 'Yes' campaign dwarfed the 'No' campaign(s) by factor of at



least 200:1. This imbalance was compounded by the low levels of civic engagement and mobilisatory capacity in Czech society, which effectively ruled out the possibility of substituting activist networks for top-down political communications, financing and organisation. While the 'Yes' campaign enjoyed extensive and unimpeded access to national media, the 'No' campaign fell below the threshold necessary to acquire any real public profile and was dependent on editors' to gain media access. Many Czechs could thus have been forgiven for thinking that no 'No' campaign existed.

Both 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns were characterised by limited effectiveness and strategic errors, although these were particularly marked in the case of the 'No' camp, which squandered what limited potential it might have possessed. Czech public relations professionals praised the 'Yes' campaign's organisation, targeting and timetabling, but were critical of its lack of substantive information, limited visibility, excessively positive image of the EU and its unusual decision to centre its message around the experience of foreigners. The campaign slogan, 'Welcome to the Community' was also criticised for implying that accession was a *fait accompli*. Some also argued that the absence of any effective 'No' voices, paradoxically, undermined the effectiveness of the 'Yes' campaign.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, analysis of polling data suggested that, despite superior planning, organisation and resources, the 'Yes' campaign was having relatively little impact on voters beyond creating an awareness that 'something was going on'.<sup>83</sup> Polling data also suggested that, despite the message of the 'Yes' campaign, large numbers of Czech voters still believed that accession *would* have a significant negative, short-term, economic impact on their lives.<sup>84</sup> Many, however, believed that they would be able to adjust to these changes – an expectation perhaps influenced by the relatively benign Czech experience of economic transition during the 1990s -and were therefore inclined to vote 'Yes' or not strongly inclined to vote 'No'.<sup>85</sup>

The 'No' camp's lack of resources were aggravated by internal political divisions. As a well-resourced parliamentary party with significant local organisation and growing appeal, it was the Communists who, who appeared best placed to organise an effective 'No' campaign. However, despite organising anti-EU events on the basis of party gatherings May 2003, the party failed to develop a broader campaign or use other media to build on its success in the June 2002 elections. Given that these party political events mainly attract its own members and sympathisers, it seems unlikely that KSČM's belated campaigning on EU accession reached beyond its own limited, core electorate. Its campaign also appears to have been weakened by a lack of strong central co-ordination, allowing local organisations, in some cases, to articulate a more radical and nationalistic message than that of the party's national leadership.<sup>86</sup> Despite its considerable resources and capacity for strategic planning, KSČM thus appears to have mounted only a belated token campaign against accession.

Notwithstanding its lack of resources and the fractiousness and mutual suspicion of the fringe groups within it,<sup>87</sup> the 'No' campaign's strategy appeared misconceived in a number of ways. Firstly, as polls repeatedly showed, voters inclined to vote against accession were most concerned about the immediate negative economic impact of EU membership on prices and employment, than abstract concepts such as sovereignty or identity, which were at best a secondary concern. The use of anti-communism to frame the issue of accession was also arguably a strategic error, as many (potential) 'No' voters and activists were politically on the left, many being Communist supporters. Secondly, the 'No' campaign rapidly became side-tracked, focussing much of its energy and propaganda on the alleged unfairness of the official information campaign and its refusal to fund to 'No' campaigners. Finally, the campaign was also arguably discredited by the obvious extremism of some of its leading members. František Červenka, for example, who headed the Citizens Against the EU movement, was reported as telling the Eurocritical Congress that joining the EU was treason and that

members of the Czech Government would one day find themselves on trial for doing so. He also stated that European integration was the work of masonic lodges and the Socialist International intended to destroy European Christian civilisation through ‘abortions, homosexual marriages, euthanasia and other perversions’.<sup>88</sup>

