

Jan Čulík¹

Current Czech Opinion of the pre-1989 and post-1989 Regimes: Disillusionment with Politics, Regardless of Party Political Allegiances

In January 2010, STEM, an official Czech polling and public opinion research agency², found out that 80 % of Czech citizens were of the opinion that Czech politicians today "are on a lower moral level" than the politicians of the pre-1989 communist regime. 40 % believed this strongly. 84 % were convinced that the privileges of Czech politicians today were the same as those of politicians under communism. 87 % thought that the Czech government and politicians did not take into consideration the views of voters when making decisions. In January 2010, Czech voters' opinions of their politicians were the most negative since 1993, says STEM.

STEM interviewed 1297 respondents over 18. The interviews took place on 2–11 January 2010. The pollsters used a representative sample of respondents, based on a quota selection. The results of the poll were published on 26 and 27 January 2010.³

- 1 The author would like to thank Ján Mišovič, Czech sociologist and until recently member of the CVVM research team, for his assistance with the structuring of the internet questionnaire, Fred Cartmel, sociologist at Glasgow University who specializes in questionnaire methodology, for his comments on the questionnaire, mathematician Karel Nádvorník for recalculating the results of the questionnaire using the official CVVM socio-demographic sample and *Britské listy* commentators and analysts Štěpán Kotrba, Karel Dolejší, Fabiano Golgo and Bohumil Kartous for their assistance and critical input into this project.
- 2 STEM – Středisko empirických výzkumů (A Centre for Empirical Research) Online: <<http://www.stem.cz>>.
- 3 "Odborné a morální kvality našich vedoucích politiků v porovnání s obdobím před rokem 1989 (Professional and moral qualities of our leading politicians in comparison with the pre-1989 era)" – STEM – Středisko empirických výzkumů: Informace z výzkumu Trendy 1/2010. Online: <<http://www.stem.cz/clanek/1919>> (in Czech). "Srovnání současného a minulého režimu (A

Similar research is carried out on a regular basis by the Public Opinion Research Centre at the Institute of Sociology at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (CVVM)⁴. Their most recent opinion poll of this type was carried out by CVVM in September 2009.⁵ According to this poll, a mere 45 % respondents believed that the quality of life in the Czech Republic was now better than it had been pre-1989.⁶

Table 1: CVVM Poll, September 2009.⁷

Age in years	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-59	≥60
Quality of life s better now	43%	48%	52%	45%	37%

comparison of the current and the previous regime" – STEM – Středisko empirických výzkumů: Informace z výzkumu Trendy 1/2010. Online: <<http://www.stem.cz/clanek/1921>> (in Czech).

In Czech Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění Akademie věd České republiky, (CVVM AVCR).

Naděžda Horáková, "Porovnání současných poměrů se situací před listopadem 1989" (Comparing the contemporary situation with the pre-November 1989 situation), CVVM 2005. Online: <http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/100462s_pd50401.pdf> (in Czech). Klára Procházková, "Srovnání poměrů dnes a před rokem 1989" (Comparing the situation now and before 1989), 2006. Online: <http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/100614s_pd61109.pdf> (in Czech). Jan Červenka, "Srovnání současné situace s poměry před listopadem 1989 z pohledu veřejnosti." (Comparing the current situation with the situation before November 1989 from the point of view of the public) CVVM 2007. Online: <http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/100729s_pd71116.pdf> (in Czech). Paulína Tabery, "Srovnání dnešního života a života před listopadem 1989" (Comparing life today to life before November 1989), CVVM 2009. Online: <http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/100964s_pd91103b.pdf> (in Czech).

The STEM questions seem to be more manipulative than the CVVM questions.

A number of the older respondents in the CVVM poll are unhappy with the post-1989 lack of job security (40 %), perceived unreliability of social welfare (63 %), and lack of social security in old age (53 %). Many of the older respondents had a general feeling of lack of security (49 %). The current *Britské listy* opinion poll has produced similar results, see below.

The Research Questions and Methodology of Constructing an Internet Questionnaire

The intriguing results of these opinion polls led us⁸ to examine the matter in greater detail. We set out to find out what kind of mythology is current in 2010, twenty years after the fall of the communist regime, in a definable sample of the contemporary Czech population. We also wished to find out to what extent the levels of the citizens' disillusionment with politics in the contemporary Czech Republic might have any bearing on their political allegiances.

In order to glean more information about views held by a sample of contemporary Czech society, we prepared a detailed internet questionnaire comprising 184 questions. Respondents were asked to compare various aspects of the pre-1989 communist regime in Czechoslovakia with characteristic features of the post-communist regime in the Czech Republic today.

The questions were formulated using a preliminary questionnaire that was submitted in February 2010 to the author's internet focus group – a sample of 50 respondents from varying political, social and economic backgrounds. The questions in the preliminary questionnaire were open ("What do you think of the pre-1989 regime?"). The most typical answers were used to define the closed questions in the current questionnaire.

The final internet questionnaire contained sets of identical questions, relating to the pre-1989 and post-1989 periods. Questions had to be answered with a graded response on a 1 to 5 scale between Yes-No ("1" being the best, "5" being the worst). There were also the options "I don't know" and "I don't wish to answer".

The final internet questionnaire contained the following categories of questions:

- The respondents were asked to rate the pre-1989 and the post-1989 politicians according to various characteristic features on a scale from 1 to 5.

8 See footnote 1.

- The respondents were asked to rate various features of the quality of life under the pre-1989 communist regime and the post-1989 post-communist regime using the same scale.
- The questionnaire asked the respondents to rate different historical periods from the founding of the communist regime in 1948 to the present day. (The purpose of this question was to assess to what extent the respondents might be victims of doctrinaire attitudes; for instance, if too many respondents gave the times of Stalinist oppression of the early 1950s a highly positive rating, the results of the poll would be suspect.)

