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Migratory Trends in the Czech Republic: "Divergence or Convergence" vis-a-vis the Developed World?

SUMMARY

The main goal of this paper is to analyse whether the geopolitical and socio-economic integration and "harmonisation" of the Czech Republic with Western Europe is accompanied by a divergence or convergence of the Czech migratory reality vis-a-vis the developed western world. When testing resemblance two kinds of measurements are used: 1) quantitative – (in terms of the numbers of international migrants, and 2) "qualitative" – a) in terms of regularities linked with the migration itself and those that tackle mutual relationships among immigration, the socio-economic development of the destination country and subjective attitudes of the majority population towards minority groups: 3 hypotheses are tested in this regard; b) in terms of migratory policies and practices. The results clearly show us that convergence rather than divergence is characteristic of the current migratory trends in the Czech Republic as compared to the developed world, mainly Western Europe.

KEY WORDS: migration, transition, integration, migratory conditionality, migratory policies

1. Introduction

International population migration (especially "stocks and flows", reasons for migration/migratory conditionality, migratory "mechanisms", the impact of the migration, migration policies and practices) has undergone a very dynamic development during the more than eleven years' transformation period in the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia). Four rather mutually different migratory stages culminate in the current situation (more in Drbohlav and Baršová, 2001). The question is as to whether, in the case of political, economic or purely demographic parameters and their development over time (see e. g. Hampl et al., 1999, 2002) the Czech migratory situation, to large extent, follows that which one can find in the most developed western democracies, namely in Western Europe. The main goal of this paper is to contribute to a discussion which is closely related to the above question. In other words, the goal is to document whether the geopolitical and socio-economic integration and "harmonisation" of the Czech Republic with Western Europe (mainly the already existing membership in the NATO and membership in the EU which is expected soon) is accompanied by a divergence or convergence of the Czech migratory reality vis-a-vis the developed western world. In accepting the fact that today's Czech Republic is a developed rather than developing and immigration and transit country (see below), then, putting the Czech Republic side-by-side with Western Europe one can easily verify some of the propositions of the following three researchers: Cornelius, Martin and Hollifield (1994). They argue that there is over time a growing resemblance between the developed immigration countries in terms of: a) the political tools which are used for controlling/managing immigration, mainly concerning illegal immigration and asylum seeker/refugee movements from the less developed world, b) the results or effectiveness of measurements by which migration is regulated, c) the society's integration policies (arrangements adopted in immigration countries to influence the extent and level of social, economic and political integration of foreigners who have become long-term immigrants) and d) the attitudes of the public towards the current immigration and towards the assessment of the government's endeavour to regulate immigration.

2. Testing resemblance

When testing the "compatibility" of the migratory arena between the Czech Republic and the developed world, at least, two different dimensions come into play. Whilst the first kind of measurement - in terms of the existence (and numbers) of international migrants in the territories of the given states/regions – is rather simple, the second perspective of the view is more difficult. It concerns a comparative assessment of general processes which are closely tied both to the migration itself and to its impacts upon social, psychological, political, economic and geographical structures in new immigrant societies above all. However, it is not an easy task at all. Possibilities in Central and Eastern Europe are particularly limited in this regard. There are, amongst others, two key reasons for this: 1) So far only a short time period has elapsed since the transformation/ transition processes commenced and international migration movements and immigrants' integration processes could thus develop in a "normal way"(not enough time for a crystallisation of these trends); 2) Since the transformation/transition has been under way, there is not vet a fully stabilised and functioning free market environment. The reality is burdened with unpropitious heritage - with consequences of past development in specific political and socio-economic structures. Precisely these reasons can, to large extent, explain why so far ethnic immigrant minorities in Czech cities and towns (perhaps with the exception of the town of Karlovy Vary) have not been able to create any larger areas of concentration (no specific districts that are distinguished by their identification with particular groups of immigrants - see also Drbohlav and Čermák, 1998). As a corollary, it is very difficult, if possible at all, to test such theoretical concepts like, for example "ethnic residential segregation" (Massey, 1985), "segmented assimilation" (Zhou, 1997) or "heterolocalism" (Zelinski and Lee, 1998).