*... or campaign side effects?*

The political consensus on EU accession in the Czech Republic was not only less broad than in many other CEE states, but also shallower. This was evident in the campaign itself from the acrimonious public disputes amongst the Czech political elite, including divisions within both the Communists and the Civic Democrats, and in President Klaus’s failure to publicly advocate a ‘Yes’ vote or to say how he would be voting in the referendum. Indeed, Klaus was the only heads of state of an accession state not to recommend a ‘Yes’ vote. It is important to note, however, that these disputes were, on the whole, disputes *around* accession, rather than *about* accession. They concerned issues such as the nature of the campaign, the costs and benefits of accession, the relative importance of accession and post-accession issues, and preferred model of integration, rather than accession itself, which was viewed as a *fait accompli* even by its notional opponents in the Communist Party. We might, therefore, hypothesise that, such elite level division would offer confused signals, suggesting that a *side-effect* of the campaign might be to further demobilise weakly committed voters, whose motivation to vote was already weakened by the uncompetitive nature of the referendum campaign and the predictability of the result.<sup>89</sup> It is noticeable that both the turnout (55.21 percent) and the margin of victory (approximately 3:1) correspond closely to the percentages of those identified as firmly favouring or opposing accession in early May 2003 (42 per cent and 17 per cent, total 59 per cent).

## Conclusions

Despite *low* levels of public knowledge of the accession procedure and European integration generally and *high* levels of elite contention around these issues, the Czech accession referendum produced a sizeable vote for accession based on a medium turnout. Despite a marked imbalance in the resourcing and effectiveness of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ campaigns, neither seems to have made a significant detectable impact on the result or turnout. With the possible exception of Communist voters, it is also difficult to identify linkage with government-opposition or party political alignments, which would have suggested a relatively sizeable number of ‘No’ votes or abstentions by centre-right voters. The linkage between domestic reform, European identity and EU accession is a complex one with considerable potential to vary.<sup>90</sup> However, it therefore seems most likely that political-cultural predisposition of most Czech voters to identify themselves as belonging in (Western) Europe coupled with the perception of EU membership as the logical next step on the path of post-communist modernisation was the most significant ‘cue’ followed, producing an effect similar to party political cueing on a known issue referenda in established democracies by simplifying and channelling political choices.<sup>91</sup> Whether such a pattern will hold for future EU-related referendums, however, remains an open question.

## TABLES

**Table 1:** Results of the 2003 EU accession referendum in the Czech Republic

	Total	% of Registered Voters	% of Valid Votes
Registered voters	8 259 525	100.00	
Ballot papers issued	4 560 399	55.21	
Votes cast	4 557 960	55.18	
Valid votes	4 457 206	53.95	
Yes	3 446 758	41.73	77.33
No	1 010 448	12.23	22.67

Source: Central Election Commission, [www.volby.cz](http://www.volby.cz)

**Table 2:** Exit poll findings on voting patterns in the June 2003 Czech EU accession referendum

	Yes %	No %
<b>Voting by gender</b>		
Men	77	23
Women	78	22
<b>Voting by age</b>		
18-29	78	22
30-44	75	25
45-59	77	23
60+	79	21
<b>Voting by place of residence</b>		
Urban	78	28
Rural	75	25
<b>Voting by education</b>		
Primary	73	27
Vocational	73	27
High School Diploma ( <i>maturita</i> )	79	21
Higher	82	18
<b>Voting by occupational group</b>		
Employees	77	23
Businesspeople	79	21
Students	84	16
Pensioners	78	22
Housewives/husbands	75	25
Unemployed	65	35
<b>Voting by party</b>		
Freedom Union (US-DEU)	92	8
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	86	14
Christian Democratic Union (KDU-ČSL)	84	16
Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)	82	18
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)	37	63
Other	71	29

**Source: SC&C for Czech Television as reported in *Lidové noviny* (online edition), 14**

**June 2003.**

<sup>1</sup> G. Nodia, 'How Different Are Postcommunist Transitions', *Journal of Democracy*, October 1996 (reprinted in M. Diamond and M. Platter (eds.) *Democracy After Communism*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, pp. 3-17.