The questionnaire also included several pairs of questions, one of which was formulated in an impartial way while the other used expressions which were emotionally charged. The purpose of these sets of questions was to work out whether the respondents would be manipulated by questions with a clear emotional content.

In its second part, the questionnaire contained detailed socio-demographic questions in order to make the results of the poll comparable with an academically recognized socio-demographic sample and the results of the May 2010 general election. In this section, the respondents were asked questions about

- their gender;
- age;
- education;
- profession (according to the nomenclature used by the Czech Statistical Office);
- position in the hierarchy at work and their decision-making powers at work (using the indicator of their spending power);
- place of residence in the Czech Republic and the size of the community in which they lived;
- their income and their level of savings;
- which daily newspaper they read most frequently; and
- which political party (if any) they voted for.

The Characteristics of the Self-Selecting Sample in Relation to the Periodical *Britské listy*

The internet questionnaire was filled in by a self-selecting sample of readers of the Czech-language daily *Britské listy*⁹. In order to be able to describe the sample of respondents, it is necessary to say a few words about this publication.

Britské listy is a cultural and political periodical that has been in existence since 1996. Presently, more than 25 000 individual readers access *Britské listy* daily. It has the reach of 200,000 individual IP addresses per month. To put it in the context of Czech media: *Britské listy* has about 25–30% of the number of readers of www.ceskenoviny.cz, the website of the official national Czech News Agency (Česká tisková kancelář, ČTK) and about 20% of the number of readers of www.cro.cz, the website of the Czech public service national radio Český rozhlas. In the sphere of Czech internet publishing independent of large capital-based media groups and publishing houses, *Britské listy* is by far the most widely-read internet periodical. Its share is 4–6% of the total internet traffic in the Czech Republic¹⁰.

Britské listy practices critical journalism and attempts to function as a democratic watchdog. Apart from being a vehicle for lively internal Czech cultural and political debate, it features information about cultural and political debate in the outside world, mostly in the English-speaking countries. The primary vantage point is that of the United Kingdom and British quality media, in particular the BBC, and serious British daily newspapers. The editor-in-chief of *Britské listy* teaches at a British university, but the periodical has a large number of contributors in the Czech Republic.

Britské listy is ideologically open: it publishes both right- and left-wing argumentation. However, since most of the Czech mainstream print media is openly right wing, authors and readers of mostly left-of-center orientation gravitate towards *Britské listy*. The reason

9 www.blisty.cz (in Czech).

10 According to the audit figures available here: www.iaudit.info, for a comparison with other servers see for instance www.netmonitor.cz/, <http://www.toplist.cz/zpravodajstvi> <<http://navrcholu.cz/Zebricek>> (all in Czech).

for this is that left-wing authors find it difficult to find publication space in the mainstream media in the Czech Republic due to the politically motivated gate-keeping within them. *Britské listy* makes a sizable contribution to the Czech cultural and political discourse on the left and in the center of the political spectrum.¹¹

The automated questionnaire was published in *Britské listy* on 20 May 2010¹², ten days before the general election in the Czech Republic. Within seven days¹³, the questionnaire was completed by 4955 respondents. In order for the results to be comparable with opinion polls carried out by CVVM, we have eliminated those respondents who failed to answer the socio-demographic questions. We have also eliminated respondents living abroad. The number of respondents whose answers were analyzed was thereby reduced to 3229.

The questionnaire was lengthy, taking approximately 45 minutes to complete. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that the self-selecting sample of respondents was dominated by individuals who wished their opinions to be heard. Many of the respondents were highly educated (of all the respondents, 58 % were university graduates, of these 56 % were holders of a Masters Degree, 33.5 % held a postgraduate degree).

The respondents who opted in to fill in the questionnaire thus seem to be the representatives of an educated, active social group that is apparently partially dissatisfied with its own economic or professional status and is unhappy with the standard of Czech mainstream media, which caters for a consumerist readership with an average to substandard education.

11 It happens relatively frequently that the right-wing mainstream Czech media take over topics and even content from *Britské listy* without acknowledging the source. The statistics of the IP addresses which access *Britské listy* show that the periodical is consistently read by many Czech decision-makers, including the journalists on staff of the mainstream newspapers and TV channels, members of the government and MPs.

12 <<http://blisty.cz/art/52610.html>> (in Czech).

13 The publication of opinion poll results is not allowed during the last three days before the general election in the Czech Republic.

The Technical Characteristics of the Internet Questionnaire

We have used an adjusted, quantitative CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) methodology - a self-managed questionnaire, displayed as a web page. Each question was presented on a separate virtual card. The respondents could only go forward and could not compare the answers they were working on with answers to previous questions. Rare attempts by a handful of respondents to try to answer the questionnaire more than once were eliminated using their IP address identifications and cookies. The respondents were required to complete all questions, although the alternative "I do not wish to answer" was always available. Participation was voluntary; the respondents did not receive any reward for taking part in the questionnaire.

Comparing the *Britské listy* Poll to the Standardized Omnibus Research Methodology

Although from a sociological point of view, the *Britské listy* questionnaire results cannot be reliably extrapolated to the whole population of the Czech Republic, we have, nevertheless, in the second part of this paper, recalculated the results according to the official socio-demographic indexes of the standardized omnibus research methodology used by CVVM.

The results of this re-calculation are therefore only illustrative, nevertheless they would appear to provide some basic information on the current views of the populace in the Czech Republic.

Table 2: Comparing the Standardized CVVM Data with the *Britské listy* Sample of Respondents.

Sex	CVVM Standard ^a	<i>Britské listy</i> April 2007 respondent sample ^b	<i>Britské listy</i> May 2010 respondent sample ^c
Male	48.87 %	82.73 %	85.04 %
Female	51.13 %	16.44 %	14.96 %

a Non public data.

b <<http://blisty.cz/art/33476.html>>.

c Non-balanced, primary data.