A deep analysis of a migratory conditionality in the broadest sense of the word via theorising is a difficult task even in the "classical developed world". Massey et al. (1998) add to this point that "compared with the research literature of North America, the range of studies available for Europe provides a rather limited basis upon which to judge the efficacy of the theoretical explanations put forth to account for the initiation and perpetuation of international migration ... The problem is not a lack of research so much as a scarcity of theoretically relevant research, and a general disarticulation between theory and study design". He points out that when testing theories in Europe one should mainly concentrate upon more "robust, macro quantitative analyses". An even

more complicated situation concerns Central and Eastern Europe, since what has originated in the field of international migration theories in the past was totally cut off from that region (it was based either on migration in the most developed, or in the developing world or on mutual migratory contacts between these two worlds). Searching for adequate theoretical concepts (also by modifying the old ones) to explain migration movements and migrants' adaptation in the new immigrant environment of Central and Eastern Europe is a task of high priority (see e. g. Wallace and Stola 2001). Without doubt, in doing so globally valid structural shifts from industrial to post-industrial societies also have to be taken into account (Wallace and Stola, 2001).

2.1 Immigration burden

As for the first aspect, as of December 31, 2000, 200,951 foreigners (under the umbrella of a permanent residence permit and visas for more than 90 days, 365 days as a maximum) were officially registered in the territory of the Czech Republic. It represents some 2% of the population. According to the statistics in the late 90s, for example, the share of foreigners in Denmark, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, but also in Norway fluctuated between 3.0 and 6.3% (Salt, 2001). If we include the relatively high estimates of illegal immigrants who stay and operate in the Czech Republic (about 200,000), the difference would be smaller or even would not exist at all with regard to some countries (e. g. Norway). In fact, The Czech Republic with its number of illegal immigrants fits quite well with the Western European pattern in this regard. In the beginning of the 90s, between 3.5 and 5.5 million foreigners were estimated to live there (Widgren, 1994). Thus, the average number of illegal immigrants per country (bearing in mind the sometimes huge differences between individual countries – e.g. Italy versus Norway) might correspond to numbers typical of the Czech Republic.

As to the number of asylum seekers (7,220 in 1999 and 8,788 in 2000), the Czech Republic, for example, in absolute terms in 1999 came ahead of Portugal, Greece and Finland, and its numbers of asylum seekers were more or less comparable with those in Denmark, Ireland and Spain (see Salt, 2001).

2.2 Migratory conditionality and migration vis-a-vis other phenomena

Despite the above-mentioned problems it has been proven that some of the current international migration features/patterns in the Czech Republic (possibly in Central and Eastern Europe) might be explained through well-known migration theories. It concerns, particularly but nevertheless not exclusively, labour migration movements of Ukrainians to the Czech Republic (see Drbohlav, 1997a; Kroupa et al., 1997; Drbohlav et al., 1999). Despite analysing the migration/migrants "only" via rather qualitative approaches (see Massey's remark above), for example, *neoclassical economic theory*, *new household theory of migration, world system theory, dual labour market theory*, *network theory and institutional theory* (see e. g. Massey et al., 1998) have already been found to be, to some extent, useful in explaining at least some aspects of the Czech migratory reality. By the way, interestingly and surprisingly enough, one can find many specific parallels when juxtaposing the Ukrainian-Czech circular labour migration to the Mexican-US one (conditionality, mechanisms of the movement, conditions in the new environment etc. – Drbohlav, 1997a, Drbohlav et al., 1999).

In the Czech Republic, so far rather at a more general level, two "migratory macro developmental models" have also been verified (Drbohlav et al., 1999): 1) a gradual (or rather step-by-step) transformation of circular labour migration into permanent settlement (e. g. Martin and Taylor, 1995; or Castles and Miller, 1993) and 2) a relative stabilisation and even strengthening of the circular migration flows within the migratory "transnationalism" (e. g. Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999).

In any case, there are other migratory regularities (more of a qualitative character) well-known throughout studies done in the developed world. For example, those that tackle mutual relationships within immigration, the socio-economic development of the destination country and subjective attitudes of the majority population towards minority groups. Of course, the validity of such relationships is, despite "time and transformation barriers" (see above), worth analysing in the Czech Republic too.