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<sup>2</sup> See T. G. Ash, 'Does Central Europe Exist?' in *The Uses of Adversity*, (Cambridge, Granta Books, 1991), pp. 161-92.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Fawn, 'Reconstituting a National Identity: Ideologies in Czech Foreign Policy after the Split', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 19/ 3, September 2003, pp. 204-228 and P. Bugge, 'Czech Perceptions of the Perspective of EU Membership Havel vs. Klaus' in J. Rupnik and J.Zielonka , eds. *EU Enlargement and the Road to European Union – Volume I*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 180-98.

<sup>4</sup> See S Hanley *The Political Context of European Integration in the Czech Republic*, Royal Institute of International Affairs Briefing Paper, October 2002, <http://www.riia.org/index.php?id=103>

<sup>5</sup> See A. Brown and G. Wightman, 'Czechoslovakia: Revival and Retreat' in A. Brown and J. Gray (eds.) *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (London, Macmillan, 1977), chapter 6.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer*, March 2002, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion). Hungary was a significant exception to this trend.

<sup>7</sup> Ján Mišovič, 'Podpora vstupu do EU podle jednotlivých sociálních skupin', *Integrace* no. 4/2000 [www.integrace.cz](http://www.integrace.cz). See also Deutsche Bank Research, 'Public Opinion – Stumbling Block for Enlargement?', *EU Enlargement Monitor*, March 2001

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, *Eurobarometer 2003.2*, July 2003, European Commission, *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer*, March 2002, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion) pp. 145-6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 58

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<sup>10</sup> According to Eurobarometer polling in May 2003, the proportion of Czech respondents respectively preferring Czech official sources and EU sources for information about integration was 24 and 26 per cent, one of the lowest levels of overall trust in official sources across all the accession and candidate states. *Eurobarometer 2003.2*, p. 57

<sup>11</sup> See Mišovič, 'Podpora vstupu do EU podle jednotlivých sociálních skupin'.

<sup>12</sup> 'Cílové skupiny a jejich segmentace', [www.euroskop.cz](http://www.euroskop.cz) (accessed 21 December 2003).

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer*, March 2002. [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion) (accessed 10 June 2003).

<sup>14</sup> See *Eurobarometer 2003.2*, *Eurobarometer 2003.3 - Full Report*, September 2003 and *Eurobarometer EB60 CC-EB 2003.4 - Comparative Highlights*, November 2003 [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion) (accessed 20 January, 2004)

<sup>15</sup> See E. Hahn (ed.), *Evropa očima Čechů* (Prague, Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, 1997)

<sup>16</sup> See S. Hanley, 'Europe and the Czech Parliamentary Elections of June 2002', (Royal Institution of International Affairs/ Opposing Europe Research Network Election Briefing no. 5, July 2002) <http://www.riia.org>.

<sup>17</sup> 'Referendum, červen 2002' *Respekt* no. 24, 10-16 June 2002, .

<sup>18</sup> Anecdotal evidence from former Sudeten German areas, which recorded high Communist votes in June 2002 supported this. J. Brabec, 'Rudé zaře nad Čerchovem' *Respekt* no. 28, 8-14 July 2002, 'Znojensko je rudé', *Morava Dnes*, 17 June 2002 (regional supplement in *Mladá fronta Dnes*), p. B2.

<sup>19</sup> J. Pehe, 'Controversy Rages over the Referendum on the Future of Czechoslovakia', *Report on Eastern Europe*, 30 August 1991, pp. 27-31 and 'The Referendum Controversy in Czechoslovakia', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1/43, 30 October 1992, pp. 35-7.



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<sup>20</sup> Article 2.1 states that ‘All state authority emanates from the people; they exercise it through legislative, executive and judicial bodies’ and article 2.2. which states that ‘a constitutional act may designate the conditions under which the people may exercise state authority directly’. See M Gillis, ‘Czech Republic in A. Auer and M. Butzer (eds), *Direct Democracy: The Eastern and Central European Experience*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2001), pp. 39-46.

<sup>21</sup> However, unlike in general elections – and despite the efforts of several Senators - expatriate Czechs were not permitted to vote at Czech embassies and consulates abroad, but required to return to the Czech Republic to do so.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Poslanci schválili zákon o referendu’, *Lidové noviny* , 18 October 2003.

