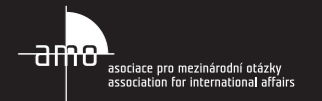**Objectives of this book are:**

■ To examine the factors that feed the contemporary populist facet of Central European politics.

■ To critically analyze the concept of populism: Is populism an inherent feature of politics?

■ To discuss the historical and ideological roots of Central European populism: What has influenced the formation of populism in Central Europe?

■ To ask whether the features shared by the Central European states outweigh their differences and whether there is such phenomenon as "Central European populism".

Václav Nekvapil and Maria Staszkiewicz (editors)

amo
asociace pro mezinárodní otázky
association for international affairs

POPULISM
IN CENTRAL EUROPE

POPULISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE

asociace pro mezinárodní otázky
association for international affairs

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades, Central European societies have been developing new, liberal environments in their various domestic political cultures. While the political culture in each country was distorted to a different extent during the communist era, the transformational processes these countries are currently undergoing are being determined by similar internal and external factors. The post-communist era has been marked by two main overlapping processes: Political, economic and societal transformation, and the effort to enter NATO and the EU. Beneath the surface of this major evolution, a vivid political life has been taking place in each country in which political boundaries are being drawn concerning attitudes toward the principles behind and consequences of these supranational processes.

In the case of the Czech Republic, partitocracy and the powerful position of the Communist Party remain permanent features of the socio-political landscape. Poland has been witnessing the return of politicized Catholicism and anti-communism, and fear of rapprochement between Germany and Russia is still strong. The Hungarian political scene is recurrently marked by a division of the population (and the electorate) into the liberal/urban and the conservative/rural, and relations with Hungarian minorities abroad have been playing an increasingly crucial role. Slovakia has been intensively seeking a basis for statehood in its national past; while relations with the Czech Republic were addressed by dissolving the Czechoslovak federal state in 1993, bilateral relations with Hungary remain still unresolved.

As the 2004 EU accession drew nearer, the political elites, institutionalised as they were in pro-European governments, focused on adopting EU legislation and negotiating the final details of the accession treaties. In the meantime, however, their societies felt progressively neglected. Their accumulated expectations, goals, worries and frustrations generated a populist backlash in Central Europe prior to EU accession. The seeds of social instability were further catalysed by those Central European populist parties and politicians that celebrated successes in the European Parliamentary elections one month after the 2004 enlargement. Even though the circumstances leading to the populist parties' victories were as divergent as their ideologies, their degrees of success, and their levels of persistence, the populist backlash in Central Europe did occur at the same time in all of these countries and evolved in opposition to the same "enemy" (i.e., European integration).

The objectives of this conference were:

■ To examine the factors that feed the contemporary populist facet of Central European politics: Why here?
■ To critically analyse the concept of populism: Is populism an inherent feature of politics?
■ To discuss the historical and ideological roots of Central European populism: What has led to the formation of populism here?
■ To discuss the consequences of populism: How is Central Europe perceived abroad?
■ To ask whether the features shared by the Central European states outweigh their differences and whether there is in fact such a phenomenon as "Central European populism".

ORGANIZERS

asociace pro mezinárodní otázky
association for international affairs

The conference was organized by the Association for International Affairs (Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky, AMO), a leading independent think-tank established in the Czech Republic to provide information, resources and analysis in the fields of international relations, foreign and security policy and European and global politics.

With the kind support of

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Prague

HEINRICH
BÖLL
STIFTUNG

International Visegrad Fund

Visegrad Fund
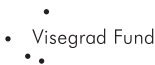
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Prague**

The conference was co-organised with the Institute of Contemporary History of the **Czech Academy of Sciences**, the Institute of Political Studies of the **Polish Academy of Sciences**, and the Institute of Political Sciences of the **Slovak Academy of Sciences.**

The conference was held under the auspices of **H.E. Karel Schwarzenberg**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

NOVEMBER 21-22, 2007

NOVEMBER 21, 2007

VENUE: HOTEL SAVOY (KEPLEROVA 6, PRAGUE 1)

20:30 - 23:00
WELCOME DINNER

■   DINNER SPEECH: EDVARD OUTRATA, MEMBER OF ADVISORY BOARD
     OF AMO, FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE OF THE CZECH
     PARLIAMENT (CZ)

NOVEMBER 22, 2007

VENUE: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ČERNÍNSKÝ PALÁC (LORETÁNSKÉ
NÁMĚSTÍ 5, PRAGUE 1)

09:00 - 09:15
OPENING REMARKS

■   ALICE SAVOVOVÁ, Director, Association for International Affairs
■   TOMÁŠ KAFKA, Head of Department of Central Europe, Ministry of Foreign
     Affairs
■   EVA VAN DE RAKT, Director, Heinrich Böll Stiftung in Prague

9:15 - 10:45
DISCUSSION PANEL I

2004 - 2006: WHAT HAPPENED IN CENTRAL EUROPE?
Can we speak of a rise of populism in Central Europe? The perception of politics in changed circumstances. Populist instruments and methods. The heritage of 1989: Popular revolutions or negotiated deals? Visions of transformation. Election dynamics and populist parties.

■ JOSEF JAŘAB, former chairman of Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security of the Senate (CZ)
■ EDUARD KUKAN, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (SK)
■ ONDŘEJ LIŠKA, chairman of Committee on European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament (CZ)
■ CYRIL SVOBODA, Minister of the Government and Chairman of the Legislative Council of the Government, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (CZ)

Chair: MICHAL KOPEČEK, Research Fellow, Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences (CZ)

10:50 - 12:20
DISCUSSION PANEL II

POPULISM. THEORETICAL APPROACHES.
What is populism? Does a non-populist form of politics exist? Right-wing and left-wing populism. Populist "fictions": National unity, political unity, the unity of politicians and the demos. Democracy and populism. Characteristics of the electorate: Socio-demographic, programmatic, volatility of populist parties. Populism and extremism.

■ KLAUS VON BEYME, Ruprecht-Karls University in Heidelberg (GE)
■ BOJAN BUGARIČ, University of Ljubljana School of Law (SLO)
■ MARIA MARCZEWSKA - RYTKO, Department of Political Movements, University of Lublin (PL)
■ JIŘÍ PEHE, Director of New York University in Prague (CZ)

Chair: VÁCLAV NEKVAPIL, Research Director, Association for International Affairs (CZ)

12:20 - 13:10
LUNCH

13:10 - 14:40
DISCUSSION PANEL III

ARE CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES PRONE TO POPULISM?
Between popular democracy, "goulash communism" and populism: Society and public opinion at the close of the communist era. Nationalism, ethnicity and national memory. Historical and cultural determinants of populism in Central Europe. The heritage of 1989: Popular revolutions or negotiated deals? Visions of transformation.

■   MARIE GAILOVÁ, Chairperson of civic association Romodrom (CZ)
■   GRIGORIJ MESEŽNIKOV, President, Institute for Public Affairs (SK)
■   JIŘÍ MUSIL, Center for Social and Economic Strategies, Charles University (CZ)
■   MICHAEL SHAFIR, Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University (RO)
■   SOŇA SZOMOLÁNYI, Comenius University, Bratislava (SK)

Chair: JURAJ MARUŠIAK, Research Fellow, Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK)

14:45 - 16:15
DISCUSSION PANEL IV

THE EUROPEAN UNION - A NEW STIMULUS FOR POPULISM?
New perceptions of sovereignty, self-determination and national identity in Central Europe. Anti-EU populism in Central and Western Europe - similarities and differences. Post-national Europe and nation states. Immigration and possible new waves of populism. Elitism and populism: How should European integration be managed? Is Central Europe prepared to accept multiculturalism?

■   KAI-OLAF LANG, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (DE)
■   PAUL LUIF, Austrian Institute for International Affairs (A)
■   JURAJ MARUŠIAK, Research Fellow, Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK)
■   VÁCLAV NEKVAPIL, Research Director, Association for International Affairs (CZ)

Chair: GWENDOLYN ALBERT, Director, Women's Initiatives Network,
           Peacework Development Fund, Inc. (CZ/USA)

16:20 - 17:00
CLOSING REMARKS

■ JIŘÍ DIENSTBIER, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (CZ)

Chair: VÁCLAV NEKVAPIL, Research Director, Association for International Affairs (CZ)

18:00 - 20:00
GLASS OF WINE

VENUE: EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND (VALDŠTEJNSKÁ 8, PRAGUE 1)

OPENING REMARKS

ALICE SAVOVOVÁ
Director, Association for International Affairs

Alice Savovová briefly introduced the Association for International Affairs and its activities, also addressing partner institutions of this particular conference. Mrs. Savovová the highlighted conference's ability to develop long-term responsible political policies addressing issues of democratic development and its relation to the emergence of populist ideas. These populist ideas must be particularly addressed with respect to the challenges its thoughts pose to the integration of minorities into the European Union community. In her view the aim of this conference should include scrutiny of the different faces of populism, and/as well as its role in Central Europe and the Czech Republic.

TOMÁŠ KAFKA
Head of Department of Central Europe, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Tomáš Kafka welcomed the participants on behalf of Ministry of foreign affairs. Mr. Kafka stated that the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs' attention is focused not only on its everyday duties, but is also interested in the lifestyle of Europeans. In that lifestyle, attitudes of populism arise frequently in popular culture. Based on the events of 1989 that marked the "return of history", confusion had been

brought to people's lifestyles as the application of Western models began to define the future direction of the region. On the other hand the majority was convinced that the influence on public opinion must be built on politically correct culture. Quite candidly, they admitted "we were dizzy" with transformation, and eager to accept patterns of political management and culture from abroad without the necessary attention to the differing rules and cultural structures generally applied to these imported patterns. Mr. Kafka admitted there are external factors leading to populism; however he emphasized the role of internal motives such as the "culture of fear" causing the spread of populism in the east and west of Europe. Today's Eastern Europe sees a shift from the culture of existentionalist fear, based overwhelmingly on the negative historical experience, towards the western type of "fear for the future" that proliferates into populism. According to Mr. Kafka, this conference should give us more courage in tackling those fears.

EVA VAN DE RAKT
Director, Heinrich Böll Foundation in Prague

Eva van de Rakt welcomed the participants on behalf of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Prague. The Heinrich Böll Foundation is an independent political foundation affiliated with the German Green Party - Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. The Heinrich Böll Foundation's foremost task is political education in Germany and abroad focusing on democracy, human rights, ecology and sustainable development.

Ms. van de Rakt mentioned that the key to the stabilization of any democratic system is its political culture. The development of democratic political culture must be understood as a long-term process. Political education in this particular context means getting people involved and empowering people to participate in political processes. Responsible politics means winning over the majority to support democratic values, ideas, and concepts. The victims of populist politics are first and foremost minorities, and in Central and Eastern Europe this primarily means the Roma minority. Populist tendencies in Europe not only stand in the way of integrating minorities, but they also block further integration of the European Union. Ms. van de Rakt considered it therefore especially important that the issue of populism was being discussed in a European context.

(executive summary)

WHAT HAPPENED IN CENTRAL EUROPE?

JOSEF JAŘAB

Mr. Jařab brought forward questions concerning the situation in Central Europe as to whether there has appeared a phenomenon of populism in general or whether there are more populisms, i.e. types of populism? And what can we possibly do about populism?

He began by defining the term populism. For this purpose he looked deeper into the history of how populism originated and evolved in the United States more than a century ago. He then mentioned undemocratic forms of populism in some Latin American countries, with other examples referring to Russian nationalism and "Putinism," as well as a special kind of nationalist and Christian populism in Poland today. Mentioning Russia, Mr. Jařab quoted the writings of Sergei Kovalev who is trying to answer "Why Putin Wins." The basic assumption is derived from the current condition of the political system in Russia, offering a mere imitation of democracy, where an autocratic system and visible lack of a viable liberal democratic tradition are main causes of the success of the present populism.

Mr. Jařab introduced a historical background for populism in the following terms. Old agrarian populism in the U.S. as well as Russia (the radical agrarian movement "Narodniki") is one kind, most often of a grass-roots nature. Industrial or economic populism was the result of a "class struggle" in capitalist economies, while inefficiency and corruption could provoke reactions in the socialist systems. It was interesting to watch how some of the older traits and newer ones combined into something to be called "transformational populism" in post-communist countries and societies during the process of transition towards liberalized political and economic systems. Finally, political populism can combine a number of the above mentioned aspects, and acquire some new ones.

According to Mr. Jařab, Central Europe today is still tackling its totalitarian heritage that is in conflict with free and democratic influence of values that have already been formally and structurally adopted.

The truth about present, post-modern populism is that it has no ideology as it is more an inherited reaction to the existence of an official establishment, a reaction to authorities, however defined. What we may recognize as a common feature throughout history is "anti-intellectualism," though mentions exist also of "intellectual populism". The impulse for a populist movement can come from the top down and from the bottom up as well. In some post-communist countries top-down nationalism uses old and new myths to control, even unify, nations; fear is often spread by inventing enemies, frequently false ones. In the new and integrating Europe, where the EU is considered by some, including a few national leaders, as a powerful and authoritarian establishment, Brussels is being repeatedly attacked by a populist rally of anti-EU or anti-supranational forces. In local and national politics politicians too often make populist gestures towards their electorates, political parties trying to outdo their rivals in election campaigns with hardly realistic promises.

One way of defining populism today is also by giving it a label of neo-populism which uses the media as its primary tool. Gianpietro Mazzoleni, Julianne Stewart and Bruce Horsfield, in their 2003 publication, The Media and Neo-Populism, make the link quite explicit, as does Umberto Eco´s new collection of essays, Turning Back the Clock: Hot Wars and Media Populism. The problem here is that politicians who can master media, and political forces or parties that can influence or even control media, can create politics outside traditional constitutional

channels appealing directly to the "people", thus shaping the public mind, and, consequently, the public polls, or vice versa. So the public uses the media as a source of information while at the same time being, quite possibly, used by the same media as indicators of "truth". All that leads to the creation of "tabloid politics", which is not identical with the politics of the tabloids, nor is it the question of whether the Blesk newspaper has now become the watchdog of democracy in this country, as someone wittily remarked, but it is a threatening trend of a dangerous matching of politics and media, including media of public service. Mr. Jařab strongly argued that this is not acceptable and distorts history. In this light he brought up a news item of the day, namely a current issue in the Czech Republic - the problem of selling pork for prices that cannot compete with subsidized products from other EU member states, when production costs rise and domestic subsidies are low. In a subtle way, this is a case of populist interpretation, yet of an arguably difficult situation. Other examples may be more convincing.

Mr. Jařab also looked at populism from the positive side; the question remains whether, for instance, dissident activities in the totalitarian age, such as the Solidarity movement in Poland or Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia can be seen as samples of political populism. He argued that there have been cases, especially the large Polish movement of the early eighties, when populism served as a unification agent of the civil society. Even today, in the post-communist societies, it is an issue whether initiatives like "Děkujeme, odejděte!" ("Thank you, but leave now"), "Impuls 99", and especially the "TV Crisis" of the year 2000 can and should be seen as manifestations of political populism.

In this context he quoted Lawrence Goodwyn's "Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America," referring to the positive acceptance of populism in the U.S. as a popular empowerment of the civil society. In present Central and Eastern Europe, however, political activities of people and civil societies tend to be perceived quite critically by parts of the political establishments, which Mr. Jařab considers a relic, as if a remaining legacy, from the former regimes. And he disagrees with views considering civil society activism unnecessary and improper for a free democratic social and political environment.

Mr. Jařab believes that a definition of "politics" from Ambrose Bierce´s The Devil´s Dictionary fits a good description of negative cases of political populism

- "A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage." Yet he feels that it remains necessary, and should also be possible, to distinguish between positive and negative motivations for populist policies and activities. The bottom-up or top-down approach could be a telling criterion, comparing long-term political objectives as stated in political programs to immediate behaviour of political entities could be another one. And, of course, as throughout history - reliance on common sense.

Populism should certainly not be allowed to spread like plague.

(executive summary)

WHAT HAPPENED
IN CENTRAL EUROPE?

EDUARD KUKAN

Starting with the definition, Mr. Kukan stressed the difficulty in giving populism a clear label as "populism is one of the most imprecise concepts in language" or else "the face of Yeti that we speak about but don't see it."

So is there populism in Europe? With respect to objective judgment and perception of the situation in different parts of Europe, it is necessary to note that the West watches the East very strictly, even though similar things occur in the West. Nevertheless according to Mr. Kukan there are a few issues and signs that resemble populism:

■   general dissatisfaction of voters who lose touch with political affairs
■   tendencies to discredit the opponent
■   tendencies to play with popular dissatisfaction about specific issues
■   challenging values and institutions
■   polarization and simplification
■   counter elites

In scrutinizing the existence of populism and key factors leading to it in Eastern and Central Europe, Mr. Kukan gave an example of Slovak early parliamentary elections that took place on 17th June 2006. They resulted in strengthening the authority of the state, where state takes care of and protects people. On the contrary the new pension reform literally steals money from private accounts rather than saving money on public expenditures. There is a never ending problem of corruption, health insurance companies failing to regenerate and the society is polarized on certain issues that have indirect effects on foreign policy. An example of this is the rise of anti-Americanism, i.e. "having less U.S. but more Russia", which may bring about unpredictability as well as tensions between Slovakia and allied or neighbouring countries.

There are already tensions between Slovakia and Hungary and controversies over the opinions on American missiles in Poland where there is too much reliance on Russian position. This is partially the fault of current Minister of Foreign Affairs who has little support.

Summarizing political situation in Slovakia, Mr. Kukan quoted the Honorary President of the Institute of Public Affairs of Slovakia on the emergence of "new political populism". There is a fear of stagnation and suspension of modernization of Slovakia, where the current Prime Minister, Robert Fico, is excessively influenced by communist values.

In order to overcome these threats, new agenda for future elections must be put together, especially for the continuation of European integration. It is vital to stick to values and principles, clear and true alternatives against populists.

(executive summary)

WHAT HAPPENED
IN CENTRAL EUROPE?

ONDŘEJ LIŠKA

Mr. Liška was not surprised to see populism exist in Europe. In defining the ter-
ritoriality of populism, he refrained from saying what we mean by Central
Europe, as the term is rather symbolical. He concentrated mainly on the exam-
ples of populism in the Czech Republic, with references to its impact on the per-
ception of neighbouring countries and the European Union.

In the case of the Czech Republic, we cannot look at populism outside the con-
text of the evolution of today's Czech society. In order to understand this, we
should return to the ideologies of nationalism and the way they had formed the
basic elements of our society during the emergence of the Czechoslovak Republic
after the 1st World War. In the first decade of the 20th century we had experi-
enced democratic emancipation. This, however, began with the emancipation of
society "A" but restriction of society "B", driven by the demand for corrective
ideologies such as "Czechoslovakism". The Czechoslovak nationalism was hid-
ing in the fact that the society never considered itself nationalist, but as democ-
rats fighting against Catholic Church, aristocracy and Germans.

Today, our political parties including ODS, ČSSD, KSČM still carry this nationalistic legacy of fighting for democracy. To prove this statement Mr. Liška referred to a poster published during the election campaign, where the picture of yellow Czech Republic and black surrounding Western countries reminded him of the fear of aristocracy and "the Germans".

Apart from the nationalistic heritage, Mr. Liška also addressed the role of media in enabling marginal ideologies to be heard and seen. Continuing with nationalism, its ethnical definition is the result of despair, as the boundary between those who are politically involved and the public deepens. This brings us to another question: Who is "the public"?

As another example Mr. Liška chose the case of the European Union and its "supra-national" decision making, perceived by certain groups of people as a threat to sovereignty. It is also the motivation of the "new members" of the EU trying to show the "old members" that they can rebel and do something the old members have not had the chance to do.

To conclude his speech, Mr. Liška defined populism as not anti-democratic but anti-liberal tendencies since they threaten human freedoms.

(executive summary)

WHAT HAPPENED IN CENTRAL EUROPE?

CYRIL SVOBODA

Minister Svoboda began with defining populism as "political rejection of more views on one thing", a very narrow minded and short term approach. In his view, populists attempt to reflect upon the needs of society, however, they have no responsibility to this particular society. Since populists are driven by intuition, they tend to adopt a model of "we can do everything and nothing is forbidden to us" to try and prevent the loss of ground in political affairs. This concept of position against strategy is adopted by political celebrities, claiming they know what is and what should be the public opinion, trying to present themselves as the right examples despite lacking responsibility.

However this does not mean that it is always a primitive and naive policy. One of the bases of political correctness is not to be in conflict with anyone. Harmony with the perception of masses is vital, as conflict equals risk. A populist politician also does not want to endanger himself and needs to maintain harmony with the rest of the public. The lack of responsibility shown by populist politicians is evident as long as we know that "there is no voting for the truth". On the other

hand the danger Minister Svoboda points at in his quotation of J. F. Kennedy is that "an individual with courage shapes the majority". Another way how populists distinguish themselves from the rest is by labelling their scapegoats "them" as opposed to "you". They fear relationships that fall into discomfort, their inner closure and excessive emphasis on national interests weakens that which we are all bound to do. Populists rely on the reflection of majority demand. They try to inflict responsibility on people who then should feel they are the ones to decide e.g. about the conception of our defence, as opposed to the elected elite being responsible for the future of our country. Does that mean the elite are wrong about the future threats? Isn't cursing the Czech political representation also a sign of populism? This is where Minister Svoboda closed the argument: For the populists, the decision of the people is necessary, because only then it will be the responsibility of "them".

To combat the populist success, Minister Svoboda stressed the need for responsible self regulation, a weapon of compromise and open mindedness. As we are approaching energy and water crises, we need to adopt self regulatory policies or there will be conflicts. It is vital to secure the civil society, leaving populists speechless when they are challenged.

(executive summary)

POPULISM AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN MODERN DEMOCRACIES

KLAUS VON BEYME

1. Definitions, criteria, developmental sequences and typologies
2. Populism and right-wing extremism
3. The new normative debate on democracies and the virtues and failures of populism

Introduction

Populism is a subject for studies which gets growing attention. But as in every scientific fashion the terms are inflated (as formerly happened with elitist neo-corporatism - one of the arch-enemies of the populist movements). Populism should not be used as a catch-phrase for everything, in order to keep its scientific connotation. The term in the political arena, however, frequently degenerated into an invective for allegedly unrealistic, phony policies or opportunistic political behaviour. If postmodern democracies have to cut down welfare benefits, the supporters of the status quo - quite frequently the former leftist forces - are accused of "populism". If national governments excuse failures of national policies by hinting at the restrictions of the EU which imposed unpopular measures they are frequently criticized for their populist "irresponsibility".

1. Definitions, criteria, developmental sequences and typologies

With the spread of populist elements in a time when parties developed from class-based mass-organisations into lose movements and entrepreneurial and professionalized parties of voters (cf. von Beyme 2000), populism had a chance to move from a marginal phenomenon into the centre of a political system - as Berlusconi showed in Italy and so many movements in post-communist countries. Thereby populism lost its former petty-bourgeois class-image and found increasingly followers in the working class.

Research on populism is promoted in four dimensions (cf. Hartleb 2004: 68):
■ The ideological and programmatic dimension,
■ The personal dimension of leadership,
■ The technical dimension of a simplifying metaphoric style in politics,
■ The exploitation of positive or negative reports in the mass-media and propaganda via events and scandals.

Populism initially seemed to prevail in societies which are aware of being peripheral to the centres of power. The most well-known examples were the Russian "Narodniki" and the American Populists in the 19th century. Both were contrary to postmodern populism leftist, though not in a Marxist but rather in an anarcho-syndicalist way. In Third World Countries - without a legitimized party system and established institutional structures - populist movements from Peronism to Kuomintang were even the rule, rather than the exception of political mobilisation as in Western Europe. Three types of populism have been classified: agrarian, economic and political (Mudde 2000). Positions of populist parties in the political space came to a more complex typology, differentiating six groups: centrists, social populists, national conservatives, agrarian, nationalists and radical leftists (Lang 2007: 133).

The older wave of Populism had mainly two roots:
■ Populism was a response to crises of development and to industrialization.
■ In a populist phase of the drive for national independence the "people" were mobilized against "foreign or denationalized rulers". In the second half of the 20th century sub-nations from Catalonia to Scotland used populist types of movements to fight for independence or at least autonomy. Post-modern ethno-pluralism is a good example for the democratization of marginal groups in society: unlike traditional racism and nationalism ethno-pluralism does not focus on

ethnic or racial superiority but on the threat of a loss of identity. It has normally no expansionist drives, unless the "constructed territory of ethnic identity" exceeds current boundaries, as in the case of the Basques (in France) or the Catalonians (in France, Valencia and Mallorca). The loss of identity, however, in the meantime is feared even by whole nation-states. Identity-politics was developed against the threat of being crowded by foreigners. As Jean-Jacques Le Pen once put it: "I love North Africans, but their place is in the Maghreb". (cit. Betz 1994: 183). This development has the advantage to turn right-wing populists into protectors not only of their national culture, but also of the immigrant populations (unless they want to transform abandoned churches into Mosques).

Populism in Political Science is frequently discussed as a homogenous phenomenon. Differences over time and periods are often neglected. Post World War II, three phases can be differentiated (von Beyme 1988: 8ff):

1) Post-right-wing movements were mostly openly neo-fascist such as Uomo Qualunque and MSI in Italy, or the SRP, prohibited in Germany in 1952.

2) With new depravations since the first economic slumps after the "economic miracle" a moderate right-wing extremism developed and tried to be serious and respectable, avoiding Nazi methods of propaganda, such as Adolf von Thadden as the leader of the German NPD which in 1969 almost entered the German Bundestag.

3) The third wave of populist movements were responses to globalization and Europeanization (slogans: "Europe yes - EU no)," growing immigration and unemployment. The decline of the welfare finally created even a populist movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Sweden, the most misnamed "Swedish Democrats" which sprang up from former neo-fascist groups - misnamed as much as the "Constitutional Democrats" of Zhirinovsky in Russia. Sweden was a populist late-comer, because the SAP, the Social Democratic Party - in an almost hegemonic position - tried to organize smoothly the drawback from an excessive welfare state. The EU is at best accepted only as a loose "confederation of nations" (Haider 1994: 283).

Populism is not a one-way-development. It is facilitated by general changes in ideologies and organisations of parties. The third wave of populism was favoured by processes of decline and disintegration within the traditional party system: decline of membership in the parties and party identification of the voters, decreasing voter turnout. The former ideological camps eroded and party

elites were increasingly professionalized. This created anti-establishment feelings and spread anti-party moods in the society. Contemporary voters are more instructed, less collectivistic and independent from the advice of the big political machines. The result is increasing volatility.

Populists were frequently prone to crisis mongering. But some theoreticians never abandoned us in naming the crises of post-modern societies which have been exploited by populist ideologies. Thus Habermas' classifications of crises entered the debate on populism in variations:
1) A crisis of distribution (expressed in growing unemployment figures),
2) a crisis of identity facing immigration,
3) a crisis of representation which created hostility towards the parties and strengthened demands for direct democracy.

Populism started as a kind mystical union of the people - rather a syndrome than an ideology (Wiles 1969: 166). Leaders boasted of direct communication with the people. Populists think in terms of "social movements" rather than organizing a party.

The basic creeds are:
1) Populist propaganda is less programmatic and more moralistic. Since populists quite frequently pretend to be against science and its inhuman rationalism they appeal to common prejudices in the people and hardly ever participate in criti-cal controversial debates. They prefer myths of conspiracy: "we have been cheated" or "we have been neglected by the establishment" are popular slo-gans. Virtue resides in the simple people and their collective traditions. Liberalism is said to have deteriorated to a "philosophy of marginal groups". The great ideologies, such as liberalism and socialism, are declared to have failed. But when populists pretend to be defenders of liberty they frequently oppose all "fundamentalist theories of salvation" (Haider 1994: 28, 24).
2) Populists pretend to fight the "corruption" of the established elites. They pre-fer the term "political class" instead of the positive connotations of the term "elite". In third world countries primitivism (a mystification of Aztec heritage in Mexico) merges with progressivism, close to socialist ideas.
3) There is rarely a consistent doctrine - sometimes the populists started as a single-issue-movement, which creates not a system of related creeds as in an ideology but only a stubborn overestimation of one issue in society. Class

becomes secondary. Empirical research in 1990s emphasized "mileus" according to life-styles. This may be one of the reasons why even unemployment does not have so much impact on populist attitudes among the voters as the slogans of the movement suggests (Betz 1994: 114) Three out of eight milieus can serve as recruitment base for populist movements: the petty-bourgeois milieu, the hedonistic milieu and the alternative-leftist milieu (Faltin 1990: 81ff). The materialist hedonists are, however, rarely mobilized. When new social movements organize, most of them remain "fuzzy systems". Postmaterialism theories have frequently overestimated to what extent the new life styles entail mobilization and organization.

4) Originally populism was a rural movement. In the era of globalization it tends to turn into an urban phenomenon. Competition of foreign migrants was always a breeding ground for populists in cities of the United States. Now all West-European countries are immigration societies - whether they accept it or not - and this causes populist unrest and xenophobia, except among left-wing ecological populists. American left-wing populists supported all socialist demands for nationalization of banks and big industries - except the collectivization of the farmer's land. An example of this is Saskatchewan or North Dakota - strongholds of rural populism in North America - in the 1930s. Early populists opposed dreams of hyper-industrialization according to the model of Ruhr valley and preferred "Black forest" type of small cooperative industries as Lenin once put it. Since the 1960s populists and even many right-wing extremists have not yet became fond of big industry, collectivism and planned economy. But contrary to early populists many of them developed individualistic and neo-liberal attitudes and accepted the market as an arbiter, rather than individual chance (Betz 1994: 179). Even leftist populists close to left-libertarian ideas share with right-wing populists the rejection of established authorities and the hope for decentralized decision-making. In some other points they are, however, fundamentally opposed to right-wing populist ideologies. Some ecological populists favoured more immigration and a multicultural society which was abhorred by right-wing populists (Betz 1994: 181).

2. Populism and right-wing extremism

There is still a debate as to whether all populist movements are right-wing, merely the more moderate form of right-wing extremism. Recently left-wing populists have been discovered (or re-discovered because they existed in Russia and in the United States): Originally the Green movements were considered as populists and some-

times the post-communist parties, such as the PDS-Linke in Germany which became the most important special party for representing East German interests.

The notion of populism should be differentiated from extremist movements - though they, such as the fascists, have many populist features. There are, however, neo-fascist parties, such as the NPD in Germany, which show little populist inclinations and behave like fascists in a respectable dark suit with a proper tie. Most extremists and populists dislike increasingly to be dubbed as "fascist". Haider claims that when he is called a "nazi" this is the product of an "anti-elitist society of applause". But populism is taken as a kind of honorary title, as Haider (1994: 53, 57) wrote in his book "Freiheit, die ich meine" (The liberty I mean) is that populism is a necessary movement in democracy in the fight against the "commands from the ivory tower of the political class" and its "disgust of the people".

The main difference is that extremists prefer tight parties and a kind of "democratic centralism", whereas some populist movements can be democratic and decentralized, like most movements in American history. Sometimes right-wing extremists and populists are difficult to separate, as in the cases of the Scandinavian "Progress parties" and even the Austrian FPÖ under Haider (Decker 2006: 16). Some of their creeds sound fascist - others are rather neo-liberal. A populism like George C. Wallace's movement was clearly racist (slogan: "segregation for ever" (Hartleb 2004: 54).

Most frequently the boundaries between populists and right-wing extremists are blurred in the new EU countries in Eastern Europe. The type of "far-right" and national populists, such as the Hungarian "Party for Justice and Life", the "Slovak National Party" the "Movement for a Democratic Slovakia" (HZDS) in the 1990s, and the Czech Republicans or the "League of Polish Families" were semi-authoritarian, xenophobic and close to right-wing extremism (cf. Lang 2007: 128f).

Extremist movements tend to believe in the overthrow (or at least radical change) of the existing system and do not recognize the constitutional rules whereas most populist movements grudgingly accept the rules and want to change only minor elements: mostly the electoral law and the demand for a direct election of the president. When they already had a popular elected president in Austria, the populists complained that there was a costly duplication in foreign policy because of the competition of the federal chancellor and the federal president (Haider 1994:

235). Populist movements are rarely revolutionary. They continue to hope to bring the establishment back on the right road to democracy. There is some class-consciousness, but populists never accepted the myth of the proletariat and necessary class warfare. Marxists therefore classified them - as Lenin did with the Narodniki - as "petty-bourgeois" and accepted a temporary alliance only with the leftist faction of the so-called "social revolutionaries".

The difference between populism and right-wing extremism seems to be rooted in three elements:
1) With the spread of terrorism all over the world, the basic criterion for classification of populists' movements - as opposed to right-wing extremism - was whether they accept or refuse terrorism as a tool of political conflicts.
2) Additional criteria for the differentiation of right-wing extremists from radical right-wing populists are a consistent and continuous anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism - not part of the ideologies of most populist movements.
3) The most general mode of differentiation seems to hint at the "negation of democratic values" and not only - as most populists and radicals do - the "negation of democratic methods" (Backes 2006: 232).

Only a minority of populists today can be identified with right-wing extremists. Martin Lipset in his "Political Man" (1960) was one of the first to discover "extremism of the centre". But he had mostly third world countries in mind. With growing Europeanization and globalization populism in the centre of the party spectrum has been discovered. The losers of recent economic developments turn into populists and they blame certain scapegoats from the European bureaucracy in Brussels for foreign investors "invading" the country bringing with them their neo-liberal ideology, the CIA and the United States. This does not mean that all populist fight against neo-liberalism. On the contrary: from Glistrup in Denmark to Blocher's party in Switzerland and Haider's FPÖ one kind of conservative populism is directed against the welfare state and many populists have accepted the logic of individualization (Haider 1994: 181; Betz 1994: 115). This is another reason why they prefer rather loose networks instead of traditional parties.

3.   The new normative debate on democracy and the virtues and failures of populism
There is a normative debate about the virtues and failures of populism. The established parties tended to consider populist movements as bad. In Germany - a country which invented the possibility to outlaw a party, a technique copied by

other countries, such as Russia - even prohibition was considered. But in the age of the new social movements, the creative forces of populists have been discovered. Populist leaders are classified by the extent to which they endorsed democracy: de Gaulle and Gandhi were the good populists; Sinn Fein or the Basque leaders were the bad populists - as long as they supported terrorism.

The contemporary debate on populism should not obscure the fact that populism had not only negative consequences due to the following two reasons:
■ Sometimes it was successful in agenda-setting and promoting new topics, which were increasingly accepted by the established parties.
■ Frequently the negative consequences of populism in a representative democracy were overrated.

The initial verdict against populism has been mitigated by several experiences:
1) Populism is organized by charismatic leaders such as Poujade or Le Pen in France. If this charisma fails or is substituted by bureaucratic leadership and what Max Weber called "Veralltäglichung des Charismas," "routinization" and decline of the special attraction of the leader the populist movement disintegrates very quickly. In Germany the fall of Schönhuber made the populist Republicans marginal in the system. When Pim Fortuyn was killed in Holland he was not easily substituted in his movement. In many countries the "intellectualisation" of leadership was not successful and erosion was the consequence when the masses got bored by the ever repeating slogans (cf. Stöss 2000: 178). A lack of professionalization in parliaments proved to be detrimental to the growth of movements in the long run. When populist policy styles are adopted even by the big parties the populist smaller groups no longer have an advantage (cf. Merz 2003: 43).

2) The routinization of populist movements starts when they get close to power. Many of them prefer to remain in opposition to "keep clean" the purity of their basic creeds. Nothing is more compromising than being held responsible for bad policies, such as Haider in the Austrian government, Gregor Gysi as left-wing populist in the Berlin government or the support of populists for bourgeois governments in the Benelux or the Scandinavian countries. A unique case in Western Europe was Berlusconi who reshuffled the whole Italian party system in the early 1990s. When his "Second Republic of Italy" proved to be even more corrupt and undemocratic than the former "classe

politica" Berlusconi was toppled. He was able to survive for a while only with the help of a democratized neo-fascist movement and a regional populist group "Lega Lombarda". Coalitions are always shaky; coalitions of populist, however, are even more likely to be unstable.

3) Populist styles captured the leadership in established parties - as has been demonstrated by leaders such as Blair in Britain or Schroeder in Germany. Charismatic media democracy created a populist style in conventional politics (Korte 2003). Populists benefit from the modern media and their inclination towards "infotainment". But the irrational campaigns of some media should not be overrated. Public opinion - manipulated by some media - is unstable. One day the masses shout "hosiannah," the other day "crucifige!" This occured more often to populist leaders than to "normal" routinized politicians of the established parties.

4) Populism in most West-European systems was no threat to the institutions of democracy so far. In the 1980s the social movements were suspected to substitute the old institutions. But most populists no longer pretend to aim for a completely new system. They only demand a "Second Republic" as Berlusconi did in Italy, or a "Third Republic" in Austria, proclaimed by Haider (1994: 201, 239) proclaimed. After his failure in the elections of October 2007, Kaczynski declared the end of the "Fourth Republic" in Poland. The "revolution" in populist documents is smoothed over as a "transformation" (Umbau) or a vaguely defined "cultural revolution". However, the final result was an integration of populism into the system. The new social movements were mostly successful in agenda-setting and provocation of new issues in the public debate. In most West European systems the populists did not exceed 10% of the votes, with the exception of the Front National in France, the FPÖ in Austria and the Norwegian "Fremskrittspartiet". But the fluctuations are enormous (data in: Betz 1994: 3), as the Poujade movement showed in the Fourth French Republic, which withered away within a matter of years. Many great electoral successes proved to end up in disasters because the populists lacked professional cadres to act successfully in parliaments, as the NPD or the Republicans showed in German Laender diets (Holtmann 2002). Populism was not even a serious threat to European integration, as shown by the cases of nationalistic populists in government in Austria, Denmark, Italy and the Netherlands.

Two variations of a kind of "built-in populism" in representative democracies have been differentiated (Decker 2006: 22, 26):

a) Moderate populists accept the constitutional-representative model of democracy, and strengthen it by emphasizing greater inclusion of groups and interest and a deliberative democracy.

b) More radical populists favour plebiscitarian democracy. "Decisionism" on the basis of a unitary will of the people substitutes "deliberation".

The second version of plebiscitarian democracy model might be a potential danger, but the drive of populist parties - with the exception of Italy - was never strong enough to change the system and its institutions. Germany proved to be particularly protected against right-wing extremism and populism because of

■ its Nazi past,

■ because the two major parties are moderately welfare oriented, and twice merged their forces into a Grand Coalition to reform the system. Populist slogans in catch-all parties are increasingly stolen from the populist groups.