Three basic hypotheses are formulated in this regard, whilst I expect them to be valid in the line of the above reasoning:

- During periods of economic problems (recessions, crises etc.) in developed immigration countries, inflows of immigrants decrease, be it as a consequence of "natural reasons" (less room for immigrants to operate) or in the wake of restrictions introduced by legislation. By contrast, in the case of growing economies immigration usually increases (see e. g. Gieseck and Heilemann; von Loeffelholz, 1995; Altzinger, 1995; Rahman, 2000).
- 2) Though attitudes of the domestic population in immigration countries towards immigration/immigrants develop and change over time, to take a simplified view one may argue that these attitudes are usually reserved, typical of anti rather than pro immigration positions (e.g. Simon and Lynch, 1999). This fact is also reflected in the official policies of individual developed immigration countries (e.g. World, 1998; Freeman, 1994).
- 3) Cyclical recessions but also deep structural recessions lead to a shrinking of opportunities for immigrants in finding their place in the labour market of the destination country. Consequently, anti-immigration attitudes of the majority population will tend to grow (Lowell, 1996). On the contrary, positive economic development goes against anti-immigration feelings and attitudes (DeSipio and de la Garza, 1998).

Hypothesis no. 1: The hypothesis is proven. After an important and quick decrease at the very beginning of the 90s, one can see a period of relatively steep growth of the Czech economy (1993–1996 – the GDP growth per year was 2.2% in 1994, 5.9% in 1995 and 4.8% in 1996) which is accompanied by a relatively huge increase of economic, labour immigration (during this period the number of foreigners with a long-term residence permit increased from 46,070 to 152,767). The economic recession between 1997 and the first half of 1999 was characteristic of an important stagnation of immigrant inflows whilst some types of economic migrants ("stocks") even decreased (e. g. the number of foreigners with work permits dropped from 61,044 to 40,312 be-

tween December 31, 1997 and December 31, 1999; foreigners with job licenses during the same period dropped from 63,529 to 58,386). Since 2000, the Czech economy, with its real indications of improvement/revitalisation (e. g. the shift of the GDP development per year from -0.8% in 1999 to +3.1% in 2000 and to expected about +3.5% in 2001), despite the newly accepted relatively very restrictive migratory legislation, has started absorbing new immigrants (about a 10% increase of foreigners with work permits in the second quarter of 2001 but also the long-term growth of the attraction of the country for asylum seekers – 18,082 in 2001 – *Migrace*, 2002). A new stimulation of selective immigration stems from the recently designed "Proposition of Active Selection of a Qualified Foreign Labour Force" (the recruitment movement plan – see Diskusní, 2001). In this case new arguments about the necessity of a "renaissance" of demographic structures in compliance with the economy's needs have been raised.

Hypothesis no. 2: This hypothesis is also proven. Three different perspectives support the fact that the Czech population is xenophobic: A) The assessment of the attitude of the Czech population towards selected ethnicities (defined according their citizenship) living in The Czech Republic is on average 25/30 (the average assessment of a "good" versus "bad" feeling towards Poles, Germans, Jews, Vietnamese, citizens of the Balkans, citizens of the former Soviet Union and Roma - the rest up to 100% is represented by the answers: "neither good nor bad" and "he/she has no relationship"; representative survey of the Czech population, October/November 2000 - see O vztahu, 2000). The average figure does not allow us to see the considerable differences in the "attractiveness" of individual ethnic groups, in their socio-cultural distance from the Czech majority population (ranging from the most-favoured Poles to the least-favoured Romas – see also e.g. Simon and Lynch, 1999). B) 11% of the Czech population would grant asylum to a great majority of those foreigners who search for better living conditions; 39% would grant it to only a smaller group of them and for 50% almost no one (out of that group) should be granted it (representative survey of the Czech population, May 2001 – see O názorech, 2001. C) The opinion that foreigners and ethnic groups should, to large extent, adjust to our practices/customs is advocated by 61% of the Czech population; 31% argue that they should, to some extent, adjust and 5% proclaim that they should be absolutely free to live in harmony with their practices and customs; 3% "do not know" how to answer (representative survey of the Czech population, April/May 2001 - see O vztahu, 2001).

