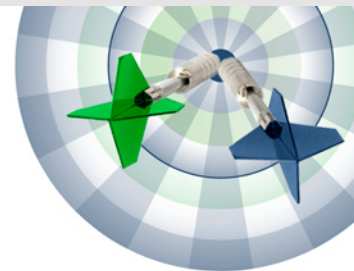


Cooking one's own goose

The age-old argument from the Right is that soaking the rich isn't the cure for budget deficits. Even if you took all the income of the rich, the theory goes, it wouldn't fix the problem. It simply wouldn't be enough, because the middle classes are the ones driving the economy. There's always been a grain of truth

to this, but it falls short in today's Czech context because it overlooks the massive illicit transfer of wealth over the past 20 years. There are billions and billions of crowns hidden away that never appeared anywhere as "income" and were never taxed. Tapping this undeclared pot of gold - and ensuring that it doesn't grow - is the only feasible way to make a dent in the national debt. ČSSD can have limited success arguing as populists that the tax policies of the Nečas government are socially insensitive, but to provide a comprehensive solution of its own would require it to tax or confiscate the hidden stashes. And with someone like Bohuslav "Suitcase" Sobotka or Michal Hašek in charge of ČSSD, such a policy is entirely unrealistic.



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