

## 1 **Prime minister, but not in the way that he** 2 **hoped**

3 (original at  
4 [http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=16079734](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=16079734))

5 Britain has not had a general election quite like this one in living memory.  
6 There were shameful scenes at a number of polling stations, as voters  
7 tried—and in some cases failed—to vote. At the end of the day, the  
8 country returned to its first hung parliament since 1974, albeit one in  
9 which David Cameron's Conservatives had accumulated considerably more  
10 votes and seats than Gordon Brown's Labour Party.

11 But the Tories, despite having gained a higher percentage of the vote than  
12 that which put Labour comfortably in government in 2005, fell short of the  
13 326 parliamentary seats required for an overall majority in the House of  
14 Commons. Labour's seat tally did not collapse to the extent that once  
15 seemed possible. The biggest surprise of the night was the poor  
16 performance of the Liberal Democrats.

17 Yet while the new parliament will be hung, in a moral and practical sense  
18 the result is plain enough. The election has produced a clear enough  
19 winner: Mr Cameron. His party, more than any other, has earned the right  
20 to govern. The outstanding question is to what extent he will require the  
21 support of the Liberal Democrats or, conceivably, another small party.  
22 That would probably consist of a loose parliamentary pact rather than a  
23 formal coalition.

24 The instinctive response of many Britons—and the likely first reaction of  
25 financial markets—will be anxiety and confusion. Britain has only a limited  
26 experience of hung parliaments; of the wrangling and protracted period of  
27 transition that may now ensue; and of minority government, the probable  
28 outcome. The unfamiliar is always disconcerting. The prospect of a weak  
29 government is especially alarming now, because of the challenges that will  
30 confront the next prime minister: the biggest being the need to shrink the  
31 perilous fiscal deficit.

## Questions

- 1) Why was this British election exceptional?
- 2) What is the House of Commons? (13/14)
- 3) What made an election result like this one possible, with the Tories winning as many votes as Labour in 2005, while not attaining a majority? (Note that the text itself does not give you the answer.)
- 4) What is a 'hung parliament' (lines 17 and 26)?
- 5) 'The unfamiliar is always disconcerting' (line 28) – paraphrase this sentence with your own words.
- 6) What will be the immediate consequences of the election results and why?
- 7) Give synonyms to 'response' (line 24)!
- 8) Does the article say that the UK needs a strong government?
- 9) What are the differences between the British and the Czech electoral systems? Would you like to see the Czech one modelled on the British, or vice versa? Why?

## Vocabulary

At the end of the day (line 7) – in the end, eventually

fall short of something (line 12) – to fail to attain a specified amount, level, or degree

to the extent that (line 14) – as much as, to the level that, so much that, etc.

conceivably (line 21) – capable of being thought of; imaginable

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