Hypothesis no. 3: The results of the already quoted survey on the popularity of individual selected ethnic groups among the Czech majority population (*O vztahu...*, 2000) more or less support this hypothesis as well. The results of the survey carried out every year (there is a possibility to evaluate the development over time for the individual ethnic group since 1993 on, except for "citizens of the former Soviet Union" where data are available from 1995 onwards) show us that since 1993, the attitudes of the Czech population towards six out of eight evaluated ethnic groups (Slovaks, Poles, Germans, Jews, Vietnamese and Roma) have gradually been improving, sometimes really significantly (e. g. towards Slovaks – from the proportion 66/8 – "good/bad" attitude – in 1993 to 77/2 in 1999; similarly towards Roma from 3/77 to 12/52). After 1999 there was a reversal of the attitudes regarding Vietnamese and Roma, even after

1998, when attitudes of the Czech population started shifting towards less tolerant ones. The above-described reality is fully in harmony with the indicated trends of the Czech economy, more specifically, with its impacts upon the Czech population (polarisation: reaction to the growth of living standards versus the consequent increase of the unemployment rate). And in addition, in this case – as has been documented – one has to take into account a sort of "perception time-lag".

2.3 Migratory policies and practices

The current migratory philosophy of Western Europe (EU) can be simply characterised through two basic principles: on the one hand, a permanent attempt to limit inflows of immigrants (with some exceptions) via various rather highly restrictive regulations – it also concerns guarding borders as strictly as possible, on the other hand, to protect human rights and to hammer out humanitarian respects (it includes, for example, granting asylum status to those who really need it).

No doubts, the current Czech migratory policies and practices, to large extent, correspond to what has been mentioned as typical of Western Europe.

First, two basic new migratory laws (Act No. 325/1999 on Asylum – the Asylum Act – and the 326/1999 Act on the Stay of Foreigners within the Territory of the Czech Republic – the Foreigners Act) came into force in January 2000. They help support two important long-term goals: 1) to join the EU and thereby harmonise migration policies and practices with those in the West and 2) (of course, within the former goal) to combat illegal immigration. New migratory legislation, to large extent, enabled "migratory theory and practice" to harmonise both, within domestic institutional, administrative bureaucratic networks and towards the EU.

Second, as also follows from the new legislation, the Czech Republic applies a fairly restrictive migratory regime based on "theoretical limits" and external and internal controls within restrictive practices. For example, in 2000, Foreign and Border Police intensively examined foreigners in the Czech territory (out of 20,036 examinations, 8,406 were directed to ascertaining whether foreigners were working/doing business illegally and 16,337 as to whether they were illegally resident - internal documents of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs). Also, in 2000 10,042 foreigners were administratively and 1,065 foreigners judicially expelled from the country. For example, in 1997 these figures corresponded to 736 and 802, respectively (Informace..., 2001). As in the case of the whole EU, illegal transit migration has become a typical migratory phenomenon also in the Czech Republic. Between 1997 and 2000 the number of foreigners apprehended when trying to illegally cross the state Czech border oscillated between 27,000 and 43,000, reaching 30,761 in 2000. Taking into account that behind every apprehended person there might be about three or four others who successfully cross the border (e. g. Widgren, 1994), then, the estimate of the whole number of transit migrants in The Czech Republic – more than 100,000 – is not overvalued.

Third, regarding the attempts of the state to take responsibility for immigrants and to apply active and fair attitudes towards its foreigners, three important examples are given: 1) There is an integration programme aimed at persons who have been granted asylum status and at foreigners who have been granted permanent residence in the Czech Republic on the grounds of health handicaps. The purpose of the aid is to provide humanly reasonable and respectable conditions of living to those persons; particularly accommodation and employment (see more in Drbohlay, 1997b). This program has been implemented since 1994, between 1994 and 2000 altogether 564 foreigners have participated in it and about 64 million Czech crowns have been allocated by the state to support it. 2) A new ministerial advisory commission (composed of migratory experts - representatives of other relevant ministries, other selected state bodies, regional or local policy makers, NGOs and independent research/scientific circles) has been established. In collaboration with this Commission the Ministry of the Interior has worked out a "Concept of immigration integration policy." This document was adopted by the government (December 11, 2000) and became a basic pillar designing the systematic policy and means through which activities in the field of international migration/ immigrant integration will be realised. 3) An important step in launching an active migration policy is represented by the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs' newly designed "Proposition of Active Selection of a Qualified Foreign Labour Force" (the recruitment movement plan - see Diskusní, 2001). Such activity is fully in compliance with the current activities of some other developed countries which via this strategy try to combat their unfavourable demographic structures. Due to the ageing process, domestic (majority) populations are not now and will not be able to meet demands of their economic development much further into the future. The newly designed recruitment movement model which is now being discussed by various Czech state bodies is a variant of the Quebeckian point system. A new would-be long-term or permanent immigrant is to be selected according to various criteria, namely, as to what kind of assets he/she brings and what is a chance of his/her successful integration into Czech society. Particularly young, (between 23 and 30 years old), educated, those with language skills, experienced in a given profession, with experience of a stay in the Czech Republic and those from geographically closer countries are to be preferred.