<sup>23</sup> In practice, this suggested that minor modifications to the terms of accession would make an earlier repeat referendum possible. An ordinary law on the organisation of the referendum (Law no. 114/2003) was passed on 25 April 2003 . ‘Senát schválil pravidla pro referendum’, *Lidové noviny* , 17 April 2003.

<sup>24</sup> See D. Král, ‘One back, two chairs: Czechs oscillate about Iraq’, [www.openDemocracy.net](http://www.openDemocracy.net), 29 May 2003.

<sup>25</sup> L. Zamálová, ‘Po čase dluhů nasledoval čas škrtů’, *Respekt* no. 3, 23-29 June 2003, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, remarks by Labour Minister Zdeněk Škromach, ‘Škromach varoval před radikální reformou financí’, Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 5 March 2003. The reforms were also opposed both the Communists, who hoped to destabilise both the governing coalition and his leadership of ČSSD, and the Civic Democrats, who saw the reforms as insufficiently radical. Aspects of the proposed reforms can be linked to EU accession.

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Odbory chtějí stupňovat své protesty proti reformě až do stávek’, Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 23 May 2003.

<sup>28</sup> See J Naegele, ‘The Benes Decrees – How Did They Come to Be and What Do They Mandate?’ , Radio Free Europe feature, 1 March 2002, [www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/03/01032002095607.asp](http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/03/01032002095607.asp)

<sup>29</sup> F. Šulc, ‘Svoboda: chci přes sto millionů na propagaci EU’, *Lidové noviny* , 19 July 2002. The current director of the Communication Strategy Section, Jana Adamcová is a Christian Democrat

<sup>30</sup>See T. Menschik, ‘Kampaň o EU má být ve velkém stylu’, *Lidové noviny*, 9 October 2002 and K. Šafaříková, ‘Mágové lákají k referendu’, *Respekt* no. 3, 13-19 January 2003.

<sup>31</sup> See ‘Místopředseda vlády Petr Mareš v rozhovoru o vstupu ČR do EU’, [www.iHned.cz](http://www.iHned.cz), 14 June 2003

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> One of the campaigns stated goals was ‘to inform citizens of the government’s conviction that the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU will be of benefit to our country’. Others stated that information should be comprehensible and easily accessible. There was no mention of balance. ‘Cíle komunikační strategie’, [www.euroskop.cz](http://www.euroskop.cz) (accessed 21 December 2003).

<sup>34</sup> ‘Cílové skupiny a jejich segmentace’, [www.euroskop.cz](http://www.euroskop.cz) (accessed 21 December 2003).

<sup>35</sup> ‘Přispěje vstup do Evropské unie k pozitivnímu vývoji v ČR?’ and ‘Budou mít české podniky v Evropské unie více šance?’, information leaflets published by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Získáme ihned po vstupu do EU občanská práva?’, information leaflet published by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Chcete dozvědět více o euru?’, information leaflet published by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Získává ČR z fondů EU až teď?’, information leaflet published by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>39</sup> ‘České tradiční lahůky v EU’, information leaflet published by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Cílové skupiny a jejich segmentace’ and ‘Komunikační kanály’, [www.euroskop.cz](http://www.euroskop.cz) (accessed 21 December 2003).

<sup>41</sup> P. Gregr and T. Sedlák, *Brány Evropské unie otevřeny*, (Prague: Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). The Hussite Church and Czech Unity of Brethren were also consulted.

<sup>42</sup> Figures from the Information Campaign suggest that the ČMKOS trade union federation organised 5 per cent of regional events ‘Akce v regionách’, [www.euroskop.cz](http://www.euroskop.cz) (accessed 21 December 2003).

<sup>43</sup> ‘Czech Unions Launch pro-EU Campaign’, *RFE/RL Newslines*, Part II, 8 April 2003.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Lidovci a unionisté odstartovali kampaň k referendu o EU’, Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 6 May 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Eva Knotková, personal communication, 4 April 2003 and K Šafaříková and L Doležalová ‘Příští stanice Evropa’, *Respekt*, , no. 20. 12-18 May 2003, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> See Hanley, ‘Europe and the Czech Parliamentary Elections of June 2002’.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Start kampaně před referendy’, *CEVRO*, 2/2003, p. 16.

