

A creeping dictatorship is beginning in municipalities! So far, it doesn't bother anyone much, but...

Very few people now attend municipal council meetings. Why? Simply because they have stopped being interested in life in the municipality. They live only for themselves. They make excuses, saying that after the elections, the cards are dealt. Parties form coalitions and govern. And this happens regardless of the citizens' concerns. But who would address these concerns when it's not the election period? Democracy is about discussion and also the right to free speech. However, citizens today have very limited opportunities to express themselves at council meetings. And so, a new dictatorship, similar to the one under communism, is slowly but surely starting here. We certainly didn't strive for that after 1989!

How does this emerging new dictatorship manifest itself?

The council's rules of procedure are designed so that citizens have only minimal space for criticizing the leadership of the town. Regarding individual agenda items, they are allowed to speak only once, and for no more than three minutes. After that, the chairperson of the meeting can respond with anything or simply not respond at all. Even if they say the biggest lie, nonsense, or don't answer at all, citizens cannot respond!

The same applies to the final discussion. The discussion is not a discussion for citizens, but at most, just a three-minute monologue.

Formally, about once a year, there are discussions with citizens. Their suggestions are written down, and that's usually where it ends. Only in rare cases are these suggestions developed into specific tasks and implemented.

The minutes of council meetings are censored to benefit the town leadership.

Council meetings are often held only once every two months. No official meetings are held during the summer. This greatly reduces the chance to solve citizens' problems, and the opportunity for citizens to present and discuss them is also limited.

Opposition and dissenting articles in local newsletters are censored.

Some council members or their close relatives are also employed by the municipality. This leads to a conflict of interest, which was previously not allowed.

There is indirect bribery. For example, athletes receive grants for sports fields and their operation. This obliges them to "obedience" in the council.

Discrimination against people who have moved to the town ("outsiders") still persists.

Their suggestions are usually considered second-rate. Unfortunately, the same applies to the opposition's proposals.

The council mostly doesn't care about the advice, recommendations, or suggestions of seniors. How many towns have a Council of Elders? This disrupts the important transmission of experience!

Arrogant behavior from mayors and councilors toward the opposition is also quite common. They look to our Parliament as a role model!

The level of council meetings is lower due to "party discipline." Why would "party" councilors prepare for the meeting when they will vote according to their party anyway?

Whoever has not experienced this will not believe it. The ruling group dares to do more and more. Even significant economic damage passes without consequence. They have no personal responsibility, so they are practically untouchable.

So what can be done about it?

- Ensure that discussions are real discussions, even if limited by time.
- Ensure direct broadcasts of council meetings for citizens.
- Dedicate at least one page of the municipal newsletter to the opposition and citizens.

- Do not allow municipal employees to run for council unless they cease to be employees. Consider implementing voluntary psychometric tests for elected council members (or even for candidates).
- Allow the opposition to hold the control function (control committee), as happened in Slovakia after the parliamentary elections.
- Dedicate thirty minutes at the beginning of council meetings for citizens' suggestions.
- Minimize the remuneration of council members and committee members (in 1993, councilors of a smaller town received 50 CZK a month – it was more of an honorary role). The higher the remuneration, the greater the economic obedience to the respective party. The disobedient would not be listed on the party list in the next election.

Democratic elections are no guarantee that a shift toward dictatorship cannot happen over time. It is necessary to continually monitor the activities of the elected officials. After all, Hitler, Gottwald, and Putin were also elected democratically! And look how that turned out.

The well-known slogan “Democracy must be fought for every day!” should be taken much more seriously by citizens than they currently do!

At least once a year, every citizen who takes democracy seriously should attend their municipal council meeting. The participation of all capable citizens in elections should also be a given. Those who do not participate in elections lose their moral right to criticize the elected officials.

Where there are no arguments, the discussion ends!

Long live democracy!

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15.1. 2024