The results of the questionnaire, presented to *Britské listy* readers in May 2010, re-confirmed the surprising findings from a questionnaire, presented to *Britské listy* readers in April 2007. It was the aim of the April 2007 questionnaire, which was completed by 5257 respondents, to glean information about the socio-demographic structure of the *Britské listy* readership¹⁴. It was found out then for the first time that more than 82 % of *Britské listy* readers are male¹⁵. Although a public debate followed, trying to examine the reasons for this, no reliable information was found. Some people believe that the *Britské listy* writing style may be to be too adversarial for many Czech women.

It may be interesting to note that the continual content analysis of the news and current affairs in the Czech media, which is being carried out by the Czech branch of the German-British research agency MediaTenor¹⁶ for Czech public service broadcasters¹⁷ shows

14 The analysis of the April 2007 opinion research is here (in Czech): <<http://blisty.cz/art/33475.html>> the complete results of the April 2007 poll are here (in Czech): <<http://blisty.cz/art/33476.html>>.

15 Or that perhaps if women do read *Britské listy* in larger numbers, they do not like answering questionnaires. Although, when taking the readers' letters to the Editor of *Britské listy* in consideration, these are also predominantly written by men. This either means that women not only do not like filling in questionnaires, but also that they do not like writing letters to the editor, or it means that women do not read *Britské listy* in large numbers.

16 <<http://www.mediatenor.cz>>.

17 Data in: *The Annual Report*, Czech public service Radio, 2006. Online: <http://www.rozhlas.cz/rada/2006/vz_2006.htm>.

that the participation of women in the Czech media discourse is 12-18 %.

Table 3: The Age of the *Britské listy* May 2010 Respondent Sample in Comparison to the CVVM Standard.

Age	CVVM standard ^a	BL May 2010 respondent sample ^b	Age	BL April 2007 respondent sample ^b
≤29	19.83 %	8.39 %	≤29	32.16 %
30-44	28.62 %	35.65 %	30-49	19.69 %
45-59	24.79 %	43.07 %	50-59	32.37 %
≥60	26.76 %	54.99 %	≥60	15.31 %

a Non public data.

b Non-balanced, primary data.

Even though the data regarding age from the *Britské listy* polls taken in April 2007 and May 2010 are not fully comparable, it is obvious from the above table that the May 2010 questionnaire, requesting respondents to compare the pre-1989 and the post-1989 regimes in Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic, was filled in by many more older *Britské listy* readers than is the normal spread of age within the *Britské listy* readership community. This seems understandable, considering that obviously, many younger readers would not be prepared to comment on the similarities and/or differences between the pre-1989 and the post-1989 regime since they had not experienced the pre-1989 regime.

Table 4: The Education of the *Britské listy* May 2010 Respondent Sample in Comparison to the CVVM Standard.

Education	CVVM standard ^a	<i>Britské listy</i> May 2010 respondent sample ^b
Basic	16.7 %	0.27 %
secondary without diploma	36.1 %	5.84 %
secondary with diploma	34.2 %	36.53 %
university	13.0 %	57.36 %

a Non public data.

b Non-balanced, primary data.

It is obvious from the table that the *Britské listy* May 2010 respondent sample is considerably more highly educated than the general standard within the population of the Czech Republic.

Table 5: The Place of Residents of the *Britské listy* May 2010 Respondent Sample in Relation to the CVVM Standard.

Community size	CVVM standard ^a	<i>Britské listy</i> May 2010 sample ^b
≤ 999	17.48 %	6.93 %
1,000–4,999	20.82 %	11.01 %
5,000–19,999	18.45 %	13.25 %
20,000–99,999	21.63 %	23.49 %
≥ 100,000	21.62 %	45.33 %

a Non public data.

b Non-balanced, primary data.

When we compare the *Britské listy* May 2010 respondent sample to the CVVM standard, it is obvious that there are more urban dwellers than is the average in the Czech Republic.

Table 6: The Political Profile of the *Britské listy* May 2010 Respondent Sample; Support for Czech Political Parties.

Agency	May 2010 public opinion research ^a CVVM ^a	Factum Invenio	Median STEM	5/2010 general election ^b	5/2010 <i>Britské listy</i> sample ^c
Time of the poll	3–10/5	23–28/4	2/4–1/5	28/4	20–27/5
No. respondents	1,016	1,014	914	1,257	8,415,892
(Assumed) general election voter participation	61 %	64.6 %	64 %	not given	85.9 % ^d
Left wing parties (in %)					
Social democrats (ČSSD)	30.5	27.5	26.2	27	22.09
Communists (KSCM)	13.0	13.9	13.3	11.8	11.27
Centre-right wing parties (in %)					
Green party (SZ)	4.5	2.9	3.5	3.1	2.44 ^f
Christian democrats (KDU-ČSL)	3.5	5.2	7.5	3.9	4.39 ^f
Right wing parties (in %)					
TOP 09 ^g	14.0	11.1	10.7	9.2	16.70
Civic democrats (ODS)	19.0	21.7	19.0	18.7	20.22
Sovereignty ^h	11.5	11.0	7.6	8.9	3.67 ⁱ
Public Matters (VV)	2.0	3.2	6.8	2.3	10.88
Party of Citizens Rights (SPOZ) ⁱ					4.33 ^f
Other parties (in %)	2.0	3.5	5.3	15.1	18.83 ^f
					12.7

a Balanced data from representative respondents.

b The results of the Parliamentary Election in the Czech Republic, Czech Statistical Office. May 2010. Online: <<http://www.vvolby.cz/pls/ps2010/ps2010?xjazyk=CZ>>.

c Non-balanced, primary data.

d Public opinion research. CVVM May 2010, Online: <http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/101038s_pv100519.pdf>.

e The sum total of the answers "I don't know" "I don't wish to answer" and "I will not vote for anyone" deducted from the overall number of respondents.