5) Populists finally remained apolitical because they don't like compromise. Populists pretended to mobilize, but frequently the result was manipulated "pseudo-participation." As soon as populists are established and learn to work in terms of compromises with other groups they are accepted parties and lose their uniqueness. This occured to some progressive parties on the right and to the green parties on the left of the spectrum.

6) My optimism may be challenged by experiences among defective democracies in Eastern Europe. There is no doubt that populism in these areas is more dangerous than in Western Europe.

■ There is frequently no tradition of a stable party system.

■ Electoral volatility contributes to unstable party organisation.

■ "Institutional engineering" has not come to an end in some of the new democracies.

■ Ethnic diversities favour ethno-populism still more than in Western systems.

Research on the consolidation of democracy has lost its arrogance towards new democracies. To a minor extent the deficiencies of defective democracies lurk also in allegedly consolidated democracies. Ethno-populism in some Western areas such as the Basque Countries and even Belgium, is even stronger than in the East.

Sometimes an Austrian slogan from the time of the First World War has been applied to the populist upheaval: "the situation is hopeless but not serious".

In the long run I am, however, optimistic for the new members of the European Union:

■ EU values and laws shape political cultures in the East. Euro-scepticism in some official parties is sometimes stronger than in the "people" that populists pretend to represent - as growing figures for approval of the European integration show (Rupnik 2007: 168). Trust in Europe is frequently higher than trust in the national government.
■ Party groups in the European parliament help to streamline the fancy pluralism in some Eastern countries.
■ Judicial review via constitutional courts is making its impact felt - as in Western Europe. Originally the French "conseil constitutionnel" had very limited functions in France. It is increasingly developing into a real constitutional court. The same is true of the constitutional courts in the East which are styled after the Austrian-German models rahter than the example of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Even in Eastern Europe the experience teaches us that populism has a combination of longevity and instability: "populism never lasts long - but it is somehow always around" (Deegan-Krause 2007: 144).

Populists - if they care for theory and consistent ideology - sometimes try to benefit from the new normative debate in contemporary democracies. New notions are spreading about the decline of traditional representative democracy:

1) negative connotations are inherent in the terms post-democracy
2) positive connotations are conveyed by the term deliberative democracy (Habermas) or dialogic democracy (Giddens).

In the age of "post-democracy," the elites receive less deference and the secrets of politicians are laid bare to the democratic gaze. Virtually all the formal components of representative democracy survive (Crouch 2005: 12, 22). Deliberative democracy is a normative hope, but post-democracy did not come close to it. Leftist writers complain that there is hardly any fundamental criticism of capitalism - but only of abuses by transnational multinational corporations. Many populists, such as Blocher's "People's Party" in Switzerland and Haider's FPÖ in

Austria, are rather capitalist-minded and offer no hope for fundamental change of the economic system. If we look at former leftists like Hardt/Negri (2002) in their notion of "Empire", there is not even hope for a fundamental change. Foucault's spirit is spreading. Each power structure inherently bears its counter-power. Populism is offered by some more sophisticated leaders as an element of Foucault's counter-power.

The more liberal democracy was universalized after 1989/90, when communism and other dictatorships collapsed. The more liberal democracy, which is essentially a system of representation is considered as a rather limited system. Torchbearers of "radical politics," such as Anthony Giddens (1994: 112), developed the idea of a "dialogic democracy," hoping that this concept will be more than an extension of liberal democracy. It should create not new rights and representations of interests as in representative democracy but further cultural cosmopolitism, decisive for reconstructions of social solidarity. There are, however, few cosmopolitans among followers of populist movements.

Social solidarity is reconstructed by many new social movements, but it is no longer encompassing and universal. Identity politics became a catch-phrase of postmodern democracy. But prospects according to Colin Crouch (2005: 119) are slim: "Nor will populism be contested by trying to move beyond identity politics to a Third Way political appeal which tries to evade the very idea of identity." But political parties which claim to represent the masses need to do so by articulating an identity for those people (Pizzorno 1993). The more these identities are artificially "reconstructed," the more other possible identities are neglected. The established parties have been compared to large corporations: both avoid risks, with the corporations avoiding risky investments, and the established parties avoiding investing in identity-building for new social movements (Crouch 2005: 120). Parties prefer to cooperate with selected social movements, but avoid the necessary specialisation of populist movements. Successful new social movements were mostly only successful when they accepted cooperation with established interest groups and parties - as the ecological or the feminist movements have shown.

Populist movements - as other new social movements - sometimes cause "elite-directing forms of politics" against former elite-directed politics (Inglehart 1990: 338). But this does not mean that populist movements have no permanent impact. Since the "participatory revolution" in the 1970s and 1980s, electoral

competition has changed: medium range, non-totalizing ideologies, special issues and a growing impact of individual candidates and their profiles prevailed (Kaase 1984).

New terms also gave more respectability to some populist movements: they claimed to represent the "civil society" against the political class. But no movement has ever permanently incorporated the civil society. Some critics (Latour 1995: 68, 188) believe that modern constitutions have already become a victim of their success and are about to collapse. Mobilization of collective groups has created so many hybrid forms that the constitutional framework can no longer keep them together. In the light of postmodern "normalisations" this is certainly an exaggeration. The production of hybrids which explicitly and collectively will be part of a "non-modern constitution" and an "enlarged democracy" is a utopia on the basis of "reunification of nature and society" which is not under way and so far remains a hope of the ecological movement.

Even a normative thinker such as Habermas (1992: 446) who was fighting for "deliberative democracy" admitted that civil society is always in danger of degenerating:
■ by populist movements which defend traditions and identities against a capitalist modernization,
■ by movements which exceed influence-seeking and try to establish themselves as power groups,
■ and by social revolutions which re-establish a historical subject in teleological theory as torchbearer of progress.

Ideological revolutionaries became tiny minority groups, but the two first movements remain a certain threat to representative democracy.

References

Backes, Uwe: Politische Extreme. Eine Wort- und Begriffsgeschichte von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.
Betz, Hans-Georg: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe. Houndsmill, Macmillan, 1994.
von Beyme, Klaus: Right-Wing Extremism in Post-War Europe. Westeuropean Politics, 1988: 1- 18.
von Beyme, Klaus: Parteien im Wandel. Von den Volksparteien zu den professional-

isierten Wählerparteien. Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000.

Betz, Hans-Georg: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe. Houndsmills, Macmillan, 1994.

Bútora, Martin et al. eds: Democracy and Populism in Central Europe. Bratislava, Institute for Public Affairs, 2007.

Crouch, Colin: Post-Democracy. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005.

Decker, Frank (ed.). Populismus. Gefahr für die Demokratie oder nützliches Korrektiv? Wiesbaden, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006.

Deegan-Krause, Kevin: Populism and the Logic of Party Rotation in Postcommunist Europe. In: Bútora et al, 2007:141-159.

Faltin, I.: Norm, Milieu, politische Kultur. Wiesbaden, DUV, 1990.

Giddens, Anthony: Beyond Left and Right. The Future of Radical Politics. Cambridge, Polity, 1994.

Habermas, Jürgen: Faktizität und Geltung. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1992.

Haider, Jörg: Die Freiheit, die ich meine. Frankfurt, Ullstein, 1994.

Hardt, M. /Negri, A.: Empire - die neue Weltordnung. Frankfurt, Campus, 2002.

Hartleb, Florian: Rechts- und Linkspopulismus. Wiesbaden, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2004.

Holtmann, Everhard: Die angepassten Provokateure. Aufstieg und Niedergang der rechtsextremen DVU als Protestpartei im polarisierten Parteiensystem Sachsen-Anhalts. Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002.

Inglehart, Ronald: Culture Shift in Advance Industrial Society. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

Ionescu, Ghita / Gellner, Ernest (eds.): Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969.

Kaase, Max: The Challenge of the "Participatory Revolution" in Pluralist Democracies. International Political Science Review, 5,3, 1984: 299-318.

Korte, Karl-Rudolf: Populismus als Regierungsstil in: Werz 2003: 209-222.

Lang, Kai-Olaf : Populism in " Old " and " New Europe " : Trends and Implications. In: Bútora, 2007: 125-140.

Latour, Bruno: Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Paris, La Découverte, 1991, dt. Wir sind nie modern gewesen. Versuch einer symmetrischen Anthropologie. Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1995.

Lipset, Seymour Martin: Political Man. London, Mercury Books, 1960.

Mair, Peter. Populist Democracy vs Party Democracy. In: Mény/Surel 2002: 139-154.

Mény, Yves / Surel, Yves (eds.): Democracies and the Populist Challenge. Houndsmill, Macmillan, 2002.

Mudde, Cas: In the Name of Peasantry, the Proletariat, and the People: Populisms in Eastern Europe. East European Politics and Societies, 14, 2000: 33-53.

Mudde, Cas: The Populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition, 29, 2004: 541-563.

Mulgan, G.: Politics in an Antipolitical Age. Cambridge, Polity, 1994.

Rupnik, Jacques: The Populist Backlash in East-Central Europe. In: Bútora et al, 2007: 161-169.

Pizzorno, Alessandro: Le radici della politica assoluta e altri saggi. Milan, Feltrinelli, 1993.

Stöss, Richard: Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland. Berlin, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2000, 3rd edition.

Taggart, P. : New Populist Parties in Western Europe. West European Politics, 1995:

Werz, Nikolaus (ed.) Populismus. Opladen, Leske & Budrich, 2003.

Wiles, Peter: A Syndrome, not a Doctrine. Some elementary theses on populism. In: Ionescu /Gellner 1969: 166-179.

POPULISM: THEORETICAL APPROACH

BOJAN BUGARIČ

In Bojan Bugarič's perception, populism is a very dangerous phenomenon in Central-Eastern Europe. A certain degree of disdain for liberalism constitutes one of its central features. Though he concedes that CEE democracies are in no way in danger of collapsing, the challenge of populism must be taken seriously. Like Central Europe, populism is at its very core democratic, but lacking complementary attributes of liberalism. This holds true especially for constitutional institutions, which are not sufficiently developed. The most susceptible institutions are:

■ constitutional courts,
■ the development of an independent civil service,
■ the development of an impartial media,
■ and respect for human rights.

Mr. Bugarič emphasized the need to strengthen Constitutional Courts. He mentioned that many judicial decisions go ignored or disrespected and in many cases individual justices are removed and replaced due to political motivations. He also advocated the insulation of the civil service from the politics of patronage since the opposite situation fundamentally undermines the professionalism of government institutions. He also advocated the strengthening of a Central European interest in human rights, especially in regard to respecting and integrating the Roma population and further ensuring the rights of other minorities such as Jews, homosexuals, and whatever other group might not be included within populists' homogeneous ideas of "nation."

Additionally, Mr. Bugarič stressed the need for development of liberal institutions since they have the capacity to protect individuals from populism. Today, such institutions are merely "forms without substance." In them the façade of constitutional liberalism is present, but it lacks backbone. This is alarming due to the fact that there is no genuine political consensus on how to move forward. By definition, liberal democracies are contradictions. The absence of a liberal foundation (in courts, media, civil service) that could potentially check democratic powers has left room for a tyranny of the majority as fostered by populist leaders.

(executive summary)

POPULISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE: THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

MARIA MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO

Terminological problems

The differentiation, definition or evaluation of populism constitutes one of the most difficult tasks facing social scientists. The term "populism" has no single precise definition.[1] Its uses encompass many meanings pertaining to different contexts.[2] The problem is all the more complicated since the history of populism reflects the social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of particular countries and civilisation areas. Apart from conceptions regarding populism as a historical phenomenon, there are conceptions in which it is employed to describe the solutions of direct democracy or as an instrument in election campaigns.

---

1   Opinions claiming that populism "has been fairly well described by theorists, so there is no major disagreement as to its " (J PARADOWSKA, WŁADYKA 1993:1) are inaccurate. It is enough to compare the classic studies of the subject: IONESCU 1969, CANOVAN 1981, CONNIFF 1982. The terminological problems connected with populism are dealt with in POPOV 1994:7 p. 9 (see "The concept of populism is a controversial one. Discussion on that subject have not produced any precise and commonly accepted definition"); MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO 1995: 15-22.

2   Compare articles collected in the book Populizm na przełomie XX i XXI wieku. Panaceum czy pułapka dla współczesnych społeczeństw, MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO 2006 .

Hence, in the present considerations we have adopted a conception assuming that it is difficult to talk about one universal populism, either on the level of the doctrine or on the level of the social or political movement. Ultimately, we are dealing here with different, culturally and historically determined, populisms referring to social hopes, fears and resentments.

The experience of Poland and other post-communist countries in East-Central Europe, determined by the clash of two traditions: the democracy of the inter-war period and communism, undoubtedly affected the image of populism in the region.[3] The lack of liberal traditions in this part of the world, negative experience of the period of the so-called real socialism, the commonly held belief in the responsibility of the state for the success or failure of the citizens, and the support of ideologies promising an immediate rise of the living standards, largely determine the process of transformation and the shaping of the democratic system. Consequently, it is important to determine the significance of populism in the process of transformation. No less important is the answer to the question about the influence of populism on the shaping of the democratic system.

In the period of system transformation in Poland, populism has become a catch-word. On the one hand, there are opinions that, particularly in the case of Poland, one can hardly speak of populism. The most frequent argument supporting this view is based on one of the definitions of populism assuming that it originates from unfinished reforms conducted in a given system. It was pointed out that a radical transformation in all fields of life was taking place in Poland, which makes the Polish case different from the classic examples of populism, where transformations were superficial and incomplete. The crises in particular post-communist states, it was argued, became so strong, that there is no possibility of returning to the former system, to the former structures. The argumentation offered in this context combined a belief in the small probability of a return to the system of the past with a belief in the irreversibility of the initiated reforms. Others raised some doubts as to the validity of applying the concept of populism to Poland.[4] Does not this concept, when applied to Poland, refer simply to the usual social demands and demagoguery? So, perhaps, it is enough to

3   MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO 1996: 485-490.
4   PARADOWSKA, WŁADYKA 1993: 11

use the concepts of social demands and demagoguery. On the other hand, many political groups in the Third Republic of Poland have been accused of populism. S. Tymiński, M. Jankowski, L. Wałęsa, A. Miodowicz and many other representatives of the Polish political scene have been accused of populism.

From the methodological point of view both approaches question the usefulness of the concept of populism as an instrument of politological analysis. In fact, it is an interesting question and one that has often been raised by some scholars dealing with the problem of populism.[5] Analysing the Polish experience from a broader perspective it seems that it is justified to reject both the minimalistic approach (assuming that the concept does not have any designate) and the maximalistic one (manifestations of populism are everywhere). Populism is a complex phenomenon, or even a multi-dimensional one. Meanwhile, in the Polish conditions populism provokes univocally negative associations, often assuming the form of a bogey such as Peron's or Pinochet's solution.[6] It is interesting to observe that the experience of Latin American countries has become the point of reference in evaluating populism in the first period of transformation.[7] Taking into account the tradition of populism this direction of enquiry seems well chosen. On the other hand, the conclusions derived from the cultural, political or economic conditions of Latin America are hardly applicable to the analysis of populism in Europe.[8] Considering populism as a bogey usually leads to the impoverishment of the analysis itself and the depreciation of the object of study. Meanwhile, it is not possible to negate the simple fact that the history of the last two centuries demonstrates that populism has become one of the few most important socio-political traditions. And if this is so, then we can consider pop-

---

5   DZWOŃCZYK 2000, KOZŁOWSKI 1995: 115

6   Interview with Lawrence Wechzler, WECHLEZER 1990: 2. MICHNIK 1990: 7. Jerzy Hausner also characterised populism as a threat to social and economic transformations - HAUSNER 1992: 118-129. Viewed in this context, Nebojsa Popov's observation is hardly surprising: "Apart from the characteristics shared by all populisms, there is one particular feature that renders its Central and East European variety even more destructive" (POPOV 1994: 9). If Popov's observation, referring to the tragic experience of the society of the former Yugoslavia is fully motivated, Hausner's argumentation seems incomplete.

7   SERRILL 1991: 4-5; SERRILL 1992:9, p. 9; KOFMAN 1992 8-9.

8   Compare an interesting paper by GRESKOVITS 1993: 9-33, in which the author analyses economic populism on both continents

ulism on at least two levels: the axiological level (a particular vision of the world) and the institutional one (institutions and methods of activity).

As rightfully stated by Andrzej Walicki, the modern connotation of the word "populist" is invariably negative, the classical meaning of the notion is, however, entirely different.[9] I have pointed to the above fact in numerous publications concerned with the concept of populism (particularly the Russian or North American populisms).[10] Nowadays the concept of populism tends to be associated with the concepts of ethnocentrism and xenophobia.[11] Ethnocentrism can be defined as a worldview, according to which the dichotomic division into "us" and "them" constitutes the basis of social life and the criterion of evaluation of the surrounding world. Here, "us" constitutes an idealised group, and "them" are seen as a threat and a source of evil. Usually, such an attitude leads to defensive isolation and conflict.[12] On the other hand, xenophobia consists in the creation and propagation of such an image of the community (often the motherland) in which there is no room for "others", whose influence on the cultural ethos, usually highly deceitful, is seen as destructive to a given culture.[13]

In the present considerations, we have focused on the problems connected with populism in Eastern and Central Europe in the historical perspective, populism as an attitude, vision of the world in the populist tradition, populist social and political movements and conclusions how to prevent populists.

Populism in Eastern and Central Europe in the historical perspective
Populist ideas did not appear on the Central European political scene with the beginning of the democratisation process. However, it must be admitted that the process of transformations offered (not only) to populism new horizons and challenges. Searching for the ideological genesis of Polish populism we should turn to the ideas of the narodniki, which at the end of the nineteenth century spread from Russia to Central Europe. It was born in response to Western socialist ideas and to

---

9   WALICKI 2002: 20.

10   MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO 1995

11   MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO 2002: 73-87.

12   See KRZEMIŃSKI

13   See OKRASKA 1999

the need of transforming the almost feudal social-economic relations. At first it supported the transformation of the archaic collective institutions into socialist institutions bypassing the phase of capitalist development. During the later period, the followers of populism argued that the accomplishment of the objectives of the people, most often identified with the peasant masses, required active assistance of the intelligentsia. Populist ideas exerted an unquestionable influence on the formation of socialist and peasant movements. In the inter-war period populism also affected the development of fascist and proto-fascist movements. This does not mean the identification of populism with fascism, although such a view can also be found in the literature. In the period of the so-called real socialism populist ideas found their reflection in the declarations of the ruling communist parties, particularly in relation to such problems as the role of the leader, the role of the masses and the workers-peasants alliance, or the conception of the state. However, populist ideas functioned primarily in the axiological domain. In political practice, most of the opposition movements exhibited a strictly populist character in relation to the ruling elites. These movements appealed to the whole society as opposed to the usurpatory elites described as "them". For example, in Poland "Solidarity" combined the characteristics of a trade union with a broad social movement, which was the main reason of the communists' attacks and demands that the movement defined itself as a trade union. "Solidarity" became the broadest representation of the working people of Poland. Declaring pluralism, "Solidarity" brought together people of different worldviews and political attitudes.

After the fall of the bloc of the communist countries, the populist-nationalist movement arose on the ruins of the communist system and ideology. In the post-communist period two elements came together. On the one hand, everything connected with socialist, including the broadly understood Left, was rejected, and on the other there was increasing dissatisfaction with the political groups forming in the new situation. In the newly emerging capitalist system, populism, understood as a particular vision of the world, became an alternative to the emerging liberal-democratic systems.

I share the opinion of Joseph Held, who claims that the East European populism originating from peasant societies has become an alternative to both socialist and capitalist development strategies.[14] Among the features characteristic of new

14   See HELD 1996; LUKACS 1990:41-48; WALSH 1990, MUDDE 2000: 33-53.

populism, the most notable are anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and antagonism towards modernity. A French political scientist and publicist, Jacques Rupnik, comments that one may discuss a crisis of democratic transformations in Central European countries, which have been taking place since 1989. In this way - in his opinion - the Visegrad option for Central Europe is now being substituted by the emerging nationalist populism. To quote a fragment of Rupnik's prognostics: "Nationalistic-populist options support each other during electoral campaigns. Were they to succeed, the power would be transferred to the hands of Orban in Budapest, Klaus in Prague, Mecziar in Bratislava and Stoiber in Berlin. While they cannot be equated, each of them -in their own way- contributes to substituting the model of democratic Central Europe aiming for the integration with the EU, by expansion to the East of Alpine populism (Berlusconi and Bossi in Italy, Blocher in Switzerland, Schuessel and Haider in Austria, and Stoiber): a mixture of ethnic nationalism, egoism of the wealthy, and verbal assaults against Brussels".[15]

The new populism parties are most influential in Russia, Romania, Poland, and Serbia. In Slovakia, the electoral results indicate a decrease in the prominence of new populism, which can be treated as a result of Vladimir Mečiar's rule in the country. It is noteworthy, that the primary role in this sort of groups is played by their leaders, who pose as saviors of the people and fathers of the nation. The most recognized of them include the above mentioned Vladimir Mečiar, Andrzej Lepper, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Vladimir Żyrynowski, Viktor Orban and István Csurka.[16]

In reference to the Serbian populism, Popov believes that its variations are in fact in opposition to the trend itself which "aimed at a harmony of civil and state liberties, equilibrium between the internal and external freedoms [...]".[17] Furthermore, he notes that a comparative analysis of the Serbian populisms indicates that there "exists a common spiritual pattern of anti-individualism and militant nationalism, which are characterized by the belief in conspiracies, fear of others, especially >aliens<, hatred towards any differences between individuals and nations, and readiness to eliminate the differences by force".[18]

---

15   RUPNIK 2002: 15.

16   Compare SCHOPFLIN 1991: 60-68; WALLACE 1994: 28-29; WALLACE 2002: 14

17   POPOV 1994: 77.

18   Ibid, p. 79.

In Poland, the main new-populist party is Samoobrona (Self-Defense). As rightfully noted by Roman Wapiński, however, "populist elements are traceable in the programs of the majority of parliamentary parties: Self-Defense, LPR [League of Polish Families], even PiS [Law and Justice] [...]. The situation is an unfortunate consequence of the historical division into post-Solidarity and post-communist parties. As the parties supporting the system refuse to cooperate, there is always a niche for those proposing the third alternative, posing as saviors, claiming to have a remedy for everything. Lepper's position is an unfortunate outcome of the structure."[19] Karol Modzelewski comments on the problem from a broader perspective, when he writes: "in Russia or Ukraine - where things are really going badly - there is a risk of deeper social destabilization. The left-wing lacks solutions - and that is when the area of discontent is exploited by, alongside the communists, the populist and nationalist right-wing."[20]

Populism as an attitude

Populism as an attitude is connected with the call to defend the social groups threatened by the effects of the modernising transformations initiated by the alienated elites. Populism understood in this way may characterise particular politicians[21], the electorates of particular political parties, or various groups and social strata. Politicians usually create their image as the father of the nation, a saviour, a man from nowhere, a man from outside the establishment, or a populist ruler. Charismatic features prove very useful. According to Max Weber, charisma is an attribute of an individual distinguished from other people by supernatural or at least exceptional qualities.[22] Charisma thrives on irrationality,

---

19   GAZETA WYBORCZA 3.12.2001: 8. See also MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO 2000

20   GAZETA WYBORCZA 1998: 10

21   M. Canovan speaks of "the populism of the politicians", CANOVAN 1981: 260-288. In the Polish conditions, populism characterises the activists of both trade unions. A characteristic example of this can be found in the following conversation with Maciej Manicki (Member of Parliament representing the Alliance of the Democratic Left and vice-chairman of the National Trade Unions Association:

- And do you know any populist, who admits it?

- No, I don't, as a matter of fact.

- Do you think that anyone from the NTUA is a populist?

- It seems to me that the establishment of a parliamentary group to defend the employees' interests by one of the leaders of the NTUA is a striking example of populism. GAZETA WYBORCZA 1994:3

22   WEBER 1947: 364-366.

most often as a result of irrational thinking. Weber provides the examples of popular kings, prophets, and leaders. Power granted to such people is contrasted with two other forms of legitimisation: rational-legal and traditional. Charismatic legitimisation usually appears in times of crisis, pushing other forms aside. Populism understood in this way is usually associated with nationalism. Every leader relying on the voters' dissatisfaction tends to make use of as many national symbols as possible.

I would like to concentrate my attention on two examples. In the beginning of 1990, Lech Wałęsa declared that he was not interested in politics, but would become the president if the good of the country demanded it. As a trade union leader he began attacking the government in Warsaw as a clique of intellectuals alienated from the Polish system of values. He called for "crushing the cliques", "the airing of Warsaw", and destroying the nomenklatura. In building his political following, Wałęsa listened to economic demands and complaints of different social groups, from shipyard workers to farmers and railwaymen, and agreed that they were justified. In many conflicts Wałęsa appeared as a man of destiny, bringing about their solution. He often made vague promises to redress the wrongs, when he would be in power. He often said that he did not want to be the president but that he believed that the circumstances and his sense of responsibility would force him to assume that office. At the same time, he endorsed the idea of "acceleration", according to which Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government was heading in the right direction, but not fast enough. He promised to give every citizen one hundred million zlotys to purchase the privatised enterprises. According to Wałęsa, the main task for Poland was to create such conditions in which no social group would have to pay the excessively high social costs of the reforms. Hence, all his speeches were pervaded with populist rhetoric that intensified as the presidential campaign progressed. Wałęsa's gift for understanding the common people and identifying with them was often emphasised.

On the other hand, the presidential campaign of Stanisław Tymiński, who, as it turned out, became Wałęsa's chief rival, combined technocratic and populist elements.[23] Tymiński projected his political image as the saviour of the nation and defender of the country's threatened independence. He argued that as an

---

23   BAZYLKO, FAFARA, WYSOCKI 1991; RACIBORSKI 1991: 65-66.

independent man, who knew the West, where he made his fortune, he was able to serve the Polish transformations. At the same time, he attacked the governing elites. He accused Mazowiecki's government of selling out the best enterprises. He accused the government of ignorance, which brought the crisis upon the country. He tried to present himself as a victim of the plot organised by the ruling elites, to whom, allegedly, he posed a threat (his famous "black portfolio"). In the studies of the subject the phenomenon of both Wałęsa and Tymiński is emphasised. The successes of both politicians can be analysed on the basis of the relationship between the leader and the masses (the nation). This peculiar understanding is characterised by interplay of rational and irrational factors. The leader's will to power finds support in the emotions of the frustrated members of the masses. According to social psychologist Janusz Czapiński: "Many social groups live in constant uncertainty, which the reforms only make worse. And fear makes them more susceptible to extreme ideas and calls for simple solutions. People overwhelmed by fear look for the guilty one. Fear gives rise to the need for a leader who would put an end to the uncertainty and project a static image of reality." In the presidential elections of 1995 many politicians tried to repeat the success of Stan Tymiński.[24]

The populist vision of the world

In the canon of populist values the moral domain plays a major role. An appeal to it constitutes one of the principal elements of the populist vision. In the populist thought, the world appears as dichotomous, clearly defined as black and white. Good is identified with the society in which the fundamental values are to be found. On the other hand, evil is embodied by the state, understood as the ruling elites alienated from the society. In the populist tradition, the majority comes closer to the discovery of the true social values, ideals and aims. The instinct of the masses and the will of the society are often evoked. Hence, the majority rule is based on being right. In the populist tradition, the minority can only be wrong. In a democracy that comes closer to the populist vision, the aim is to turn the preferences and the will of the majority into the universally binding social and political canon. The ideal of the populist vision of the world is a small community based on the principles of fraternity and social solidarity. Each individual aspiring to power should appeal to the values inherent in the nation. The idealisation of the people and society goes hand in hand with the depreciation of the elites.

24   BRATKOWSKI 1995: 18-19.

Anti-elitism and anti-intellectualism consist in the belief that the elites are carriers of values that have little in common with the values affirmed by the people (the conflict of values). Populism does not refer to the intellect or knowledge but to such concepts as justice, tradition, feeling, or faith. Consequently, the world of intellect appears as the world totally alien to the society as a whole. This also leads to the hostility towards science and modern technologies. Anti-intellectualism manifests itself in the distrust towards professional politicians, in the opting for the principles of populist democracy, in giving preference to a charismatic dictator, or in the tendency towards anarchism.

Utopianism in the populist vision of the world is closely connected with the utopian ideas of the Golden Age. Utopias usually appear in situations of social crises. The existing reality is no longer perceived as self-evident or the only possible one. The new ideal order can refer to both the past solutions or visions of the glorious future. The utopian idea of the Golden Age is not characteristic of the populist vision of the world alone. Agrarism, too, manifests a tendency to conserve a utopia. Perfect worlds are created in socialist and communist thought. Populism combines two factors: the opposition to the alienation of individuals and social groups brought about by social divisions and the belief in the sanctity of the earth and those who cultivate it.

The conspiratorial theory of history results from the belief that everything that happens in social and political life is a result of the clandestine activity of various social groups, or parts of them. Such an activity is aimed against the people, the nation, or rather the society. Conspiratorial theories are constructed on the basis of anti-elitism and distrust towards professional politicians, often accused of putting their own interests or those of other decision-making centres before the interests of the society, the nation, or the state. Jews, freemasons, or foreigners threaten the community, because they undermine its basis by creating their own culture.

Populism calls for the adoption of the so-called third way, denoting an attempt at constructing the new order halfway between capitalism and communism. It claims that it is possible to combine the best of the socialist and capitalist thought. It envisages the state protection for state-owned enterprises. The state is to assume the role of a defender of the society against monopolies acting against it. It favours inflationary policy, increasing the budget deficit and the

amount of money in circulation as a remedy for economic problems. With regard to its economic proposals, populism seems to be walking the thin line between development and stagnation.

Populism is essentially eclectic as far as its system of values is concerned. It results from the fact that it delivers a vision of the world that can be accepted by different social groups and different political trends. Hence populism stresses nationalistic ideas and glorifies the values advance by the society or the nation as the basis of national identity. Populism proclaims the idea of belonging to a group or culture, in opposition to the alienation of the individual. The glorification of native culture plays a major role in shaping the new awareness of the masses. At the same time, populism rejects cultural, political and economic elites as anti-national.

Populism as a social and political movement
Appealing to the positive inheritance of the society and the collective wisdom of the masses, populism tends to form social and political movements rather than political parties. A populist movement can be characterised as a mass political movement formed in response to the existing state affairs and calling for its radical change. Populist movements are characterised by their position outside the main centres of power, and the tendency to change its structure and replace its representatives.

For example "Self-Defence" in Poland emerged as a form of defending the people who took bank loans and as a result of the rising interest rates were unable to pay them back (hence the slogan "we will not abandon the land where our debt was born"). Very soon, the movement, which in the early stages of its development became notorious for physically removing the representatives of the establishment on wheelbarrows and organising roadblocks, turned into a political movement. It declared that "no negotiations with the representatives of the ruling elites make any sense, since they are determined to realise foreign interests. We must organise resistance against the plunderers of national property...".[25] Other documents of the movement also contain slogans attacking the establishment.[26] In one of the interviews, Andrzej Lepper, the leader of "Self-Defence" said: "I and "Self-Defence" as a whole want to live in Poland, not in

---

25   MERKURIUSZ. BIULETYN PARTII I UGRUPOWAŃ POLITYCZNYCH 1993: 14-16.

the country sold out to foreigners". And further: "We thought that after the elec-
tions of 4 June 1989 there would be a transfer of power. But no transfer of power
took place. Power was divided during the secret talks in Magdalenka and at the
Round Table. The same people as before run the banks and state enterprises.
They only changed their colours."[27]

The Draft Programme of the "Self-Defence" Electoral Committee of June 1993
declares that "Poland, having plunged into political and economic chaos, is in
mortal danger. All efforts must be made in her defence, involving reason, con-
science, and love for the Fatherland. Determined political action is needed in
order to choose a government that would truly represent the interests of the
Polish nation. [...] The Polish society has been neglected and disgracefully
deceived. The reforms turned out to be a smoke screen for the dismantling of the
economy and the state. The political elites brought to power by the working peo-
ple, turned against the society. They adopted an anti-social attitude. They sub-
jected Poland to foreign centres of economic and political decision-making".
Such documents project an image of the world dominated by plots and conspir-
acies organised in order to destroy the nation. The positive programme of the
movement consists only of promises and indefinite proposals of the so-called
third way.[28] In practice, this party organises peasant marches on Warsaw and

26 The Appeal to the Polish People proclaims "The present ruling caste does identify itself with the fate of the nation,
and carries out tasks imposed upon it by foreign economic and political centres..." MERKURIUSZ. BIULETYN PAR-
TII I UGRUPOWAŃ POLITYCZNYCH 1993:19). In the Declaration of 23 September 1993, the group commented upon
the election results in the following way: "Some of the main manipulators...workings towards Poland's loss of inde-
pendence have become members of parliament. These views [expressed by the Western centres, that little or noth-
ing will change in the direction of transformations, M.M-R] must be based on some grounds. These are dangerous
signals, indicating that the tired and economically deprived Polish society has again been subjected to clever manip-
ulation..." MERKURIUSZ. BIULETYN PARTII I UGRUPOWAŃ POLITYCZNYCH 1993:7).

27 ŻAKOWSKI 1993 10-11.

28 Among other promises we can also find the following ones: "it can be better, so it must be better", or "Poland
and the Poles must become rich. There must be many who are rich, and few who are poor". MERKURIUSZ.
BIULETYN PARTII I UGRUPOWAŃ POLITYCZNYCH 1993: 13). The third way is "neither the nineteenth-century
capitalism with its unlimited free market and inhuman idea of the strong ruling over the weak...nor the inflex-
ible socialist collectivism, but a natural organic system, internally balanced and free from divisions into antag-
onistic social groups and strata MERKURIUSZ. BIULETYN PARTII I UGRUPOWAŃ POLITYCZNYCH 1993: 8).

demonstrations before the parliament, where the peasants wielding their scythes throw pieces of meat and bones, and pour out liquid manure.

"Self-Defence" emphasises its moral purity since it comes from outside the establishment, the existing system. Moreover, it is aware of that system and attempt to break it up. Its orientation is firmly anticommunist and anti-liberal. Poland is seen in terms of a bi-polar system, with the wise, admirable and deceived society at one end, and the political elites bringing the country to ruin, at the other. An important role is played by the theory, or rather a set of theo-ries, about the plots, secret agreements, and conspiracies, headed by the notori-ous "secret accords of Magdalenka". The populist groups attach great impor-tance to national values, national identity, and, at the same time, manifest their dislike of "others". "Self-Defence" declared actions aimed at "raising the coun-try from ruins" are usually full of promises unsupported by economic analysis.

Conclusion

The deliberations presented above provoke the following question: how can the danger of populism be countered? One of the ways would be introducing formal solutions limiting the political representation of populism (the example of France). An alternative is to allow the populists to exercise power, expecting them to discredit themselves, and thus disaffect the electorate (the example of Austria). Out of historical experience, the American practice is noteworthy: com-peting groups adopted the postulates of the populists. However, the crucial ele-ment is developing a civic society. In the opinion of Michal Vašečka, it is neces-sary to "build step by step and develop a self-confident civic society, one which has a sense of its own dignity. Only such a society is capable of challenging the decline of values, corruption, and the progressing institutionalization of populist movements".[29] Other important elements are education and a change in the functions of the media, especially during elections. It is commonly believed, for instance, that Andrzej Lepper's popularity was in fact created by the media alone. What is needed therefore is a different -from the one existing now - approach towards practicing politics. An Italian philosopher, Paolo Flores d'Arcais, refers to the current state of affairs as to a spectacle, show, spots built up from demagogic slogans, performances by political showmen.[30] Paul Johnson

29 VAŠEČKA 2002:8. Compare: MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO 2002: 443-458.

30 D'ARCAIS 2002:8

states that "a new moral conservatism seems to be spreading in Europe, and the populists are well placed to harness this mood. In reply, all the establishment can do is play the much-used card of European federal idealism. If they wish to counter populism's rise, they must take urgent steps to make the European ideal look fresh, creative, and politically sexy again".[31] The Appeal of European Intellectualists and Politicians includes a call to counter the threat of populism. It reads: "thus we appeal to all whose voice can be heard, and to politicians, to act, both in their countries and in any other place, against pseudo-national rhetoric and pestering populism, even if they seem no more than farce and political kitsch. Let us not comfort ourselves by saying that great historical tragedies can only be repeated as farce".[32]

References

BAZYLKO, P., FAFARA, P., WYSOCKI, P. *Czarna teczka. Rzecz o sztabie wyborczym Stanisława Tymińskiego.* In GRABOWSKA, M., KRZEMINSKI, I. (eds.). *Bitwa o Belweder, Warszawa 1991*

BRATKOWSKI, P. *Dziś prawdziwych Tymińskich już nie ma, Gazeta Wyborcza, 6 November 1995, p. 18-19.*

CANOVAN, M. *PopulisM, London 1981*

D'ARCAIS, F. *Show, szok i nadzieja, Gazeta Wyborcza, 4-5 May 2002, p. 8.*

DZWOŃCZYK , J. *Populistyczne tendencje w społeczeństwie postsocjalistycznym (na przykładzie Polski), Toruń 2000*

GRESKOVITS, B. *Dominant Economy, Subordinated Politics. The Absence of Economic Populism in the Transition of Central-East Europe, Sisyphus 1993, no. 2, p. 9-33.*

HAUSNER, J. *Populist Threat in Transformation of Socialist Society, Warszawa 1992*

HELD, J. (ed.). *Populism in Eastern Europe: Rascism, Nationalism and Society, New York 1996.*

IONESCU, G., GELLNER, E. (ed.) *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics, London 1969*

JOHNSON, P. *That's Populism, Not Fascism, World Press Review, October 1994, p. 52.*

KOFMAN, J. *Między Europą a Ameryką Łacińską, Gazeta Wyborcza 1992, no. 121, p. 8-9.*

---

31   JOHNSON 1994: 53

32   GAZETA WYBORCZA 2002:2

KOZŁOWSKI, P. Szukanie sensu, czyli o naszej wielkiej zmianie, Warszawa 1995

KRZEMIŃSKI, A. Etnocentryzm, In http://www.niniwa.cad.pl/ETNO.htm

LUKACS, J. The Stirrings of History, Harper's Magazine 1990, vol. 281, s. 41-48

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, M . Populist Movements in the Process of Transformation in Poland - 1989-2000. In APOLLON, D., FURE, O.-B.. SV?SANDS, L. (eds.). Approaching a New Millennium: Lessons from the Past - Prospects for the Future, (eds) D. Apollon, O.-B. Fure, L. Sv?sand, Bergen 2000, CD

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, M. (ed.). The Problem of Populism in East-Central Europe, in: DUMAŁA, A., PIETRAŚ, J. (ed.). The Future of East-Central Europe, ed. A. Dumała, Z. J. Pietraś, Lublin 1996

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, M. Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective, In CONNIFF, M.L (ed.) Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective, Albuquerque 1982

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, M. Populizm. Teoria i praktyka polityczna, Lublin 1995

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, M. Tendencje populistyczne we współczesnym ruchu chłopskim. In. BAŚCIK, K., ZALEWA, J. Dzieje i przyszłość polskiego ruchu ludowego, t. 3: Przebudowa i przyszłość, Warszawa 2002, p. 443-458.