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<sup>48</sup> ‘Špidla a Topolánek výzvou voliče ke vstupu do Unie’, *Lidové noviny* 9 June 2003.

Topolánek stressed that his support for accession stemmed from economic considerations and the lack of an alternative to the EU.

<sup>49</sup> Although the Civic Democratic Party published collections of Position Documents on the EU and proceedings from its ideological conference, each over a hundred pages long (*Poziční dokumenty ke vstupu do EU*, and *IV. Ideová konference ODS*, Prague: ODS 2003) it issued only one leaflet (‘Když do EU, tak s ODS’) explaining its position more succinctly: The topic was also discussed in its internal bulletin *Listy ODS*. All are available in electronic form at <http://www.ods.cz/>

K Šafaříková and L Doležalová , ‘Příští stanice Evropa’, *Respekt*, 12-18 May 2003, no. 20, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> ‘ODS vyzývá své příznivci, aby hlasovali pro vstup do EU’, *Lidové noviny* 14 June 2003. For the full text see, ‘Tiskové prohlášení ODS ze dne 13.6.2003’, [www.ods.cz](http://www.ods.cz)

<sup>51</sup> ‘Když do EU, tak s ODS’, leaflet May 2003.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Czech Opposition Party Wants Two Plebiscites on Accession’, *RFE/RL Newslines*, 23 May 2003.

<sup>53</sup> As Zahradil walked out of the European Convention, where he was one of the Czech representatives, in protest at against its ‘unacceptably federalist’ final draft EU Constitution and subsequently signed the dissenting Minority Report (see <http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/03/cv00/cv00773en03.pdf>) his views on the subject seem clear.

<sup>54</sup> See O. Kundra, ‘ODS nasedla na Titanic’, *Respekt* no. 21, 19-25 March, 4. See also interview with Langer ‘Svým hlasem vstup do EU nepodpořím’, *Lidové noviny* , 31 May 2003 and Bednář’s speech to the Ideological Conference, ‘Proc by ODS neměla podpořit

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vstup ČR do EU', <http://www.ods.cz/akce/ideovky/4.ik/vystoupeni/projev.php?ID=11>

(accessed 11 January 2004).

<sup>55</sup> 'Czech President Says He Sees "No Alternative" Path Than EU', *RFL Newslines*, Part II, , 4 April 2003.

<sup>56</sup> 'Klaus: vstup do EU je manželství z rozumu, ne z lásky', Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 15 April 2003 and 'Czech President Distances Self from "Joint European Foreign Policy"', *RFE/RL Newslines*, Part II, 11 April 2003.

<sup>57</sup> 'Mohli jsme si více užít samostatnosti', *Lidové noviny*, 11 June 2003.

<sup>58</sup> 'Czech President Sends Mixed Signals in Vienna', *RFE/RL Newslines*, 24 April 2003.

<sup>59</sup> See Hanley, 'Europe and the Czech Parliamentary Elections of June 2002'.

<sup>60</sup> 'Svoboda se nepřimo distancoval od názoru Klause...', Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 24 April 2003.

<sup>61</sup> 'Klausovi se nelíbí televizní reklama na vstup do EU', Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 27 May, 2003.

<sup>62</sup> See Hanley *The Political Context of European Integration in the Czech Republic*.

<sup>63</sup> J Gotzová, 'Část KSČM chce za EU Dolejšovu hlavu', *Právo*, 10 June 2003.

<sup>64</sup> 'Stanovisko KSČM pro referendum ke vstupu České republiky do Evropské unie', 22 March 2003, [www.kscm.cz](http://www.kscm.cz) Small but significant minorities on the Communist executive (2 out of 16 members in each case) voted for the more radical alternatives of a 'moderate yes' or a 'resolute no' to the EU. See 'Komunisté vyzvou voliče, aby hlasovali proti vstupu do EU', *Lidové noviny*, 8 March, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> See press conference with Václav Exner, 'Tisková konference z 24 dubna 2003', [www.kscm.cz](http://www.kscm.cz), 24 April.