- f Not elected to Parliament. In order to be elected into Parliament, a political party must receive at least 5% of the votes.
- g A Christian conservative party of former Finance Secretary Kalousek and Václav Havel's former presidential chancellor Karel Schwarzenberg.
- h A Eurosceptic populist party of former non-partisan member of the European Parliament Bobošíková.
- i A center-right wing conservative party of former social democratic prime minister Zeman.

In comparison to the pre-election opinion polls, the general election brought a major surprise in the sense that the "new" political parties TOP 09 and Public Matters recorded unexpected gains. It is a matter for debate whether these unexpected gains were due to a sudden rise in right-wing activism, or to a profound disillusionment with the current Czech political establishment. Nevertheless, it is obvious from the above table that the *Britské listy* May 2010 respondent sample is more left wing than is the average in the Czech Republic.

As it can be seen from the above table, compared to the May 2010 general election in the Czech Republic and the pre-election opinion polls, right-wing representation in the *Britské listy* sample of respondents is relatively weak. Even so, the right-wing sample in the *Britské listy* group of respondents is not negligible. It totals 23.2% of respondents.

The Results of the *Britské listy* Questionnaire

1. *What do the Respondents Think about Contemporary Czech History?*

Table 7.

Period of history	1948-53	1953-64	1964-69	1970-85	1985-89	Average 1948-89
Average rating	4.26	3.44	2.14	3.27	2.78	3.18
Period of history	1990-96	1997-2006	2007-10	1989-2010	Average 1948-2010	
Average rating	2.95	3.22	3.77	3.32	3.23	

We asked respondents to rate individual periods of Czechoslovak/Czech history on a scale from 1 (best) to 5 (worst) from the founding of the communist regime in 1948 to the present day. The purpose of the question was to find out whether responses might be ideologically biased or whether they more or less conform to the views of mainstream historians regarding these periods. As can be seen from the historical outline below, based on the interpretation of modern Czechoslovak history by mainstream historians, the responses of the respondents were not particularly extremist or eccentric.

The period 1948-1953, from the setting up of the communist regime until the death of Stalin, was an era of fierce political oppression. Tens of thousands of people ended up in labor camps, more than 250 innocent individuals were condemned to death and executed for political reasons. The period 1953-1964 was an era of stagnation when the worst totalitarian excesses no longer took place, but many of the people unjustly sent to labor camps were still held there and not released until the early 1960s. The period 1964-1969 was an era of liberalization. Reformist communists ruled Czechoslovakia at this time. This was a period of exceptional cultural renaissance when writers, filmmakers and other intellectuals used their art to

ush for freedom. The drive for freedom culminated in a political arrival of "total democracy" during the 1968 Prague Spring. The Prague Spring was ended by the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968, but the invaders did not manage to suppress Czechoslovak society until 1970.

The post-invasion period 1970–1989 bears the name of "normalization", i.e. the period when society was disciplined after the period of "anarchic excess" of the 1960s. The period started in 1970 with the wholesale purges of hundreds of thousands of liberals from positions of influence and then continued in stagnation for the rest of the period. In the 1970s and 1980s, Czechoslovak society was stagnant. No meaningful political or cultural activity was possible in the official scene, which was dominated by strong neo-Stalinist propaganda.

While dissidents and liberal intellectuals were forced to live in isolation from the rest of society and a number of them were given prison terms for subversion, the oppression never reached the intensity of the early 1950s. While in the early 1950s there were many people in Czechoslovak society who ardently believed in communist ideology, in the 1970s and 1980s, communist ideology had been discredited in the eyes of most of the population. Only careerists adhered to the official communist line after 1970. The citizen was required to perform certain public political rituals, but the regime no longer expected him/her to internalize support for the political system. Consumerism was encouraged after 1970 and collaborators with the system were rewarded with material benefits. From 1985, Gorbachev's perestroika started having an impact on the immovable, "normalized" Czechoslovak society.

The period 1990–1996 can be seen as an era of "foundation post-communism". Fast, controversial privatization of state-owned industries took place. Politics both in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia were dominated by strong characters and their political parties: the "right wing" economist Václav Klaus and the Civic Democratic Party, ODS, in the Czech Republic, the populist nationalist leader Ladimír Mečiar and his Movement for the Democratic Slovakia, ĽZDS, in Slovakia.

In 1996, the grip of these political leaders on their respective societies dissipated and opposition parties gradually came to power. The

Czech Republic was ruled by the Social Democrats from 1998–2006. The general election in June 2006 resulted in a hung parliament and the right-of-center Civic Democratic Party could only form a government in February 2007, on the basis of a one-percent majority, after two social democratic MPs defected to their side. But the Civic Democratic Party government fell in April 2008. Henceforth the country was run by a caretaker government of officials until the general election in May 2010, in which a coalition of ODS and two "new" (in effect, reconstructed) right-of-center political parties won a majority. Since the late 1990s, Czech politics has been characterized by increasing voter disillusionment.

The *Britské listy* May 2010 opinion poll seems to reflect the history of Czechoslovakia /Czech Republic over the past sixty years very much in line with standard historical interpretations. The era of extreme Stalinist oppression of 1948–1953 is rated as the worst period of modern Czech history (the mark is 4.26). Only 44 respondents (1.4 % per cent) rated this period as best in recent Czech history.