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, M. The Problem of Xenophobia in the Context of Populism and European Enlargement. In Xenophobia and Post-Socialism, PAJNIK, M. (ed.) Ljubljana 2002, p. 73-87.

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, M.(ed.). Populizm na przełomie XX i XXI wieku. Panaceum czy pułapka dla współczesnych społeczeństw,Toruń, 2006

MERKURIUSZ. BIULETYN PARTII I UGRUPOWAŃ POLITYCZNYCH 1993. Ideologically-programmatic Assumptions, "Merkuriusz. Biuletyn Partii i Ugrupowań Politycznych" 1993, no. 3, no. 18

MICHNIK, A. The New Republic, 2 VII 1990, Forum 8 July 1990, p. 7

MUDDE, C. In the Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat, and the People: Populisms in Eastern Europe, East European Politics and Societies 2000, vol.14, no. 2, p. 33-53.

OKRASKA, R. Szukanie obczyzny: na manowcach ksenofobii i ideofobii, Zakorzenienie 1999, no. 5.

PARADOWSKA, J., WŁADYKA, W. Kto da więcej. Polski populizm '93, Polityka, no. 16, 1993

POPOV, N. Serbski dramat, Warszawa, 1994

Przeciw populizmom. Apel europejskich intelektualistów i polityków, Gazeta Wyborcza, 22-23 June 2002, p. 2.

RACIBORSKI, J. Polskie wybory. Zachowania wyborcze społeczeństwa polskiego w latach 1989-1995, Warszawa, p. 65-66.

RUPNIK, J. Nacjonalizmy w reakcji łańcuchowej, Gazeta Wyborcza, 19 April 2002, p. 15.
SCHOPFLIN, G. Conservatism and Hungary's Transition, "Problem of Communism" 1991, vol. 40, p. 60-68
SERRILL, S. Demokracja i bieda, Time (28 X), Forum 1991, no. 47, p. 4-5
SERRILL, S. Mieszczaństwo potrzebne od zaraz, Gazeta Wyborcza 1992, no. 110
VAŠEČKA, M. Populizm w Europie Środkowej. Sztandary buntu i nienawiści, Gazeta Wyborcza, 23 April 2002, p. 8.
WALICKI, A. Co po inteligencji?, Gazeta Wyborcza, 10-11 August 2002, p. 20.
WALLACE, B. Return of the Old Guard, MacLean's, 10 October 1994
WALLACE, B. Śliski Hun, "Forum", 11 March 2002, p. 14.
WALSH, J. Populism on March, Time, 24 December 1990
WEBER, M. The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, New York 1947
WECHLZER, L. Interview with Lawrence Wechlzer, Forum 1990, no. 25, p. 2.
ŻAKOWSKI, J. Nie chcemy dużo: jakieś 60 bilionów, interview with Andrzej Lepper, Gazeta Wyborcza 19 August 1993, p. 10-11.

POPULISM IN THE AGE OF MEDIOCRACY AND MEDIACRACY

JIRI PEHE

In the prestigious Encyclopedia of Democracy, edited by Seymour Martin Lipset, populism is defined as a political movement that emphasizes the interests, cultural traits, and spontaneous feelings of the common people, as opposed to those of privileged elite. For legitimation, populist movements often appeal to the majority will directly - through mass gatherings, referendums or other forms of popular democracy - without much concern for checks and balances or the rights of minorities.[1]

The encyclopedia also examines the origins of populism in the Narodniki movement in Russia in the 1870s and describes various later forms of populist movements in the United States and Europe. According to the Encyclopedia, today the term populism generally refers to a third kind of political phenomenon, common in Latin America, and, in a different form in Asia and Africa. It refers to political parties that are not socialist but are based on the support of common people and are hostile to the dominant classes. Such parties are usually based on a constituency that has little experience of associating for civic purposes - in sharp contrast to the basis of American populism.[2] Because populist movements in devel-

---

1 Torcuato S. Di Tella, in The Encyclopedia of Democracy, Seymour Martin Lipset, editor, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1995, pp. 985-988.

2 Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America, New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

oping countries are not based on autonomous self - organization, they need some other way of holding supporters together. That social cement is the presence of an undisputed leader, who establishes a charismatic relationship with followers. The quotes are from the edition of the Encyclopedia published in 1995. The definition of populism in this particular edition is interesting for two reasons. First, virtually nothing is said about countries of Central Europe, which in 1995 were usually described as "emerging democracies" undergoing the process of democratic consolidation. Why is politics in Central Europe 12 years later almost a synonym for populism, despite the fact the countries of Central Europe have undergone an unprecedented institutional modernization under the guidance of the European Union, is a question as intriguing as is the question why even top political scientists in the West did not foresee this development 12 years ago.

Another interesting question is why so little was said in a prestigious political science publication about the relationship between populism and the modern media, which so visible today. One possible explanation is that there has been a real shift in the media since 1995.

The modern media seem to play an increasingly important role in the rise of populism, as both the media and modern populist politicians have one common denominator: they speak supposedly in the name of vox populi. Their falling back on the vox populi, however, is not most of the time limited to just reacting passively to the majority will, but often involves efforts to manipulate the public with the help of sensitive issues that resonate well with the atavistic side of human nature, such as nationalist feelings, ethnic allegiances, or fear of foreigners.

Both populist politicians and the mass media are anti - elitist. Modern populism also does not need an active civil society; it appeals to masses. Both the mass culture and political populism are based on mediocracy as opposed to meritocracy. In other words, the mass media and populist politicians can thrive only if they are able to identify, and speak to, the lowest common denominator.[3]

Some sociologists and political scientists have noted that in modern societies the public space is rapidly being privatized by individual and group interests that are

---

3   On a relationship between the media and politics with regard to populism, see Umberto Eco, Turning back the Clock: Hot Wars and Media Populism, Milan: Libri SpA/Bompiani, 2006

not rooted in active civic engagement. In fact, active citizens and a civil society as a whole are often seen as enemies of such interests. Public space is becoming increasingly depopulated. We live in an era in which the media that work in the service of private interests, however, fill the public space with virtual stories that often have only one purpose - to manipulate public opinion and transform the civil society into an unstructured mass.

The mass democracy of the modern era is based on the conviction that people, understood as a mass, are politically as wise as politicians. Populist politicians, finding support in the anti - elitist attitudes of the mass media, therefore often use the majority public opinion as a reference framework for their policies, and often advocate referendums in place of making difficult decisions. One consequence of this trend is the disappearance of real political leadership in most Western democracies.

The notion of "elite" has increasingly negative connotations. Both populist politicians and the mainstream media claim to speak in the name of the people. They frequently criticize various political endeavors and projects as "elitist" and alienated from the people.

As everyday political affairs are increasingly influenced by an anonymous vox populi, it is supposedly the task of mass media to tell us what this vox populi actually says. In some ways, this is a vicious cycle: the majority mainstream media are increasingly engaged in the agenda setting for politics, actively promoting certain points of view and rejecting others. They do so by constantly referring to the supposed wishes of the public, changing public opinion trends in the process. Politicians then react to the public opinion. In other words, the mass media and populist politicians live in a strange sort of symbiosis.[4]

The notion of the public, as defined by Jürgen Habermas or Charles Taylor (a rational discourse within the domain of public space, which is represented in the modern age by the media), is disappearing in front of our eyes. The public as a

---

4   Interesting analyses of such symbiosis, in particular between the media and extreme-right populist movements, can be found in Gianpietro Mazzoleni, Julianne Stewart, Bruce Horsfield , The Media and Neo-Populism, New York: Praeger Pubslishers, 2003.

form of civil society, which is supposed to serve as a check on political power, has been replaced by the nebulous concept of the people, whose voice is represented by the media that predominantly serve private economic interests and often have, mainly due to efforts to increase their markets, their own political agenda.

Real political leaders, who offer their personal integrity as a guarantee of their political program, are increasingly being replaced by the vox populi - either in the form of anonymous public opinion or popular figures of mass culture. In other words, in today's societies of mass culture, politicians are being replaced in the role of political authorities by show talk hosts, entertainers and moderators of mediocre discussion programs, which are held hostage to various surveys of audience shares and readership. The main work method of these new age substitutes for real politics is not rational analysis and informed discourse, but emotions and feelings.

The fact that politics has become a form of entertainment is an increasingly important phenomenon in the rise of populism in modern democracies. In order for the media to sell political events and developments as one of their products, the politics must be able to entertain. A populist politician is aware of this fact: he or she will say what the audience wants to hear, rather than trying to convince the audience that his or her opinions, although unpopular at the moment, make sense.

But even populist politicians face some risks in relying on the supposed majority opinions, as represented by the media, as it is increasingly more difficult to distinguish between the situations in which the media objectively represent the majority public and the situations in which the media substitute their own agenda for what they claim is the opinion of the public. Democracy is, indeed, in danger of being replaced by mediacracy or, to be more specific, telecracy.

Alexis de Tocqueville warned in the 19th century against the tyranny of majority. What he warned against was not only the abuse of the majority will against individual rights and minorities, but also the fact that if a democratic regime blindly follows the majority will of the so - called people, the very foundations of democracy may be undermined. This is why de Tocqueville saw as the basic pillar of any democracy the rule of law which is protected by constitutional liberalism. In other words, the rule by rules is more important than the rule by people.

The plurality of the modern media, on the one hand, seemingly makes the tyranny of majority problematic; on the other hand, the prevailing methods of media work often support it. Sociological surveys and various public opinion surveys commissioned most often by the media and used to support their arguments, have contributed to the creation of a political environment in which there exists almost a constant non - personal relationship between politicians and the so - called public. In this environment, politicians can predict, or even test, public reactions to their decisions even before they officially make them.[5]

This has significantly affected the ways in which politicians behave in all democracies. The ability of politicians to lead is decreasing, while efforts to pander to the supposed majority will of the public are increasing. In other words, populism is not just a result of some sudden change in the psychological makeup of politicians, but, among other things, a result of the fact that modern communication technologies, combined with the changing nature of the modern media, weaken the system of representative democracy.[6]

The possibility to test the reactions of the public to the intended political decisions even before any official decision has been made has infiltrated the representative democracy with the elements of direct democracy - albeit in a distorted fashion.

Modern technologies have created a political environment in which democracies act as if elections were held permanently. Political parties can test their popularity almost permanently, and they do so. Political leaders who would like to advocate necessary but unpopular measures are, through media, exposed not only to public pressure but also internal pressure from within their parties which constantly compete for better popularity ratings.

Politicians who despite all of this can still institute unpopular measures must not only be strong in dealing both with their opponents and supporters, but also

---

5   For an interesting analysis of the influence of public opinion surveys, as presented by the media, on politics, see Thomas E. Patterson,   Out of Order: An incisive and boldly original critique of the news media's domination of America's political process, New York, Vintage, 1994.

6   On a relationship between representative democracy and the power of modern media, see Robert W. McChesney, Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times, New York: New Press, 2000.

must have the ability to manipulate the public to some extent. In other words, the political leader of today is quite different from political leaders of only several decades ago. Any politician is now confronted with his/her voters virtually without any time lag. What is important is not only his or her message, but also how the message is conveyed. A politician's media image may be more important than his or her policies.[7]

It is not an accident that populism, as a political movement, has been on the rise in the age of modern communication technologies, which are used most widely by the media. In the environment, in which it is possible to instantly measure public moods and preferences, political leaders need to have the ability to feel the pulse of society. If they do, it is often easier for them to adjust their views to the public than advocate changes.

This new dynamic that determines much of what happens in modern democracies is further complicated by the fact that the above mentioned "pulse of society" is in most cases represented by the media. However, as mentioned above, today's mass media follow their own, usually business interests, which in societies of mass consumption can be the most effective only if they appeal to mediocrity. The mediocracy and the mediacracy thus have much more in common than the fact the spelling of the two words is almost identical.

The mediacracy is most commonly defined as government, usually indirectly, by the popular media - a system in which politicians stop thinking on their own and begin listening exclusively to the media regarding what the important issues are and what they should do about them. Since the media are increasingly in the hands of major corporations, the mediacracy is a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the corporations and exercised by them or by their elected agents.

If that is true, perhaps we need to come up with an additional notion of sources of populism. The voice of the majority, which supposedly guides populist politicians, may in fact increasingly be identical with the voice of powerful cartels, in which political, economic a media power blend into one.

---

7   See Colin Seymour-Ure, The Political Impact of Mass Media, London: Sage Publications, 1974

POPULISM IN THE CONTEXT OF "THE ROMA QUESTION"

MARIE GAILOVÁ

The recent behaviour of some politicians in the Czech Republic when attempting to resolve problems related to ethnic minorities has prompted a polarisation of opinion. Some of the most-discussed recent events - which can be described as populist measures - are the municipal-level actions of the politicians Jiří Čunek and Liana Janáčková, both of whom then went on to become high-level political representatives.

What makes the racist statements and actions of these politicians necessarily "populist"? For some time, a negative opinion of the Roma ethnicity has been on the rise in the Czech Republic, an opinion based on significantly simplified generalisations. Exploitation of this public mood has brought several politicians a wave of success - Jiří Čunek even rode this mood to the head of the Christian Democratic Party and into the cabinet.

It is the method of misusing this mood, exploiting society's simple prejudices, and increasing the tone of attack that is dangerous, populist, and open to abuse. A typical feature of populism is its use of simple statements, simplifications of complex situations, and blanket promises. The situation with regard to Jiří Čunek is clear: He succeeded in removing the Roma from his town, either sever-

al kilometres beyond the town limits or even into another administrative region altogether, and he managed to exploit media coverage of these events by the most-watched television station to explain to the public, in simple terms, that his actions were in everybody's interests. The media then went on to other stories -- and Čunek was suddenly a popular politician.

Did he actually help the situation? On his web page - where the Roma receive an entire column - he provides information on the actions that were taken to correct the situation, but he does not reflect on the causes and contexts of the relationships he is describing, nor on any follow-up work to be performed with members of the Roma ethnicity after they have been removed from the town. After approximately four months, we learned that only one family which had been removed to the housing units in the Poschlá district beyond the town limits had succeeded in returning to the town proper. Who worked with that family?

These cases are dangerous precisely because of the methods used to resolve them and society's support for such methods. Ms Janáčková openly discusses the need to move "groups of the inadaptable" into a single location and leave them there to lead their lives "behind an electric fence". At the same time she happens to be a member of the Czech Senate's Human Rights Commission, and her colleagues claim she broke no laws when making such statements.

In my opinion, those elected to either the upper or lower chambers of parliament should be persons of some moral authority. The Senate in particular is a chamber in which the members have more of an opportunity to promote their personal opinions without having to toe the party line as they do in the lower house. At present we have every reason to be concerned that statements on "inadaptability" and the necessity of segregation, such as those made by Mr Čunek and Ms Janáčková, are dangerous precisely because they are made by such influential representatives of the state.

Populism means the division of society into two groups: Those who are perfect, and those who can never hope to attain perfection, who do not "adapt", who are bad. It is all the same whether the "bad" group is an ethnic minority, or a whole other nation, or half of the rest of the world. Populists are essentially socially intelligent people who know how to exploit the negativity and disillusionment present in the majority of society.

As a democratic activist, I must condemn in the strongest possible terms the denigration of any group of inhabitants here, as well as the incorrect designation of the members of such a group as "all the same."

In conclusion, I would like to state that this problem concerns not only the unfortunate statements of two politicians, but the alarming support of the public for their opinions. Unless we work for a change in the overall awareness of ethnic and other minorities, there is no use in fighting these two senators, as they basically simply said out loud what others only think. When fighting populism it is necessary to start from the bottom, from the people.

POPULISM AND POPULIST POLITICS IN SLOVAKIA: FACTS AND TRENDS

GRIGORIJ MESEŽNIKOV

Many political observers attribute the rise of populism in Central European countries to EU post-accession syndrome, arguing that the integration fatigue spread in society enables populist reactions toward new challenges related to membership in the EU. They also argue that "EU conditionality" is over since Central European countries are the members of the Union and that efficient restrictions for populist politics imposed by EU in the previous period (either in the area of voter support for populist parties or in defining the coalition strategies of mainstream political parties) simply disappeared.

No doubts, accession process and the post-accession developments are the relevant factors that should be addressed in surveying the populist politics; however, the overall picture with populism in Central Europe is more complex. Slovakia is a good example of that.

Slovakia has had remarkable experience with populism and populist politics during the whole period of post-communist transformation. Populist parties are here the constituent parts of the pluralist party system de facto from the very beginning of its existence. They are permanently represented in the parliament, being in opposition or in the ruling coalitions (as it was in the years 1992 - 1998 and after elections 2006).

Exploring populist politics in Slovakia, we may basically apply two approaches. First, populism may be examined in the broader (universal) context of transition toward democracy that was typical for Central and Eastern European countries following the collapse of communist regimes. Second, it may be analyzed in the context of specific (national) conditions that at certain development stage temporarily diverted Slovakia from the path of transition that leads to forming a liberal-democratic regime; these specific conditions include ethnic heterogeneity, emergence and development of independent statehood, the socio-cultural legacy of authoritarian politics from the period before communism, the struggle over historic interpretation of the national and state identity or the central conflict over preserving a democratic regime that polarized the entire society in the 1990s.

At the beginning of the 1990s the populist (at that time opposition) parties in Slovakia - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and Slovak National Party (SNS) - laid down the fundaments of a peculiar method of addressing the voters, which include:

■ Licentious anti-establishment rhetoric, accusing the government of various misdemeanors, disrespect for the rule of law, corruption, privileging the rich and neglecting the poor;
■ Verbal criminalization of political opponents;
■ Portraying the government and the governmental forces as the agents of external forces and alien interests (between 1990 and 1992 it was the Czechoslovak federal government, during the period of 1998-2006 it was Western groupings such as the EU or NATO, foreign monopolies, international corporations, government of neighboring Hungary etc);
■ Calls to restore order that has allegedly been disrupted during the acting administration's rule;
■ Illiberal elements in understanding of law and order;
■ 'Pro-social' promises of distributive nature that are anti-capitalist in essence;
■ Encouraging nostalgia about life before the communist regime's collapse;
■ Appeals to ordinary people, blue-collar workers, residents of rural areas and smaller municipalities, 'producers of material goods' that view the life through common sense, as opposed to sophisticated and over-elaborate urban intellectuals who deal in activities that bear no immediate material benefits for the society;

■ Nationalism and defense of "national" interests of the state established by the ethnic majority, which endorses more or less overt anti-minority resentment, ethnocentrism;
■ Elements of isolationism in foreign and external security policy.

Although the process of political transformation after the collapse of the communist regime in Slovakia offers a variety of opportunities to analyze different patterns of populist politics, the most relevant criterion for typology of populist parties should be considered their access to power on the practical level (i.e. execution of power), because this aspect is of key importance to populist policies' impact on the transition process. Additionally is that populist parties have ruled longer in Slovakia than in other Central European countries.

There are two generations or types of populist formations in Slovakia that continue to operate in the country side by side - so-called 'hard' or authoritarian populists (i.e. parties that were established at the beginning of the transformation period) and so-called 'soft' or moderate populists (i.e. parties that emerged during the pivotal conflict over preserving a democratic regime and continuing with the process of European integration). Populist parties of either type already enjoyed the position of a dominant player within the country's party system (i.e. the HZDS in the mid-1990s) and recently restored their dominant position (i.e. Smer-SD since the middle of the current decade).

It is worth noting that from the very beginning of the 1990s, Slovakia lacked a 'transition consensus,' mostly due to political leaders' different notions about the type of society that should emerge as a result of transformation. While political forces carrying the legacy of the Velvet Revolution from November 1989 (i.e. civic and Christian democrats, conservatives, liberals and the political representation of the Hungarian minority) as well as the post-communist left agreed that the transformation should lead to establishing a liberal-democratic regime, hard populists (namely the HZDS and the SNS) led society's development in the direction of creating a hybrid regime based on elements of illiberal democracy, authoritarian practices and curtailed protection of human and minority rights. Although hard populists never openly presented an intention to build a regime of illiberal democracy in the country, their inability to muster broader public support for the course they preferred, as well as confrontational methods of tackling problems, gradually led them to use against their political and ideological oppo-

nents (i.e. the opposition, civil society players and the media) methods and means that severely contradicted principles of liberal democracy.

Also, we should not forget that Slovakia has never experienced the paradox that happened in Hungary, to some degree in Poland and partly, in a modified version, in the Czech Republic, i.e. that dominant ruling parties would actually pursue (or would be forced to pursue) policies that largely contradicted their basic ideological concepts or at least their election rhetoric. In its modern history, Slovakia has never been ruled by post-communists that would prepare and introduce Lajos Bokros's type of the 'reform package' (as it happened in Hungary) or smoothly embrace their country's NATO accession and pro-Western, pro-Atlantic political and security orientation under the aegis of the United States (as it was in Poland); neither has it been ruled by the kind of right government as Václav Klaus' administration in the Czech Republic, which was significantly 'pro-social' and careful when it came to extensive reforms. Unlike in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic where people's dissatisfaction with the course and results of early stages of the transformation process benefited primarily leftist parties (i.e. the communists, post-communists and social democrats), the greatest beneficiary of voters' disenchantment in Slovakia became at the beginning of 1990s the national populist formation (HZDS).

In 2006 the new ruling coalition was formed from three parties - one moderate populist party (Smer - Social Democracy), which was and still is considered in spite of its populist character, a mainstream party and two hard populist parties (SNS and HZDS). What can be said about governance of the above-mentioned parties, their policies, and the state of the country ruled by soft and hard populists?

The analysis of the first 18 months of the administrative rule of comprising soft and hard populist parties in Slovakia justifies a general conclusion that the institutional framework of consolidated democracy of EU and NATO member states provides sufficient safeguards against excesses that could jeopardize functionality and stability of key constitutional elements. All three ruling parties have to comply with the existing institutional model and although some of their measures designed to cement their power position contradicted the spirit of liberal democracy, the foundations of the liberal democratic regime in Slovakia were not directly undermined by the rule of populist parties after the 2006 parliamentary elections, unlike during the period of 1994 - 1998. Besides guarantees of

democratic development ensuing from the country's EU membership, an important factor preventing a possible relapse of authoritarianism was the ratio of non-authoritarian (soft) and authoritarian (hard) populists in the government, which was in favor of the former.

The most important changes since the populist administration inauguration can be perceived in general societal atmosphere and the public discourse. The fact that the ruling coalition comprises a dominant left party that defines itself as etatist (Smer-SD), as well as a radical nationalist party (SNS), has led to a strengthening of the etatist, egalitarian, anti-capitalist, nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric that was used to justify some of its measures in the field of practical policies; this rhetoric was the most perceptible during campaigns against natural monopolies, private pension funds, private health insurance companies, commercial banks, business associations, international retailers' networks etc.

Another apparent trend was strengthening the isolationist elements in the public discourse. The dominant ruling party demonstratively shifted the focus to the so-called domestic agenda while doing much to disparage the importance of foreign policy activities. This approach was in glaring contradiction with the new status of a country that recently gained full-fledged EU and NATO membership, which gave it a leverage to influence developments in Europe and in the world, including issues that immediately concern it.

A shift toward isolationist concepts is present in the interpretation of current world affairs. During celebrations of the anniversary of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising, prime minister and Smer-SD chairman Robert Fico declared that the modern world was "no better than [it was during World War II]," adding that like then, people "still fight over raw materials, power and influence, they only use different weapons [such as] globalization, liberalization and privatization." The Prime Minister called on people to "keep the courage to stand up against these processes so that we do not find ourselves in a country where we are still citizens but where everything around us - water, land, energy - belongs to somebody else. This is the main message: the courage must exist also in 2007, not only in 1944."

Analysis of populists' governance showed that they did not lost their abilities to provoke conflicts in society, and that the intensity and frequency of these con-

flicts grew rapidly and the spectrum of actors involved in these conflicts broadened compared to the previous years - it is not only political opposition, but also media, NGOs, ethnic minorities, select business groups, etc. For example, frequent attacks on the media on the part of Prime Minister Fico and some of his closest associates went beyond the framework of standard tensions between politicians and journalists as they questioned the very mission of independent media in a free democratic society. Many government officials refused to take part in the public debate in the form of an open dialogue; instead, they seemed to prefer a monologue in which they 'convey the truth' to their supporters while consciously using their inadequate knowledge about some intricate phenomena and problems. In their communication with citizens, top government officials - particularly Smer-SD representatives - placed excessive emphasis on material aspects and even tried to degrade social needs to safisfy primary material needs. Values of a non-material nature as well as issues related to development of the Slovak society in the horizon of several decades were virtually absent from messages the government conveyed to the voters.

Vis-à-vis civil society, the government takes an approach that reveals technocratic disdain, bureaucratic incomprehension and political distrust. The incumbent administration's attempts to restrict resources that guarantee long-term sustainability of the non-governmental sector has created an atmosphere of mistrust between the government and many civil society players. While the government has so far avoided systematic efforts to create a 'parallel' third sector that would be close to the government or ruling parties (as was the case between 1994 and 1998), suspicions of clientelism surrounding some decisions to support certain non-profit organizations coupled with verbal attacks on NGOs with 'unsuitable' orientation indicate that (with certain exceptions) the ruling coalition does not consider the third sector in its present condition a real partner that could contribute to tackling the existing social problems.

Probably the most visible change in public atmosphere caused by the power shift in 2006 occurred in the area of inter-ethnic relations. Ethnocentrism was an important binding agent of the ruling coalition formed after the 2006 parliamentary elections. In 2007, the tendency of strengthening the ethnocentric element in Slovakia's political development gained a new impetus with some particular issues, such as an idea of Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation, which provoked the Slovak parliament to approve the notorious declaration on the unal-

terability of the post-war Czechoslovakia's president Edvard Beneš's decree, which ethnic Hungarians consider unacceptable. Other notable gestures include the case of legislative glorification of pre-war clerical-nationalist politician Andrej Hlinka, and declaration dedicated to 100th anniversary of police massacre happened in Černova village in 1907. It was also visible in the case of Kosovo's future status, which was made part of domestic political agenda when all parliamentary parties except the SMK adopted a position that in the context of the situation could be described as "pro-Slavic." In the background of this position one could clearly identify efforts to play the so-called ethnic card, perceiving the Kosovo issue from the viewpoint of Slovak-Hungarian interethnic relations.

The main energizer of nationalist sentiment in the country's public and political discourse was, of course, the radical nationalists from SNS, however the "social-democratic" Smer-SD was actively helping. In many practical aspects of Slovak-Hungarian relations Smer-SD's position was quite close to that of SNS. Smer-SD's firm 'national' stance may be documented by its leaders' flat refusal of the idea of the Slovak and Hungarian parliaments passing reciprocal resolutions to apologize for mutual wrongs of the past. Representatives of Smer-SD frequently speak of the necessity to encourage people's patriotism and pride in their own country, referring to the Slovaks' historical national traditions such as St. Constantine and St. Methodius or Svätopluk. Ethnic elements in the general performance of Smer-SD are becoming more perceptible and the rhetoric of party leaders betrays clear efforts to interpret social developments within the categories of 'Slovak' and 'national', as opposed to 'non-national', 'strange' or 'foreign'. Quite symptomatic was Fico's statement at a meeting with students of Comenius University in Bratislava, that he was proud of "ancient Slovak, not Slavic, history." He also introduced the notion of "loyal minorities" to the public discourse, which could imply that some minority might be labeled as insufficiently loyal to the national state.

Political forces that rose to power after the 2006 parliamentary elections have not presented any integral vision of a society that they intend to build, nor the strategy of achieving that objective. So far, their performance in government has been a combination of a pragmatic approach aimed at sustaining positive economic development trends inherited from the previous administration, haphazard improvisation in tackling lingering problems and selective fulfillment of some election promises in order to maintain sufficient voter support.

Results of the last parliamentary elections in Poland, which crushed two extreme populist parties - League of Polish families (LPR) and Self-Defense (SO) - offer good analytical material for considerations about the proper attitude toward populists, particularly about the dilemma of what is the better approach - either to isolate and ostracize populists or to involve them to governance with the intent to weaken them and let them discredit themselves. Poland's example could lead to the conclusion that the second option is more effective. However, Slovakia's example - at least for the time being - shows something different. The ruling forces for a year and half populists are stronger than when they were in the opposition. In Poland, paradoxically, the biggest threat to the Law and Justice (PiS)-led-government quite quickly became PiS' own narrative of Poland's post-communist history and its vision of a 4th Polish Republic. In coalition with LPR and SO this narrative and vision appeared partially false and mostly non-functional. As a result, PiS' failure in elections not only weakened positions of this party, but also led to the decline of extreme nationalist populists. The advantage of populists in the current Slovak government is, paradoxically, the absence of any narrative and vision comparable to that in Poland, which could be scrutinized in similar manner to PiS' narrative. In Slovakia, the populists admitted to the government, trying to penetrate into political mainstream, are not becoming more moderate. On the contrary, the mainstream, moderate parties are taking on some elements of populist rhetoric and policies and soft populist are becoming harder. As a result, we are witnessing a de facto extremization of the political mainstream instead of the softening of the extreme populists.*

REFLECTIONS ON CZECH POPULISM

JIŘÍ MUSIL

The political ideologies which belong to the basic intellectual orientation of European populism include trends that, even though they are diffuse and indistinct, still manage to incorporate strong elements of nationalism, xenophobia, and racism. This direction is ultimately an anti-intellectual one that takes a critical stance on science, technology and technocracy.

When I was invited by the Association for International Affairs to participate in one of the panels of their international conference "Populism in Central Europe," I did not fully realise what a complicated area I was stepping into. However, as a sociologist, I also felt the topic was immeasurably interesting and attractive, if for no reason other than the fact that practically every serious work on populism begins with the statement that almost no other political phenomenon is so difficult to define. There is no doubt that the phenomenon is by and large a diverse one which has taken numerous historical and regional forms, is constantly changing, and has never been precisely defined. Moreover, the term is starting to be used more often in our current political struggles as a semiotic weapon. If a political party or politician wants to adroitly and effectively criticise the opponent, it is enough to use the label 'populist' - even though, very often, it is not clear what this term means exactly.

History can provide a helping hand in the attempt to define this unclear concept, as it shows us that two basic kinds of populism can be distinguished. The first kind is a collection of ideas and political actions expressing the economic dissatisfaction of the countryside and rural people, farmers to be exact. The second kind is a variegated collection of more general positions and political styles which commonly refer to a deep 'popular wisdom' and express doubts as to the effectiveness of liberal democratic institutions. Today, these positions have very little in common with the rural roots of populism besides the emphasis on 'the people,' which is being understood more and more as referring to an ethnic nation.

Populism as an extreme form of rural political radicalism has taken on many forms, from the American People's Party, which expressed the dissatisfaction of farmers in the Western and Southern states of the USA in the 1890s, to the philosophies and movements of the radical Russian nationalists, to the Zapatistas in the Mexican Revolution and the radical agrarian movement in Eastern Europe after the First World War, represented, for example, by the Bulgarian Party of Alexander Stamboliski. The common denominator of this agrarian populism was fear of the demise of traditional agriculture, fear of capitalism, and an effort to preserve traditional agricultural society, or even to exploit those elements of collectivism that had been preserved in order to create an agrarian socialism. However, in his noteworthy book on 'The Rational Peasants' in Vietnam, Samuel Popkin has demonstrated that rural populism has not taken on such an anti-market form everywhere.

At a large conference on populism in London in 1967, the majority of authors presenting there understood populism as a rural or agrarian movement, even though when reflecting on Latin America, especially on Peronism, some of the participants also spoke of urban populism. Ghita Ionescu did not hesitate at that conference to classify the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party as a representative of populism and spent no time on urban populism, or on what we have above termed the 'second' kind of populism, i.e., populism as a set of diverse political stances, actions, organisations and political coalitions rejecting standard democratic institutions and approaches. This is the category of populism that seems to me to be dominant in the Czech Republic today, and I would like to address it here, as it is this particular concept of populism that has been infiltrating public life and the parliamentary parties.

How can we identify the general and specific signs of Czech populism that are thus more narrowly defined? One option is to construct an ideal type, a model of contemporary European populism (in the sense of Max Weber's methodology) and then compare this ideal populism with the Czech variety. The ideal type is a tool intended to help us recognise empirical reality by describing a certain dimension of the phenomenon under research in its maximally 'pure' form, usually through several key indicators. In this case, there are three clusters of indicators: 1) a central intellectual populist orientation 2) political orientation and populist methods of political organisation and 3) the populist style and the populist activities deemed most important. With the help of data from studies by Margaret Canovan, who has engaged in long-term studies of populism, as well as the older classifications of populist indicators as per Peter Wiles and entries in respected dictionaries of social science, I have constructed such an ideal type of European populism.

The basic intellectual direction of this populism is a diffuse, uncertain political ideology which includes strong elements of nationalism, xenophobia and racism. Its anti-intellectual orientation takes a critical stance toward science, technology, and technocracy. One strong element is a sense that the people whom the populists want to represent have been betrayed; ideologically, populism is an anti-establishment movement.

A moralising orientation, not a programmatic one, dominates the political direction and organisation of European populism, and the populist critique borders on enmity for representative democracy, including an effort to replace it with direct democracy and pressure groups. There is also an emphasis on the social side of life, but populists do not agree with the concept of class warfare in the Marxist sense of the term. The majority of populists voice their protest against globalisation and also against the political integration of the European Union. In this context they do not agree with foreign investment and the growing role of international capital. In their considerations of economic organisation we can find sympathy for small manufacturers and consumer cooperatives. In the background of many of these orientations there is a sort of diffuse communalism, the search for an integral community, and for harmony based on ethnic relatedness (of the people/nation).

In populist organisations and activities we can find an effort to take over the public space, to become visible through marches, meetings, dress, symbols and rituals - a preference for collectivism, so to speak. There is also a propensity for

creating a sort of paramilitary image. The principle of leadership is accepted by the populists, and in some cases this orientation manifests itself in the leaders' dress, behaviour, and lifestyle. In some cases a kind of mystical contact between the leaders and the people is assumed. The flip side of this phenomenon is an adulation bordering on a cult of the leaders of the various movements.

In order to compare the Czech populist movements (which in my opinion are those nationalist coalitions and parties which have not made it into parliament and are either covertly or openly fascist-oriented, as well as more general groups which have been labelled right-wing extremist) with the ideal type of European populism, I used information from the groups' web sites and programme declarations, from the media, and from my own observations of populist actions. What I present here is not the result of a systematic, quantitative research project, but reflections based on a sociological understanding of Czech populism. I will also not shy away from stating that I have based my observations on what is termed 'sociological imagination.' I of course compared all of the indicators of the ideal type with the available information on the Czech situation, and this comparison then led me to the following conclusions on the specific features of the Czech populist movements.

The intellectual orientation of Czech populism is obviously urban and related to the socioeconomic situation in individual regions of the country. In terms of programmes, Czech populism is weaker than in many Western European countries, and it particularly lacks intellectual, charismatic leaders capable of inspiring the broader public and breaking into the system of political parties active in parliament. Czech populism does not have a marked economic orientation, but depends very much on a feeling of grievance and social exclusion. Overall we can say its programme is weaker than that of Western European populism. Like its Western European counterpart, Czech populism distinguishes itself by an effort to take over the public space and by an emphasis on symbolism. However, it has not yet developed the principle of strong leaders such as Poujad, Haider or Le Pen. In many indicators it is similar to the ideal type of European populism, especially its nationalist and xenophobic elements. It also involves racist elements, as can be seen from its attacks on non-white guests and inhabitants of the Czech Republic. The target of these populist attacks is primarily the Roma.

Despite government efforts to improve the position of Roma in Czech society, the position of a rather significant part of the majority population and many com-

munal politicians vis-à-vis the Roma is either covertly or openly racist. This creates a comfortable environment for the aggressive behaviour of populist movements. As migration from abroad grows, as can be expected, and as the number of foreigners living in the Czech Republic rises, we may see the intensification of a xenophobic mood among the ethnically Czech inhabitants of the republic. Therefore, we can also expect the number of members in populist organisations to grow. On the other hand, the development of populism in the Czech Republic is suppressed by the fact that a certain segment of the Czech political spectrum definitely already uses nationalist arguments in its official platforms. However, I believe the ultimate barrier to the development of populism in the Czech Republic is Czech society's traditionally critical relationship to extreme political movements on the right, which is connected to the social structure of Czech society and its historical experience.

VOX POPULI, VOX DEI AND THE [HEAD-] MASTER'S VOICE: MASS AND INTELLECTUAL NEO-POPULISM IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

MICHAEL SHAFIR

1.   Populism and Neo-Populism in a post-communist context.

Populism is a problematic concept. Since time constraints do not allow for a proper and detailed examination of this aspect, and since we had a separate panel that examined problems linked to that issue, let me just state where I stand on it and how I handle it in my presentation. As a general concept, I believe populism is not of much use, since it suffers from a malady that Giovanni Sartori once called "conceptual overstretch". If, as Cass Mudde once wrote, both former Czech President Václav Havel and former Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír

Mečiar could be categorized as "populists" because they both appealed to the people, that is to say the voter, then something must definitely be wrong with it (Mudde, 2000). Neither does the overstretch stop here. In the historical context of East Central Europe, the concept cannot ignore the legacy of Russian "narodnicism" and its influence over large chunks of the area (Walicki, 1970; Ionescu, 1970).

Yet this legacy is by no means unambiguous. It influenced both the Left and the Right. Furthermore, as Joseph Held has pointed out, "In almost every East European society the populists conceived the notion of what they called 'the third road'. This was an idea that societies whose populations were basically rural needed neither Western-style capitalism, nor Soviet-style socialism, but something different from both" (Held, 1996, pp. 2-3). German völkisch thought, which had a tremendous impact on the forging of Nazi ideology and culture (Stern, 1974; Mosse, 1981), can also be considered to have been a variety of populism and, moreover, one that in turn influenced the East European brand of populism (Held, 1996, pp. 8-15). Eventually, the two influences ended at opposite sides of the ideological political polarization of the last century:

> There was a dichotomy among the East European populists; on the one had they wanted to reform society and provide a greater share of worldly goods for the peasantry. Thus, some of them opposed the existing social and political system from the left. On the other hand, many of them realized that reforms could be achieved only through revolutionary ways, and the process could be speeded up through an alliance with the extreme right. The left-wing populists, therefore, cooperated with the communists, while the right-wing moved closer to the fascists. Thus, the "third road", which they espoused led to authoritarian systems for which both the left and the right worked (Held, 1996, p. 16).