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<sup>66</sup> ‘Stanovisko KSČM pro referendum ke vstupu České republiky do Evropské unie’, 22 March 2003 [www.kscm.cz](http://www.kscm.cz)

<sup>67</sup> Press conference with Václav Exner, ‘Tisková konference z 24 dubna 2003’, [www.kscm.cz](http://www.kscm.cz), 24 April.

<sup>68</sup> P. Kolář, ‘KSČM nevěří průběhu referenda’, *Lidové noviny*, 6 June 2003. The Communists undertook similar monitoring initiatives during the 1994 and 1998 local elections. However, the only discrepancies uncovered stemmed from inaccuracies on the part of KSČM monitors.

<sup>69</sup> The groups in question were Action for National Renewal (ANO), the Patriotic Front (VF), the Lime Cross (LK), National Idea (NM) and National Unity (NS). Of these only National Unity was registered as a political party.

<sup>70</sup> Radio Prague, ‘Odpůrci EU žádají od ministerstva zahraničí 100 milionů na kampaň’, on-line news report, 19 November 2002.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Euroskeptici se budou propagovat ...’ and ‘Odpůrci EU vypsali sbírku...’, Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 11 and 14 March 2003.

<sup>72</sup> H. Čapová, ‘Nový žalář národů’, *Respekt*, no. 7, 10 – 16 February 2003, p. 4 and ‘Nezájem provázel demonstraci proti vstupu do EU’, *Lidové noviny*, 15 March 2003.

<sup>73</sup> The Eurosceptic Alliance, for example, drew in its language and arguments from the mainstream centre-right euroscepticism of ODS, but reached different and more radical conclusions, whereas Citizens Against the EU saw the EU in more conspiratorial terms as threatening to liquidate the Czech nation.

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, D. Dudík, O. Hubl, B Trojak, O. Stradičský z Strdic and M. Šmíd, ‘Do Evropy ano, ne do evropské uhnije!’, [www.ardor.info/uhnije.htm](http://www.ardor.info/uhnije.htm); ‘Euroskeptická alternativa: Varování před bezhlavým vstupem do EU’, [www.euroskeptik.cz/uvodni\\_prohlaseni.html](http://www.euroskeptik.cz/uvodni_prohlaseni.html); P

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Edelmannová, 'Our View on the Process of the Accession to the European Union', [www.narodni-strana.cz/english/stanoviska\\_our\\_view.html](http://www.narodni-strana.cz/english/stanoviska_our_view.html) and 'NE-EU' , [www.narodni-strana.cz/stanoviska/2003/unor/ne\\_eu\\_alternativy.html](http://www.narodni-strana.cz/stanoviska/2003/unor/ne_eu_alternativy.html); B. Kuras, 'Patnáct důvod proč nevstoupit do EU', [www.euroskeptik.cz/html/15-dvod.htm](http://www.euroskeptik.cz/html/15-dvod.htm); 'Memorandum vládě České republiky', [www.svedomi.cz/aktuality/a2003/mek\\_030208\\_memorandum.html](http://www.svedomi.cz/aktuality/a2003/mek_030208_memorandum.html) (all accessed 1 July 2003), and B. Kuras, 'Time to decide', *Prague Post*, 12 June 2003 (on-line edition).

<sup>75</sup> L. Vaculík, 'Mně se nezeptají' and 'Evropa v Novém Strasecím' *Lidové noviny*, 29 April and 27 May 2003. Petr Zídek divides Czech intellectuals opposed to EU membership into three groups: conservative-nationalists, ultra-liberals committed to the free market and philosophical ecologists opposed to the Union as an extreme form of industrialism and technocracy. 'Intelektuálové proti unii', *Lidové noviny*, 14 July 2003.

<sup>76</sup> See K. Šafaříková, 'Domů do Evropy', *Respekt*, 9-15 June 2003, p.2 and 'Euroskeptici vydali sborník proti EU', [www.iHNED.cz](http://www.iHNED.cz), 30 May 2003.