It is perhaps not particularly surprising that the liberal 1960s (1964–1970) come out as the best rated period of recent Czech history (the mark is 2.14). This era is rated even higher than the first period of wild privatizations and "unrestricted freedom" after the fall of communism in 1990–1996 (mark 2.95). It is perhaps remarkable that the period of Gorbachev's perestroika (1985–1989) is rated more highly (mark 2.78) than the first post-communist period of 1990–1996. (It needs to be emphasized that the ratings of these historical periods are strongly influenced by the current experiences of the Czech citizens; needless to say that the rating of these periods would undoubtedly have been different in earlier times.) The deepening disillusionment with post-communist democracy in the Czech Republic is evidenced by the fact that the ratings of the post-communist periods get progressively worse (1990–1996: Mark 2.95; 1997–2006: Mark 3.22; 2007–2010: Mark 3.77), the latest period of 2007–2010 having been given a worse mark (3.77) than the stagnant post-Stalinist period of 1953–1964 (Mark 3.44). It is perhaps also remarkable that the respondents have given the communist period a marginally better mark (3.18) than the post-communist period (3.23). These results thus seem to reflect a considerable disillusionment

with post-communist democracy in the Czech Republic, but at the same time, they cannot be dismissed as the views of a doctrinaire, extremist sect.¹⁸

2. *What Do the Respondents Think of the Quality of Life before 1989 and after 1989?*

When looking at these results, it is necessary to realize that we are examining a mythology in people's minds. Let us reiterate that these statements were generated by a focus group in the Czech Republic. Many of them contradict historical facts, see footnotes *passim*.

Table 8: Positive Features.

Question	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
People had/have time to pursue their interests and hobbies	1.64	3.81
There was/is a high level of social equality	1.82	4.43
Housing was/is economically accessible to everyone	1.84	4.35
Cultural and other leisure activities were/are accessible to all	1.98	3.58
People had/have time to devote themselves to serious studies	2.05	3.50
People behaved/ behave decently to each other	2.17	4.21
The economy was/is stable	2.31	4.13
High quality health service was/is available to all	2.33	3.28
The regime guaranteed/ guarantees a decent standard of living	2.33	3.99

18 The average marks for the whole pre-1989 and the post-1989 regimes, calculated from the ratings for the individual periods, are 3.18 and 3.32 respectively. Compare these results with the marks produced in response to the questions asking the respondents to rate the whole communist and post-communist periods, see below, p. 484. These marks are 3.28 and 3.55 respectively.

Question	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
High quality education was/is available to everyone ^a	2.37	3.12
Supporting social infrastructures were/are available to all	2.26	3.47
People behaved/ behave honorably towards each other	2.75	4.12
The regime guaranteed/ guarantees fair salaries	2.83	4.17
The state civil service worked/ works well	2.91	4.03
The state civil service was/ is helpful towards the citizens	3.00	3.64
The laws of the land were/ are enforceable	3.02	3.99
The regime had/ has firm ethical values	3.09	4.35
The law was/ is just ^b	3.32	3.80
The media defended/ defend the rights of ordinary people ^c	3.55	3.99
The citizen was/ is free in his/ her decision-making ^d	3.60	2.95
It was/ is easy to achieve official rectification of wrongdoings	3.70	4.01
The citizen had/ has free access to information	4.12	2.41
The media were/ are free	4.39	3.50
The citizen had/ has free contacts with the outside world	4.43	1.66

- a Access to education was barred to many people for political reasons under communism.
 b The law under a totalitarian dictatorship can hardly be described as just.
 c There seems to be a mild conflict between the rating of this statement in relation to the pre-1989 period (3.55) and the rating of the statement that before 1989, "The citizen had free access to information", which is extremely low (4.12).
 d The inhabitant of communist Czechoslovakia could hardly be regarded as a "citizen" in the full meaning of this word.

Table 9: Negative Features.

Question	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
Money bought/buys influence	3.48	1.27
Each citizen was/is selfishly taking care only on himself/herself	3.31	1.88
The citizens were/are subject to economic oppression	3.30	2.15
People lived/live in a superficial way	3.18	1.93
The citizen didn't/doesn't have a chance to influence the regime	3.03	3.16
Mafia-like conspiracies of friends had/have decisive influence in society	2.76	1.52
The citizen was/is politically illiterate	2.73	2.56
The citizen felt/feels that there was/is no justice	2.57	1.96
The citizen was/is helpless in relation to the power of the state	2.55	2.62
The media was/is an instrument of economic manipulation	2.53	1.65
The citizen was/is persecuted for his/her political views	1.82	3.50
The media were/are an instrument of political manipulation	1.64	1.73
The ruling party had/had unlimited power	1.40	2.77

Table 10: What I Feared Before 1989 / What I Fear Now.

I was/am afraid of	Average mark (1=least, 5=most fear)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
Loss of employment	1.26	4.13
Loss of housing	1.27	3.42
Loss of social security in old age	1.31	4.31
Old age ^a	1.68	3.55
Loss of personal security	1.68	3.87
Criminality	1.78	4.17
Loneliness	1.79	2.86
Lack of sufficient health care	1.82	3.34
Political persecution	2.71	2.25

a People who feared old age in 2010 probably did not feel the same amount of fear of old age before 1989 because they were much younger.

Table 11: Levels of Opportunity before and after 1989.

It was/is possible	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
To work ^a	1.42	3.03
To live contentedly	2.13	3.11
To study ^b	2.20	2.24
To travel	3.65	1.68
To get involved in entrepreneurial activities	4.43	1.60

a Before 1989, it was compulsory by law for every inhabitant of Czechoslovakia to be in full time employment.

b The respondents probably did not have any experience with the fact that many people under communism were barred from accessing higher education for political reasons.

Table 12: Levels of Satisfaction before and after 1989.

	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
One had the feeling of satisfaction	1.66	2.32
Derived from family life	2.07	2.82
Derived from personal life	2.42	2.72
As a result of professional success		

It is obvious that while the respondents do not harbor any illusions about the nature of the communist state before 1989, they do believe in the whole that the position of the individual and his/her quality of life was much better in the pre-1989 era than it is now. People had time to pursue their interests and hobbies, there was a high level of social equality¹⁹, housing was economically accessible to everyone, cultural and leisure activities were accessible to all, and people had time to devote themselves to serious study. In the view of the respondents, it has changed dramatically for the worse after 1989.