If that be so, than what have we gained by using populism as a concept apart from confusing its origins and, no less important, substituting a political pejorative for an academic one? Indeed, a close examination of a book published by Vladimir Tismaneanu reveals populism stands, in fact, for such niceties as "ethnic radicalism", "paranoia" and the sort, in fact for what the author calls "fantasies of national salvation" (Tismaneanu, 1998, p. 54 and passim).

Conceptual overstretch is not overcome by pulling together phenomena such as "Peronismo" and post-communist populism, as the same author earlier attempt-

ed to do, no matter how heuristically provocative the parallel may be (Tismaneanu, 1996). On historical grounds, a distinction must be made between a movement or movements that had the peasant at the center of its concern, and movement or movements that, as Mudde (2000) puts it, nowadays claim to act "In the name of the peasantry, the proletariat and the people". In other words, it must be borne in mind that in its present form, populism is no longer social-class focused but "catch-all focused", to adopt Otto Kirchheimer's classic designation of that breed of modern political parties (Kirchheimer, 1966).

Insofar as the former East European (but also other) communist countries are concerned, a way out of this dilemma has been suggested by Andrew Janos's distinction between "populism" and "neo-populism". But while the distinction is important and while I myself have used it in my earlier work (Shafir, 2001, p. 400), I have come to believe that it misses the central point. Janos distinguishes between three traditions that have influenced the "strategic choices" made by post-communist political elites: the liberal/civic tradition, the technocratic tradition, and the neo-populist one. As he formulates it, however, the "neo" in populism resides in continuity, rather than in change. It refers to such aspects as the cultivation of a self-centered apprehensive perception of "the Other" and of a globalizing world and to the cultivation of "the symbols of the victim and the weak" (Janos, 1994, pp. 24-25). There is very little "neo" here for anyone familiar with the history of East Central Europe, indeed with the history of European radicalism in general.

For the "neo" to become relevant, it seems to me that the distinction should rather introduce a different dimension: that of Sartorian "systemic" and "anti-system politics" (Sartori, 1979, pp. 132-133 and passim). I am, once more, applying here concepts that were originally used for political parties, and I do that with a good reason. I believe that in the context of post-1989 politics, there is simply no way that these can be openly conducted by admitting an "anti-systemic" telos. That is not to claim that there are no "anti-system" parties, organizations or personalities in post-communist East European life. There is plenty of them. However, in one way or another, they are all conscious of the fact that such an admission would transform them into pariahs within, and particularly outside, their own political community. Thus "neo-populists" are different from both interwar populists and from the earlier populists of the socialist or völkisch shades. Unlike their predecessors, they no longer denounce the "evils" of capi-

talism, only the "rapaciousness" of capitalists who allegedly forgot where they stemmed from. In neo-populism, there are "virtuous" and "corrupt" capitalists, and the former engage in self-sacrifice by entering politics allegedly against their own personal interests. The image the neo-populists pursue is, as Mudde pointed out, that of "reluctant politicians" where politics is presented as being a "necessary evil" in a self-sacrificing posture. Hence, neo-populists are, at least in appearance, "systemic". Not only do they not claim, as their predecessors did, "system destructive" objectives, but, on the contrary, the claim is made that they do so in order to safeguard genuine democracy. The claim, as Mudde writes, is built upon a rigid dichotomy of the "pure people" whom they reluctantly took upon themselves to represent, versus "the corrupt elite" (Mudde, 2000, p. 37).

None of the above rules out elements of continuation from populism to neo-populism. It is striking, however, that these elements are often denied when the neo-populists are confronted with uncomfortable parallels drawn by either domestic opponents or foreign political critics. Furthermore, not only is the democratic dress up considered to be inevitable, but neo-populists are particularly gifted in mobilizing support via the self-transmogrification into the very personal embodiment of popular grievances or those of influential segments in their societies.

Last but by no means least, neo-populism is not an "in-power" or "out-power" function. It may be found in both government and in opposition. It is, however, useful to distinguish between neo-populism from below and neo-populism from above, since they are prone to employ different techniques. This is what I intend to do in the next two parts of my presentation discussing the case of Romania after the 2004 elections.

2. Neo-Populism from Below: Vox Populi, Vox Dei

The leader of the New Generation Party (PNG), George (Gigi) Becali is a good example of what might be called an "instinctive" neo-populist politician seeking to gain power from below by whatever possible means. His model appears to be the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Like Berlusconi, he is a highly successful businessman (Romania's second-richest man, with an estimated fortune of 2,8-3 billion US dollars, see Ziua, 27 November 2007), and, like him, he owns the country's most popular soccer team-in Becali's case, Steaua Bucharest. Unlike Berlusconi, however, Becali lacks any formal education, and unlike him he is on record for having occasionally uttered antisemitic statements, as well as pro-fascist views.

This continuation element in Becali's brand of neo-populism is all the more inter-
esting, as a comparison between the Romanian politician and a lesser known
contemporary political figure seems to be just as fitting. I have in mind Arkadii
Gaidamak, an Israeli tycoon of Russian origins who settled in that country rela-
tively recently, and who bought up the popular Jerusalem Beitar soccer team as
an instrument to pursue his political ambitions (Haaretz.com, 12 December 2006;
aic, 7 June 2007). At this point in time, Gaidamak aims at gaining the Jerusalem
mayoralty running at the head of the Hanukkah party which he set up some time
ago, despite the fact that his mastery of Hebrew is yet to be accomplished.
Gaidamak's politics is extreme right and emphasizing links to religion. So was at
one point Becali's. While Gaidamak cannot address Hebrew-speaking audiences,
in his frequent television appearances Becali displays a primitive vocabulary, all
too often full of invectives at his critics, which would normally turn him into what
the Germans call "salonunfähig". Not in Romania, however. Considered by
many TV moderators to be an audience-attracting clown, in early 2007 Becali
was for some time one of the most interviewed political personalities, which
undoubtedly contributed to a seemingly unstoppable raising popularity in opin-
ion polls. Both Becali and Gaidamak had problems with the law being suspect-
ed of tax evasion and unsavory deals (the latter also in France), but this had
apparently affected the popularity of neither.

Professing to be a devout Christian, Becali engages in uncontestable charities,
claiming he has been picked up by God to become rich in order to help the poor
and save Romania from its current travails. In 2005, for example, he financed the
construction of houses for those affected by floods (Evenimentul zilei, 7
September 2005) and promptly showed up in a Bucharest slum in 2006 paying the
electricity bill for residents who were threatening to turn the town into rubble
after their supply had been cut off (Ziua, 17 November 2006). Similarly, during the
latest war in Lebanon, Gaidamak provided shelter and assistance to the residents
of northern Israel forced to escape shelling by the Hezbollah (aic, 7 June 2007).
Meanwhile, Becali picks up the vote of the disoriented and the disillusioned,
whose numbers run into hundreds of thousands. While in the 2004 elections he
barely received 1.77 percent of the vote and the PNG received 2.36 percent, fail-
ing to gain parliamentary representation (Mediafax, 1 December 2004) by 2007
polls showed him to be the country's second most popular politician and his party
third in party preferences, against the background of the mutual annihilation of
Romania's parliamentary parties and the deadlock in the confrontation between

them and President Traian Băsescu (Cotidianul, 2 April 2007). Alongside the Army, the Romanian Orthodox Church has been consistently shown in public opinion polls to be the country's most popular institution. Back in 2004, Becali, who is also the most generous magnate financing the construction of Romanian Orthodox churches, said he was ready to help any religious organization except for the Jews, who were allegedly well infiltrated in Romanian politics and did not need his help (Shafir, 2004a). On several occasions, Becali has awarded prizes to high-school pupils in contests for reciting prayers. By 2007, ahead of a cancelled visit to Israel, he was denying any such discrimination and claiming he was ready to engage in charity for Jews in Romania and Israel as well. Like many other of his country's politicians, he had become convinced meanwhile that Jews could do and undo everything anywhere-including the Romanian presidential elections. He also denied on the occasion any trace of antisemitism, claiming that it would run against his devout Christian beliefs to hate Jews (Ziua, 2 May 2007). Furthermore, apparently aiming at gaining some votes from Jews of Romanian origin in Israel ahead of the November 2007 elections for the European Parliament, PNG Secretary General Cătălin Dâncu , made a great effort in an interview with a Romanian-language Israeli daily to deny any links between Becali and Iron-Guard sympathizers (Viața noastră, 16 November 2007).

Yet back in 2004, he had called on the OTV private television for the canonization of Iron Guard "Captain" Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Shafir, 2004a) and on 28 August 2004 he said on television that "the Legionary Movement has been the most beautiful movement in this country [incorporating] the country's entire elite, [such as] priests, university professors and students" (Ziua, 12 November 2004).

While populist presidential candidates with a successful business record and employing continuity elements (including antisemitism) for support recruitment are not a new phenomenon in East-Central Europe (one remembers Stanislaw Tyminski, who managed to place second in the 1990 Polish presidential elections), they tended to be returned émigrés. Unlike them, Becali is entirely a local product. He is a former shepherd who made his fortune right after the fall of the communist regime. How he did that is not entirely clear. He attributes his wealth to fortune, capitalist skills, belief in God, and (last but not least) to his family, from which (he said in an interview ahead of the 2004 elections) he received some $150,000-$180,000 as the regime fell. That was certainly a lot of money for anyone, let alone a simple shepherd at the down set of the Ceausescu regime.

According to the tabloid Atac, Becali's fortune can be traced back to his father, Tase Becali. A shepherd of Aromanian origins, Tase Becali was involved in lucrative black marketing with sheep, from which a network of communist officials, the secret police (Securitate), and Arab meat dealers all profited. Other versions have him borrowing the money for his initial investments in real estate from Gheorghe Hagi, Romania's most famous international soccer star. Whether accurate or not, this latter version might yet prove to have been Becali's kiss of death. In early 2007, he hired Hagi as trainer of Steaua Bucharest, which was not doing too well at either national or international level. Becali insisted, however, in dictating to Hagi which players to use and which not, and when the highly popular Hagi refused to follow orders, he presently dismissed him. The result was a plunge in Becali and his PNG's former spectacular poll rates - a drop of 7 percentage points for Becali and for his party (Ziua, 22 October 2007). Whatever the outcome of this electoral context, it appears that ownership of a popular soccer team is too fragile an electoral basis even for neo-populists. Becali vows however to retire from politics if his PNG does not win the next parliamentary elections scheduled for 2008 or he does not win the presidential contest due in 2009. "I have a clean conscience, since I tried to do something for this country. If the people does not want to let me bear this cross, if it does not give me the [political] power, I wish it good health", he stated in typical self-martirizing neo-populist jargon. (Adevărul, 18 November 2007).

Born in June 1958, Becali decided to enter politics in 2003. He did so by simply becoming president of a phantom party, established in January 2000 by former Bucharest Mayor Viorel Lis, who had resigned from the PNG after failing to gain representation on the Bucharest City Council. Becali simply bought the party from Lis, thereby sparing himself the trouble of registering a new political formation. Whether or not Becali bought the party for cash or decided to take it over at the urging of his friend, Social Democratic Party (PSD) official Viorel Hrebenciuc, as some journalists alleged, may never be known. According to this version, it was the PSD's intent to take voters away from the extremist Greater Romania Party (PRM) by creating a Christian-Democratic formation that would be acceptable to the West and a possible coalition partner. Hence his hardly concealed persuasion that whatever he lacks in education or political experience can be bought for cash. And he may be right.

Having hired political scientist Dan Pavel as a consultant in March 2003, Becali began employing the political discourse of the interwar fascist Iron Guard. Pavel,

who used to be a specialist (and a prominent opponent) in Iron Guard renaissance, never addressed this issue. He simply confessed that as Becali's consultant he would make more money than he would have made in 10 years as a university professor. Becali first came out with the slogan "Everything for the Country" (which was used at one point by the Legionnaires as the name of their party), then promised to "make Romania into a country like the holy sun in the sky." The words were taken almost literally from a famous Iron Guardist song and were based on a letter addressed by Ion Moța to fascist leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, shortly before Moța died fighting on Franco's side in Spain in 1937. After the 2004 elections, Pavel cut his ties with Becali, claiming the PNG was becoming a "fascist party", having co-opted several members of the New Right Group (Cotidianul, 22 December 2004; Evenimentul zilei, 16 February 2005). But he soon rejoined the party and in March 2007 was appointed PNG executive chairman, while "historian" Alex Mihai Stoenescu was appointed PNG first deputy chairman (Mediafax 30 March 2005, Gândul, 1 November 2006). Yet in November the same year Pavel once more left the PNG, this time claiming that he was the victim of "political schemes" by "cur colleagues", after Becali had reproached him he does not work hard enough to justify the position of party executive chairman (Cotidianul, 18 November 2007).

When the list of PNG candidates for the European Parliament was released, it included Stoenescu and former PRM parliamentary deputy Vlad Hogea. Both are notorious antisemites and Holocaust deniers and/or banalizers, with Hogea being also on record for racist positions targeting the Roma. In a collection of articles published in 2001, he was praising an infamous Nazi ideologist, exclaiming: "[the] time has come for the nations to liberate themselves from the chains of Jewish slavery, lest it be too late! How right was Julius Streicher (tortured and killed by the Occult for his courage): 'He who fights against the Jews, fights against the devil!'" (Hogea, 2001, p.44. Author's emphasis). Incitement on deicidal grounds was not missing from the volume either:

Many ask themselves why the heads of the Judaic Occult are so revengeful and so acquisitive. The key of the problem is likely to be found in the killing of the Redeemer by the Jews. Unable to liberate themselves from the sin laying heavy on their shoulders for 2,000 years, the Jewish-Khazar anti-Christs have been trying to break their spiritual inferiority complex by fully animalizing their affective experiences (Hogea, 2001, p. 44. Author's emphasis).

Finally, Hogea was citing approvingly crowds shouting anti-Roma slogans at soccer games and calling for Antonescu to take care of "a million crows" in his old proven way (Hogea, 2001, p. 25).

As for Stoenescu, he purports to abhor the innocent victims of the June 1941 Iaşi pogrom (whose number he minimizes as best as he can), and deplores the ensuing "Death Trains." At the same time, however, he claims that the thousands who died on the trains were the victim of "negligence" rather than intent, and that even those victims can ultimately be laid at the door of other Jews. Those who had been embarked on the trains were suspected of being Communists who had opened fire on Romanian and German soldiers, he claims without questioning this propaganda swindle. The "selection" (triere) had unfortunately been carried out under tension. It was not the first time in history that the many were paying the price for what only a handful - in this particular case a few Jewish Communists - had done, he concludes (Stoenescu, 1998, p. 280).

In a multiple-volume entitled History of State-Strikes in Romania, Stoenescu tells his readers that at its starting days, the Legionary Movement on Romania was by no means anti-Semitic. "Captain" Corneliu Zelea Codreanu "was not born as an anti-Semitic, but as an anti-Communist leader". It became so, however, when it realized that the many Jews who at that time attended Romanian universities were leftists and thus carriers of the Bolshevik threat (Stoenescu, 2002, Vol. 2, pp. 415-416). Even so, Stoenescu claims, it is wrong to describe the Movement as Right Wing just because of its antisemitism, and it is particularly wrong for Jews to do that, because "once you explain the position of the Legionary Movement as Right Wing, by implication find yourself in the position of having stated that the Jews were of Left-Wing, thus provoking a Right-Wing antisemitic reaction" (Stoenescu, 2002, Vol. 2, p. 422). For Stoenescu, whatever Jews do is unavoidably wrong. Those who worked in the media are "the first who should be held responsible for the instauration of hatred between Romanians and Jews". They had for years claimed they were fighting for political rather than racial rights, but when their political adversaries, dressed up in Iron Guard uniforms and carrying pistols, set up to hunt them, they started shouting up they were Jews and the reason for their persecution was antisemitism, not anti-Communism, he writes. Whereas in the past they had distanced themselves from their rabbis, they became Jews again overnight. Many of them later took refuge in the Soviet Union, "only to return riding its tanks as victors" (Stoenescu, 2002, Vol. 2, pp. 423-424).

In any case, there had been no reason for them to seek refuge. The Legionary "Death Squads", according to Stoenescu, "were not set up as groups of assassins, organized to eliminate political adversaries." Only Communist propaganda portrays these groups as such. They had been set up "on the principle of self-sacrifice, being formed by legionnaires willing to risk their life; hence their uninspired name" These were people ready to die, "not to bring death on others. This is a fundamental distinction. The Legion, Stoenescu tells his readers, has been persecuted by all regimes and its image distorted by all alike. That persecution "continues even today, in 2002" (Stoenescu, 2002, Vol. 3, p. 142).

The reason I insisted on citing rather at length these two authors is manifold. First, I wanted to illustrate the continuity element in the Romanian case of neo-populism. But to the same extent, I wish to demonstrate that this element does not necessarily play in neo-populism the pivotal role it once played in interwar populism. Antisemitism is not a central credo but a function of the needs of the hour. Once Becali became convinced that being portrayed as an antisemite might undermine his purpose of joining the Popular Party (for which purpose he had added the name Christian Democratic to his Party's denomination), he had no hesitation in dropping Hogea and Stoenescu from the list of candidates to the European Parliament. This demonstrates that, as it has been pointed out, neo-populists insist on projecting the image of "systemic" rather than "anti-system" political formations. To be sure, neither Stoenescu, nor Hogea were expelled from the PNG (see the interview with Dâncu in Viața noastră, 16 November 2007). They were, so to speak, on the "waiting list" and it was likely that their role would have once again become prominent, should political circumstances require it. Hogea, nonetheless resigned from the party in late November 2007, reproaching Becali to have "humiliated" him and accusing the PNG leader of being a political, economic and sports "impostor," describing the PNG as a "pseudo-party full of prejudice, [self-] seclusion, of bigotry and the domination of suspicion" rather than a "militant Christian [formation] concerned with the fate of many and the wretched" (Interesul public, 20 November 2007). While losing the position of deputy chairman, Stoenescu is part of a "historians' team" whom Becali hired to write a "genuine history" of Romania and its people (Cotidianul, 6 September 2006). Prominent Holocaust negationist and PRM Deputy Chairman Gheorghe Buzatu is also part of that team, which more or less indicates what one is to expect from it. But just as important-so is historian Dinu Giurescu, one of the few Romanians to have admitted (even if minimalizing its

magnitude) his country's participation in the Holocaust (Giurescu, 1999, pp. 70, 91). An interview granted by Giurescu in early November 2007 demonstrates that Becali may after all be right in his belief that money can buy anything (Ziua 3 November 2007).

The PNG (or the PNG-CD) as it calls itself after undergoing the respectability baptism is also re-writing its own short history. In the interview with the Israeli Romanian-language daily, Cătălin Dâncu claimed that the use of Iron Guard slogans in the 2004 electoral campaign has been due to the legacy inherited from Halaicu's party where, he claimed, some youngsters of extreme-right persuasion had managed to penetrate. Nothing is further from reality. Halaicu was a corrupt politician forced to form his own political formation after being expelled from the National Peasant Party Christian Democratic. But he never gave the slightest indication of pro-Iron Guard sympathies and never used such slogans when campaigning. Nor was he the leader who admitted into the party's ranks members of the New Right Group (who openly display Codreanu's portrait on T-shirts) or notorious antisemites of the Hogea and Stoenescu sort.

It is, however, difficult to establish to what extent Becali himself really believes in such continuity symbols. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain how, at one point in 2007 he announced his PNG-CD was about to fusion with an ecologist formation. This is simply pure "catchallism" and ideology plays little, if any role in catch-all formations. Had the failed fusion worked out, it would have been interesting to watch whether Becali's party would apply to admission into the Populists' or into the Greens' ranks at European level. Personally, I tend to believe he could not care less.

Yet a third reason for my having insisted on citing Hogea and Stoenescu at length rests in the emphasis they both place on Communism as having victimized their country. While the insistence placed by these two authors on the equation Jews = Communism may not be shared by all critics of the former regime (though it is probably shared by more than dare express it overtly), the belief that Communism needs to be officially condemned and placed on equal footing with the Holocaust is a lot more widespread. As will be shown in the next section, in Romania's case providing a positive response to this sentiment has helped President Traian Băsescu in his quest to pursue neo-populism "from above". Last but by no means least, this neo-populism prone element in Romanian post-com-

munist political culture is to a large extent due to the legacy of the 1989 trans-
formation. As is well known, Romania was the communist country where this
transformation was achieved at a considerable price: 1,104 dead and 3, 352
wounded. Of these, just 162 were killed and 1, 101 were wounded between 17
and 22 December 1989, the date of Ceaucescu's flight from the Central
Committee building in Bucharest (Siani-Davies, 2006, p. 142). Who shot at the
revolutionaries after Ceaucescu was no longer in power, who gave the orders for
the massacre and why remains a still unsolved riddle (Gabanyi, 1990; Rados,
1990; Ratesh, 1991; Hall, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2007; Siani-Davies, 2006, pp. 142
ff). This gave birth to a variety of conspiracy theories, the most prominent of
which has the orders having been given by Nicolae Ceaucescu's inheritors head-
ed by Ion Iliescu in order to legitimize their "stolen revolution" (Cesereanu,
2004, pp. 115-137). Bringing to justice those alleged to have masterminded the
useless massacre (the heads of the National Salvation Front, or FSN, and above
all former President Ion Iliescu) thus combines in Romania's case of the 1989
legacy with elsewhere similar drives to "sanitize" the communist past by lustra-
tion laws and the condemnation of the former regime as criminal. The combina-
tion adds up to a powerful temptation for any politician driven by neo-populist
motivations. Paradoxically, it is also a combination that may well thrive on the
survival of communist-like paternalism, to which Romania's population has been
subjected in the long years of Ceaucescu's personality cult.

3.   Neo-populism from above: His Master's Voice.
Traian Băsescu was elected president on 13 December 2004, in a runoff against for-
mer Premier and Social Democratic Party (PSD) candidate Adrian Năstase. He had
run as the candidate of the center-right Justice and Truth Alliance, formed by his
own Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party in 2003. His victory was hard-
ly overwhelming: Băsescu received 51.23 percent of the vote, as against 48.77 per-
cent who backed Năstase. Yet it was an all the more impressive victory, as in the
ballot held two weeks earlier Băsescu had trailed Năstase by some seven percent-
age points (33.92 as against 40.04 percent) (Mediafax, 1 and 13 December 2004).

Romania seemed to be moving towards the novel political experience of "cohab-
itation", as in the parliamentary elections held on 28 November, the Justice and
Truth Alliance had scored only second best: it won 112 seats in the Chamber of
Deputies (31.33 percent of the vote) and 49 seats (31.77 percent) in the Senate;
running in an electoral alliance with the Humanist Party (PUR, which later

changed its denomination into Conservative Party), the PSD had come ahead of the center-left alliance, scoring 36.61 percent (132 seats) in the lower and 37.13 percent (57 seats) in the upper house (Mediafax, 1 December 2004).

At that point, the new president for the first (but by no means the last) time displayed his skills as a political manipulator. He simply managed to talk in Humanist Party Chairman Dan Voiculescu to switch sides and join a cabinet headed by National Liberal Party (PNL) Chairman Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu. The move was made possible by the existing legislation, which distinguishes between "electoral" and "political" alliances. Whereas the former end once the results are in, and each side is subsequently free to opt for its own line, the latter continue in the new parliament. Hence, whereas the Justice and Truth Alliance held to its number of elected deputies and senators, the PSD suddenly found itself with some 30 lawmakers less than it had actually managed to elect, it being known that the backing of the Humanists was hardly comparable to what they had managed to squeeze out of the PSD in pre-electoral bargaining. The Socialists thus ended with some 149 deputies and senators, while the opposition alliance would have 161 lawmakers. Since neither of the two blocs had a majority, it was up to the president to appoint the country's next prime minister, after consulting parties represented in parliament; and since the largest parliamentary group was that of Justice and Truth, the PSD ended by winning the elections at polling stations and yet losing them in parliament. On 29 December 2004 Romania had a new government, formed by Justice and Truth, the Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania (UDMR, which garnered some 6 percent), and the PUR (Ciobanu, Shafir, 2005).

No sooner had Băsescu successfully made that move that he began to undermine it, by calling Voiculescu's participation in the cabinet an "immoral solution" and urging early elections (Adevărul, 6 January 2005; RFE/RL Newsline, 6 and 7 January 2005). On face, the new president appeared to stand by his promises. He had vowed to fight endemic corruption, signaling right after his election that he intended to "place the problem of corruption in the national security strategy. I estimate that currently, high-level corruption has become or is about to become a threat to [Romania's] national security," he said. Voiculescu, a media mogul, was widely believed to be not only a corrupt politician, but also one whose fortune stemmed from his having been involved in dubious deals as manager of a Cyprus-based offshore firm that handled Ceaucescu's secret funds channeled

through a Securitate foreign trade company. While the allegation has never been proved, Voiculescu was indeed eventually revealed to have been an informer of the communist secret police (Cotidianul, 14 June 2006). But Voiculescu was no more "immoral" in January 2005 than he had been a few days earlier. His party would eventually leave the coalition in December 2006 (www.partidulconserva-tor.ro/ro/comunicate/620/) but that move failed to produce what Băsescu was apparently after: engineering a cabinet headed by either a PNL member he trust-ed or by a Democrat.

That transpired when Băsescu made it clear to Popescu-Tăriceanu that he did not intend to entrust him again with the formation of the cabinet in case the Justice and Truth Alliance would win the planned early elections. From that point onwards, the relationship between the two politicians constantly deteriorated, finally leading to the dissolution of the alliance between their parties and to the Democrats' being forced out of the cabinet in April 2007.

And yet Băsescu had stepped into the presidential shoes more by accident than by planning. The agreement between the Democrats and the PNL stipulated that the functions of presidential candidate and candidate for the premiership would be divided between their representatives and the alliance had designated then-PNL Chairman Theodor Stolojan, a former premier under PSD ruling (1991-1992) as the presidential choice. In early October 2004, however, Stolojan withdrew from the race on grounds of poor health. Only at that point did Băsescu, former-ly the alliance's choice for premier, step in as prospective president. After his vic-tory, he appointed Stolojan as presidential economic advisor, and the early elec-tion move was apparently aimed at having Stolojan return at the head of a cab-inet that would be more inclined than the one chaired by Popescu-Tăriceanu to have all spotlights on the presidential palace. Eventually, the president engi-neered a split in the PNL, with Stolojan forming a new political formation, the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) in early December 2007. Following the 2007 elec-tions for the European Parliament (see below), the Democratic Party and the PLD announced the intention to merge into what observers are unanimous in appre-ciating as a large, pro-presidential political formation (Ziua, 4 December 2007). Băsescu had told the electorate that as president he intended to be "a player, rather than a referee" and, once again, he was making his promise good. The trouble was that this was not the role attributed to him by the constitution, which gives nearly all inner affair prerogatives to the cabinet.

There was more to it, however. Before, as well as after Stolojan's withdrawal, a number of prominent PNL leadership personalities expressed misgivings vis-a-vis Băsescu's dominant position in the alliance. The most vocal group was the "business wing" gathered around Dinu Patriciu. After the November parliamentary elections, this faction went so far as to raise the possibility of forming a PSD-PNL ruling coalition, but the idea was unequivocally rejected by a meeting of the party's leadership in early December (Ciobanu, Shafir, 2005). With independent Monica Macovei appointed as Justice Minister on a Democratic governmental slot, the country seemed to be finally moving in the right direction in coping with corruption. Even former Prime Minister Năstase was charged - a move that would have been unthinkable a few moths earlier and one that led to his loss of the position of lower house speaker in March 2006. But among those charged was also Patriciu. Băsescu was slowly but surely posing into "Mr. Clean", sometimes blundering by announcing the opening of procedure he should not have even known about within a proper division of powers. He seemed to fully fit into what Mudde (cited above) described as that type of politician who "reluctantly" takes it upon himself to undergo self-sacrifice for the sake of political "purification".

Not that Romania's politics needed no such rituals. It did so, and did so badly. But Băsescu had a few skeletons in his own closet. Among them was a ten-year old file on a questionable privatization of Romania's merchant fleet that took place while Băsescu was transportation minister in governments headed by Petre Roman and Stolojan in 1991-92. That investigation was first launched in 1996, when Băsescu willingly resigned from parliament and gave up his immunity in order to allow the investigation to run its course. The inquiry produced nothing, but it was reopened in 2003. Since as president he enjoyed immunity from prosecution, the case must now await the end of his (possibly two) five-year term(s). There were also question marks on his having purchased a luxury house at prices well below those of the market during his tenure of the Bucharest mayoralty, and the president acknowledged that he might have acted improperly, though not illegally.

A delicate point seemed to have been reached in April 2007, when an "unholy alliance" of Romania's besieged politicians of all shades and colors, ranging from the PSD and other opposition parties to the governing PNL and the UDMR, voted to "suspend" Băsescu from office, with an eye on impeaching him. For the impeachment to take effect, however, it should have been approved in a referendum.

Băsescu was at his best in campaigning against this dismissal. As it fits a neo-populist, he was careful not to slide into attacking free enterprise and a market-oriented economy which gives hard-working but honest people the possibility to become rich. He stressed he was not against business, but against those businessmen who promote their selfish interests by political means. In an interview with Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty's Moldova/Romania service on 14 May, he said:

> I am not demanding a breakup between the business world and the political class. They cannot live without each other, and the politicians have to feel always the pulse of the business community. What I want is a rupture of the oligarch from politics.

> Oligarchs should not be confused with the business community. They are the few who have made fortunes thanks to facilities from government, people who have become very rich and now give orders to politicians, those who are supported financially by the oligarchs and who have turned into puppets of certain businessmen like Voiculescu, Patriciu, and many others. Some people like Mr. Voiculescu have founded political parties, in order to protect their business interests. Dinu Patriciu controls fully the leadership of the National Liberal Party, to which the prime minister of this country belongs.

> This is what I demand: the people who have made fortunes thanks to the laws serving the interests of certain men, rather than the general public interest. These very rich people have to understand that they are not in control of political power, too. At this moment, the risk Romania runs consists in the fact that the decision is made by people who are not elected and politicians act as monkeys reacting to orders of very rich individuals.

This was neo-populism at its best, and it worked. I can tell that from my own experience. Faced with the choice of approving rampant corruption under the guise of democracy and unlocking the door to imposture, at the referendum held on 19 May I opted for the latter alternative. And Băsescu was quick to seize the opportunity. For him, the choice had been one between "the ideas promoted by me" and "those 322 legislators" who had voted for his suspension from office. The 75 percent of the ballot cast against his dismissal, in other words, demonstrated that his was the voice of the people. And to prove that, he celebrated his victory the same evening in the symbolic Bucharest University Square, pledging

to return there once every three month to "report" directly to those whose will he allegedly represented.

Bucharest University Square is, indeed, a symbolic place. It is here that a marathon demonstration was held in 1990, with the square being occupied for weeks by people protesting against what they considered to be the "hijacking" of the anti-Communist uprising by Iliescu's "neo-communist" FSN. The protest demonstration ended with the miners' rampage of Romania's capital, which added to the square's reputation as a site of martyrdom, since it was here that Army units acting at Ceaucescu's orders had first opened fire on demonstrators in Romania's capital city. And it was no accident that precisely here, Băsescu chose to tell audiences on 19 May 2004 that those who voted for him in the referendum had also voted for his "program", which included such points as introducing a lustration law and changing Romania's electoral system from a proportional to a majority "winner takes all" single constituency system in order to reform the country's political class.

But the referendum never referred to those proposals. Moreover, on both issues Băsescu was reversing positions he had publicly spoken up against not long ago. The lustration issue was part of the recommendations made by a presidential commission headed by Maryland University political science professor Vladimir Tismaneanu. In an interview with a Bucharest weekly, Băsescu in July 2005 had expressed doubts that a condemnation of communism was at all possible or warranted. He said he had personally lived through the difficult times of the Ceaucescu years, but he could not enounce a condemnation of the communist system based "just on my personal experience up to 1989". To do that, the president said, he needed a document produced by a commission of specialists, just as the condemnation of the Holocaust by former President Ion Iliescu in November 2004 had been based on a report produced by the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania headed by Elie Wiesel (Revista 22, No. 801, 12-18 July 2005.Yet grasping that such a step would enhance his popularity among influential intellectual opinion-makers, he quickly changed his mind, the more so the cabinet headed by his by now acknowledged political foe, Popescu-Tăriceanu, had set up in December 2005 a governmental Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism. As a result of the Tismaneanu Commission's work, in a speech before parliament, the president on 18 December 2006 condemned the communist regime in Romania, branding it "illegal and criminal." That skyrocketed his popu-

larity among this segment of Romania's intellectual elite, on whom he would be able to count for backing proposals on which it would have frowned had they come from Băsescu's predecessor, Ion Iliescu. Indeed, speaking on 24 November 2007, on the occasion of launching the book-format version of the Tismaneanu Commission's final version of the report, Humanitas publishing house director, philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu, openly admitted that the backing of Băsescu's campaign to enhance presidential prerogatives at the expense of those of parliament was due to the president's having taken the lead on the condemnation of the communist past and on the lustration of former communist officials. Liiceanu was a prominent member of a group of intellectuals whose positions might well be dubbed as "neo-populist elitism".

Apart from Liiceanu and Tismaneanu (ironically, the author of a book on post-communist populism!), the group includes such figures as Horia Roman Patapievici, director of the Romanian Cultural Institute and his deputy, Timișoara-based university professor and essayist Mircea Mihăieș, philosopher and aesthetician Andrei Pleșu (a former Culture and later Foreign Minister and short-timed Băsescu counselor on foreign affairs), Bucharest University professor Andrei Cornea, and journalists Sever Voinescu and Traian Ungureanu. These are all members of the prestigious intellectual Group for Social Dialogue (but above all by itself), considered by many to have embodied the voice of Romanian civil society in the stormy years of post-communist transition. It was their readiness, indeed eagerness, to lend Băsescu their "symbolic capital" as intellectuals that introduced an altogether new dimension in Romanian neo-populism.

Not only did the members of this group not pose the question of how was one to explain the transformation of an avowed member of the privileged segment of communist technocrats (Băsescu, a ship commander, had headed the Antwerpen-based branch of the Romanian commercial fleet bureau) who had quite recently opposed lustration on principle grounds and owed his post-communist political career to having joined Iliescu's FSN, but they now advanced most peculiar proposals aimed to hasten political reforms that Băsescu promoted with an eye on diminishing the power-base of his political opponents - and primarily the reform of the country's electoral system.

If classical populism in East Central Europe stressed the "third Road option," neo-populists are just as keen to advocate a "New Republic", as the case of the

Kaczynski brothers in Poland amply demonstrates. In their quest to back Băsescu, the Romanian elitist neo-populists were now urging a rapid reform of the Constitution aimed at creating a "Third Republic" (the communist being considered as the first and the post-1990 transitional republic as the second) that would introduce a presidential rather than the current semi-presidential system in which, it was stressed, the prerogatives of the head of state and of parliament tended to be blurred. The idea, as he would eventually acknowledge it in an interview, came from Tismaneanu (Academia Cațavencu, 27 November 2007). The argument is debatable, and one might have argued with just as much (and probably more) justification that a full parliamentary system in which presidential prerogatives are symbolic is less prone to politicking. Not so, however, when one is backing a head of state who had adroitly claimed he represents "the people's will", while that of corrupt politicians is represented by "the other 322" (see above). Liiceanu was consequently objecting to political ally and former Liberal Party Chairman Valeriu Stoica (a constitutional lawyer by training) warning that constitutional reform is a long process, requiring at least four years. The reform, urged the Heidegger specialist, must be carried in just a few months. Tismaneanu himself spoke of the "historical urgency" of such a change. (Simonca, 2007; Shafir, 2007).

What was even more striking was that Ungureanu claimed that in the wake of the plebiscite that had rejected Băsescu's impeachment, Romanian society had comprehended that it has become part of an "anti-systemic movement" that is triggering "social energies" which the "old system" made up of corrupt political parties is incapable of handling. Băsescu, wrote the journalist whom the president attempted unsuccessfully to appoint as Romanian ambassador to the United Kingdom, has "allied himself with the anti-system project". This was very much reminiscent of what Viktor Orbán stood up for in Hungary when he spoke of the need to unify all civic and political forces opposing the former communists into a single "movement" and when he refused to distance himself from the extreme right in a sort of strange post-communist, but nonetheless communist-party like "inclusion" (Shafir, 2006, pp. 270 ff.). Should one be reminded of Hannah Arendt's insistence that totalitarianism is based on the centrality of the "movement" rather than on political parties? But neo-populism is not totalitarian; at least not consciously so. Băsescu himself would never argue against the democratic system; rather, as in his proposal to change Romania's electoral system, he would argue that democracy must be improved by substituting outlets for corrupt politics with improved mechanisms for the genuine expression of people's will.

Băsescu shares with Orbán a few other traits. He has no hesitation to move from one side of the political spectrum to the other: if Orbán began his political career as a radical Liberal but switched identity to become a neo-conservative, moving at European level from the Liberal International to the People's Party in 2000, Băsescu became a fellow European peer of Orbán's in the People's Party after moving his Democrats from the Socialists to the Christian Democratic faction in the European Parliament in 2006. But this also illustrates the point I was trying to make in the introduction to this article, namely that ideology plays second fiddle in neo-populist orchestras, which are more than anything else "catchallist" bands.

It is highly important to note that such bands do not play only false tunes. Some tunes might be played correctly, indeed even virtuously. For example, neo-populist insistence on the malaise of corruption by no means indicates that corruption is an invented story. The recipe for fighting it might, however, be dubious or suspiciously self-serving. This applies to terrorism just as neatly. A couple of months after Băsescu became president, in March 2005, three Romanian journalists (a woman and two men) were abducted in Iraq. The official story had it that they left for Baghdad without consulting the authorities. Leaks to the media indicated that the abduction had been staged by a Syrian businessman who lived in Romania. Omar Haysam, so the story went, wished to pose into the liberator of the three in exchange for having a substantial debt in tax arrears for which he was being prosecuted crossed out. But something had gone wrong and the three eventually ended in the hands of a terrorist group linked to Al Qaida. The three were eventually released and returned to Romania on 23 May. Additional links to the media indicated that the release had been secured by a team headed by Băsescu himself, working out of the presidential palace. Băsescu became overnight a national hero and did certainly not shy away from taking credit for the release. He also told television audiences that details on the operation had been placed under state secrecy and would not become known for at least 50 years. As for Haysam, he was to stand trial, all while the three abducted journalists were forbidden to reveal any details on the abduction. When one of them became suspicious that the official version was inconsistent and attempted to reveal details on the ordeal in Iraq, he was promptly dismissed by the daily România liberă, for which he had worked. Then, in July 2005, Haysam, who had been freed from jail on health grounds (he claimed to be suffering from cancer), vanished from the country. Political analyst Peter Banyai, who thoroughly investigated the affair, concluded that there were serious grounds for suspecting that

the abduction and the liberation of the hostages had been staged, as apparently Haysam's escape had been facilitated on high orders (Bursa, 25 July 2006). The Syrian is known to have returned home via Egypt, which he reached on an Arab commercial ship. Meanwhile, in November 2007, the other male journalist, who had kept silence, was appointed an official Băsescu photographer. By the time Banyai had published his findings, however, the attention of Romanian public opinion had switched to other venues and the president's popularity was hardly affected.