<sup>77</sup> The town of Zlín has a strong tradition of pro-reform voting, probably related to its origins as the company town of Bat'a, the 'Shoe King', whose unusual brand of enterprise culture and paternalism dominated the locality and its politics in interwar Czechoslovakia.

<sup>78</sup> One third of the 19,000 voters approached refused to answer questions.

<sup>79</sup> 'K soudu dorazilo 18 stížností na referendum', *Lidové noviny*, 24 June 2003. 'Ústavní soud: Referendum je platné', *Lidové noviny* 8 July 2003 and 'Ústavní soud: stížnosti na referendum nebyly odůvodněné', *Lidové noviny*, 9 July 2003.

<sup>80</sup> European Commission, *Eurobarometer 2003.2*, July 2003, European Commission, *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer*, March 2002, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion), p. 78.

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<sup>81</sup> See M. Franklin, N. van der Eijk and M. Marsh, 'Referendum Outcomes and Trust in Government: Public Support in the Wake of Maastricht', *West European Politics* 18, (1995), pp. 101-7 and its refutation in P. Svensson, 'Five Danish Referendums on the European Community and the European Union: A Critical Assessment of the Franklin Thesis' *European Journal of Political Research* 41, (2002), pp. 733-50.

<sup>82</sup> 'Odborníci: Vládní kampaň o vstupu Česka do EU je udělena kvalitně', Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 14 May 2003 and 'Experti: kampaň k referendu má řadu chyb, není však amatérská', Radio Prague online news (citing ČTK), 11 June 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Šafaříková, 'Kdo rozhodne v referendu'.

<sup>84</sup> CVVM polling in May 2003, for example, showed that 53 per cent of respondents saw price rises as a likely negative consequence of EU membership. D. Kunštat, 'Výhody a nevýhody vstupu do Evropské unie', press release 3 June 2003, [www.cvvm.cz](http://www.cvvm.cz). A STEM poll carried out between February and May for the Czech Foreign Ministry produced similar findings. See S Blechová, 'Největší obava Čechů z EU? Růst cen', *Lidové noviny*, 24 May 2003.

<sup>85</sup> Anecdotal evidence also suggests that groups such as pensioners discounted its immediate economic impact in favour of the longer-term benefits it could bring future generations. See, for example, N. Carey, 'Where We Belong', *Prague Business Journal*, 15 June 2003 (on-line edition).

<sup>86</sup> For example, a Communist leaflet distributed in Brno in May 2003 predicted a 'gradual lose of national identity. .... A new wave of [German] colonisation in border regions and then in the Czech heartlands, including Brno' before (inaccurately) warning that after accession 'everyone will have the right to vote in elections to parliament and local councils according



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to his place of residence: will foreigners be able to take decisions in our institutions? 'Chceme do EU?'

<sup>87</sup> For an insider far right perspective see, for example, F. Rozhoň, 'Rozpacitá zpráva o mezinárodním eurokritickém kongresu',

[www.svedomi.cz/aktuality/a2003/rof\\_030217\\_mek.html](http://www.svedomi.cz/aktuality/a2003/rof_030217_mek.html)

<sup>88</sup> Čapová, 'Nový žalář národů'.

<sup>89</sup> Pollsters identified such a trend among many voters those inclined, but not committed, to vote 'Yes' in the last phase of the campaign. Such voters, it was predicted, would give priority to family and leisure activities. K Šafaříková, 'Kdo rozhodne v referendu', *Respekt*, no. 22, 25 May – 1 June 2003, pp. 5. Eurobarometer polling in May 2003 also accurately predicted the result. European Commission, *Eurobarometer 2003.2*, p.184.

<sup>90</sup> See B. Fowler, 'Legitimacy and Accountability in EU Enlargement: Political Perspectives from the Candidate States' in A. Arnall and D. Winicott (eds), *Accountability and Legitimacy in the European Union*, (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 419-36.

<sup>91</sup> L. Leduc, 'Opinion Change and Behaviour in Referendums', *European Journal of Political Research*, 41, 2002, pp. 711-32.