The respondents also believe that while society was by no means perfect under communism, the fall of communism has greatly contributed to the rise of selfish and dishonorable behavior in Czech society. The respondents do not harbor any illusions about the state of the economy, health service, education or welfare services but they are of the opinion that while under communism these structures may have been mediocre, in post-communist societies, they are much worse. While the respondents rate to the quality and attitude

¹⁹ Prague sociologists led by Libor Prudký have recently pointed out that Czech society is still extremely egalitarian: "Egalitarian values predominate over individualistic values in Czech society in the ratio of 72,5": Libor Prudký and collective, *Inventura hodnot: Výsledky sociologických výzkumů hodnot ve společnosti České republiky* [The stock-taking of values: The results of the sociological research into values in the society of the Czech Republic], Academia, Prague 2009, p.292. - However, there are recent indications that the younger generation in the Czech Republic may be becoming extremely individualistic. Especially educated young males with good salaries are individualistic according to Prudký.

of the civil service, the law and the media under communism as very low, they give them an even lower rating for the post-communist period. In their view, the post-communist media defends the rights of ordinary people even less effectively than under communism, the regime's ethical values are even feeble now than they were before 1989 and it is even more difficult to rectify wrongdoings now than it was under communism. The media are only marginally more free than they were under communism.

Money buys influence much more now than under communism. Citizens are much more selfish than they were before 1989. They live in a much more superficial way. Mafia-like conspiracies of friends have more influence in Czech society than they had before the fall of communism. Citizens are subjected to more economic oppression than before 1989. Citizens feel more acutely than before 1989 that there is no justice. The media are more of an instrument of economic manipulation than before 1989.

The media are the instrument of political manipulation almost to the same extent as before 1989. Just as before 1989, the citizen does not have much chance to influence the regime and is helpless in relation to the power of the state. Citizens are only marginally less politically illiterate than before 1989.

The respondents see improvements in only six areas: Citizens are now marginally freer in their political decision-making than before 1989. The media are also marginally freer. Citizens have much greater access to information, and in particular, they have many more free contacts with the outside world than was the case under communism. People are considerably less persecuted for their political views and the ruling political parties have less unlimited power.

The respondents' replies to the more personal questions in Tables C, D and E confirm the opinions which arise from the questions about the quality of life in the pre-1989 and the post-1989 regimes in Tables A and B. Social welfare issues, such as the possible loss of security in old age, criminality, loss of employment and loss of housing are of primary concern to most respondents. They are less worried about possible political persecution.

Regarding the levels of opportunity before and after 1989, most people appear to feel that it was easier to work and to live contentedly

before the fall of communism than after. The only two things that have become much easier since the fall of communism is the possibility to travel and the possibility to get involved in entrepreneurial activities. It is perhaps interesting that even the levels of satisfaction derived from family life, from personal life and as a result of professional success have dropped since the fall of communism in 1989.

3. *What Do the Britské listy Respondents Think of the Quality of Politicians before and after 1989?*

Table 13: Negative Features.

	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
The politicians did not have/do not have a clear political programme	3.54	2.27
The politicians were/are without social compassion	3.38	1.77
Politics was/is just business for them	3.31	1.31
The politicians were/are criminals	3.07	2.64
The politicians were/are aggressive	3.06	1.40
The politicians were/are corrupt	2.89	1.35
When a scandal blows up around them, they were never forced/are never forced to resign	2.80	2.36
The politicians were/are corporative power organized on the principle of a mafia	2.79	1.79
The politicians created/create mafia-like conspiracies	2.73	1.33
The politicians were/are thieves	2.71	1.50
The politicians were/are cynical	2.56	1.61
The politicians were/are arrogant	2.42	1.45
The politicians were/are morally discredited	2.41	1.64
The politicians were/are superficial	2.30	1.76
The politicians did not/do not care about the citizens	2.30	1.44

	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
The politicians were/are incompetent	2.20	1.93
The politicians ignored/ignore the citizens' views	2.20	1.63
The politicians were/are mendacious	2.12	1.47
The politicians were/are vain	2.10	1.50
The politicians used/use ideology as an instrument of oppression	1.91	2.65
The politicians worked/work within the limits of the ruling political ideology	1.50	2.59
The politicians were/are sycophantic towards foreign powers	1.47	1.50

Table 14: Positive Features.

	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
The politicians were/are vulnerable by criticism in the media ^a	3.65	3.53
The politicians were/are idealistic	2.89	4.04
Local politicians were/are more effective than national politicians	2.76	2.72
Local politicians were/are more decent than national politicians	2.67	2.92
Local politicians listened/listen to people more than national politicians	2.61	2.74

a Before 1989 (with the exception of the period 1964-1969) criticism of politicians in the media was exceptional, so politicians were not vulnerable because there was almost no such criticism. In the post-communist period, politicians are often criticized in the media, but they arrogantly ignore this criticism.

The rating of the pre-1989 and post-1989 politicians is a picture which is similar to the respondents' assessment of the quality of life before and after 1989. Just as when they rated the quality of life under the communist regime, the respondents have also rated communist politicians rather critically, as fairly mediocre. The respondents however believe from today's vantage point that the politicians under communism had a certain amount of idealism and social compassion. The respondents did not see the communist politicians as too aggressive or corrupt. In comparison with communist politicians, the post-communist politicians seem to fare far worse; in the view of the respondents, they display a large gamut of negative qualities. The only positive features characteristic of post-communist politicians appear to be that the post-1989 politicians apparently use ideology less as an instrument of political oppression and they seem to be less constrained by the limits of the ruling political ideology. Most respondents do not think that local politicians are better than national politicians and there is not much difference in this respect in the situation before the fall of communism and after it.

It seems remarkable that the respondents believe that the post-1989 politicians are just as sycophantic towards foreign powers as were the pre-1989 politicians, who were beholden to the Soviet Union.