Addenda and conclusions: Testing Neo-Populism at the Ballot Box[1]

The elections for the European Parliament held on 25 November 2007 (the first held in Romania after the country became a member of the European Union on 1 January) were the first occasion on which neo-populism was confronted with the test of the ballot box. The test was amplified by the fact that a presidential initiative had forced the government to organize on the same day a plebiscite on the Băsescu-advocated electoral reform. It must be specified that the cabinet had earlier itself initiated a bill on the change of the current electoral system, embracing a proposal made by a Romanian NGO - the Pro-Democracy Association. Under this alternative proposal, the proportional system would be replaced by multiple representation constituency system that would facilitate access to parliament of representatives of parties who had placed second or third in their constituencies or whose names figured on party-established national lists. The latter proposal was for all practical purposes closer to a mixed majority-proportional system.

The low turnout of 29.4 percent (nothing unusual for European Parliament elections elsewhere on the continent, where turnout was between 16.9 percent in Slovakia and 28.3 percent in the Czech Republic and Slovenia among the new members, but also below 43 percent among older EU members, see Evenimentul zilei, 27 November 2007) makes it difficult to project from this ballot to possible outcomes at national level, where turnout is usually substantially higher. Nonetheless, some tentative conclusions are warranted. Turnout was even lower for the referendum- 26.5 percent, leading to its invalidation (România liberă, 27 November 2007, Mediafax, 28 November 2007). In this case, conclusions are more justified: although

---

1   This section was added a few days after the 22 November conference held in Prague, as were some references unavailable at that time.

81.3 percent voted in favor of Băsescu's initiative, the president had for the first time since his election as head of state failed to mobilize support. The Democratic Party, whose leader he is in all but name, had managed to perform better than any other competitor in the elections for the European Parliament (28.8 percent) and the surprising score registered by the pro-Băsescu PLD headed by Stolojan (7.7 percent) might have misled observers unfamiliar with Romanian politics into concluding that the president should be pleased with the European elections outcome (România liberă, 28 November 2007). But the President knew better. According to press reports, he briefly visited the Bucharest headquarters of the party, where he spoke harshly to its leaders, reproaching them for having failed to mobilize party supporters and bring them to polling stations (Gândul, Cotidianul, Gardianul, Adevărul, Jurnalul național, 27 November 2007). Indeed, the Democratic electoral harvest fell well behind the 40 or so percent that pollsters had been predicting on the eve of the elections. Political scientist and Pro-Democracy Chairman Cristian Pârvulescu commented in the daily Cotidianul on 27 November:

>…[The] 25 November referendum has considerably scattered to the winds what the 19 May plebiscite had nearly accomplished: the president's legitimacy. The two-sided weapon has turned against its initiator. Thus, the Carpatian Gaullism claimed by a Romanian presidentialism that appeared to be in the offing has floundered, at least for the moment, in the more or less informed apathy of the majority of the population. When just one-fourth of the electorate turns out to vote and just 21 percent approve a presidential project, the president's legitimacy is shaking.

How should one explain this failure? Băsescu is excellent in personal political confrontations, where he usually manages to throw a decisive punch. His 2004 presidential contest had been probably won by the memorable line thrown during a televised debate at his opponent, Năstase. It was deplorable, he said, that Romanians had to choose "between two former communists: yourself and myself" (Ciobanu, Shafir, 2005). As his former chief of staff Adriana Săftoiu pointed out in an interview right after the ballot, in the plebiscite held on 19 May 2007, Băsescu could still benefit from the same "me vs. them" posture: "he had an opponent; true, the opponent was called 'the 322', but it existed" (Evenimentul zilei, 27 November 2007). The situation was different now. His opponents did not contest the president, but the reform he was proposing, and, moreover, were advancing their alternative proposal for an electoral reform.

The 2004 presidential election had already revealed that Băsescu would not shy away from taking a populist route. In a manner reminiscent of the extremist Greater Romania Party (PRM) leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor (see below), the future president promised during the 2004 campaign that he would "execute with my own hand any minister who would be suspected of corruption" (RFE/RL Newsline 22 November 2004). Once he made it to the runoff, he said that he would welcome "any vote, from wherever it came," because "I make no distinction among Romania's citizens." The appeal was primarily aimed at voters for the PRM (Shafir, 2004b). He was successful in this tactic. Exit polls conducted by the Center for Urban and Rural Sociology (CURS) found that 68.8 percent of those who cast a ballot for Tudor in the first round opted for the Justice and Truth Alliance candidate, and only 31.2 percent chose Năstase (Ciobanu, Shafir, 2005). But this time around the contest was no longer a personal one, but an issue-context. In the referendum, voters were asked to judge whether or not a majority first-past-the-pole system should be introduced and, implicitly, whether they agreed with Băsescu that this would cure the country's malady of corruption. Most gave a sincere answer by staying away from the poll: namely that they did not know or that they were skeptical (in a poll conducted on the eve of the plebiscite, no less than 71 percent of the respondents said they "understand nothing" of what was at stake, see Evenimentul zilei, 27 November 2007). And some voters undoubtedly failed to cast a ballot in order to render the plebiscite invalid. Journalist Cristian Tudor Popescu summed up the essence of the dispute submitted to plebiscites quite well: the two 2007 referenda, he wrote, demonstrated that Băsescu does very well when he steps into the ring as a fighter facing an adversary, but considerably less well when at issue are "abstract concepts". "He is not, and cannot be, a locomotive for concepts, ideologies or religions." He is "neither Jesus Christ, nor Adolf Hitler" (Gândul, 27 November 2007. Author's emphasis). Indeed, Băsescu is neither. He is just a neo-populist, with the advantages and the limitations implied by this concept. Săftoiu compared his behavior with that of a headmaster towards his pupils (Evenimentul zilei, 27 November 2007).

To grasp the difference between post-communist neo-populism and political extremism, Băsescu should be read in juxtaposition with PRM Chairman Tudor. The PRM is not a populist, but an anti-system party. I have labeled it elsewhere a party of "radical continuity", one that combines and exacerbates "national communist" ideological elements inherited from the Ceaucescu era with efforts geared at undermining the democratic system as such. This differentiates the PRM from less

successful Romanian anti-system parties, those of "radical return", whose ideologies are modeled on the base of emulating the inter-war fascist movements in Romania, and particularly the Iron Guard. This distinction is applicable elsewhere in the former European communist countries as well (Shafir, 2001).

This does not necessarily imply that political parties in the category the PRM belongs to would not employ populist tactics and address audiences employing populist terminology, which is precisely why it proves so difficult to distinguish between populist parties and/or personalities and extremist anti-system formations of rightist or leftist shades. Indeed, the xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and ultra-nationalist Tudor constantly presents himself and his party as the "tribune" of the victims of corruption, the "righteous" (justiţiar) knight who would cut corruption at the roots, a spotless man untainted by previous participation in the spoiling of Romania's post-communist "looters." Moreover, in the context of the post-1989 disrepute of the former regime, even radical continuity leaders might be tempted into posing as systemic personalities, though this entails a considerable risk of losing electorates. This is precisely what happened to the PRM after the 2000 elections. Having reached the peak of support in that year's presidential contest and parliamentary elections (Tudor faced Iliescu in the presidential runoff and his party garnered about one fifth of the vote in the parliamentary elections), the PRM leader opted for political respectability. Starting with the end of 2002, he strove to project a different image that would rid him and his party of the label of "extremist," but apparently all he managed was to alienate his hard-core ultranationalist supporters, without convincing anyone on the democratic side of what Romanian journalists ironically dubbed "Tudor's transfiguration." Posing as a great friend of Jews and Israel, and at one point even changing the party's denomination into the Greater Romania Popular Party to illustrate its hopes to join the European Popular Party, and promoting Corneliu Ciontu as on-face party chairman, Tudor seemed to have become "institutionalized". But when the Popular Party rejected in 2004 the PRM's quest to join its ranks, he expelled Ciontu and returned to his old self and to former postures of negating the Holocaust in Romania (in his "grace period" he had headed a PRM delegation to Auschwitz), of proposing the segregation of the Romany population and its interment into labor camps, and of fighting Transylvanian "Hungarian terrorism" and its alleged quest to dismember Romania. The damage, however, was substantial, and his traditional electorate turned its back on him, partly also due to the gradual loss of appeal of the extreme nationalist argument in general. In

the 2004 elections, Tudor scored just 12.5 percent and the PRM dropped from second to third rank, garnering some 13 percent of the vote. While such about-faces might still squeeze the PRM into the category of neo-populists, its partici-pation in the 1999 attempted coup against state order (Andreescu, 2003, pp. 33-34) clearly moves the PRM into the category of anti-system formations.

As Giovanni Sartori has shown, anti-system parties thrive in situations of "polarized pluralism." Such situations involve not only the number of parties but also the ide-ological distance between them. Sartori (1976, pp. 126-127) writes that political sys-tems may be "fragmented" - that is to say include many political parties, and yet belong to the category of systems of "moderate pluralism" in the sense that they are ideologically not too distanced. Conversely, a party system that is both frag-mented and polarized is defined by Sartori as one of "polarized pluralism."

After the 2000, and even more after the 2004 elections, Romania certainly moved away from what French political scientist Jean Blondel termed as "a mul-tiparty system with a dominant party" to one described as a "multiparty system without a dominant party" (Blondel, 1972, p. 103). Anti-system parties of the PRM type are likely to do considerably less well in situations of "moderate plu-ralism," but as long as ideological polarization persists; they still have room to maneuver. And it is exactly such a situation that the 2004 elections produced - to be more precise, a 2+2 ideologically polarized party system with two domi-nant poles (a Left pole represented by the Social Democratic Party and a center-right pole represented by the Justice and Truth Alliance) and two smaller forma-tions "for sale to the highest bidder"- the UDMR and the Humanist (conserva-tive) Party. In such a constellation, anti-system parties of the PRM sort become what Sartori (1979, pp. 122-123) terms as "irrelevant" parties, losing hope to either become coalition partners or the "blackmail potential" of exercising a veto on the political agenda.

The outcome of the November 2007 ballot for the European Parliament seems to be pointing out precisely in that direction. For the fist time since it first entered electoral competition in 1992, the PRM failed to secure representation. It gar-nered 4.1 percent, thus failing to jump over the 5 percent electoral hurdle (Mediafax, 28 November 2007). The reaction of PRM leader was typical of an anti-systemic loser: as he consistently does since 2000, he accused electoral fraud. He first threatened to resign from the Romanian legislature and to with-

draw from it all the PRM representatives. The PRM, it was implied, would no longer be bound by electoral etiquette and would act as an extra-parliamentary anti-systemic force. When his colleagues (apparently wary to lose their comfortable incomes as parliamentarians) urged him to reconsider, Tudor acquiesced. But he was still threatening both U.S. Ambassador to Romania Nicholas Taubman, as well as President Băsescu with defenestration and with bringing into the street tens of thousands of supporters (Adevărul, Gândul, Interesul public, Jurnalul național, Ziua, 27 November 2007). The party's daily wrote on the day after the election:

> The Jewish ambassador of the USA, Nicholas Taubman, has patronized the most unashamed electoral fraud in Romanian history! The theft is more barbarous than that committed by the Stalinist occupation in 1946. At the order of this slave-owner and with the approval of national drunkard Traian Băsescu, the PRM has been ousted from the European Parliament…being replaced by the terrorist and irredentist UDMR organization, to allow it to pursue in Brussels its program of tearing up Romania's territorial integrity. Shame! Romanians, get out on the street and defend your rights! Out with the pig Băsescu! Out with Taubman! (Tricolorul, 26 November 2007).

Nothing of this sort of uttering came from the mouth of George Becali, which points out once more to the difference between neo-populist and anti-system parties. The PNG-CD leader, who this time around had campaigned under the slogan "In the service of the Cross and the People", garnered 4.8 percent of the vote in the scrutiny for the European Parliament. This was just (but just!) below the 5 percent electoral hurdle. Instead of accusing electoral fraud, as Tudor has done, Becali frankly admitted that if he had suspected the electoral outcome, he would have simply bought the missing votes. He also ventured the opinion that if anyone was to blame, this was Satan, who certainly disliked his numerous attacks on Romania's gay community. Anyhow, he said, the electoral failure might turn out to have been a blessing in disguise, since it had economized the price of a private plane he had been about to purchase for commuting between Bucharest and Brussels (Evenimentul zilei and Cotidianul, 27 November 2007).

Sources

Academia Cațavencu, Bucharest, (2007), www.catavencu.ro, (accessed 28 November 2007).

Adevărul, Bucharest, (2005, 2007).

aic (The Alternative Information Center Palestine/Israel), www.alternativenews.org/news/english/the-other-front-3-June-10-June-2007-20070607.html (accessed 19 November 2007).

Andreescu, Gabriel, 2003, Extremismul de dreapta în România (Cluj: Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală).

Blondel, Jean, 1972, Comparing Political Systems (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson).

Bursa, Bucharest, 25 July.

Cesereanu, Ruxandra, 2004, Decembrie '89: Deconstrucția unei revoluții (Iași: Polirom).

Ciobanu, Monica, Shafir, Michael, "The 2004 Romanian Elections: A test for Democratic Consolidation?" in East European Perspectives, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2005, http//www.rferl.org/reports/asăfiles/printonly.asp?po=y (accessed 7 April 2005).

Cotidianul, Bucharest, (2004, 2006-2007).

Evenimentul zilei, Bucharest, (2005, 2007).

Gabanyi, Anneli Ute, 1990, Die unvollendete Revolution (München: Piper).

Gardianul, Bucharest (2007)

Gândul, Bucharest, (2006-2007).

Giurescu, Dinu, 1999, România în al doilea război mondial , (București, Editura ALL Educațional).

Hall, Richard Andrew, 1999, "The Uses of Absurdity: The Staged War Theory and the Romanian Revolution of 1989" in East European Politics and Society, Vol. 13, pp. 501-542.

Hall, Richard Andrew, 2000, "Theories of Collective Action and Revolution: Evidence from the Romanian Transition of December 1989" in Europe-Asia Studies, No. 6 (September), pp.1069-1097.

Hall, Richard Andrew, 2002, "The Securitate Roots of a Modern Romanian Fairy Tale: The Press, the Former Securitate, and the Historiography of December 1989" in East European Perspectives, Vol. 4, Nos. 7-9, 2002, http://ww.rferl.org/reports/eepreport/2002/ (accessed 20 November 2007).

Hall, Richard Andrew, 2007, "Orwellian, Positively Orwellian: Prosecutor Voinea's Campaign to Sanitize the Romanian Revolution of December 1989", http//onmem-oryrow.blogspot/com (accessed 3 November 2007).

Haaretz.com, Tel Aviv, www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/804669.html (accessed 19 November 2007).

Hogea, Vlad, 2001, Naționalistul (Iași: Editura Crater).

Interesul public, Bucharest, (2007).

Ionescu, Ghita, 1970, "Eastern Europe" in Ghita Ionescu, Ernest Gellner, Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), pp. 97-121.

Janos, Andrew, 1994, "Continuity and Change in Eastern Europe: Strategies of Post-Communist Politics," in East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 1-31.

Jurnalul național, Bucharest, (2007).

Kirchheimer, Otto, 1966, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems" in Joseph LaPalombara, Myron Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 177-200.

Mediafax, Bucharest, (2004-2005, 2007).

Mosse, George L., 1981, The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: Schocken Books).

Mudde, Cas, 2000, "In the Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat and the People: Populisms in Eastern Europe" in East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 33-53.

Rados, Antonia, 1990, Die Verschwörung der Securitate: Rumäniens verratene Revolution (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe).

Ratesh, Nestor, 1991, Romania: The Entangled Revolution (New York: Praeger).

RFE/RL Newsline, (2004-2005).

Revista 22, Bucharest, (2005).

Sartori, Giovanni, 1979, Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Siani-Davies, Peter, 2006, Revoluția română din decembrie 1989 (București: Humanitas).

Shafir, Michael, 2001, "Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues: Radical Politics in Post-Communist East-Central Europe" in Studia Politica, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 397-446.

Shafir, Michael, 2004a, "Profile: Gigi Becali", www.rferl.org/featuresarti-cleprint/2004, 13 December.

Shafir, Michael, 2004b, "Romania's Presidential Runoff Produces Possible 'Cohabitation' Scenario," 13 December http://www.rferl.org/featuresarchive/ (accessed 27 November 2007).

Shafir, Michael, 2006, "Hungarian Politics and the Post-1989 Legacy of the

Holocaust" in Randolph L. Braham, Brewster S. Chamberlin (eds.), The Holocaust in Hungary. Sixty Years Later (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 257-290.

Shafir, Michael, 2007, "Despre trădare, ignoranță și impostură" [On Treason, Ignorance and Imposture] in Observator cultural, No. 378.

Simonca, Ovidiu, "Spre o republică prezidențială?" [Towards a presidential republic?] in Observator cultural, No. 377.

Stern, Fritz, 1974, The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Stoenescu, Alex Mihai, 1998, Armata, mareșalul și evreii (București: RAO International Publishing Company).

Stoenescu, Alex Mihai, 2002, Istoria loviturilor de stat din România (București: RAO International Publishing Company), Vols. 2-3.

Tismaneanu, Vladimir, 1996, "The Leninist Debris or Waiting for Peron", in East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 504-535.

Tismaneanu, Vladimir, 1998, Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-Communist Europe (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Tricolorul, Bucharest, (2007)

Viața noastră, Tel Aviv, (2007).

Walicky, Andrzey, 1970, "Russia" in Ghita Ionescu, Ernest Gellner, Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), pp. 62-96.

Ziua, Bucharest, (2004, 2006-2007)

www.partidulconservator.ro, 2006 (accessed 25 November 2007)

ARE CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES PRONE TO POPULISM?

SOŇA SZOMOLÁNYI

Mrs. Szomolányi argued the theses, that there is no such a phenomenon as "Central European populism" in terms of a specific inclination of these countries toward the populism only universal and specific factors conducive to its recent success. However there are specific factors favorable for popular support of the populist politicians. Specific factors leading to the rise of populism are connected with the historical processes in Central Europe, especially the legacy of the communist past including the inner indebtedness that made the economic transition and structural reforms inevitable. Those structural reforms had to be managed, unlike in Western Europe, very quickly and with limited economic resources.

Though the contents of populism in every single Central European country are different, its rise has common reasons. This is the tension between losers and winners in the society and the so called political entrepreneurs, who search to gain profit from this tension. Mrs. Szomolányi does not agree with Mr. Krastev, who holds the opinion, that the right-left conflict has already lost its relevance in the political competition.

The criticism from the left have played a crucial role in the last elections (June 2006) in Slovakia. After almost eight years of a center-right government, Slovak voters chose to support opposition parties whose programs corresponded more closely to their current preferences. The coalition that formed even appears to be such a good match for the current attitudes and collective identities of Slovak society that the high support for Fico and his Smer party is even theoretically expected. Despite the existence of several large urban centers, Slovak society is stamped by a village and small-town mentality in which those who are less well-off typically hold negative views of those who have done well for themselves.

Mrs. Szomolányi mentioned a comparative survey about the views of elites in Europe, where the correspondence of the elites´ and main society´s views were investigated. There was a remarkable difference between the views of the elites from new and the old EU countries. While in the new countries the elites held very liberal-economic views, in the old countries they had much more egalitarian opinions, which the population could rather share.

The natural result was a general repulsion of the pro-reform elites in Central and Eastern Europe by their more paternalist voters.

There are different conceptions how to cope with populism. Mrs. Szomolányi argued that if a government wants to implant its program, it should not be too responsive the volatile public opinion. In a representative democracy the political elites should have the right to implement the structurally required reforms. An example to support this opinion can be the implementing of the flat tax in Slovakia. The opposition parties were strongly opposing it at that time, but today there is a consensus about its usefulness. That convicts the Slovak populists as "utilitarian libertarians" - they search to gain votes with anti-government rhetoric, but as governmental party they do not keep their position. Because now even their voter experience benefits of the earlier launched economic reforms.

(executive summary)

THE EUROPEAN UNION: A NEW STIMULUS FOR POPULISM?

KAI OLAF-LANG

In his paper, Mr. Lang asked questions about dynamics and structures in old and new countries of the EU. He concentrated on four topics: what are the faces of the populist parties in the old EU, what is happening in the new member countries, what are the implications for the functioning of the EU and how should the EU respond to take out the wind of the sales of populism.

Concerning the first topic, Mr. Lang stated that populism is darker part of democracy, but asked the question why it is so successful in elections. He thinks that populism is a result of change and lack of orientation people feel. This was also a problem in postwar era, but in that time it was easier to reintegrate the victims of change. Today´s change is more intensive and the need to adopt is stronger. Mr. Lang observed that populism in the old EU is recently more colorful - we have new right, protectionist left and lately also populist strength partly rooted in the middle class and partly rooted in the working class (Berlusconi, etc.). Especially the social-democratic parties are in very uneasy position - they are loosing the position of the "party of common people." Mr. Lang pointed out that we have traditional drivers of populism, but recently we have increasingly European vector - the EU integration is perceived as a continuation of globalisation.

Mr. Lang went on by investigating the reasons of populism in Central Europe. In his opinion the first wave of discontent was immediately after 1989, now we face the second wave - due to discontent with radical reforms people voted for ex-communists, but ex-communists did not change the reformist course, which is the reason of populist remobilization. Membership in the EU symbolically marks the end of transformation but in some countries the transformation is not finished yet; this produces discrepancy. Another cause of populism can be a political vacuum after the accession to the EU - populists came back with the themes that were current after 1989. Mr. Lang also shared his observation concerning the present crisis of leadership.

In third part of his paper, Mr. Lang asked for the implications for the EU. In his opinion there might be an increase in populist potential in the European Parliament - populists parties always do better in the European elections than in the national elections. In the future there may be higher number of populists in the European Parliament than in the national Parliaments. When it comes to the European Council, the summits are more and more about "trophy collecting" - national governments want something to sell on the domestic front; they will use existence of populist parties in their countries as a threat ("if we do not get something, you will have populism in our country"). In the EU Commission, after the reform treaty there might be a tendency of closer links of the Commission President to bigger countries - it would bring the anti-EU effect in smaller countries.

Concerning the question for possibilities of the EU how to deal with populism, Mr. Lang stressed the need of politicization of the EU. There should be common list of European candidates in the elections to the European Parliament. Mr. Lang perceives the institution of the European President as problem - it might be a block against politicization. The EU should redefine its raison d´étre concerning globalisation - it should protect the citizens against the negative impacts of globalisation.

Mr. Lang is skeptical about strengthening the civil society as a remedy for populism, but he emphasized the need for a new republicanism.

He concluded with the statement that strength of populism is weakness of moderate liberal forces.

(executive summary)

POPULISM IN GOVERN-MENT: REMARKS ON THE REACTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES TO THE AUSTRIAN FREEDOM PARTY

PAUL LUIF

When discussing populism in Central Europe, one cannot avoid debating Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ, Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs). It is regarded in many ways a typical representatives of a right wing populist party in Europe. The rise (and fall) of the FPÖ was closely connected with the involvement of the European Union (EU) in domestic politics of Austria.

There exists a number of publications on the FPÖ and the actions of EU countries, in German and in other languages as well. The interested reader can use these books and articles to get comprehensive information on this controversial subject.[1] This short article deals only with a few pertinent aspects of this topic. It first discusses some facets of Austrian domestic politics and the reasons why the FPÖ did get so much support in the 1990s. Second, it deals with the measures initiated by 14 of the 15 EU member states against the government which was formed with the FPÖ in February 2000. Third, it analyses some of the consequences of theses measures.

Notes on Austria's Political System

Austria with its 8 million people is the mostly German-speaking "remnant" of the large Habsburg Monarchy which broke up after World War I. Among the many things the small successor state inherited from the Monarchy were the three political Lager ("camps"). All three had more or less to do with the developing of the (in the European sense) liberal groups in the second half of the 19th century. Most of the liberals rather quickly turned into pan-Germans and anti-clericals (both elements implied anti-Habsburg leanings). As a reaction to this trend, on the one hand a Catholic mass movement emerged, the Christian Social Party (after 1945 the Austrian People's Party, ÖVP); on the other hand the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) was created as another big mass movement.

The democracy established after 1918 in small Austria ended in the civil war of 1934. After an authoritarian regime of the Christian Social Party, Austria became part of the Third Reich through the Anschluss in March 1938. Independent Austria was re-established in 1945, albeit under the occupation of the four Allies. Only in 1955 it gained its full independence. The price for the withdrawal of the occupying forces was the status of neutrality.

In 1945, it was the two mass parties ÖVP an the SPÖ, which founded, together with the much smaller Communist Party, the "Second Republic". Only in 1949, a party representing the (through Nazism fallen in disrepute) third Lager, was allowed to participate in the general elections. After internal conflicts, the Freedom

---

1   See the list the Annex to this article; it gives a sample of the literature dealing with this subject.

Party (FPÖ) was founded in 1955 to represent this pan-German camp. Until 1986, when its new leader Jörg Haider took over, it never gained much more than 5 percent of the popular vote. From 1945 the ÖVP and SPÖ (and till 1947 with the Communists) ruled up to 1966 in a Grand Coalition with the ÖVP as senior partner. From 1966 to 1970 the ÖVP governed alone.

In the elections of 1970, the SPÖ gained a relative majority. With the support of the FPÖ (many of its top officials still having a Nazi past), the SPÖ established a minority government, which at the next elections gained an absolute majority and the SPÖ could form single party majority governments until 1983. The coalition government of the SPÖ and the now slightly more liberal FPÖ was soon replaced (in 1987) again by a Grand Coalition, this time with the SPÖ as senior partner.

The long rule of the two large parties, SPÖ and ÖVP, in a Grand Coalition with a comparable share of votes led to a system of Proporz, where most positions in the bureaucracy, but also in other quasi-state institutions and in the (up to the early 1990s rather large) nationalized industry were equally distributed among them; qualifications for the jobs being of secondary importance. This system was duplicated at the economic level by the influential social partnership (Sozialpartnerschaft). The business groups (with close relations to the ÖVP) and the trade unions (tightly connected with the SPÖ) not only managed together labor relations in a consensual way, they also decided about the economic policies of the government. The opening up of the Austrian markets, through increased trade, the free trade agreements with the EC in 1972 and particular EU membership in 1995, reduced somehow the influence of the social partners, but without making their cooperation completely obsolete.

The rise of the FPÖ since the mid-1980s can be, in large part, interpreted as the dissatisfaction by a growing portion of the population with the Proporz system. In the 1980s Greens were also elected to parliament, but they did not increase their share of votes as spectacularly as the FPÖ. In 1993, some MPs quitted the FPÖ because of its xenophobic, nationalist policies and formed the Liberal Forum. The Liberal Forum gained seats in the elections of 1995 , but lost them in 1999 since it did not reach the four percent mark needed to be seated in parliament.

The problem for the new leader of the FPÖ, Jörg Haider, was that the Austrians felt more and more "Austrian", only a tiny minority considered themselves

"Germans".[2] The third Lager was practically "dead".[3] So Haider chose "right-wing populism" as his rather successful strategy. His aggressive criticism of the situation in Austria aimed in particular at the corporatist structure and the various scandals of the renewed Grand Coalition from 1987 on.

Difficulties especially in the nationalized industry caused an economic downturn in the mid-1980s, just before Jörg Haider was elected party chairman of the FPÖ. The nationalized industry was practically bankrupt, since the government could not bail it out any longer. The reasons for this situation were the large budget deficits and the ensuing debt, the result of many years of "deficit spending", in line with the "Keynesian" policies of the times. The way out of the crisis was seen in the accession to the EU which would make Austria's economy fit again. The reluctant SPÖ ceded to the pressures of the ÖVP only in April 1989; the letter for membership application was handed over in Brussels in July 1989. Membership negotiations finally started in 1993.

At first, Jörg Haider strongly supported Austria's membership of the EU, a demand which had been part of the FPÖ's party platform since 1964. In the early 1990s, he completely revised his stance and vehemently opposed EU membership, seeing a (populist) chance for the FPÖ to gain votes.

In the referendum on EU membership in June 1994, a rather high percentage of "yes" votes was achieved in Austria, 66.6 percent of the voters were in favor of EU membership, with a turnout of 82.3 percent. This outcome was a clear defeat for Haider and the FPÖ. On 1 January 1995, Austria joined the EU together with Finland and Sweden.

The "Sanctions" of the EU-14

The Grand Coalition was unable to preserve the good will which it had gained in the EU referendum. In order to fulfill the "Maastricht criteria" and to become part of the Economic and Monetary Union and the euro area, the Austrian government

2   In a public opinion poll in 1956, 46 percent of the respondents still endorsed the statement that "Austrians belong to the German people", but in 1964, already 47 percent agreed that "Austrians are a nation"; this latter percentage increased to 75 percent in 1987 and to 83 percent in 1999. See LUIF 2001: 85-125

3   TRIBUTSCH/ULRAM 2004:67.

had to introduce several "austerity packages", aimed at reducing the budget deficit. These measures reduced the popularity of the Grand Coalition government further.

At the elections in October 1999, the Social Democrats lost heavily and received only 33.2 percent of the vote. The ÖVP and the FPÖ both got 26.9 percent and the Greens 7.4 percent. After long and tortuous discussions among all parties in parliament, the ÖVP finally agreed on a coalition with the FPÖ; Wolfgang Schüssel (ÖVP) was nominated as chancellor, although the ÖVP had received 415 votes less than the FPÖ in the elections. Jörg Haider did not get a position in government and accepted to stay as governor in Carinthia.

Even before the new ÖVP-FPÖ coalition government was formed, Austria came under pressure by its partners in the EU. Many politicians and commentators in the EU member states and beyond regarded the FPÖ as an extreme right-wing, neo-Nazi party, an accusation widely rejected in Austria.[4]

The critiques of the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition came basically from two sides. On the one hand were French and Belgian politicians, also from conservative parties, who feared that their policy of refusing coalitions with and building a "cordon sanitaire" against extreme right-wing parties (like the Front National and the Vlaams Blok) would be undermined. On the other hand, socialist/social democratic politicians (inside and outside Austria) worried about the prospect of new kinds of conservative-led coalition governments which could diminish the influence of the left in Europe.

After not very transparent activities over a weekend, involving mostly hectic telephone calls among the government leaders of 14 EU states (excluding Austria), the Portuguese EU Presidency[5] finally issued a statement on 31 January 2000, in which the FPÖ and its leader were accused that they repeatedly questioned "the values and principles of humanism and democratic tolerance underlying the European

---

4   See e.g. the statement of the then Speaker of the Austrian Parliament (Nationalrat), Heinz Fischer (SPÖ, now President of the Republic), maintaining that "there is no neo-Nazi party in the Austrian Parliament, since the Austrian Constitution and Austrian laws would prohibit that; the same holds true for the government" (see Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 29.6.2000, translation Paul Luif).

5   In 2000. Portuguese Prime Minister António Guterres was at the same time President of the Socialist International.

project". When the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition became reality, 14 EU member states (without contacting the Austrian government) put into force the three decisions already announced a few days before:

■ Governments of the 14 Member States will not promote or accept any bilateral official contacts at political level with an Austrian Government integrating the FPÖ;

■ There will be no support in favor of Austrian candidates seeking positions in international organizations;

■ Austrian Ambassadors in EU capitals will only be received at a technical level.[6]

The measures could not be based on EU law since the conditions of Article 7 Treaty on European Union in force at that time ("existence of a serious and persistent breach" of EU principles in deeds, not in verbal statements) were clearly not existent. The EU-14 introduced these measures (soon called "sanctions") in their bilateral relations with Austria; nevertheless, the Portuguese EU Presidency published them on the Presidency's homepage.

Inside Austria, in the early weeks after the formation of the government, demonstrations in the streets put intensive pressure on the government as well; but in a few weeks these protests dwindled and lost their significance. The measures of the EU-14 were much more serious. Their direct effects were the cessation of high-level bilateral contacts between Austrian officials and Austria's 14 EU partners. Yet these measures often involved technical levels as well and one could not distinguish between the refusal of "bilateral" contacts and "normal" EU procedures. Austria's participation in the important preparatory phase of EU decision-making was definitely hampered by the EU-14 measures.[7]

But there were even more wide-ranging consequences for Austria. Foreign Minister Louis Michel, one of the principal organizers of the measures against Austria, even recommended to his fellow Belgians "de ne pas aller skier en Autriche. Je pense que ce n'est pas moral [do not go skiing in Austria. I think that this is unethical]".[8]

---

6   These statements were published on the homepage of the Portuguese EU Presidency http://www.portugal.ue-2000.pt/uk/.

7   BÖHM 2000

8   VOOGT, MICHEL 2000

Besides this rather strange association of skiing and ethics, Foreign Minister Michel overlooked that Adolf Hitler, when he came to power in Germany, introduced in June 1933 the "Tausendmark-Sperre" ("Thousand-Mark-Embargo") against Austria. With this embargo, the German Reich succeeded to ruin the (at that time already quite important) Austrian tourism industry. Michel's advice and also the very critical reports in the French media (cf. the extensive coverage of Austria's "extreme right" in Le Monde) probably led to a reduction in tourist visits from these countries to Austria.[9]

Cultural, media and scientific contacts between Austria and other EU countries (in particular Belgium and France) were stopped or reduced for several months. Austrian schoolchildren having exchange programs with French, Belgian and Portuguese schools were told not to come.[10] There were even stories of Austrians being attacked in EU countries (e.g. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 16.9.2000).

Israel called back its ambassador from Vienna, but among the other non-EU states only the Czech Republic, Canada and Argentina did partake in the EU-14 "sanctions"; the United States simply "observed" Austria. Officials in Central and Eastern European countries, candidates for EU membership, regarded the EU-14 measures with skepticism or outright hostility.[11]

The European Commission tried to keep normal working relations with Austria, because the EU-14 measures lacked a base in EU law. The Commission even helped Austria in situations where such measures (potentially) violated EU law. One case in point was the starting of an information procedure against Belgium when Belgian authorities prohibited their schools to book skiing courses in Austria.

If the aim of the EU-14 measures was to topple the ÖVP-FPÖ government,[12] they just were not effective. Surveys showed that these measures were very unpopular

---

9   According to statistics of Austrian tourism between May and July 2000 the visits from French and Belgians declined by 17 percent resp. 14 percent compared to the year before (Die Presse, 26.8.2000).

10 MARTIN 2000

11 GREEN 2000

12 This was the declared goal of the Belgian Foreign Minister, see Louis Michel, "Je veux faire tomber l'actuel gouvernement autrichien, en tout humilité". L'interview de Pascal Vrebos, in: Le Journal du mardi, No. 40, 29.2.-6.3.2000, pp. 4/5..

in practically all strata of Austrian society. Asked in a public opinion poll in March 2000 about the "sanctions", 66 percent of Austrians said that they were "outraged", only 24 percent showed "understanding" for the measures of the EU-14.[13] For pollsters, the sanctions were almost a "stroke of luck" for the government, diverting the public from the troubles of the new government, especially the problems with the inexperienced ministers from the FPÖ.[14]

The opposition in Austria, the Social Democrats and the Greens, at first backed the EU-14 measures against the new center-right government. Trips of their party leaders to other EU countries to explain the situation in Austria were criticized by government officials as "betrayal" of Austrian interests. The party leaders should fight against the "unjustified" measures and not "drink champagne" with French hardliners. The low popularity of the "sanctions" among the general public finally obliged the opposition parties also to call for an end of the measures as well.

The futility of the actions of the EU-14 made some (mostly smaller) EU countries, which only reluctantly had supported the measures in the first place, call for a termination of the "sanctions". Already in February 2000, commentators in Finland saw the event rather critical.[15] The Danish government pleaded for a cessation since the measures threatened to lend support to the opposition in the upcoming referendum on the introduction of the euro in Denmark.

The Portuguese government whose EU Presidency had suffered under the quarrels on the Austrian case, finally succeeded in putting together a scenario for ending the EU-14 measures. The Portuguese Presidency asked the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the Swiss Luzius Wildhaber, to appoint a three-man panel to assess Austria's human rights record.[16] On 12 July 2000, Wildhaber announced the names of the three wise men: Martti Ahtisaari, the former President

---

13 See Telefonumfrage Nr. A38 der Sozialwissenschaftlichen Studiengesellschaft, 17.-25.3.2000, N=998.

14 See Meinungsforscher: "EU-Sanktionen für Regierung fast ein Glücksfall", in: Der Standard aktuell, 12.5.2000 [Internet].

15 On the one hand, small EU countries were seen "under pressure", on the other hand, the "shoot first, ask questions later approach" was criticized; see KIVINEN 2000

16 The European Court of Human Rights is an institution of the Council of Europe, not to be mixed up with the EU's Court of Justice.

of Finland, Jochen Frowein, German specialist in comparative public law and inter-national law, and Marcelino Oreja, former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs. In fact, these eminent persons speedily carried out their mandate. Less than two months later, on 8 September 2000, they presented their report to President Jacques Chirac, France having the EU Presidency in the second half of 2000.

Their conclusions concerning the Austrian government were unambiguous:

> [B]ased on a thorough examination, it is our considered view that the Austrian Government is committed to the common European values. The Austrian Government's respect in particular for the rights of minorities, refugees and immigrants is not inferior to that to the other European Union Member States. The legal situation in the three mentioned areas is well up to the standards applied in other EU Member States. In some areas, particularly concerning the rights of national minorities, Austrian standards can be considered to be high-er than those applied in many other EU countries.[17]

Concerning the evolution of the political nature of the FPÖ, the report was critical:

> There are reasons why the description of the FPÖ as a right wing populist party with radical elements appears to be still correct.[18]

In describing the FPÖ as basically a "populist" party, the three wise men seemingly adhered to the opinion of many social scientists, who have regarded the FPÖ as a populist and not as an extreme right or (neo)Nazi party.[19]

On 12 September 2000, the EU-14 agreed on an unconditional end of the meas-ures imposed on 3 February. A joint statement was published on the homepage of the French foreign ministry (and not on the EU Presidency homepage, as the Portuguese did in announcing the measures). "The measures taken by the 14 were useful," the statement said. "They can now be lifted." But the statement added: "The nature of the Freedom Party and its uncertain evolution remains cause for

---

17 AHTISAARI 2000: 32.

18 ibid.