3. Conclusion

The current Czech Republic is an immigration and transit country. Despite the short period (since 1990), in which migratory trends have not yet fully crystallized, and despite the continuing transition/transformation process (with its still not fully functioning free market environment) the Czech Republic has, to large extent, brought its migratory patterns nearer to those which are well known from the most developed democracies. These parallels concern: 1) quantitative aspects (numbers of immigrants – "stocks and flows"); 2) the conditionality of migration and, consequently, some of the theoretical concepts via which one can explain some of the important migratory features; qualitative aspects in terms of mutual relationships among immigration, socio-economic development of the destination country and subjective attitudes of the majority population towards minority groups; 3) the nature and the whole development of the future migratory trends (here not discussed at all) of the country will, because of the ongoing integration processes, be even more closely related to those in Western Europe.

To sum up, clearly convergence rather than divergence is characteristic of the current migratory trends in The Czech Republic vis-a-vis the developed world, mainly Western Europe.

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MIGRACIJSKI TRENDOVI U ČEŠKOJ: PRIBLIŽAVANJE RAZVIJENOM SVIJETU ILI UDALJAVANJE OD NJEGA?

SAŽETAK

Glavni je cilj članka analizirati obilježava li geopolitičku i društveno-ekonomsku integraciju Češke u Zapadnu Europu udaljavanje ili približavanje češke migracijske zbilje u odnosu na razvijeni zapadni svijet. Za testiranje sličnosti upotrijebljene su dvije vrste mjerenja: 1) kvantitativno (u odnosu na broj vanjskih migranata) i 2) "kvalitativno" – a) u odnosu na pravilnosti povezane sa samom migracijom te one koje se tiču uzajamnog odnosa imigracije, društveno-ekonomskog razvoja zemlje odredišta i subjektivnih stavova većine stanovništva prema manjinskim skupinama; u tom smislu testirane su 3 hipoteze; b) u odnosu na migracijske politike i prakse. Rezultati jasno pokazuju da je približavanje više nego udaljavanje karakteristika sadašnjih migracijskih trendova u Češkoj u usporedbi s razvijenim svijetom, uglavnom Zapadnom Europom.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: migracije, tranzicija, integracija, migracijski uvjeti, migracijska politika

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LES TENDANCES MIGRATOIRES EN REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE : DIVERGENCE OU CONVERGENCE PAR RAPPORT AU MONDE DEVELOPPE

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif principal de cet article est d'analyser si l'intégration géopolitique et socio-économique et le rapprochement de la République tchèque avec l'Europe occidentale est accompagné d'une divergence ou d'une convergence de la réalité migratoire tchèque par rapport au monde développé occidental. L'évaluation des ressemblances s'est faite au moyen de deux sortes de mesure: 1) quantitative (quant au nombre des migrants extérieurs) et 2) « qualitative », – a) quant aux régularités liées à la migration elle-même et concernant les rapports entre immigration, développement socio-économique du pays de destination et attitudes subjectives de la population majoritaire par rapport aux groupes minoritaires – à cet égard, 3 hypothèses ont été prises en compte; – b) quant aux politiques et pratiques migratoires. Les résultats montrent nettement que les tendances migratoires actuelles en République tchèque sont placées sous le signe de la convergence plutôt que de la divergence par rapport au monde développé, et surtout à l'Europe occidentale.

MOTS CLES: migration, transition, intégration, conditions migratoires, politiques migratoires