Table 15: The Overall Assessment of the pre-1989 and the post-1989 Regimes.

	Average mark (1=best, 5=worst)
The pre-1989 regime	3.28
The post-1989 regime	3.55

A Possible Influence of Emotionally Charged Questions

The questionnaire contained several sets of questions with more or less similar wordings which differed by their emotional content. We wished to find out to what extent the answers of the respondents might be influenced by an increased emotional content in the questions. The responses to these questions were quite surprising:

Table 16.

	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)		
	Pre-1989	Post-1989	
More emotive	The politicians were/are criminals	3.07	2.64
Less emotive	The politicians were/are morally discredited	2.41	1.64
Less emotive	The politicians were/are corrupt	2.89	1.35

When comparing the above set of questions, it would appear that the respondents were reluctant to agree with the emotively formulated, first statement. They seem to have given preference to the more measured formulations, thus displaying a certain amount of fairness and thoughtfulness.

There were two other sets of more or less duplicated statements in the questionnaire, but the difference in the level of emotional content within them was smaller and so the difference in the ratings was practically negligible:

Table 17.

	Average mark (1=yes, 5=no)	
	Pre-1989	Post-1989
Slightly more emotive? The politicians created/create mafia-like conspiracies	2.73	1.33
Slightly less emotive? The politicians were/are corporative power organized on the principle of a mafia	2.79	1.79
Slightly more emotive? The politicians used/use ideology as an instrument of oppression	1.91	2.65
Slightly less emotive? The politicians worked within the limits of the ruling political ideology	1.50	2.59

These sets of questions seem to confirm that the respondents reacted factually and realistically.

Re-Calculating the Results of the *Britské listy* Poll According to the Standard Sociodemographic Data

For illustrative purposes, we have re-calculated the results of the *Britské listy* poll using standard socio-demographic data. The answers to the *Britské listy* poll were re-calculated according to the standard CVVM data on the structure of the population of the Czech Republic relating to age, education, place of residence and level of earnings. The fifth factor, which was used in the recalculation, was the division of the population according to its support for differing political parties, using the results of the May 2010 general election.

This re-calculation has produced very surprising results. We have divided the data into tables where the respondents rated neutral statements, positive statements and negative statements respectively. We have only included those questions where the difference in the

rating from the *Britské listy* group of respondents and the rating weighted according to the standard socio-demographic CVVM sample and the results of the May 2010 general election differed by more than 5 per cent:

Table 18: Rating Neutral Statements.

No. Question	<i>Britské listy</i> answer	CVVM/election weighted answer	Difference (%)
182 After 1989, local politicians have listened to people more than national politicians	2.74	2.54	19.15
181 Before 1989, local politicians listened to people more than national politicians	2.61	*2.44	17.12
177 Before 1989, local politicians were more decent than national politicians	2.67	*2.51	16.64
179 Before 1989, local politicians were more effective than national politicians	2.76	*2.59	16.24
178 Since 1989, local politicians have been more decent than national politicians	2.92	2.77	14.84
180 Since 1989, local politicians have been more effective than national politicians	2.72	2.60	11.96
123 Rating the history of Czechoslovakia in 1964–1969	2.14	*2.03	10.66
122 Rating the period of 1954–1963 of Czechoslovak history	3.44	*3.38	6.13
2 Rating the post-1989 politicians	4.11	4.04	6.94

* The re-calculated answers based on the standard CVVM socio-demographic sample and the results of the Czech general election are slightly more critical ("left-wing") than the answers of the allegedly "left-wing" *Britské listy* sample.

Table 19: Rating Positive Statements.

No. Question	Briské listy answer	CVM/election weighted answer	Difference (%)
108 After 1989, it has been possible to work	3.03	*3.14	10.80
52 Since 1989, people have had time to devote themselves to serious studies	3.50	*3.60	9.79
167 Before 1989, the politicians were vulnerable by criticism in the media	3.65	*3.56	9.09
67 Before 1989, the state civil service was helpful towards the citizens	3.00	*2.91	8.23
58 Since 1989, supporting social infrastructure has been available to all	3.47	*3.55	8.11
45 Before 1989, the media were free	4.39	4.47	8.09
120 Since 1989, one has been receiving satisfaction from family life	2.32	2.24	7.93
47 Before 1989, the regime guaranteed fair salaries	2.83	*2.76	7.52
111 Before 1989, it was possible to study	2.20	2.27	6.97
59 Before 1989, cultural and other leisure activities were accessible to all	1.98	1.91	6.93
27 Before 1989, the media defended the rights of ordinary people	3.55	*3.48	6.72
33 Before 1989, the citizens had free access to information	4.12	4.18	6.63
34 Since 1989, the citizens have had free access to information	2.41	*2.48	6.50
115 Before 1989, one had a feeling of satisfaction from family life	2.07	*2.01	6.25
83 Before 1989, high quality education was available to everyone	2.37	*2.31	5.63
165 Before 1989, the politicians were idealistic	2.89	*2.84	5.39
112 Since 1989, it has been possible to study	2.24	*2.29	5.38

No. Question	Briské listy answer	CVM/election weighted answer	Difference (%)
42 Since 1989, there has been a large measure of social equality	4.43	*4.49	5.33
56 Since 1989, a quality health service has been available to all	3.28	*3.33	5.22
57 Before 1989, supporting social infrastructures were available to all	2.26	2.20	5.05

* The re-calculated answers based on the standard CVM socio-demographic sample and the results of the Czech general election are slightly more critical ("left-wing") than the answers of the allegedly "left-wing" Briské listy sample.

Table 20: Rating Negative Statements.