19 See in particular MÉNY, SUREL 2000: 308.

serious worry. The 14 consider that a particular vigilance should be exercised with regard to this party and the influence it exerts on the government it is a part of."[20] This "vigilance" was soon forgotten. EU Commission President Romano Prodi had become more and more critical of the EU-14; after the lifting of the "sanctions" he said that "this will never happen again." The EU would have to accept govern-ments of member states as long as they did not violate the rules of democracy (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 18.9.2000).

The Effects of the "Sanctions"

The immediate effect of the measures by the EU-14 was actually the strengthening of the ÖVP-FPÖ government. Only after the "sanctions" were lifted, the govern-ment lost support in public opinion polls. It was clearly the FPÖ which suffered from its participation in the government; it share of votes was reduced in almost all elections in the provinces. The strains between the FPÖ ministers in government and Jörg Haider, who wanted to force the "his" ministers to act more "populistic", became acute in mid-2002, and the ÖVP soon called snap elections. The results of the November 2002 elections were a disaster for the FPÖ. It lost almost two thirds of its support and obtained only 10.0 percent of the vote, whereas the percentage of the ÖVP increased to 42.3, the SPÖ gaining only slightly (reaching 36.5 percent of the vote). The ÖVP formed again a coalition with the Freedom Party, albeit with a rather weakened FPÖ.

When in Italy Silvio Berlusconi and his (formerly) neo-fascist and xenophobic allies won the elections in May 2001 and were forming a government, no reactions came from its EU partners. The French Minister for Europe, Pierre Moscovici, maintained that the results in Italy could not be compared to Austria and measures by the EU would be "superfluous". This caused quite some indignation in Austria. Even crit-ics of the ÖVP-FPÖ government found this inaction of the EU outrageous. This "search for differences" was considered an "offense to Austria", these "grotesque convolutions" of the European politicians and their "double standards" would only pave the way for the extreme right.[21]

---

20 DALEY 2000.

21 These were the words by Johannes Voggenhuber, a very outspoken critic of the ÖVP-FPÖ government and MEP for the Austrian Greens. The quotes of Moscovici and Voggenhuber are from MAYER 2001: 7, translation Paul Luif.

An important effect of the "sanctions" where the amendments in the EU Treaty, introduced by the Nice European Council in December 2000 and in force since February 2003. It was clear that the rules of the Amsterdam Treaty had been not sufficient, especially when a problematic government would be in place, but without the "existence of a serious and persistent breach" of the principles of "liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law" as mentioned in Article 6 EU Treaty. So at the insistence of the Austrian and Belgian governments, a new Point 1 was added to Article 7 EU Treaty. It enables the EU (the Council) to act also in situations where only a "clear risk of a serious breach" would exist and gives the Council the possibility to differentiated proceedings (address recommendations, which could be based on a report of independent persons). I also affirms that the member state in question must be heard before a decision is made:

> On a reasoned proposal by one third of the Member States, by the European Parliament or by the Commission, the Council, acting by a majority of four fifths of its members after obtaining the assent of the European Parliament, may determine that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of principles mentioned in Article 6(1), and address appropriate recommendations to that State. Before making such a determination, the Council shall hear the Member State in question and, acting in accordance with the same procedure, may call on independent persons to submit within a reasonable time limit a report on the situation in the Member State in question.
> The Council shall regularly verify that the grounds on which such a determination was made continue to apply. (Article 7(1) EU Treaty)

A rather paradox development came about when two important protagonists of the "sanctions drama" got positions in the new European Commission in November 2004. Benita Ferrero-Waldner had been Austrian foreign minister in the ÖVP-FPÖ government since February 2000 (before she was state secretary in the foreign ministry). She was among of the most notable Austrians fighting the "sanctions". Ferrero-Waldner became Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, getting thus one of the most important positions in the Commission.[22] Her main "adversary", Louis Michel, obtained a somewhat less important position, becoming Commissioner responsible for Development and Humanitarian Aid.

22 It was thought that she would soon lose the key External Relations portfolio, but since the Constitutional Treaty did not come into force, she has kept this portfolio longer than expected.

An notable effect of the Austrian affair has probably been the reluctance to "sanction" any new government of an EU member state, even if it consisted of rather dubious parties. This has already been mentioned in connection with Italy, but also the examples of Poland and Slovakia have been a case in point. The amended Article 7 EU-Treaty has not yet been put into use.[23]

The long-term effects of the "sanctions" for Austria have been twofold. On the one hand, the implementation of the measures where probably already an indication that Austria had not found a comfortable place among its partners in the EU. The belated attempt to form a "Regional Partnership" with its neighbors and future EU members was an appropriate, but rather late move. Austria's partners in the East had already created the Visegrád-Group, which not only worked during the accession of the four states, but has been a body for cooperation also inside the EU.

On the other hand, the "sanctions" had negative effects on the attitude of the Austrian public vis-à-vis the EU. In 2007, Austria belongs to the group of EU countries with the most EU-skeptic populations. They are realistic, insofar A large majority still wants Austria to stay inside the EU, but almost half of the Austrians do not see any advantages of the EU membership for Austria. This again is a paradox. Austria is probably the country which has gained more from the recent EU enlargements than any other "old" EU member state.

The Austrian affairs shows how difficult it is to deal with parties and/or governments formed with parties which are widely regarded as behaving contrary to the assumed democratic standards of the EU. Good intentions of actors can also have unintended consequences. In the case of Austria, the measures by the EU-14 against the ÖVP-FPÖ government actually strengthened this government. And it was just the participation of the FPÖ in the government that finally weakened the Freedom Party. If Jörg Haider would have let the SPÖ and ÖVP form again a Grand Coalition (thus accepting the wish of the EU-14), his party would probably have surpassed even the SPÖ at the next general elections. In the final instance, it was for the good of the Austrian political system that its decision-maker did not heed the will of the EU-14.

---

23 The Treaty of Lisbon (signed December 2007) will not substantially change the wordings of Article 7; it deletes the words on the report of independent persons.

Annex
Literature about Austria/FPÖ/EU-14 (selected publications)

In German
AUER, Clemens Martin, FLEISCHHACKER, Michael (eds.). Diesmal. Analysen zur Nationalratswahl 2002, Wien: Molden, 2003.
BURKERT-DOTTOLO, Günther R. Burkert-Dottolo, MOSER, Bernhard (eds.). Die Regierungsbildung in Österreich 1999/2000. Anatomie eines Wechsels, Wien: Politische Akademie, 2000).
BUSEK, Erhard, SCHAUER, Martin (eds.). Eine europäische Erregung. Die "Sanktionen" der Vierzehn gegen Österreich im Jahr 2000. Analysen und Kommentare, Wien - Köln - Weimar: Böhlau, 2003 (= Schriftenreihe des DDr.-Herbert-Batliner-Europainstituts, Band 8).
ENDER, Berndt. Sanktionen - die Stunde der Patrioten. Schlüsselszenen und Akteure, in: KOHL, Andreas, OFNER, Günther, BURKERT-DOTTOLO, Günther Burkert-Dottolo, KARNER, Stefan (eds.), Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik 2000, Wien-München: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik-Oldenbourg, 2001, s. 557-576.
CHARM, Isolde, RABINOVICI, Doron (eds.). Österreich. Berichte aus Quarantanien, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2000 (= edition suhrkamp 2184).
FLEISCHHACKER, Michael. Wien, 4. Februar 2000 oder die Wende zur Hysterie, Wien: Czernin Verlag, 2001.
FRÖHLISH-STEFFEN, Susanne, RENSMANN, Lars (eds.). Populisten an der Macht. Populistische Regierungsparteien in West- und Osteuropa, Wien: Braumüller, 2006.
HAU, André, Sanktionen und Vorfeldmaßnahmen zur Absicherung der europäischen Grundwerte. Rechtsfragen zu Art. 7 EU, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2002.
HUMMER, Waldemar, PELINKA, Anton. Österreich unter "EU-Quarantäne". Die "Maßnahmen der 14" gegen die österreichische Bundesregierung aus politikwissenschaftlicher und juristischer Sicht. Chronologie, Kommentar, Dokumentation, Wien: Linde, 2002.
KARLHOFER, Ferdinand, MELCHIOR, Josef, SICKINGER, Hubert (eds.). Anlassfall Österreich. Die Europäische Union auf dem Weg zu einer Wertegemeinschaft, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001 (= Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft, Sonderband).
KINDERMANN, Gottfried-Karl. Politische Studien-Zeitgespräch zur gegenwärtigen Rolle Österreichs in Europa, in: Politische Studien, Vol. 51, Nr. 370 (März/April 2000), s. 8-15.
KOPEINING, Margaretha, KOTANKO, Christoph. Eine europäische Affäre. Der

Weisen-Bericht und die Sanktionen gegen Österreich, Wien: Czernin Verlag, 2000.

LESER, Norbert. Aspekte der "Wende", in: KOHL, Andreas, OFNER, Günther, BURK-ERT-DOTTOLO, Günther Burkert-Dottolo, KARNER, Stefan (eds.). Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik 2000, Wien-München: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik - Oldenbourg, 2001, pp. 491-500.

LUIF, Paul. Die Maßnahmen der EU-14 gegen die ÖVP-FPÖ-Regierung, in: LUIF, Paul (ed.), Österreich, Schweden, Finnland. Zehn Jahre Mitgliedschaft in der Europäischen Union, Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2007 (= Schriftenreihe des Herbert-Batliner-Europainstitutes, Band 10), pp. 213-223.

MAIER, Michael. Haiders Schatten über Europa. Lehren aus dem EU-Boykott gegen Österreich, in: Internationale Politik, No. 4 (2000), pp. 19-34.

MAYR-HARTING, Thomas. Die Sanktionen der EU-14 gegen Österreich - Brüsseler Erfahrungen, in: Andreas Khol / Günther Ofner / Günther Burkert-Dottolo / Stefan Karner (eds.), Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik 2000, Wien-München: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik-Oldenbourg, 2001, pp. 389-404.

MICHALSKI, Krzysztof. Politik und Werte, in: Transit. Europäische Revue, No. 21 (Sommer 2001), pp. 208-218.

Peter Pernthaler / Peter Hilpold, Sanktionen als Instrument der Politikkontrolle - der Fall Österreich, in: Integration, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2000), pp. 105-119.

PLASSER, Fritz, ULRAM, Peter A. Rechtspopulistische Resonanzen: Die Wählerschaft der FPÖ, in: PLASSER, Fritz, ULRAM, Peter A., SOMMER, Franz (eds.). Das österre-ichische Wahlverhalten, Wien: Signum, 2000 (= Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Angewandte Politikforschung, Band 21), pp. 226-241.

SCHARSACH, Hans-Henning, KUCH, Kurt. Haider. Schatten über Europa, Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2000.

SCHORKOPF, Frank. Homogenität in der Europäischen Union - Ausgestaltung und Gewährleistung durch Art. 6 Abs. 1 und Art. 7 EUV, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000.

SCHNEIDER, Heinrich. Österreich in Acht und Bann - ein Schritt zur politischen inte-grierten "Wertegemeinschaft?", in: Integration, Vol 23, No. 2 (2000), pp. 120-148.

SPAEMANN, Robert. Europa - Wertegemeinschaft oder Rechtsordnung?, in: Transit. Europäische Revue, No. 21 (Sommer 2001), pp. 172-185.

SPERL, Gerfried. Der Machtwechsel. Österreichs politische Krise zu Beginn des 3. Jahrtausends, Wien: Molden, 2000.

VAN DER BELLEN, Alexander. Die Torheit der Regierenden: Die EU-Sanktionen und ihr Ende, in: KOHL, Andreas, OFNER, Günther, BURKERT-DOTTOLO, Günther Burkert-Dottolo, KARNER, Stefan (eds.). Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik 2000,

Wien-München: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik-Oldenbourg, 2001, pp. 455-472.

WIENLAND, Carl Paul (ed.). Österreich in Europa. Analysen, Hintergründe und Erkenntnisse, Wien-München: Amalthea, 2001.

WINTER, Balduin. Wende in Schwarz-Blau, in: Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik, No. 3 (2000), pp. 322-327.

ZELLENTIN, Gerda. Doppelstrategien zwischen Lissabon und Brüssel, in: Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik, No. 3 (2000), pp. 327-331.

ZÖGLICH, Christa. Haider. Licht und Schatten einer Karriere, 2nd edition, Wien: Molden, 1999.

In other languages

CHABANET, Didier. L'Europe et le syndrome de la valse autrichienne: un pas en avant, un pas en arri?re, les enjeux et logiques composites de l'européanisation de "l'affaire Jörg Haider", in: Olivier Baisnée / Romain Pasquier (eds.), L'Europe telle qu'elle se fait. Européanisation et sociétés politiques nationales, Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2007, pp. 101-121.

CRAMÉR, Per, WRANGE, P?l. The Haider Affair, Law and European Integration, in: Europarättslig Tidskrift [Swedish Journal for European Law], Vol. 4, No. 1 (2001), pp. 28-60.

GIACOMETTI, Pierre. Les Européens face au cas Haider. La question Haider divise les opinions européennes, in: CAUTRÉS, Bruno, REYNIÉ, Dominique (eds.), L'Opinion européenne 2000, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2000, pp. 193-204.

GILAIN, André, MICHEL, Louis. Portrait en coulisses, Bruxelles: Luc Pire, 2003.

HEINISCH, Reinhard. Populism, Proporz, Pariah: Austria Turns Right. Austrian Political Change, Its Causes and Repercussions, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002.

IHL, Olivier, CH?NE, Janine, VIAL, Éric, WATERLOT, Ghislain (eds.). La tentation populiste au coeur de l'Europe, Paris: La Découverte, 2003.

JUDT, Tony. Tale from the Vienna Woods, in: The New York Review of Books (23.3.2000), pp. 8/9.

RIDER LE, Jacques, LEVRAT, Nicolas (eds.). La crise autrichienne de la culture politique européenne, Bruxelles: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2004.

LECONTE, Cécile. L'Europe face au défi populiste, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005.

MERLINGEN, Michael, MUDDE, Cas, SEDELMEIER, Ulrich. The Right and the Righteous? European Norms, Domestic Politics and the Sanctions Against Austria, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 39, No. 1 (March 2001), pp. 59-77.

NAGORSKI, Andrew. The Politics of Guilt. Austria's Bigot, Europe's Burden, in: Foreign Affairs, Vol. 79, No. 3 (May/June 2000), pp. 18-22.

OLESEN, Thorsten B. A Danish Perspective: The Austrian Affair in Danish Politics, in: GEHLER, Michael. PELINK, Anton, BISCHOF, Günter (eds.), Österreich in der Europäischen Union. Bilanz seiner Mitgliedschaft / Austria in the European Union. Assessment of Her Membership, Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2003 (= Schriftenreihe des DDr.-Herbert-Batliner-Europainstituts, Band 7), pp. 551-573.

PINGEL, Isabelle, ROSENBERG, Dominique (eds.). Les sanctions en droit communautaire. Actes du colloque tenu ? Paris le 8 avril 2005, Paris: Éditions A. Pedone, 2006.

ROSE, Richard. The End of Consensus in Austria and Switzerland, in: Journal of Democracy, Vol. 11, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 26-40.

SULLY, Melanie. The Haider Phenomenon, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997 (= East European Monographs, No. 484).

ULFGARD, Rebecka. Norm Consolidation in the European Union: The EU14-Austria Crisis in 2000, Växjö: Växjö University Press, 2005.

VOGT, Henri. Finland and the Austria Boycott, in: Northern Dimensions The Yearbook of Finnish Foreign Policy 2001, pp. 13-21.

EU ACCESSION, POPULISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF SLOVAKIA

JURAJ MARUŠIAK

Unlike Austria, Sweden and Finland, which had been EU member states since 1995, for new member countries the EU-accession was one of the most important challenges in their contemporary history. For countries that joined the EU in 1995 the integration was the result of the pragmatic choice. For these countries the EU-accession didn't mean a change of their geopolitical position and was not connected with a period of political, economical and social transition.

On the other hand, for the former communist countries that became EU-members in 2004, the accession was a symbolic milestone. The political changes set out in 1989 were accompanied by the demand of joining the "West," the commonwealth of the democratic states and with that a changing of the geopolitical and civilization environment. The process of the post-communist "transition" where the painful economical and social reforms were adopted, was justified by the need to adjust the domestic institutions to Western standards. Particularly in the case of Slovakia, "comeback to Europe" became one of the key messages of the "Velvet Revolution" in November 1989 and of the first free elections in June

1990. On the hand, especially later, before the division of Czechoslovakia in 1992 and after the elections of 1998 were explained by the need to integrate unpopular reforms of the economy and social welfare and the "European card" was misused as an argument in favor of the preservation of the Czechoslovakia (BUČÁK - PISCOVÁ 2000: 303).

The Slovak dilemma between EU-integration and isolation during the third government of Vladimír Mečiar in the years 1994 - 1998 caused the lack of the Euro-skeptical political force, openly refusing Slovakia's EU membership. The EU-accession became an object of wide consensus contributing to social peace during the transformation. The transition was connected with the European integration process not only in symbolical terms but its particular steps were very often prepared after the consultations with the European institutions. If in the countries of the former Soviet block the integration and transition were perceived by the political elites and by the citizens as the two parts of the same process, the successful EU-accession could be perceived as the symbolical complement of the transition process.

Especially after 2000 even the previous rather Euro-skeptical political parties, like Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) led by Mečiar or Slovak National Party (SNS) changed their attitude towards European integration and the initially soft Euro-sceptical Smer ("Direction") adopted a rather Euro-optimistic program before the elections to the European Parliament in June 2004. The wide consensus within the society in terms of EU-accession was proved by the pre-accession referendum of 16-17 May 2003, where the overwhelming majority confirmed the support of the Slovak citizens for the EU-membership: 92, 46 % in favor for integration (STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC 2003). Approaching EU-accession was for the political parties a chance to find their partners in the European ideological families and to modify their programmes according to demands of their European partners. If "Smer" joined the Party of European Socialists (PES) in 2004, the attempt of HZDS to join the European Peoples Party was not successful.

The positive image of the EU within Slovak society was preserved even after EU-enlargement. In spring 2004 46 % shared this opinion, after the enlargement in autumn 2004 it was 57 % and in autumn 2006 61 % viewed the EU positively (EUROBAROMETER 66 2006: 14). In comparison with other candidate countries,

the level of public support for EU membership in Slovakia was similar to such candidates as Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey, i. e. the countries whose prospective EU membership was either controversial, or much further off, than in the case of the other members of the Laeken group. The positive impact of the EU membership was seen mainly in the economic sphere (70 %) and employment (63 %) (EUROBAROMETER 66 2006: 22). In spite of a decline in popular support of EU-membership it remained at a high level even in 2007, from 64 % in Spring to 58 % in Autumn (EUROBAROMETER 68 2007: 24).

The EU's conditions for Slovakia predominantly concerned modernity, environmental sensitivity, efforts at liberalisation + tolerance + above all self-confidence (BÚTOROVÁ, GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, VELŠIC 2004: 325-326). Slovak citizens considered the benefits fo be predominantly the freedom to travel without a visa and passport, the opportunity to work abroad, better opportunities for young people, chances to draw financial aid from EU funds and the arrival of foreign investors, leading to the creation of the new jobs (30 and more percent). Only then follows an improvement in the standards of living and the acceptance of Slovakia in Europe and in the world.

Drawbacks of EU membership are considered the use of the cheap labor force in Slovakia, brain drain (departure of the young people and professionals), reduction of the standards of living, and inflow of foreigners from other member states. The perception of these drawbacks, however, is gradually declining. On the other hand, there is a growing fear of crime and terrorism threats, increasing bureaucracy, adoption of the "western" lifestyle or a loss of independence (BÚTOROVÁ, GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ BÚTOROVÁ, GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ). As we can see, the EU-integration is in Slovakia perceived mostly as a change to the internal situation. At the same time, the EU-accession was accompanied by huge dissatisfaction with the way democracy is functioning in the new member states. Its level was the highest in Poland and in Slovakia (83 % and 80 %), at the same time the trust to the national governments was extremely low (Poland 7 %; Slovakia 17 %). Thus the image of the national state institutions was much worse than the image of the EU, so the massive support for the EU-membership could be considered as the perception of the EU as a tool of the modernization of Slovakia and of the defense against national institutions distrusted by the people. Such figures show that if the European integration was the topic of wide political consensus within the Slovak society, after the EU-enlargement the reason for it ceased to exist.

If the European agenda was perceived as a tool for improvement of the domestic political and social conditions, so too was it widely used not only by the government for the justification of sometimes unpopular measures but by the opposition as well. Especially after the failure of Slovak diplomacy in 1997 at the NATO summit in Madrid and at the EU-summit in Luxemburg when Slovakia was not invited to the pre-accession negotiations because of a lack of fulfillment of the political criteria, Euro-skeptic rhetoric dominated in the agenda of the governmental coalition. After 2000, Euro-skepticism was spread mainly within the ruling elites as well, with the exception of the Communist Party of Slovakia, which was in the years 2002 - 2006 represented in the parliament as the opposition party. The most know Euro-skeptic initiatives were for example the project of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) of the "Declaration of the sovereignty of the member and candidate states of EU in the cultural and ethical issues" focused on the abortion law and same-sex marriages. In spite of the high level of popular support towards the EU-integration and even to its deepening (EUROBAROMETER 2002 - 2007), the issue of sovereignty, mainly in terms of economic and social policy, played an important role in the political rhetoric of the ruling coalition. Such way of thinking was present in the Mid-term Strategy of the Foreign Policy of Slovak Republic till 2015, adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in December 2004 by the majority of the deputies, including representatives of the political opposition (except Communists). According to this document the Slovak political elites see the future of EU as the "Europe of national states." Such priority was stressed especially in the economic, social, foreign and security policy, but on the other hand in terms of the redistribution of EU funds, the Slovak political elites are in favor of the principles of European solidarity. On a popular level, support for the transformation of the EU to political union (77 %) and for the strengthening of Slovakia's international relations is the highest in the entire EU (EUROBAROMETER 66 2006: 20, 30).

The coalition of conservative and liberal parties adopted an ambitious program of economic and social reforms, based on the reduction of taxes and state interventions in the economy. Not only KDH, but even the conservative-liberal Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) and SMK, previous Euro-enthusiastic parties, since 2002 expressed themselves against the prospects of the harmonization of the fiscal and social policy on the EU level. The shift of SDKÚ from Euro-enthusiastic position towards more Euro-skeptic was completed in March 2006 by the declaration of its vice-chairman Ivan Mikloš, that according to him

the Constitutional Treaty is not in the interest of Slovakia (TASR, 2. 3. 2006). Some Euro-skeptic moods were present in the policy of the new Slovak government after the parliamentary elections 2006, for example in the statement of Prime Minister Robert Fico after the suspension of the membership of his party Smer - SD ("Direction - Social Democracy") from PES, according to it the decision is a punishment because of the "policy for the people" (SITA, 12. 10. 2006). On the other hand, only in the case of KDH that is now in the opposition we can speak about more sophisticated Euro-skepticism. In the other cases this Euro-skepticism has an intuitive, purpose-built character. At the same time, due the high level of the popular support of the European integration neither the political or discussion platform for the "identitarian" Europeanism emerged. Thus the Euro-optimistic or Euro-enthusiastic policy in Slovakia has more pragmatic character and the level of the conceptualization of the European policy in Slovakia is rather law not only in the term of the political party discourse but also in the term of the intellectual discourse.

If the demand for the preserving of national sovereignty could serve in certain extent as the mobilization factor for the Slovak political elites in the years 2001 - 2003, in the case of the EU Reform treaty KDH remained isolated with an attempt to adopt the parliamentary resolution, according to it the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU could not affect the legislation of the member states in the terms of the public morals, family law, protection of the human dignity and human, physical and moral integrity. Similarly KDH was not able to push the resolution on the sovereignty in the tax policy. The coalition parties, including the nationalistic SNS, are however in favor for the adoption of the Reform treaty in spite of the using of the nationalist rhetoric and promotion of the "patriotic" education in the schools.

The process of the European integration of Slovakia is accompanied by the process of the "rapprochement" with the independent Slovak statehood. Thus at the present time the European identity of Slovakia is not being developed in conflict with, or in direct contradiction of, the national identity. On the contrary, the "European" consolidation of Slovak society is taking place in parallel with the consolidation of Slovak citizens' support for the independent Slovak Republic. While in 1992, and even after the establishment of independent Slovakia in 1993, a negative attitude to the division of Czechoslovakia predominated amongst citizens of Slovakia, the situation in 2004 had reversed in favour of

independence. In January 1992 a survey by the C.S.A. agency found that 50% thought that "maintaining the common state is beneficial" and in March 1993 the same agency found that only 29% of respondents would vote for the division of Czechoslovakia and 50% would vote against (BÚTORA, BÚTOROVÁ 2003: 83, 85). According to the survey carried out at the end of 2004 public opinions has been changed significantly. Although approximately the same proportion of respondents who had come of age before Slovak independence retained their negative attitude to the division of Czechoslovakia (73% against 27% in favour of division), at the end of 2004 the ratio of supporters to opponents of the division of Czechoslovakia was 61% to 39% (NÁZORY OBČANOV 2004) A similar movement towards positive evaluations can be seen in opinions on the citizens' own state. While the year before EU accession (2003) only 49 % of respondents said they were proud of what Slovakia had achieved as an independent state, the number had risen to 59 % by 2005 (Za posledné dva roky 2005). It is highly likely that such changes were significantly influenced by Slovakia's accession to the EU, which was the consensus priority of citizens and political elites of all political parties or political orientations.

Conclusions

The EU-membership is in the Slovakia understood predominantly as the tool for the realization of the domestic purposes; it is looked as the part of the modernization process more than tool of the realization of the country's interests in the international field. The lowest turnout in the election to the European parliament in June 2004 confirms that the Slovak society sees its own role in the EU policy rather as the passive, than the active participant.

There are the differences between the EU perception on the level of political elites and on the citizens' level. The Euro-skepticism has only little support between the citizens, thus in the Slovak conditions it could be considered as the project of the political elites. At the same time the potential of Slovakia to protect its national interests without significant background of the multilateral structures like EU are even much more limited as for example in the case of Poland. Due the high level of the popular support for the European integration and for its further deepening Slovak ruling elites have only limited reason for the inhibition the integration processes. In such case the Euro-skeptical or even nationalistic moods and stereotypes are not used in the foreign policy of the

country, but they are more instrumentally used by the national elites for the domestic purposes with the aim to avoid their de-legitimization. Under the conditions of the processes of integration and globalization, when the nation-state institution are losing a significant part of their own sovereignty (mainly in the field of economy and security), they and the national elites are moving the focus on the cultural and identity aspects of the statehood.

References:
Bunčák, Ján and Magdaléna Piscová. 2000. Modern National Identity of Slovaks and their Attitude Towards Europe. In: Slovak Sociological Review, vol. 32, No. 3.
Bútora, Martin and Zora Bútorová. 2003. Neznesiteľná ľahkosť rozpadu. In: Vodička, Karel (ed.). Dělení Československa. Deset let poté… Praha. Volvox Globator, pp. 69-104.
Bútorová, Zora and Oľga Gyárfášová and Marián Velšic. 1999. Verejná mienka. In: Mesežnikov, Grigorij and Michal Ivantyšyn (eds.). Slovensko 1998 - 1999. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti. Bratislava: IVO, pp. 240-262.
Bútorová Zora and Oľga Gyárfášová. 2007. Public Opinion. In: Bútora, Martin and Grigorij Mesežnikov and Miroslav Kollár (eds): Slovakia 2006. A Global Report on the State of Society. Bratislava: IVO, pp. 221-246.
Názory občanov SR a ČR na rozdelenie spoločného štátu sa zmenili v prospech samostatnosti. Bratislava: IVO - Praha: STEM 2004.
Za posledné dva roky sa zvýšila hrdosť občanov na svoju vlasť. Bratislava: IVO 2005.

POPULISM AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

VÁCLAV NEKVAPIL

In the process of democratic transition that began at the start of the 1990s throughout the post-communist world, the countries of Central Europe have enjoyed an enormous advantage as compared to the states of Eastern Europe, namely, that the democratic transition has also freely transformed itself into the process of Euro-Atlantic integration. While in the majority of post-Soviet states the "old-new" political elites have been seeking national political programmes to guarantee governments politically independent of oversight (or opposition) from Moscow, the countries of Central Europe began implementing plans for the fastest possible "return to Europe" and integration into the European Community. In the mid-1990s, after the EU adopted the Copenhagen Criteria (1993), the vision of entry for the Central European post-communist countries became somewhat more tangible - even if more distant - and was given a clear, concrete content in addition to its symbolic dimension.

The phenomenon of the growth of populism in Central Europe has been accompanied by a lack of political figures stemming from the unique political situation of these countries in the second half of the 1990s. The adoption of the acquis communautaire, the reform of institutions and the courts, the decentralisation of the state were all pre-ordained for us and evaluated in an annual "report card" from Brussels. Agenda-setting, placing items on the table, implementing a political vision for the country in the decades to come - none of this ever had to be resolved by politicians once the decision was made to join the EU. Real political figures do not develop by working every day on a routine dictated by others - politicians must be the masters of their own political destinies, which they communicate to the public and then implement.

Each of the Visegrád countries has undergone its own specific development. The constant factor has been a faster or slower approximation to the EU, especially during the time of the authoritarian Mečiar government in Slovakia, which the EU and NATO wanted nothing to do with. In the Czech Republic, three political figures have developed, of which two (Václav Klaus and Miloš Zeman) based their political careers on an often populist interpretation of the transformation era; the third (Václav Havel) based his career on being the guarantor of the ideals of the Velvet Revolution. However, as of the second half of the 1990s, none of these politicians were required to come up with a completely new vision for the direction of society, nor were they required to gain public support for such a vision.

The political agenda of the long process of Czech transformation has been pretty much exhausted by entry into the European Union, and this is why such a wide variety of expectations were linked to EU entry. The euro-sceptics saw that date as a loss, the pinnacle of a process from without, the restriction of the sovereign right to choose our own destiny. Of course, it was at the very least irresponsible of them to bring up these topics immediately prior to accession, when the decade-long effort could only have been reversed with great difficulty and at a high cost. Had the critics of the EU direction (led by Václav Klaus) presented an alternative vision of a sovereign Central European "island" in the mid-1990s, their position would have been much more believable and realistic.

There were two kinds of expectations in the Czech Republic regarding EU entry: financial and moral. The first expectation came home to roost as the tax pop-

ulism of the 2006 elections. The second, an expectation of compensation for political injustices (typical, for example, of Poland), is difficult to fulfil, and the frustration of its not being satisfied has led to the popularity of the anti-EU policy conducted by the president, the Communists, and some Czech MEPs.

Almost all of the Visegrád countries suffered the loss of a long-term vision for the future during the period closest to EU entry. Each country sought equilibrium in its own way, determined primarily by the nature of its political culture. The classic definition of political, or rather, civic culture (as defined by Almond and Verba) says it is a "complex of symbols and values relevant to the situation in which political activity is realized". All of the post-totalitarian countries have sought and are continuing to seek ways to reconnect to their own traditional political contexts; EU entry has merely reactivated some cultural instincts present in Central European political systems and honed them into populist forms.

This can be seen in what was termed the "wave of populism" that washed over Central Europe during 2004-2006. In Poland, euro-sceptic concerns strengthened the agrarian populism of Samoobrona RP (Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland) and the Catholic-conservative populism of the Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families). In Slovakia, there was a backlash against wide-ranging reforms in the form of the social, egalitarian, anti-elitist populism of the current governing coalition. Hungary, drowning in an economic crisis, has undergone disillusionment not only with its own government, but also with its relative backwardness and the fact that EU entry has not changed the situation much. Conservative forces there are beginning to draw on the darkest traditions of the Hungarian past (i.e., the Hungarian Guard), and both national and social populisms are the only weapon of an opposition that is weak in parliament but strong in the streets.

Here we are conceiving of populism primarily as a tool used in political discourse. Democratic politics cannot avoid the use of populist methods; however, there also needs to be some sort of solid core of ideas which, if approved by the public, legitimises the populist "vehicle". Should the political process lose its content ("policy") and be reduced merely to its power and procedural aspects ("politics"), there is a danger that populism will completely govern the political space; with the result that perpetuation of this method itself becomes the only goal of the political process.

What impact did the entry into the EU have on Czech politics? Why is the Czech situation, in terms of the growth of populism, so different from the other countries with which the Czech Republic has shared the 15-year path towards joining the transatlantic structures? Are the Czechs perhaps immune to populism? Why have the classic populist forces in our country such as Vladimír Železný or the Důchodci za životní jistoty (Pensioners for a Secure Living) so markedly failed?

The reason is primarily the strength - so often criticised - of the Czech party system, which is able to absorb all of the relevant political topics as well as the main cleavages in society. The need, therefore, does not arise to create single-issue parties or parties around extreme personalities. Czech political parties also maintain relatively stable ideological positions and voter bases; today the parties cover all of the main ideological streams established in Western Europe. The specifically "quiet" form of Czech nationalism has prevented the rise of ultra-right wing chauvinism, which only ever took on mass populist forms here during a time of crisis (e.g., the Second Republic). The temporary success of Sládek's Republicans has social roots rather than symbolic-political ones.

There are certainly many reasons Czech political parties deserve sharp criticism - their closed nature, clientelism, a general lack of expertise and talent, centralisation of decision-making, primaries that are not transparent, their unhealthy financial dependency on the state, etc. It is a wonder that, despite these handicaps, the parties do fulfil the role they are intended to in a democracy - they reflect and energise the will of the citizenry and bring basic societal issues into the political space. This fact has prevented the rise of populism, which places its bets on a direct relationship between the citizen and power, not on faith in a facilitating institution.

The president's strategy does represent a specific form of Czech populism. His "populism of irresponsibility" is based on the clever presentation of the president himself as a passionate fighter against matters over which he has not the slightest influence. For the two-thirds of the citizenry who trust Václav Klaus, according to public opinion polls, the president is a courageous and uncompromising leader defending "us" against the traps of the outside world. Few people spend their daily lives reflecting on matters using such abstract terminology as "threats to human freedom", "doubting the results of the Second World War", "state sovereignty" or "standard mechanisms of democracy". The substance of any of

these problems (most of which are either completely inaccessible to the lay pub-lic or, if accessible, have been ideologically distorted) is sidelined, and the public's attention is focused on empty gestures, "professorial" posing, and, most of all, on the emotions which remain long after the topic at hand has been forgotten.

The president's populism is very unique, in that those who buy into it will find nothing there that corresponds to their own experience. The president does not speak in specific terms about social matters such as money, transportation, health care or education. That is the task of the government and of politicians, who are rewarded with votes on the basis of how the electorate evaluates their performance. This detachment from everyday politics and lack of responsibility for genuine governance gives the president a wide area in which to manoeuvre.

May 1, 2004 did not just mark the end of something, but was primarily the begin-ning of a much more complicated period in which the Czech Republic is seeking its place on the map of Europe. The openness of the Czech Republic vis-à-vis the European Union and the rest of the world brings with it other enormous chal-lenges to which we once again can expect to see populist reactions. One of these challenges will be increasing immigration, the creation of a multiethnic and multicultural society, and the end, therefore, of what has been a 50-year his-torical anomaly, during which one almost completely homogenous nation lived here in the Czech lands. This dynamic transformation of Czech society is becom-ing another great challenge for the political parties. Should the parties prove unable to absorb these new cleavages and interpret them into political cate-gories within the framework of the political system, there is a danger that these topics will once again be taken up by the populists.

CLOSING REMARKS

JIŘÍ DIENSTBIER

In his speech Mr. Dienstbier presented two aspects of spread of populism: the role of media and decline of state power are the key factors. Populism keeps spreading partly due to globalisation - this phenomenon weakens state power and strenghtens the position of non-governmental actors, "including terrorists", Mr. Diensbier outlined. State power used to have the possibility to define the rules, now this is different - NGOs funcionning on global level cannot be controlled. Mr. Dienstbier stressed that we have to define what can be solved on what level and to find a balance. Populism profits at this uncertainty about positions of governments.

Second aspect is the role of media: formerly, journalists wanted to create a plastic picture of what is happening in the world, now we do not have proper reports and people get simplified information; media do not mediate between citizens and politics, which also helps populism.

Mr. Dienstbier asked where are the real leaders today. Politicians are trained how to win the election but not what to do after it. It is necesseary to get back to the idea that politicians are people offering a vison, he concluded.

(executive summary)

HOW CENTRAL EUROPEAN POPULISM EXPLOITS ANTI-ROMA SENTIMENT

GWENDOLYN ALBERT

It is generally acknowledged that the post-1989 transition of the Visegrad coun-tries[1] to democracy and capitalism has negatively impacted the social situation of the Roma minority. Building on a longstanding European tradition of viewing the Roma as culturally inferior (if not inherently criminal)[2], populists in Central Europe have relied on the use of negative stereotypes regarding the Roma in order to curry favor with voters, for the most part successfully. The generalizations employed constitute a sort of cultural touchstone for many in the region, a litany of com-plaints to be recited by majority-ethnicity members to one another regarding the Roma, complaints that will sound familiar to anyone who has experienced racist

---

1 For the purposes of this paper, "Central Europe" will be considered to constitute the Visegrad countries of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

2 Researcher Zuzana Kršjaková writes: "…in the 15th century, the Church focused on the incoherence between Romany behaviour and western society… . This antipathy escalated until a cruel pogrom was perpetrated. Romany refugees from German countries found protection in Poland. The Austrian Empress, Maria Theresa, was the first to give them security within her lands." Zuzana Kršjaková, ROMA FROM V4 COUNTRIES AT THE GATE OF EU, http://www.visegrad.info/?q=sk/node/77. Accessed 2 November 2007.

rhetoric anywhere else on the planet. Members of the despised group are "dirty, dishonest, and lazy" as a class, and no shining examples of the "clean", honest, industrious members of that minority will ever convince the racists otherwise, so great is their need to believe in their own implied superiority.

Attempts by human rights advocates to point out the connection between discriminatory behavior on the part of the larger society and the socially excluded status of most of the Roma still fall for the most part on deaf ears, with the victims resoundingly blamed for their own destitution. As at other times in European history, the Roma of Central Europe in the 21st century have become scapegoats for their respective societies' anxieties, ills, and uncertainties; this time around, the ills are those engendered by the transition to market economies. This process has not confined itself to the realm of myth-making or rhetoric, but has resulted in the active social exclusion of the Roma minority in the countries under examination here, as well as in violent murders of Roma committed by members of extremist organizations. This paper will briefly provide a few examples of the recent exploitation of both anti-Roma words and deeds by Central European populists.