No. Question	Briské listy answer	CVM/election weighted answer	Difference (%)
174 After 1989, the politicians have been using ideology as an instrument of oppression	2.65	2.78	13.66
53 Before 1989, people lived in a superficial way	3.18	3.30	12.44
170 After 1989, the politicians have been working within the limits of their political ideology	2.59	2.70	10.98
71 Before 1989, the citizen did not have a chance to influence the regime	3.03	3.13	9.98
172 Since 1989, the politicians have been criminals	2.64	2.73	9.11
173 Before 1989, the politicians used ideology as an instrument of oppression	1.91	2.00	8.78

Of the total number of 184 questions included in the questionnaire, the difference in answers between the *Britské listy* sample of respondents and the re-calculation based on the standard socio-demographic sample from the Czech Republic was larger than 5% in 51 of the questions listed above and it was never larger than 19.15%. Still, even this largest difference amounted to just a few decimal points. In the question where the difference was the largest, i.e. the question "After 1989, local politicians have listened to people more than national politicians" was given the mark of 2.74 by the *Britské listy* sample of respondents while the re-calculated weighted answer was the mark of 2.54.

The re-calculation was surprising in the sense that the re-calculated results did not differ from the answers given by the *Britské listy* sample of respondents by a particularly wide margin. As has been explained above, the *Britské listy* sample of respondents is much more educated than is the general socio-demographic average in the Czech Republic, with respondents who have completed this questionnaire being as a rule older than is the average age in the Czech Republic and of a more left-wing political orientation.

Especially considering the results of the May 2010 general election in the Czech Republic, which surprisingly went against the results of the pre-election opinion polls by producing a much more right-of-center parliament than expected, we assumed that the recalculation of the results of our questionnaire according to the political allegiances of the Czech voters in the May 2010 general election would produce much more "right-wing"²⁰ answers than the responses of the *Britské listy* sample of respondents.

20 A vociferous minority is active on the debating fora of the Czech national newspapers. Its members are strongly anti-communist. They are also strongly individualistic, demanding the lowering of taxes and the reduction of social services. During the times of the government of George W. Bush in the United States, these people were strongly pro-American, seeing in the United States a reliable defense against possible future attack from the East. These debaters usually also assume a positive attitude towards the current political and economic regime in the Czech Republic, certainly when comparing it to life under communism. Such views are generally regarded as right wing in the contemporary Czech Republic.

No. Question	<i>Britské listy</i> answer	CVVM/election weighted answer	Difference (%)
152 Since 1989, when a scandal blows up around the politicians, they have never needed to resign	2.36	2.45	8.70
54 Since 1989, people live in a superficial way	1.93	*1.85	8.42
147 Before 1989, the politicians were thieves	2.71	2.63	8.00
22 Since 1989, the citizen feels that there is no justice	1.96	*1.88	7.95
19 Before 1989, the media were an instrument of political manipulation	1.64	1.56	7.94
92 After 1989, I have been afraid of insufficient health care	3.34	*3.42	7.49
85 Before 1989, the media were an instrument of economic manipulation	2.53	2.46	7.08
131 Before 1989, the politicians were arrogant	2.42	2.35	7.03
73 Before 1989, each citizen was selfishly taking care only of himself/herself	3.31	3.38	7.02
135 Before 1989, the politicians were corrupt	2.89	2.83	6.68
17 Before 1989, the citizen was helpless in relation to the power of the state	2.55	2.61	6.45
101 Before 1989, I was afraid of the old age	1.68	1.75	6.40
88 Since 1989, I have been afraid of political persecution	2.25	2.31	6.00
87 Before 1989 I was afraid of political persecution	2.71	2.66	5.75
79 Before 1989, mafia-like conspiracies of friends had decisive influence in society	2.76	2.70	5.70
145 Before 1989, the politicians were morally discredited	2.41	2.35	5.12

The re-calculated answers based on the standard CVVM socio-demographic sample and the results of the Czech general election are slightly more critical ("left-wing") than the answers of the allegedly "left-wing" *Britské listy* sample.

Remarkably, this assumption was not confirmed. As can be seen from the tables shown above, many of the weighted results are only marginally more right-wing than the answers from the *Britské listy* sample. Surprisingly, in 22 of the 51 answers, analyzed in the three tables above (marked by a “*”) the re-calculated answers based on a standard CVVM socio-demographic sample and the results of a Czech general election are slightly more critical (“left-wing”) than the answers of the allegedly “left-wing” *Britské listy* sample. What could be the reasons for the fact that the re-calculated results, based on the CVVM socio-demographic sample, are so similar to the results from the *Britské listy* sample? As noted above, right-wing representation in the *Britské listy* sample of respondents is smaller than is the socio-demographic norm. Yet the right-wing sample in the *Britské listy* group of respondents was not negligible, amounting 23.2 % of respondents.

There may be two reasons why the recalculated CVVM results and the *Britské listy* results are so similar. One of these could be that the right-wing respondents in the *Britské listy* sample are not a typical Czech right-wingers. An opinion has been expressed that a typical Czech right-winger is extremely bigoted and such persons would never read an open-minded journal such as *Britské listy*. The latter reason may be that the levels of frustration from contemporary Czech politics and the extent of idealization of the pre-1989 era are related to current party political preferences at all. It is obvious that the results of the May 2010 general election were the product of an extremely successful marketing campaign, that they express people’s rejection of the “older”, “established” parties and say little about genuine political preferences of the Czech populace.

It needs to be stressed that the recalculation of the question-re results is not a true opinion poll and the weighted results may be used for illustrative purposes only. Nevertheless, we feel that a hypothesis can be mooted: party-political allegiances of the citizens of the Czech Republic do not seem to make much difference to how citizens view the quality of life in the current regime as compared to the pre-1989 regime and how they view today’s politicians in comparison with the politicians of the communist era. The views of the citizens seem to be extraordinarily homogeneous across the whole political voting system. Disillusionment with politics seems

to be widespread in the current Czech Republic regardless of who people vote for. Equally strong seems to be the nostalgic feeling for the times before the fall of communism in 1989.