Political scientist Jacques Rupnik[3] recently described the current state of the Visegrad democracies as follows:

> "Since elections took place in all of the Visegrad countries in the last two years, the region has been characterized by political instability and low levels of predictability among political actors. Perhaps more worrying is an erosion of trust in democratic institutions. According to a recent Gallup International poll, eastern central Europeans appear to be the most skeptical concerning the state of democracy (only about one-third trust the democratic process). In contrast to a majority of western Europeans, eastern Europeans do not consider their elections free and fair. To the question "Do you think your voice matters?" some 22 per cent give a positive reply. Democracy today has no rivals but is losing supporters. Populist movements … express that ambivalence and discontent."

---

3   http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-09-10-rupnik-en.html. Accessed 2 November 2007.

Rupnik goes on to characterize Central European populism as a) anti-liberal and b) anti-constitutional, in the sense that electorates refuse to accept that consti-tutional norms should take primacy over popular grievances. While noting that nationalist populism is indeed a trans-European phenomenon, he claims that, unlike the 1930s, today's populists do not see themselves as an alternative to democracy, but are content to operate within the context of the European Union. Indeed, Rupnik calls populism "the greatest test of the EU's much-debated 'absorption capacity'."

The Czech Republic

The First Czechoslovak Republic, predecessor state to today's Czech Republic and Slovakia, is considered to have been Central Europe's best-developed democra-cy at the start of the 20th century. Be that as it may, the Roma were always con-sidered second-class citizens even within that democratic system, and the gov-ernment found it politically expedient to promulgate laws which enshrined a view of the Roma way of life as inferior. The early 20th century saw the devel-opment of ever more intensive police monitoring of Roma throughout Europe in general, and in 1927, laws were passed in Czechoslovakia prohibiting Roma from engaging in the "traveler" lifestyle, an itinerant or nomadic way of life they had practiced for centuries.[4]

The Nazi occupation carved Czechoslovakia into the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" and the Slovak puppet state. The Nazi Holocaust all but achieved its aim regarding the Roma and Sinti indigenous[5] to Bohemia and Moravia - 95 % of them were exterminated, either in the "Gypsy" section of the Auschwitz death camp or in concentration camps at Lety by Pisek[6] (Bohemia) and Hodonin by Kunstat (Moravia), or somewhere in between.

---

4   The right to this lifestyle was recently upheld by the European Court for Human Rights in its 2004 decision in the matter of "Connors vs. the U.K.".

5   In the sense that their ancestors have been born there and their dead have been buried there for hundreds of years. Originally from India, the Roma made their way across Southeastern Europe and first appeared in the region of Poland in the early 15th century.

6   For more than 10 years, relatives of those who perished at Lety have been trying without success to get the government to remove an industrial pig farm located on the site of this former concentration camp.

After the 1948 communist putsch in the restored Czechoslovakia, a government program to assimilate the Roma minority was begun. The postwar expulsion of ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland resulted in a lack of a labor force in Bohemia and Moravia, so the communists forcibly resettled Roma from Slovakia to these areas, touting as "progress" the fact that their rural, materially impoverished lifestyle was being replaced by "guaranteed" housing in panel flats, "guaranteed" employment in state enterprises, and mandatory school attendance. The bourgeois notion of ethnic identity was to be replaced by the new socialist man, and the Roma were described as benefiting from the "civilizing" care of the state.[7]

The rebirth of democracy in 1989 reintroduced political freedoms to Czechoslovakia which had not been enjoyed for more than fifty years. Nationalism resurfaced as well, resulting in the non-violent breakup of the country in 1993 into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This nationalism has formed the basis of populist political movements in both countries. Intolerance and discrimination in general have spread, with the Roma targeted for a particular kind of antipathy to which no other ethnic group is subjected in the Czech Republic. The late 1990s saw a growing "skinhead" neo-Nazi movement of right-wing extremist Czech nationalists, who, in the name of "preserving national identity", have committed murder and other violence against the Roma minority with the tacit support of the majority society.[8]

In the Czech Republic, the market economy has delivered the Roma a double blow, since not only are they the least-qualified entrants onto the labor market,

---

7   This "care" included incentivized sterilization of Romani women without their informed consent, as reported in December 2005 by the Czech Public Defender of Rights in his "Final Statement of the Public Defender of Rights in the Matter of Sterilisations Performed in Contravention of the Law and Proposed Remedial Measures." It was also at this time that the practice of tracking Roma children into remedial education began, a practice recently condemned by the European Court for Human Rights in its 2007 verdict on "D.H. and others vs. the Czech Republic".

8   Illustrative in this regard is the reaction in 1996 of the Czech public to the murder of a Sudanese student by a skinhead in Prague, which prompted demonstrations and condemnation by then-Prime Minister Zeman. Such a public outpouring of sympathy for a victim and condemnation of a perpetrator has never accompanied any of the violent incidents, including fatalities, committed against the Roma minority in the Czech lands since 1989.

they have been displaced from their communist-era economic niche, that of manual labor, by an influx of cheap labor from further east, particularly the Ukraine. The resulting destitution and welfare dependency means the practice of usury has become quite developed in the Roma community, sometimes conducted by local loan sharks from the community itself, but also practiced openly by various corporate entities as standard business. As social stratification based on income continues to further impact Czech society, the phenomenon of "white flight" has occurred, with upwardly mobile Czechs preferring to live as far from their Roma (or any lower-class) neighbors as possible. Spatial segregation and "ghettoisation" of the Roma has developed during the past 10 years to a degree not seen in Czech society since WWII.

The parliamentary and communal elections in 2006 saw a rise in populist political entities attempting to play on anti-Roma sentiment in the Czech Republic. For example, in January 2006, the recently formed "Narodni strana" (National Party) held a demonstration at the site of the former World War II concentration camp for Roma at Lety by Pisek. At the demonstration, speakers aired the view that the "real victims" of WWII were ethnic Czechs; that Roma who died at Lety were responsible for their own deaths due to their "dirty" practices; and that plans to remove the pig farm located on the site in honor of the dead were not worth the expenditure.[9] At the demonstration, private security guards working for the party physically attacked two counter-demonstrators who shouted "Down with Nazism"[10]; the counter-demonstrators were then arrested for allegedly having committed the misdemeanor of "verbally disrupting" the demonstration.[11] The counter-demonstrators and other observers filed criminal charges against the National Party, but the police investigation subsequently

---

9   "Ultrapravicová NS pořádá akci na místě bývalého romského koncentračního tábora v Letech u Písku", Praha, 12. 1. 2006, 11:43 (ROMEA/ČTK), http://www.romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0009; "Skandální výroky předsedkyně Národní strany přesahují všechny meze. Edelmannová: Romové si za svou smrt mohou sami", Praha, 13. 1. 2006, 11:20 (ROMEA) AKTUALIZOVANO http://www.romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0012.

10   "Chronologický vývoj skandálu kolem aktivity Národní strany v Letech u Písku", Praha, 20.1.2006, 13:30 (ROMEA), http://www.romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0053.

11   "Policie zadržela v Letech dva proromské aktivisty." Lety u Písku, 21.1.2006, 13:41 (ČTK) http://www.romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0056.

found no crime had been committed by the National Party, referring to an expert opinion of the Czech Academy of Sciences which claimed that the camp at Lety "could not be recognized as either a concentration or extermination camp," as well as claiming police recordings of the speeches showed they did not include "an open declaration of ideas which would support, question, or try to justify genocide."[12] Thus undeterred by the state, the party continued its activities in May 2007, when demonstrators at the annual memorial ceremony at Lety wore signs lamenting the deaths of the Czechoslovak guards who had died during the typhus epidemic that had led to the camp's closure. Once again, the police did nothing to stop this behavior, so clearly aimed at causing pain to the relatives of the survivors. It is difficult to imagine a similar demonstration mourning the deaths of guards at Auschwitz or any other concentration camp site being permitted elsewhere in Europe.

The National Party's actions were not the first time a politician had provoked controversy by making racist remarks during an election year,[13] but their foray into Roma Holocaust denial did not earn them enough votes to enter Parliament. However, anti-Roma sentiments and actions were to prove surprisingly effective for a different political party (a mainstream one) later that year. In October 2006 in the town of Vsetin, local authorities from the Christian Democratic Party expelled Romani tenants living in city-owned property in the town center to new housing on the edge of town, thereby creating a de facto racially segregated housing estate. Most disturbingly, some of the tenants were expelled to extremely substandard housing in an entirely other region of the country.

On 5 October 2006, Vsetin held a "grand opening" for its "new Roma ghetto," as it was frankly referred to in the media, a new housing estate designed "espe-

---

12 "Policie: Členové Národní strany neporušili v Letech zákon", Písek, 16.6.2006, 10:36 (ČTK), http://www.romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0393.

13 Christian Democratic candidate for the lower house František Straka dropped out of the race in March 2006 after making racist comments about people of Vietnamese origin ("It is immeasurably important for us to keep our [Czech] entrepreneurs in the region. The abuse that goes on here, including the person who was appointed by the Vietnamese, etc. - this shouldn't be here, we should get rid of it.") "Čunek rozdělil lidovce", 4.11.2006, Právo, pg. 4. Czech President Vaclav Klaus and Czech PM Jiri Paroubek have also faced criticism in this vein, Klaus for minimizing the Roma Holocaust and Paroubek for sharing the stage with a comedian who made jokes at the expense of the Roma.

cially for inadaptable citizens" (a frequently-used euphemism for the Roma). The opening was attended by 40 municipal representatives from towns all over the Czech Republic, who praised the project to the press as a model one. Mayor of Vsetin Jiri Cunek told the media the flats would be assigned to tenants who "meet their civic obligations…by not supporting criminal behavior by their children, and by paying their rent regularly. We will do our best to get the rest out of the city."[14] The tenants received month-to-month contracts and the mayor reportedly stated that anyone with whom a contract had to be terminated would be immediately "put out on the street." Tenants of the new units quickly learned that all heating in the buildings ran on electricity and that they were being charged for it at the highest possible rate.[15]

On Friday 13 October 2006, Mayor Cunek then had those Romani families who were, in his words, the most "problematic" transported into the region of Olomouc in the middle of the night. Some of the families were expelled to places as far as 230 kilometres from Vsetin. The town had purchased properties in isolated areas throughout the Olomouc region, and was reselling them - sight unseen - to the "problematic" families, who were also to be loaned the money for purchasing these properties by the town of Vsetin. One Roma NGO sent an open letter to the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs criticizing social workers (employed by Vsetin with Council funding) for their role in telling the families that should the parents refuse to assume these debts and sign the purchase agreements, the outcome would be that their children would be remanded into state care.

The families were dropped off in front of various dilapidated buildings in isolated areas, some of which were actually barns or stables. Olomouc regional officials were not notified that these families would be placed in these out-of-the-way locales in a region suffering high unemployment. Some of the original owners of the properties told the media the buildings were not fit for human habita-

---

14 "Vsetínská radnice začala stěhovat Romy do ghetta na periferii města", Vsetín, 11.10.2006, 12:21, (ČTK/ROMEA), http://www.romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0624.

15 "Romy vystěhované do Poschly trápí vysoké náklady na bydlení",Vsetín, 2.11.2006, 17:11, (ČTK), http://romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0706.

tion and that they would never have agreed to the sale had they known the town's intentions. A total of approximately 100 people were forcibly expelled in this way,[16] and the Czech Public Defender of Rights later issued a report which found their rights had been violated. Several United Nations human rights oversight bodies have also condemned the evictions.[17]

The creation of the new ghetto, the expulsions out of the region, and Mayor Cunek's accompanying remarks in the media[18] were protested by Roma across the country, by human rights observers, and by Government Council for Roma Community Affairs Secretary Czeslaw Walek, who observed that the timing of the "grand opening" of the new housing coincided with the run-up to municipal and Senate elections on 20 October 2006. Cunek's party, the Christian Democrats, won the Vsetin municipal elections with 26.01% and he himself won the most preferential votes on the ticket. He also won the first round of the Senate elections, with 44% of the votes, and on 9 December 2006 secured the national leadership of the party. He was subsequently appointed First Deputy

16 "Roma Vidnava: Terénní sociální pracovníci ve Vsetíně selhali" Vidnava, 3. 11. 2006, 12:08, (ROMEA), http://romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0712. For photographs of the condition of the buildings which the deported families are expected to buy, see http://romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0694.

17 CCPR/C/CZE/CO/2, 9 August 2007, Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee (Czech Republic), point 16: "The State party should take effective measures to combat discrimination. In particular, it should: … d) Prevent unjustified evictions and dismantle segregation of Roma communities in housing." CERD/C/CZE/CO/7, March 2007, Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Czech Republic), point 16: "The Committee reminds the State party that it may not invoke the right to housing to all provisions of its internal law as a justification for its failure to implement the Convention, and urges the State party to adopt all steps necessary to ensure the without discrimination, whether direct or indirect, based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, including in particular at the local level. The State party should ensure that domestic legislation clearly prohibits racial discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to housing, and protects vulnerable persons, including Roma, from evictions. In particular, such legislation should include measures providing the greatest possible security for tentns and strictly enumerate the circumstances under which evictions may be carried out."

18 "I feel like a doctor ridding someone of boils," Cunek told the press ("Já si připadám jako lékař, který tyto vředy čistí,"). Responding later to criticism of this statement, he claimed to have meant by "boils" the building slated for demolition from which he had evicted the Roma. "Čunek: Za čištěním vředu si stojím, Kasal a další jen blábolí", Praha, 3.11.2006, 01:15, (ROMEA/ČTK)" http://romea.cz/index.php?id=servis/z2006_0710

Prime Minister and Regional Development Minister. During the course of 2007 he managed to make controversial offensive remarks about the Roma several times before being forced to step down when information leaked that he had collected welfare payments during the 1990s despite having millions in the bank. Corruption charges against him having since been dropped, as of this writing the path is now open for him to return to government, and his supporters continue to passionately defend him as a man who, as far as the Roma are concerned, simply says out loud what everyone else in the country believes but dare not express for fear of being labeled "politically incorrect".

Hungary

Researcher Zuzana Kršjaková quotes an examination of Hungarian state policy towards the Roma performed by the Roma Press Agency which finds that compared to the other V4 countries, the Hungarian government's methods have been more liberal and Roma institutions in the country have been comparatively more respected.[19] It is certainly clear that in terms of political representation, the Roma in Hungary far surpass their V4 colleagues - and indeed their Western European ones - as two Romani women are currently Members of the European Parliament from Hungary. This is primarily due to laws facilitating the retention of local-level independence, which have strengthened Roma political access.

In general the split between populists, identified with inhabitants of rural Hungary, and "urbanists" goes back to the post-WWI period of the country's history. While some populists joined the far right in the late 1930s and early 1940s, others joined the communists after WWII.[20] The FIDESZ party in Hungary, currently in opposition, has long been noted for its flirtation with the far right. The current polarization between the post-socialist government and the opposition has produced what commentators are calling a "civil war mentality" in the country, as exemplified by riots in Budapest in 2006 and ongoing demonstrations in 2007.

In early 2007, opposition leader Viktor Orban said in a speech that he understood parents who didn't want to send their children to schools attended by Roma chil-

---

19   Zuzana Kršjaková, ROMA FROM V4 COUNTRIES AT THE GATE OF EU, http://www.visegrad.info/?q=sk/node/77
     Accessed 2 November 2007.

20   http://esbalogh.typepad.com/hungarianspectrum/2007/09/lakitelek-twent.html. Accessed 26 November 2007.

dren.[21] Later that year, the Budapest-based European Roma Rights Center report-ed a wave of anti-Roma media coverage spread through Hungary in the after-math of a tragic incident.[22] Mr Lajos Szögi, aged 44, hit an eleven-year old Romani girl with his car and was subsequently beaten to death by an angry mob. Major commercial Hungarian TV channels and dailies indiscriminately labelled the alleged perpetrators of Mr Szögi's death as "the Roma", with some even inciting their readers to racist violence. For example, an article by Zsolt Bayer in the 17 October 2006 issue of "Magyar Nemzet" advised drivers who run over Romani children in the future not to stop, but to keep on driving.

Poland

The populist Kaczynski government of the right-wing conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS), which was recently resoundingly defeated in early elections, was marked by religious ultra-conservatism. Andzrej Lepper's Self-Defense (Samoobrona) and the nationalist Catholic League of Polish Families parties have also long made either coded or explicit racist appeals the core of their rhetoric. Some observers say the recent rise to power of the populist right in Poland is due to political liberalism having been discredited by the "shock tactics" applied to the Polish economy during the 1990s.

Far fewer Roma are said to live in Poland than in the other V4 countries. According to the European Roma Rights Center,[23] the low estimates of Roma quoted by the Polish authorities are used to downplay the problems Romani communities face and to deny the persistent nature of anti-Romani sentiment in the majority population. Extreme right-wing nationalist groups, however, routinely claim far larger numbers for the Roma in their propaganda than do official figures.

From the communist 1970s up until 1995, at least 10 anti-Roma pogroms involv-ing mob violence occurred in Poland, with extremist organisations the most explicit propagators of anti-Romani sentiment, frequently appealing for violence to be committed against the Roma and others.[24] Some Romani leaders contend

---

21 http://www.eurotopics.net/en/search/results/archiv_article/ARTICLE2449. Accessed 26 November 2007.

22 Hungarian Media Promotes Anti-Romani Hatred. http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2776&archiv=1 Accessed 25 November 2007.

23 The Limits of Solidarity: Roma in Poland after 1989. European Roma Rights Center, Budapest.

24 The Limits of Solidarity: Roma in Poland after 1989. European Roma Rights Center, Budapest.

the post-1989 violence against the Roma was caused by perceptions that some Romani communities were accumulating wealth. Whatever the excuse, anti-Roma graffiti and posters began appearing throughout the country after 1989, and surveys throughout the 1990s indicated the Roma were the least-liked ethnic group in Poland. Racist literature became widely available in kiosks, and the local media have become infamous for inciting anti-Roma sentiment, which is also reportedly propagated by influential institutions such as the Catholic Church and media associated with them.

Like elsewhere in the region, the Roma in Poland find themselves the targets of racially motivated violence by skinheads, of police abuse, and of systematic racial discrimination.[25] The Polish police and judiciary have been slow to respond to the crimes committed against the Roma and to acknowledge racial motivation as part of the picture; indeed, the police and other authorities in Poland are frequently themselves perpetrators of violence against the Romani minority. Direct and indirect discrimination pervade all aspects of the relationship between the non-Romani majority and the Romani minority.

According to research published by the ERRC prior to Polish EU accession in 2004, Polish local authorities routinely refuse to register Roma as residents in local administrative units; the Romani minority seems to be the only one systematically precluded from such registration, which is often a precondition for access to housing, welfare and other public services. Local-level politicians have been particularly vocal about their reasons for rejecting Romani residents. Mr Leszek Zegzda, deputy-mayor of Nowy Sącz, Małopolska province, told the ERRC in 2001: "Roma are not able to assimilate to the majority. They are all half-illiterate or illiterate. They do not know anything. They are lazy, not honest, and they are not good workers. The whole Romani problem is a problem of the head, […] which means that they are stupid."[26]

Slovakia
The current coalition government in the smallest V4 country, Slovakia (population 5 million) is a combination of leftwing populist anti-capitalists - Fico's social

---

25   The Limits of Solidarity: Roma in Poland after 1989. European Roma Rights Center, Budapest.

26   The Limits of Solidarity: Roma in Poland after 1989. European Roma Rights Center, Budapest.

democratic Smer party - and extremist rightwing nationalists whose anti-liberal-ism specifically targets national minorities, Hungarians as well as the Roma. Jan Slota, the leader of the Slovak National Party, was recently reported as saying that he envied the Czechs for having expelled the Germans after WWII and that he would not mind sending Bugar, the leader of the Hungarian minority, to Mars "without a return ticket". The legitimization of such xenophobia is a great threat to liberal democracy in the country, and continues the trend set by Slovak Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, who is infamous for having said, in 1993, "… if we [the Slovaks] don't deal with them [the Roma] now, then they will deal with us in time… ." Meciar's use of anti-Roma sentiment is said by some observers to have been a significant factor in the longevity of his popularity.

An estimated half a million Roma live in Slovakia, which is afflicted with partic-ularly high unemployment and poverty in its eastern regions, and approximately 75% of the Roma are dependent on welfare. Several years ago riots broke out in the Roma settlements in response to the right-wing government's welfare reforms, and the government responded by deploying the military to control the unrest.

In a 1997 report entitled "Time of the Skinheads: Denial and Exclusion of Roma in Slovakia", the ERRC outlined the situation for Slovak Roma in stark terms, reporting in detail on pogroms and mob violence committed against the Roma in the years following the breakup of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic. The inci-dents described involve vandalism, bombings, and assaults in every possible venue, from people's homes to school classrooms to on board trains, as well as ghastly murders in which victims were set on fire.

In the late 1990s, skinheads and other violent nationalists constituted a force to be reckoned with in Slovakia, attracting many young followers with their calls for a "white Slovakia". Romani activists reported that many skinheads were actu-ally the sons (and daughters) of police officers and other respected community members. Denial of crimes was commonplace, with Romani victims of violent murders being officially diagnosed has having died of "unknown causes" and no investigations ever opened into their deaths. In cases where the crimes were wit-nessed by too many people to be denied, as in the 1996 case of 30 skinheads attacking a group of Romani schoolchildren outside a hockey rink yelling "We will kill all Gypsies," the racial dimension of the incidents has usually been down-

played by officials, who nearly always consider the youth of the perpetrators a mitigating circumstance. Lastly, a common tactic by police perpetrators of violence against the Roma has been to subsequently charge their victims with having initiated the violent encounter. Off-duty officers are also known to have participated in several incidents of mob violence.

The ERRC traces the genesis of this disturbing social circumstance as follows:

> "Independent Slovakia's historical-genealogical connections with a Nazi collaborator state caused uneasiness among its neighbors and led to a generally negative treatment of the idea of an independent Slovakia in the international press. The negative image…was not improved by…the steadily increasing incidence of skinhead attacks against Roma and a normative anti-Romani sentiment among the wider populace. The government of nationalizing Slovakia was elected on a populist platform and at present…the real heat of Slovak national populism is felt by Roma."[27]

Unfortunately, ten years on from this report, very little can be said to have changed for the Roma minority in Slovakia, and nationalist populism remains in full swing there.

As can be seen from the details outlined above, the Roma have borne the brunt of the societal changes in Central Europe in the post-communist era, and there is little political capital to be made in those societies from calling for a stop to their persecution, not to mention for their equal treatment. The challenge to liberal democrats is to promote multiculturalism inside these societies, all of which are not only passionately nationalist and prone to populism, but which remain democratically immature. Hopefully wiser heads than the Cuneks or the Meciars will prevail in future the Visegrad 4 will be steered towards a politics of respect and dignity for all.

---

27 "Time of the Skinheads: Denial and Exclusion of Roma in Slovakia", ERRC (1997).

POPULISM IN CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN POLITICS

LUKÁŠ BENDA

1. Definition of populism

This study seeks an answer to the question of whether populism has occurred on the Hungarian political scene in recent years and in what forms. Given the problematic nature of the concept of populism, the various levels at which it can be used, and the various methods of its use, I consider it necessary to first define the meaning of the term as it will be used in this text.

At the level of political strategy and tactics, those performances are usually called "populist" which, in the interest of maximising electoral support, involve a party or politician making promises (especially on social matters) which are significantly attractive for the target group of voters but which are unrealistic in terms of ever being fulfilled as they would place a disproportionate burden on the public budget or might face other obstacles (e.g., international obligations). Of course, the tactic of more or less irresponsible pre-election promises is part of the general tendency of contemporary western democracies, in which communication through the mass media necessarily leads to the simplification of political messages.

However, the concept of populism can also be used in relation to the ideological positions of political subjects. At this level, the essence of populism is a strong cult of the people, not "just" as the source of all democratic state power, but as "the source of all values, all wisdom and everything good"[1]. The "people" as thus conceived are placed in opposition to the elites. Here the antagonism of the people versus the elites and anti-elitism are essential features of populism. Political elites are considered useless, as politics must rest directly in the people. The populist critique of elites is not focused only against traditional elites, but also against revolutionary elites who implement innovative ideas - notions which may sometimes have been imported, but which are "strange" to the people in any event, even if of domestic origin.[2] From this anti-elitism comes the populist critique of representative democracy as a system which creates political elites and maintains them in power separate from the rest of society and from the people. The analysis of the antagonism between the people and the elites is sometimes formulated as a conspiracy theory providing a simple explanation for the actions of the elites "against the people".

Populism posits direct democracy as an alternative to representative democracy. Populist subjects implement the widespread use of instruments of direct democracy (referenda, petitions) and make ample use of demonstrations, protest actions, long-term movements, etc. as their means of political struggle.

Some other features of populism derive from the cult of "the people" and its critique of elites and can become part of various ideologies. Along with the central position of "the people" - "ordinary people" - there is normally an emphasis on traditional values: Family, nation, relationship to the earth, and sometimes also religious faith. "The people" are precisely the bearers of these values in their most authentic forms. Another related element is an anti-market, anti-capitalist, and anti-globalisation orientation. Populist politicians often take aim at the negative impacts of capitalist economics and market mechanisms on individuals and on the people as a whole (e.g., a falling birth rate) and demand the state take action to protect against these influences. The above-mentioned anti-elitism,

---

1   Debreczeni, J.: Vezérjátszmák. In Sándor, P., Vass, L., Tolnai, Á. (eds.): Magyarország politikai évkönyve 2006, Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Alapítvány 2006, p. 338.

2   See Tamás, G. M.: Populizmus és elitizmus. In Élet és Irodalom 2005/51 (www.es.hu)

therefore, decidedly does not mean a call to minimise the state. Far from it: The state is to be the strong protector both of traditional values and of socioeconomic interests and needs.

In this brief characterisation, it can be seen that both traditionally right-wing and left-wing elements are often combined in populist politics. Along with rejecting political elites, populism also rejects the division of the elites into left and right.

2.   Populism in the Hungarian party system after 1989
In the 1990s the radical Hungarian right was most often "accused of populism". In this section we will try to verify whether the radical right-wing groups and their representatives truly correspond to the above-mentioned characteristics of this phenomenon.

2.1   Hungarian Truth and Life Party (MIÉP)
The main representative of the extreme nationalist right wing after 1989 was the Hungarian Truth and Life Party (MIÉP), founded and led for many years by István Csurka. During the Kádár regime, Csurka was one of the leading representatives of the so-called people's (i.e., right-wing, conservatively oriented) opposition active in the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) since the end of the 1980s. In 1993, however, he split with the then-governing MDF (he criticised it for straying from conservative nationalist politics and for "too much liberalism") and founded his own party, the MIÉP. In the 1994 elections (to be exact, in the part of the elections held according to the proportional representation system) the MIÉP won only 1.59 % of votes and therefore did not make it into parliament. Four years later the party succeeded in crossing the 5 % barrier (5.47 % of the votes) and from 1998 - 2002 was thus represented in parliament, but in 2002 it remained just under the entrance requirement (4,37 %), and by 2006, running in coalition with the Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary) party, it gained only 2.2 % of the vote.

The MIÉP typically made radical promises which sounded good to many but which would have been difficult to realise, some purely of a material nature (official price ceilings for groceries and medicines, essential increases in pensions and the minimum wage, across-the-board rights to a first flat) and some in other areas (replacement of unemployment benefits with obligatory community

service work, a referendum to reintroduce the death penalty, "liberation of the people from domination by the political-economic-criminal mafia").

In the case of MIÉP, its sharp critique of the Hungarian political elite after 1989 was based in the opinion that the regime change (the "unrealised revolution", as István Csurka labelled it) had not replaced the old communist elite with a new, truly national elite, but that the replacement had been insufficient and made it possible for members of the old elite to return, to transform their one-time political power into economic advantage, etc. Therefore, the Hungarian nation still remains excluded from exercising power[3]. The cowardice and weakness of the Hungarian political elite is, according to the MIÉP, one of the reasons why the fulfilment of the "Hungarian truth" referred to in the name of the party was able to occur after 1989; this is a code word for an attempt to revise the borders of Hungary as set at Trianon on the basis of the self-determination of the ethnic Hungarian populations in the neighbouring states. The second reason "Hungarian truth" remains elusive, according to the MIÉP, is the influence of the superpowers, and a conspiracy theory of superpower machination is a frequent element in the rhetoric of this party. According to the MIÉP, the change in political regimes and subsequent developments have occurred under the direction of the superpowers and of globalised capital ... and the majority of the Hungarian nation is ending up on the side of the defeated.

MIÉP wants to advocate for strengthening the institution of referenda. Demonstrations and protest actions have taken pride of place among the instruments of its political struggle (particularly during the socialist-liberal government of 1994 - 1998).

MIÉP's programme places a great emphasis on traditional Hungarian values, institutions, lifestyles, and the system which represents the concept of "Hungarian life" in the party's name. It is now necessary to protect these values against global mass culture (especially American culture), materialism and consumerism. MIÉP politics sharply oppose the influences of the globalised capital-

---

3   See Szabó, M.: A "nép" és az "elit" populista szembeállítása, mint mobilizációs keretértelmezés (frame) Magyarországon 1989 előtt és után. In Politikatudományi Szemle 2003/4, s. 147.

ist economy (the expansion of supranational firms, liberalisation of imports, etc.). The motif of conspiracy turns up here as well: The party speaks of "the intentional destruction of Hungarian industry and agriculture". As a starting point it proposes strict state control over banking; re-nationalising key branches of the economy and infrastructure; state protection of the domestic market, particularly for small farmers; and other interventions of a strong state into free economic competition. The above-mentioned critique of elites is connected to this anti-globalisation position: According to István Csurka, the political elite is the bearer of this globalisation within which world elites are conspiring against the "peoples" of various countries.[4]

MIÉP does not consider this overlap of right-wing and left-wing elements to be a problem, as it completely rejects drawing distinctions between left and right, calling this an outmoded concept. The party claims to be neither left- nor right-wing, but Christian and Hungarian.[5]

MIÉP is primarily a nationalist party and refers more to the "nation" than to the "people" in its programme documents and speeches. However, its nationalism bears many features which correspond to the definition of populism given above.

2.2   Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP)

The other right-wing subject to be mentioned in connection with populism is the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP). From 1990 - 2002 it was in parliament (in the elections of 1990, 1994 and 1998 it earned 11.73 %, 8.82 %, and 13.15 % of the votes respectively), and in 1990 - 1992 and 1998 - 2002 it was part of the right-wing governing coalition. Its development after 1989 has been marked by many intra-party disputes and splits, which resulted in 2001 in the demise of the party (FKGP won 0.75 % of the vote in the 2002 elections). Since 1991 it was headed by József Torgyán. FKGP can basically be considered to have been a one-man party.

This conservative party, strong on values (its motto was "God - Fatherland - Family"), primarily promoted the interests of the rural agricultural population,

---

4   See Szabó, M.: o. c., s. 150.

5   For more on the MP programme see: Benda, L.: Republika Maďarsko. In Fiala, P., Holzer, J., Strmiska, M. a kol.: Politické strany ve střední a východní Evropě. s. 239 - 240, where sources are also cited.

which it considered the primary bearer of the national identity and culture. The party programme includes promises which would have been difficult to realise (e.g., a constitutional amendment on the right to a first flat, across-the-board family subsidies, repeated reductions to the retirement age), while on the other hand, naturally, the FKGP wanted to introduce a guarantee against irresponsible state spending in the form of a constitutional ban on a state deficit. However, on the basis of its values, the FKGP programme has also formulated some points which might have been expected to provoke negative reactions amongst a large part of the population and which evidently were not focused on mass expansion of the party's voter base (e.g., preservation of obligatory military service).

A critique of elites does not occupy a significant place in the FKGP programme documents, and the party has never displayed a tendency to implement the elements of direct democracy. On the contrary: The party was opposed to a referendum on entry into NATO, for example. FKGP proposed transitioning from the parliamentary model of democracy to a presidential system (which it deemed the most efficient political framework for rapid realisation of the necessary changes) or at least strengthening the powers of the premier (the chancellor model).

The FKGP was sceptical concerning the positive effects of the market, rejecting the thesis that the market would resolve problems in the structure of production, low productivity and competitiveness, etc. The party promoted a market economy with significant room for the state's own economic activity, particularly in the area of agriculture, logically enough. The FKGP was opposed to allowing foreign investors into strategic areas and the large banks.[6]

We find populist elements to only a limited extent in the FKGP programme documents; of course, they do appear more frequently in other party materials (in the party's press), mainly in the rhetoric of the party's representatives, especially that of József Torgyán, who also used rather vulgar formulations in his speeches (his speech at an anti-government demonstration in March 1996, for example, prompted significant outcry). In the case of the FKGP, therefore, we can mostly speak of populism in relation to its political style.

6   For more on the FKGP programme see: Benda, L.: o. c., s. 241 - 243, where sources are also cited.

2.3   The Workers' Party (MP)

So far we have concerned ourselves with the main representatives of the radical right. For the purposes of comparison we shall now take a brief look at the opposite end of the political spectrum. The Workers' Party (MP) was founded in October 1989 by members of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) who did not agree with the dissolution of this former communist state party. It is a continuation of the anti-reform wing of the MSZMP, continues to espouse Marxism, and completely rejects the transition to pluralistic democracy and the market economy. It has never succeeded in any parliamentary elections (in 1990, 1994 and 1998 it always won between 3 and 4 % of the vote, in 2002 2.16 %, and in 2006 only 0.41 % of the vote).

The programme aim of the MP is the adoption of a Socialist Constitution, which will guarantee the broad conveniences of a welfare state (job opportunities for every citizen, a 35-hour work week, free basic education, free health care exclusively in the hands of the state, a return to a lower age for retirement, rights to flats, etc.). The party also promises, for example, to compensate pensioners for the losses they suffered after 1989 and to regulate all consumer goods prices. The MP position on the market economy is dictated by Marxist ideology: The transition to the market economy is considered a step backward and the party demands the re-nationalisation of energy, transport, food production, the defence industry, banking and other areas. Its long-term aim is to nationalize private property.

The MP programme emphasises elements of direct democracy (referenda) and demands the introduction of direct elections for the president of the republic. In 2004 the party initiated a referendum on halting the privatisation of health care facilities. The referendum was realised on 5 December 2004 together with a referendum on dual citizenship for members of the Hungarian minority abroad, initiated by the World Federation of Hungarians. The referendum was unsuccessful due to low voter turnout, even though the campaign was enthusiastically joined by the largest opposition party, The Federation of Young Democrats - Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz-MPSZ), which called on voters to vote yes on both questions. On the other hand, the governing coalition parties called on voters not to participate.

In the case of the radical left-wing MP, there are many populist elements. Even though the party comes from a completely different ideological basis than the

right-wing parties mentioned above, it is very often similar (if not completely identical) to these parties at the level of specific programme points.[7]

We could also subject some of the other parties active on the Hungarian political scene during the 1990s to a similar analysis. For example, the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) or the Hungarian Democratic Forum displayed populist tendencies only temporarily during certain periods (in relation to certain persons in the party leadership). Other subjects with populist features were only marginally significant in the short term.

Before we turn to the question of whether populism is gaining in strength in the politics of those subjects playing a decisive role in the political life of Hungary, let us look at one more radical right-wing, nationalist subject: the "Jobbik" party, the full name of which can be translated as the Movement for a Better Hungary. This party can be compared to the above-described MIÉP party, and it is therefore interesting to compare them both from the standpoint of populist features.

2.4 Movement for a Better Hungary - Jobbik
The Movement for a Better Hungary (hereinafter referred to by its abbreviated Hungarian name, "Jobbik") was founded in 2003 and entered international awareness in 2007 when it founded the Hungarian Guards. Jobbik calls itself a radical national party whose primary aim is to defend national values and interests. The party considers the nation to be the basis of human society, and Hungarian national identity is indivisible from Christianity as far as it is concerned. In its focus, the Jobbik party is therefore very close to the MIÉP party, but there is a generational difference between both parties: Among the founders and leaders of Jobbik, the functionaries are predominantly young men (born after 1975) educated in the humanities. This generational difference is projected into differences in the parties' programmes.

Like the MIÉP, Jobbik also considers the transition from the communist regime to be incomplete; it would like to finish the job and thus establish a more just society based on tradition and conservative values. Jobbik also criticises the existing political elite for failing to defend Hungarian interests thoroughly and

---

7   For more on the programme of MP see: Benda L.: o. c., s. 228 - 229, where sources are also cited.

leading society into an unacceptable situation marked by widening social differences. However, compared to MIÉP, Jobbik documents do not emphasise the antagonism between "the people" (or the nation) and the elites, nor do they involved the motif of conspiracy; their texts are more pragmatic in style.

Social and other promises show up in the Jobbik programme (increased family allowances and more significant tax advantages for families with children; the option of consigning a part of income taxes in order to increase pensions of one's parents; free school meals for children from socially disadvantaged families; creation of a system for aid to the poor, the homeless, and people in social crises; socially acceptable energy prices; improvement of transportation services; improvement of the material situation of teachers, doctors and health care personnel, etc.). On the basis of its values, however, Jobbik has also formulated goals which would probably not have met with the approval of most of society (not extending concessions for commercial television; provision of TV concessions to subjects which would broadcast programmes better corresponding to the values the party promotes; restriction of the number of college students in order to preserve the quality of instruction and the relative value of college diplomas).

Jobbik is sceptical on the usefulness of market mechanisms: The party rejects their introduction into health care, basic education, or public transport (these areas are to remain in the hands of the state). The party calls for a strong state with a decisive influence on the operation of the economy, not only through legislation, but also through ownership rights (the state is to buy back enterprises of strategic importance). The state must be strong in the social area as well (based on the principle of Christian social solidarity), in culture (state support for creators "devoted to national values") and in the media (state oversight of the content of the press).

In an effort to counter those globalising influences which only benefit a narrow "local globalised elite", the party wants to establish a pragmatic programme which "represents the national interest in any given situation to the maximum possible extent". According to Jobbik, EU entry under forced and disadvantageous conditions has had a negative impact on most of Hungarian society: The party wants to hold a referendum on withdrawing from the EU. In 2006 and 2007, Jobbik tried to initiate a referendum on excluding previous functionaries of the communist MSZMP and the Communist Youth Union from holding high

offices in the state administration. Jobbik submitted three referendum questions to the Central Electoral Commission, which rejected them all as being in conflict with the constitutional ban on discrimination.

In its party programme, Jobbik mixes elements of the conservative right with traditionally left-wing demands (an emphasis on social justice; progressive taxation; establishment of new, strong, independent unions to empower labour). As compared to the MIÉP programme, Jobbik includes many more environmental points on its programme.

In comparison to the MIÉP texts, the Jobbik programme is more modern and formulated more specifically. The party bases its programme more on real situations: For example, the party does not simply formulate a negative position on globalisation, but takes into consideration the actual state of affairs (i.e., that supranational firms are already acting in the Hungarian economy) and demands a re-evaluation of their tax breaks and the creation of equal conditions for Hungarian entrepreneurs. Despite the pragmatic style of the party's texts, we do find in the Jobbik programme many features corresponding to the above-mentioned definition of populism. Demonstrations and public gatherings are among this radical group's primary methods of political action.[8]

3. Expansion of populism in recent years

The expansion of populism in Hungarian politics has been spoken of since 2005 - some authors have even called this year "the year of populism" or "the year of a rise in populism".[9] This expansion is understood to mean the more frequent occurrence of populist features, not amongst those political subjects previously described as populist which are rather marginalised today, but among the most significant parliamentary parties, specifically, The Federation of Young Democrats - Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz-MPSZ) and the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). If it is true that populist elements are entering the forefront of both main parties' politics, then populism is becoming a feature of the Hungarian political scene as a whole, since political rivalry takes place primarily between

---

8   Party programme as posted on www.jobbik.hu.

9   For example, Juhász, A., Szabados, K.: A populizmus éve. In Sándor, P., Vass, L., Tolnai, Á. (eds.) 2006: pp. 295-308.

Fidesz-MPSZ and MSZP.[10] In this section we will focus on whether it is possible to really discern populist features in the politics of the two largest parties.

Both parties are led by strong personalities. Fidesz-MPSZ is led by Viktor Orbán, who was party chair from 1993 - 2000 and became chair again in 2003. From 1998 - 2002 he was the head of the coalition government led by Fidesz-MPP and was the party's candidate for prime minister in all subsequent parliamentary elections. His position as party leader was strengthened thanks to some activities discussed below (especially the so-called National Consultations). MSZP has a briefer history of having a strong party leader. Ferenc Gyurcsány first took up this position in the summer of 2005 when the party was recovering from its failure in the presidential elections.[11] Gyurcsány managed to occupy this position thanks to the energy and significant level of activity he displayed when coming to his role as premier in 2004. At the same time, he devoted a great deal of attention to strengthening his position inside the party even though he was not formally its chair.[12]

The leaders of both main political parties have distinguished themselves through good performances as debaters and speakers, as well as their efforts to set the tone of political life. Given their dominant positions at the heads of both parties, the following text will focus primarily on them.

3.1   Federation of Young Democrats - Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz-MPSZ)
In the case of Fidesz-MPSZ it is necessary to return to the period just before the parliamentary elections in 2002, a close race which Fidesz-MPP (prior to its name

10   For the time period 2002 - 2006 there were four parties in parliament whose electoral gains in the 2002 elections were as follows: MSZP: 42.05 %, Fidesz-MPP (i.e., still under the name The Federation of Young Democrats - Hungarian Civic Party) in coalition with MDF: 41.07 %, SZDSZ: 5.57 %. The result of the 2006 elections confirmed the dominant position of two parties: MSZP won 43.21 % of the votes, Fidesz-MPSZ in a coalition with the small KDNP earned 42.03 %, SZDSZ 6.50 % and MDF 5.04 %.

11   The MSZP was not able to nominate a consensus personality acceptable at least to coalition partner SZDSZ, which together with the socialists held more than 50 % of the parliamentary seats; no person was found sufficient for election as president of the republic in the third round of voting. The socialist candidate for the post of head of state was MSZP parliamentary deputy and speaker of the lower house Katalin Szili, and her non-election meant a significant loss of prestige for the party.

12   For more details see: Giró-Szász, A., Héjj, D., Kisgyőri, R., Kitta, G.: A politikai erőtér alakulása 2005-ben. In Sándor, P., Vass, L., Tolnai, Á. (eds.) 2006: p. 181.

change) lost in coalition with MDF. Fidesz-MPP responded to the loss by organising demonstrations and widespread mobilisations of their supporters, out which grew the "civic circles" movement. The aim of this movement, in addition to holding protest actions, was the creation of a network of active party supporters who could be mobilised and made use of during pre-election and other campaigns. The civic circles were integrated into the party over time, and the renaming of the party as a "Union" was related to their incorporation.

After the elections, Fidesz-MPP also managed its own network of places to which citizens could turn with complaints about the electoral process. The party thereby strengthened the impression, held by the dissatisfied part of the electorate, that the elections (held at a time when a Fidesz-MPP politician headed the Interior Ministry) had not really been conducted properly, as well as the impression that the corrective measures already existing in law could not be relied upon.[13] The organisation of such parallel structures cast serious doubt on the functionality of important mechanisms of the parliamentary democracy, and through these measures Fidesz-MPP gained the reputation of being opposed to the system itself.

Part of the Fidesz-MPSZ strategy prior to the next elections was an effort to reach those citizens who had lost faith in politics and politicians. Viktor Orbán tried this in 2005 during his "trips among the people" within the framework of what were termed National Consultations. Orbán visited many places all over Hungary (travelling by public transport) and met with people both at thematically focused discussion gatherings and outside of such formal meetings (e.g., when waiting at tram stops) in order to answer their questions and listen to their problems.[14] He wanted to demonstrate that he was not like other politicians, that he was not out of touch with reality, and that he was on the side of the ordinary people, whose problems he was prepared to solve - perhaps as premier once again after the election. Orbán thereby brought a new dimension to the opposition position of his party; in his opinion, the party's task was not just to monitor the government and its activities (provided there was something to monitor - Fidesz-MPSZ systematically criticised the government for its inaction), but also to facilitate communications of the proposals, concerns and problems of ordinary people to parliament and to the government, i.e., to the political elite.

13   See Szabó, M.: o. c., p. 160.

14   More information can be found in the archives of Orbán's web pages (www.orbanviktor.hu).

The Fidesz-MPSZ electoral programme for the 2006 parliamentary elections was presented as the result of the National Consultations. The party reminded the voters that the Active Nation Programme (as the document was called) was "the first such programme to which more than three million citizens have contributed." Fidesz-MPSZ demonstrated its readiness to solve the practical problems of ordinary people at the end of 2005 (within the framework of the pre-election campaign) as follows: Despite its position as the opposition party, it elaborated a proposal for a government resolution and submitted it to the government, saying that "if [the government] would willing to approve it and adopt it as its own, electrical energy prices could be reduced by 10 % as of 1 March."[15]

It is also significant that, along with the "largest action in the history of Hungarian democracy", as Orbán termed the National Consultations, he also boycotted parliament. As chair of the leading opposition party from 15 May 2002 until 7 November 2005 he did not speak in parliament once, nor did he participate in a significant portion of the negotiations and votes there.

In one interview Orbán declared: "In Hungary there is parliamentary democracy; some place the emphasis on parliament, I emphasise democracy."[16] The elements of direct democracy very often used by Fidesz-MPSZ occupy an important position in its concept of democracy. One case which is significant from the point of view of this study is the so-called National Petition which Fidesz-MPSZ announced on 27 March 2004. It contained these five points: Permanent reduction of prices on medicines; a halt on privatisation; a return to the previous system of support for housing; larger subsidies for farmers; and capping the growth of energy prices to remain below the level of inflation. (Some of these points turned up again in the form of pre-election promises in 2006.) The announcement was followed by an intensive gathering of signatures, of which Fidesz-MPSZ hoped to obtain a million. As Viktor Orbán said, "There cannot be a more democratic answer to the questions important for our country or an answer which would honour the constitution more than that of hundreds of thousands of people, irrespective of party affiliation. [...] There can be no stronger pillar for

---

15 From a television interview with Viktor Orbán cited in Gyulai, A.: A Fidesz-MPSZ ellenzékisége. In Sándor, P., Vass, L., Tolnai, Á. (eds.) 2006: p. 258.

16 Cited in Juhász, A., Szabados, K.: o. c., p. 308.

democracy."[17] Fidesz-MPSZ announced it had reached the millionth signature on 15 May 2004. Another action during which Fidesz-MPSZ gave citizens the opportunity to directly express their political will was a poll prior to the parliamentary election of the president of the republic in 2005. In this poll citizens answered the question of whom they would most like to see as head of state.

Recently a frequently-used political instrument has been the initiative to hold a referendum. Referenda have been initiated not only by Fidesz-MPSZ, but also by many other political parties which were altogether marginal, by unions, and by many private individuals. The Central Electoral Commission (ÚVK) reviews dozens of initiatives every month and rejects most of them. Fidesz-MPSZ and KDNP initiated their campaign in October 2006. By October of the next year, they had submitted sample petitions to the ÚVK on a total of 16 different questions. Of the proposed questions, the ÚVK approved a total of eight, some only after formal corrections to their wording, and some only after the Constitutional Court overturned the original ÚVK rejection. For some of the questions Fidesz-MPSZ turned in petitions to the ÚVK with the necessary 200 000 signatures by registered voters, but the dates has not yet been set for these referenda, which have yet to be realised. Among the questions approved are: Halting the privatisation of public health care facilities (a similar question to that submitted in a referendum in December 2004 - see the section on the Workers' Party above); restriction of the sale of medicines to pharmacies alone; provision of first option to family farms during the purchase of agricultural land and farm-houses; abolition of fees for college tuition, hospital stays and doctor's visits; and two questions concerning cabinet members, state officials and parliamentary deputies publishing their salaries and reporting their assets. On the other hand, the ÚVK rejected referenda on legislating the objective responsibility of the premier and cabinet members for running a budget deficit; on publishing the tax returns of cabinet members, state officials and parliamentary deputies, and on freezing their salaries until euro introduction; on banning political advertising in the press and in public spaces; and on significantly reducing the number of parliamentary seats (from the existing 386 to 200 deputies)[18].

17 Cited in Gyulai A., Juhász, A.: Kampány - ideológia. In Sándor, P., Vass, L., Tolnai, Á. (eds.): Magyarország politikai évkönyve 2005, Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Alapítvány 2005.

18 The exact wording of the questions is available on the web pages of Fidesz-MPSZ (www.fidesz.hu) and the web pages of the ÚVK (www.valasztas.hu), where the relevant ÚVK decisions can also be found.

Fidesz-MPSZ does not intend to apply elements of direct democracy only when in opposition (i.e., it does not conceive of them as merely oppositional tools). Viktor Orbán mentioned this in a television interview where he said: "Should we have the opportunity in the future to bear responsibility for the fate of this country, we will take steps towards making its democracy more direct".[19]

In the case of Fidesz-MPSZ, it is evident that its traditionally right-wing programme elements overlap with positions and promises which are surprising for a party classified as being on the right of the political spectrum. One of the explanations as to why this right-wing party emphasises the role of the state as a protector of the citizen from certain market influences[20] and has long advocated, for example, for the regulation of sensitive prices or requiring patients to shoulder some medical costs is precisely its tendency to populism as an instrument for increasing electoral support. The party's close defeat in the parliamentary elections in 2002 and the failure of the referendum in December 2004 showed that the strategy Fidesz-MPSZ had previously employed to maximally mobilise its electoral base was not sufficient: However active and reliable this group of voters were, the party would continue to receive a minority of the votes. In order for Fidesz-MPSZ to win the elections, it would have to gain other voters, either those who had voted for one of the rival parties previously, or those who had never participated in elections before. The Fidesz-MPSZ strategy grew out of the fact that this target group of voters did not respond to rhetoric emphasising right-wing values, but responded only to practical, entirely material topics.[21]

3.2   Hungarian Socialist Party - MSZP
In May 2005 - one year prior to the parliamentary elections - PM Gyurcsány announced a government action programme entitled the 100 Steps Programme. The gradually expanding programme promised more than one hundred concrete steps in the areas of health care, education, support for families, housing, taxes, etc. At the same time, the PM promised the government would not take a summer recess, but would work on submitting legal regulations related to these

---

19   Cited in Gyulai, A.: o. c., p. 261.

20   See, e.g., the television debate between Viktor Orbán and Ferenc Gyurcsány on 8 July 2005 (DVD insert Sándor, P., Vass, L., Tolnai, Á. (eds.) 2006).

21   See Debreczeni, J.: o. c., p. 345-346. Giró-Szász, A., Héjj, D., Kisgyőri, R., Kitta, G.: o. c., p. 183.

steps. This intensive government activity, as announced, was significant primarily from the point of view of political communication: It came in response to the opposition's critique of government inactivity. However, the actual activity of the government lagged behind these political communications.[22] Critics said the 100 Steps Programme was an improvised collection of partial steps which could not be a substitute for deeper reforms. The proposed measures were prepared in a hurry, and a wider circle of specialists was not involved in the preparations. The measures promised by the programme, moreover, represented a significant burden on the state budget. Overall it can be said that the programme was mainly aimed at increasing popular support for the government and electoral support for the governing parties.

In the pre-election period, the government undertook many popular measures which did not take into account the budgetary discipline needed and the situation of the Hungarian economy (raising the minimum wage; freezing the price of natural gas; a programme to renovate panel housing; a programme to repair the highways; state support for young families, etc.). Unrealistic promises are not something Ferenc Gyurcsány brought to the MSZP: They were part of the party's pre-election campaign in 2002, and the political demand to fulfil the promises undermined the effort to clean up the state budget under Gyurcsány's predecessor, Péter Medgyessy (2002 - 2004).

After the 100 Step Programme was announced, PM Gyurcsány appeared before a full session of parliament every Monday. Through this presence in parliament, which was unprecedented on the part of an Hungarian premier, Gyurcsány placed himself in clear opposition to Viktor Orbán, who completely avoided speaking to parliament for three years. Gyurcsány repeatedly called on Orbán to stop conducting politics outside of parliament and to return the political debate from the streets to where it belonged (i.e., in parliament).

The MSZP did not merely remain a party conducting "referendum campaigns". On 15 October 2007, the MSZP parliamentary club submitted a total of 20 questions to the Central Electoral Commission for its approval, concerning the fol-

---

22 See Stumpf, I.: Nyomáspróba: kormányzás és politika 2005-ben. In Sándor, P., Vass, L., Tolnai, Á. (eds.) 2006, p. 119.

lowing: Asset reporting by and salaries of constitutional officers; regular monitoring of political parties by the Financial Office; a ban on holding a seat in parliament simultaneous to holding mayoral or vice-mayoral office or chairing county assembly; more restrictive rules on financing political parties and their youth organizations, as well as making the financing mechanisms of their campaigns apparent; strengthening the rules for providing subsidies from public budgets (connected to recent affairs concerning MSZP and Fidesz-MPSZ politicians), etc. At the same time as it initiated the referenda, the parliamentary club also submitted bills on these issues to parliament (some of the questions intended for referendum were formulated as follows: "Do you agree that parliament should approve bill No. XYZ?"; however, the ÚVK rejected these questions as insufficiently specific). The purpose of the whole action was to give "added weight" to the draft legislation prior to its negotiation in parliament. Ferenc Gyurcsány also said that if the parliamentary parties reached agreement on the bills, the MSZP would then withdraw its proposals to hold referenda on them. Of the 20 questions submitted, the ÚVK approved just five, but we can expect appeals to the Constitutional Court on the matter, and after the court's findings the MSZP "success score" may improve.

MSZP evidently does not want to remain in the background in terms of direct contact with citizens. In November 2007 it announced a campaign entitled "The Great Dialogue", which was conceptually similar to the Fidesz-MPSZ National Consultations of 2005. Public discussions held in various places in Hungary were to concern health care, pension reform, tax reform, eliminating the black market economy, security, reform of higher education, and support for SMEs. The government wants to make use of these events in order to explain its reform steps, which are rejected by a significant portion of the population.[23]

3.3   Conclusion
From this paper we can see that at the level of political programmes (pre-election platforms and government programmes) a certain level of populism is being used by both large parties in Hungary. Both are doing their best to expand or to maintain their electoral base by making popular promises; in the case of the governing party, there has also been an effort to realise these promises even at the cost of

---

23   See www.mszp.hu

deepening the state budget deficit and solving problems in an insufficiently conceptual way. At the level of political stances and rhetoric, populist features are more numerous in the case of Fidesz-MPSZ, in the form of critiques of the (governing) elite as cut off from reality, and in an emphasis on the elements of direct democracy. These stances have led the party to use an extra-parliamentary method of politics, to bring the political debate from parliament to the streets, to cultural houses, to gymasiums and other places appropriate for holding public assemblies. However, in recent times the MSZP has also begun to use similar methods, which signals that referring to "the people" (in the form of various petitions and signature actions), efforts at direct contact with many who are the most visible (i.e., the most publicised), or at direct contact with ordinary citizens is likely to become an overall feature of Hungarian politics and political culture.

POPULISM IN SLOVAK POLITICS: CASE STUDY OF RUDOLF SCHUSTER AND HIS PARTY OF CIVIC UNDERSTANDING

PETR JUST

Populism is closely connected with politics globally and therefore the Central European region does not form any unique space from this point of view. There are populist parties and populist politicians all over the world, less or more successful, less or more visible, less or more influential. The reason why populism becomes an object of research is influenced by the fact that countries, after the transition to democracy, start to explore what the pluralistic party systems bring along. It is something new for them, something that was not present in the politics of totalitarian regimes.

Populism belongs to politics as we understand it as the arena where players - political parties compete for support given to them by public, by the voters. Populism is used by those political parties that need voter's support, I have chosen for my case study on Slovak populism an example of a unique political personality - Rudolf Schuster, and his political party - the Party of Civic Understanding. In (not only) my opinion, both Schuster and his party represent populism. This article should show the rise and fall of these two actors of Slovak politics.

Before we analyze the specific cases of these two populist actors in Slovak politics, let us take a short look at Slovak populism from a more general view. The Slovak party system faces similar problems as other countries that went through transition. It includes ideological heterogeneity of many actors, non-shaped programs, the existence of anti-system political parties and also political populism. In Slovakia we can identify several populist movements that rise from different roots.

National populism
Chronologically, national populism first was connected with the process of self-identification of the Slovak nation after the transition to democracy. National populism was first aimed against Czechs and their dominance in the common state. The national populism is connected especially with the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS), the only party that stated the split of Czechoslovakia as its program goal, and later also Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, HZDS), which became the symbol of creating an independent Slovakia.

Slovak national anti-Czech populism was marked by spreading manipulated information about the intentions of Czechs to limit the political and constitutional right of Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, accusing Czech political representation of making decisions that worsen the economic situation in Slovakia, etc. The leader of HZDS Vladimír Mečiar used his charismatic behavior to supporting such statements, no matter how relevant or veritable they were. His colleagues in SNS, especially Víťazoslav Moric or Ján Slota, used even more radical statements, using even a vulgar style of rhetoric.

After the split of Czechoslovakia, national populism shifted from anti-Czech to anti-Hungarian. The Hungarian minority living in Slovakia counts about 10 % of the population, it is geographically concentrated along the southern border of

Slovakia and it created several relevant political parties that later (1998) merged together and formed one strong party, the Hungarian Coalition (Strana maďarskej koalície, SMK). The presence of Hungarians in Slovakia and their political activities and relative success in parliamentary elections strengthened the nationalism aimed against them.

Although the major actors to use national populism against SMK were again SNS and HZDS (as in the previous case), the scale of parties playing the anti-Hungarian card is wider and includes also SMER, a social democratic party, and to some extend even the standard political parties Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia, SDKÚ) and Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťanskodemoratické hnutie, KDH). Those five parties - HZDS, SNS, SMER, SDKÚ and KDH - even joined together in 2005 to form an electoral coalition for regional elections in Nitra region, a region with a strong Hungarian minority, where the SMK party succeeded in the 2001 regional election by gaining 2/3 of seats in the regional assembly.

Although SDKÚ, KDH and SMK were at this time together in a government coalition on national level, the populist "fear of Hungarians" strengthened by pointing to the past when Slovakia lived under Hungarian rule (until 1918) caused the situation that is not standard in western-type democracies. It showed that national populism is not only a feature of extreme and radical nationalist parties but sometimes is even used by so called standard parties.

Social / left wing populism
Social left wing populism - another form of populism in Slovakia - rose especially after 2002. This is the year when for the first time in modern Slovak history a right wing cabinet took power and initiated, adopted and implemented quite radical right wing reforms. These mobilized parties were not fully profiled at that moment and were standing somewhere in the center between supporting the reforms or rejecting them. By rejecting the reforms, social democratic party SMER finally found itself on the left side of political spectrum. Until then it moved in the wide center field and was not saying where it stands.

When it found itself in the left, SMER started to attack the reforms of the right wing government as non-social, discriminating, plunging Slovakia into an economic recession etc., however, after SMER entered government in 2006, almost

none of this has changed (It used the positives of the reforms, the positives that start to appear later after the reforms are implemented.)

In the previous paragraph I already mentioned that SMER was originally a center political party. It is obvious that many, especially new political parties, position themselves to the center. Public opinion polls show that most of the population does not want to identify itself as either right or left, they mostly feel they should stay in the center. And this creates a large group of parties playing the so-called centrist populism card. A nice example of such behavior can be found in the existence and activities of the Party of Civic Understanding (Strana občianskeho porozumenia, SOP) and its leader Rudolf Schuster. This essay will try to show why and how the party used its centrist populist policy.

Political beginnings of Rudolf Schuster

The political career of Rudolf Schuster started in 1964 when he entered the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ). In a 1998 interview for the weekly Domino fórum Schuster explained his step as necessary - in 1964 he was supposed to be appointed as the head of the Investment department at the East-Slovakian Metal Works (Východoslovenské železárne, VSŽ) and to be appointed to any leadership or management position, membership in the KSČ was obligatory. In the same interview, published under the title "I was an upright communist" he added that entering the party "was also because of conviction" (Domino fórum, 3/1998, p. 5). In 1974 he entered local politics, became vice-chairman of the Municipal National Committee[1] of Košice and in 1983 became its chairman.[2] In 1986 he advanced from the local level to the regional level and became chairman of the East-Slovakian Regional National Committee[3] and served in this position until the so-called Velvet Revolution in November 1989.

Rudolf Schuster: popular mayor I.

While serving on a local and regional level, he initiated many investment ventures and the city itself went through a successful process of development. Schuster, an engineer by profession, solved several problems almost personally.

---

1   The position is equal to Deputy Mayor.

2   The position is equal to Mayor.

3   The position is equal to Governor of East-Slovakian Region.

When there was lack of drinking water in Košice, he initiated building new water pipes and criticized the central government for not solving that problem. In his memoirs, called Ultimátum Schuster, he describes his discussion with then - Prime Minister Peter Colotka: "If we cannot give drinking water to the people, we have nothing to do in our offices. (…) People will never forget this." (Schuster 1997, p. 26-27) He fought against the construction of a nuclear power plant near Košice and in case of snow storms disasters, he called the Army for help (as a Chairman of the East-Slovakian Regional National Committee he served also as a Chairman of Regional Defense Council and therefore could order the Army to certain tasks).

Marián Leško in his book Masky a tváre novej elity states: "Since then people remembered that in Eastern Slovakia the damages after snow storm disasters were cleaned up in two days." (Leško 2000, p. 22) Leško argues that since then Rudolf Schuster feels that he "does not have to apologize to anybody for anything, because even during the past regime he was just seeking the best for people" (Leško 2000, p. 22-23). On the other hand Leško points out that Schuster was involved in many top secret activities of State Security (secret service of communist Czechoslovakia, Státní bezpečnost, StB). "As the Chairman of the Regional National Committee and the Regional Defense Council he received a secret order in 1988 to build detention / internment camps. Building these camps was part of StB covert operation Norbert that was supposed to isolate hostile citizens in case of the destruction of socialistic order" (Leško 2000, p. 23) Leško concludes that local and regional representatives during the past regime could work for people, but in the same time had to work for a regime that offended human rights.

Schuster himself does not see anything wrong with his pre-1989 political career. When reporter of television TA3 mentioned during an interview in 2004 that Schuster was a "high communist officer" Schuster interrupted him: "I was not a communist officer, I was a National Committee officer. I worked in self-administration. (…) Of course from the position in self-administration one was automatically member of party bodies - the mayor was in the Municipal Party Committee, the Chairman of Regional National Committee was in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, but not as a professional party officer. So let's be correct." (http://www.ta3.com/prezidenti/schuster.html, 13. 3. 2004)

Rudolf Schuster: mediator of the transition to democracy
In the time of political and social changes in 1989 Rudolf Schuster was also mem-

ber of the Slovak National Council (Slovenská národná rada, SNR), a parliament on the Slovak level. This fact started his career after 1989. The communist party tried to use Schuster's high popularity among people and therefore after the November Revolution he was elected the new Speaker of the Slovak National Council after the previous one Viliam Šalgovič, representative of hard-liners within the KSČ, resigned. Schuster was seen as the only person in the party presidium to have the confidence of the people (Schuster 1997, p. 13). As the Speaker of SNR, Schuster was the one who negotiated with opposition the transition to democracy on the Slovak level in November and December 1989. And in this role he behaved very fairly. His steps surprised both the communists (negatively) and the representatives of opposition (positively). He was aware of the situation that came, the situation that meant the end of the monopoly rule of KSČ.

He initiated changes in the SNR presidium so that communist would not have majority there, and he refused to appoint a new Slovak government because its majority was formed by communist ministers - these were just two examples of his consensual steps during the transitional period. In March 1990 Schuster left the communist party and explained that there were personal reasons and also "pointless expectations that the communist party will be able to renew its credibility in society." (Leško 2000, p. 28) In 1990 elections he did not run, although he was offered the role of leader of Public against Violence (Verejnosť proti násiliu, VPN) in Eastern Slovakia. VPN was aware of Schuster's popularity, but he did not want to be - as he said - "an instrument for gaining votes for VPN" (Leško 2000, p. 28). For his consensual behavior during transition to democracy he was sent as an Ambassador of Czechoslovakia to Canada, however, in 1992 he was called back home without an official reason stated.

Rudolf Schuster: popular mayor II.
After the return to Czechoslovakia he shortly worked for one Canadian firm and after the split of Czechoslovakia entered the diplomatic service at the newly created Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His diplomatic career was very short. He was attracted by his hometown Košice, the city he lead before 1989, and he now had a chance to return and seek the position of mayor in the democratic period, in free direct elections in 1994. He hoped that people would remember what he had done for the city and the region in the past. And people seemed to remembered it: as the independent candidate, without support of any political party, he gained 33.085 votes while incumbent mayor Rudolf Bauer (supported by KDH,

DS, MOS and MKDH) scored just 23.727 votes and the candidate of left-wing parties, Ján Mráz (supported by ZRS, SDĽ, SDSS and HPS) only 7.512 votes. Schuster won with 48, 09 % and returned to the office he had held in 1983-1986 (for detailed results see http://www.kosice.sk/gov/volby/vp90-99.htm). He defended his position in the December 1998 elections by scoring 77, 2 % of votes (for detailed results see again http://www.kosice.sk/gov/volby/vp90-99.htm). However, in the time of municipal elections, Schuster was already, the candidate of a newly created coalition for the post of the President of Slovakia (see below).

As a mayor, he organized the visit of Pope John Paul II. in Košice in 1995, reconstructed almost the whole downtown, swimming pool, parks, fountains, archeological museum, historical town hall, Košice castle, organized several grand cultural and social events etc. There is no doubt that he was able to use all this for his own profit. However, herewith he indebted the city by more than 1,2 milliards of Slovak crowns (Leško 2000, p. 30-31).

Rudolf Schuster and his (non)candidacies for presidency
Meanwhile during his term as a mayor he started to consider a return to national politics, but was waiting for the proper time to do so. His name was first mentioned in 1995 as a possible presidential candidate. Then the ruling coalition lead by Movement for Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, HZDS) of authoritarian Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar sought to remove then - President Michal Kováč from office. Schuster said the thoughts about his nomination were "political rumor". Daily SME, however, stated evidence that "mayor Schuster is often visiting Bratislava and the Prime Minister and Ministers are to be guests in the city next week" (Pacherová 1995).

Speculations about his candidacy intensified in 1997, when the issue of presidential elections was one of the most discussed topics in internal politics. In March 1998 the term of President Kováč was supposed to expire and it was obvious that the political constellation at that time would complicate the election of the new President. In this period the presidential elections were not direct yet, the President was elected by the parliament. Parliament was split between the authoritarian ruling coalition around HZDS and anti-Mečiar opposition. The coalition had a simple majority, however, to elect the President, a constitutional majority (three fifths) was needed. In 1997 Schuster - in this period still non-partisan - was asked to run for the President next year by the Party of the Democratic Left

(Strana demokratickej ľavice, SDĽ). This party belonged to the opposition camp and Schuster in this period did no want to join either Mečiar or hi opponents. Also he was aware that his election in this political constellation was impossible. He argued that: "I am a realist and I can see what the chances of each candidate are. I do not believe in miracles in politics." (Leško 2000, p. 33-34)

Generally Schuster's statements about his possible candidacies for Presidency were ambiguous / multivalent. Sometimes he neither confirmed nor rejected (Turčík 1997), than he said "he knew what the chances are" (Bán 1997: s. 13) and finally he confirmed his candidacy if there were direct elections (Šantúr 1997b). Those around him, however, noticed that ambitions to return to national politics were quite strong for Schuster. Although those were personal views, mostly influenced by personal feelings of the people around him, later developments proved them.

Founding of the Party of Civic Understanding
Rudolf Schuster was aware that to fulfill his political (presidential) ambitions he would need a solid base and the support of a political party. He refused to join any other parties or to accept their nominations (see above). He saw founding his own political party as a better way. He worked on that project from the end of 1997 and made it public at the beginning of 1998. The year 1998 was important for two reasons. Besides the expiration of the presidential term of Michal Kováč, it was the year of parliamentary elections. Although Schuster was warned by the anti-Mečiar opposition not to do so, he founded his own political party, the Party of Civic Understanding (Strana občianskeho porozumenia, SOP). The anti-Mečiar opposition was integrating its powers by uniting several smaller parties into a few strong electoral blocks that would have a chance to defeat Mečiar's HZDS. Schuster argued that with his party in the parliamentary electoral race the opposition would score more votes (he expected 60 %). The opposition was also afraid that the popular mayor would catch some votes that would otherwise go to them.

SOP was founded as the party that was supposed to "pacify" a Slovak society polarized by the rule of Vladimír Mečiar into two camps. Rudolf Schuster expressed this goal of the party in his speech at the party convention in April 1998: "SOP is founded with the intention to end the cold war that is polarizing Slovakia, to end it by politics of national and civic understanding." (Kopeček 2002) The idea of national unity was reflected in the preamble to the SOP Program: "SOP comes in

a time of sharp polarization of Slovak society, during sharp confrontation, an inability to cooperate and missing political consensus between the ruling coalition and the opposition" (Program SOP 1998). In its Status, SOP identified its goals as "to seek for civic understanding, internal unity of Slovak society, solidarity and unity of all citizens of Slovakia, to reach the level of political culture comparable with advanced democracies (…), to contribute to satisfied, non-divided, stable and prosperous society in Slovakia." (SOP Status, 1998, article II.)

It was clear that the initial identification of the party in the polarized party system and politics was neither joining the coalition nor the opposition. It wanted to stay in the middle, to serve as the bridge between two rival camps. Peter Učeň therefore uses for SOP the term "centrist populism". Učeň identifies parties labeled as representatives of "centrist populism" as "newcomers mobilizing discontent with under-performing and morally failing post-communist establishment. Their true ideological stance is "anti-establishment" which overshadows other ideological components present. Particularly in their initial periods, they shy away from ideological pledges or even label ideology as harmful to true democratic politics. Their appeal contains numerous references to common sense and rational solutions on which political decision-making should be based" (Učeň 2007, p. 12).

SOP identified itself as a center-left political party (SOP Status, 1998, article II., paragraph 2). In its program the party stressed social issues, but it more was a social populism that wanted good social conditions for everybody.

SOP behavior in electoral year 1998
Although officially founded as the party between the fighting camps, SOP later officially joined the anti-Mečiar opposition. The party started to gain a lot of popularity which endangered not only anti-Mečiar opposition, but also Mečiars HZDS. Public opinion polls showed that popularity of SOP between March and September 1998 varied between 13 and 18 % (Mesežnikov - Ivantyšyn 1999: p. 109). Mečiar himself saw in SOP and Schuster, its chairman a rival, and started to attack him as he did any the opposition parties. Public Slovak television, controlled by the government, made biased TV reports about Schuster without giving him chance to react - which was during the rule of Vladimír Mečiar, in the years 1994-1998, quite usual instrument of the opposition. Vladimír Mečiar started to treat Schuster and SOP like other opposition parties and this influenced Schuster's shift to the opposition.

As mentioned above, anti-Mečiar opposition was also afraid of Schuster and his popularity. As preference for the SOP increased, the popularity of the strongest opposition movement, Slovak Democratic Coalition (Slovenská demokratická koalícia, SDK) started to go down slowly. They even tried to invite Schuster to join their candidate lists in order not to split the support for anti-Mečiar opposition, but Schuster refused (Leško 2000, p. 35). Lubomír Kopeček identifies 3 major factors that were the key for the party successful entry into politics:

■ Media support from the private TV Markíza and influential daily Pravda (the wife of the TV Markíza CEO Pavol Rusko was on the SOP list in the 1998 parliamentary elections)
■ Financial support (one of its major sponsors was Slovak businessman Jozef Majský, whose wife also ran on the SOP list in 1998 parliamentary elections)
■ Support from celebrities (e.g. opera singer Peter Dvorský)

(Kopeček 2002)

Results of 1998 elections and after-election development

Predictions that the SOP's foundation would strenghten the opposition were to some extent correct. Opposition parties scored almost 60 % of votes, as Schuster predicted. However, the SOP results meant great disillusion. Gaining just 8,01 % of votes, 13 seats and the status of the smallest political party in parliament was deeply under expectations.[4] SOP thus became part of a new coalition composed of the parties standing in opposition to Vladimír Mečiar: besides SOP there was also SDK, SDĽ and the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (Strana maďarskej koalície, SMK). The coalition was based upon a constitutional majority of 93 seats in parliament. Forming a coalition with more than just a simple majority, but with a constitutional majority, was necessary in order to solve the situation vacant office of the President.[5] A constitutional majority was needed to elect that arose from the President in the parliament or to change the Constitution and give the right to elect the President to the people.

---

4   Public opinion polls at the beginning of 1998, when Schuster founded and registered SOP, showed 15 % of voters supported the party.
5   The office of the President was vacant from March 1998 when the term of Michal Kováč expired. Since then several attempts to elect the President were initiated, but none of the candidates received constitutional majority needed to be elected. Therefore parties waited for the results of parliamentary elections to see whether the situation will change and there would be a bloc of parties that had the constitutional majority (see Just - Hladká 2003).

All parties forming new coalition were therefore necessary and this gave a chance the SOP, to present some demands. For the smallest party in the system, Rudolf Schuster proved himself as a smart and pragmatic negotiator. He used pragmatic tactics to push his name into the Coalition agreement as the joint presidential candidate of the entire coalition (Koaličná dohoda medzi SDK, SDĽ, SMK a SOP 1998). As an exchange for getting the presidential nomination SOP demanded just two ministerial seats in government and not three (Kopeček 2002). According to many witnesses attending the coalition talks Schuster threatened that if he was not the joint presidential candidate, SOP will not be part of the coalition. The coalition would only have a simple majority and would not be able to solve the presidential problem. Schuster denaunced such interpretations (http://www.ta3.com/prezidenti/schuster.html, 13.3.2004).

However, the Christian Democratic politician Vladimír Palko said: "It is true that SOP qualified joining the government and signing the coalition agreement by the assurance that Rudolf Schuster will be the presidential candidate for all four parties." (Národná obroda, 7.1.1999) Schuster said that he was nominated by SDĽ, SMK did not have anything against that, SOP - naturally - supported his candidacy and SDK respected that. However, one of his statements later actually indicates that there probably was some kind of pressure from his side. His book Návrat do veľkej politiky, quotes a sentence from the coalition talks in 1998: "If there are three partners who agree on an issue and the fourth does not, then we are losing time here." (Schuster 1999, p. 175). The coalition later preferred to use the constitutional majority to change the Constitution and implement direct presidential elections.

Although Schuster received the nomination for president, his loyalty to the government was very strange. During a vote of confidence for the new government, just 4 of 13 members of parliament for SOP voted "for" and Schuster was not even present during the session of the parliament.[6] Schuster's absence during the confidence vote was perceived negatively as he was the government candidate for the presidency and chairman of one of the coalition parties.

---

6   See Archive of NR SR: http://www.nrsr.sk/indexarch.asp, 2nd term, session n.: 4, date: December 2nd 1998, vote n.: 45.

1999 presidential elections and a new role for Schuster and SOP

As was mentioned above, the coalition used its constitutional majority to change the Constitution and implement direct presidential elections. The first direct elections took place in May 1999 and, as per the coalition agreement, Rudolf Schuster was the joint coalition candidate. Therefore it was no surprise that Schuster won (Štatistický úrad SR 1999). His victory was also influenced by the fact that his most serious rival, former Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, was for majority of Slovaks an unacceptable candidate. Shortly after being elected Schuster terminated his SOP membership and the party had a new task - to find a new leader. "Being elected President of Slovakia, Schuster fulfilled his goal and lost interest in the further existence of the party" (Kopeček 2002).

The SOP party lost preference, new leader Pavol Hamžík was not a charismatic and known personality and could not follow the path Schuster set when he founded the party. Lubomír Kopeček identifies one more reason for SOP's loss of popularity Robert Fico's newly founded party SMER. The parties were very close to each other, their electorate had similar structure and the SMER actually also wanted to serve as bridge in a society divided into two blocks, although the roles of the blocks had changed. The popularity of SOP started to drop down and the end was near. The party could not find new topics, was missing its founder and charismatic leader and faced a similar party, SMER, which made much more charismatic (although sometimes dogmatic and definitely also populist) leader in Robert Fico. It is no surprise that Peter Učeň - ranks SMER in the same category of populism as SOP, so called "centrist populism" (Učeň 2007, p. 12). Although SMER later took the socialistic and social democratic label, in the time of its founding in 1999 and at least until 2002 (and maybe even later), it was a more populist and ideologically unidentified party.

Preference of SOP after 1998 (% of decided voters)

	IX 1999 b	I 2000 b	III 2000 a	IV 2000 c	V 2000 b	VI 2000 c	VII 2000 b	VIII 2000 b	IX 2000 b	X 2000 c	XI 2000 c	XII 2000 c	I 2001 c	II 2001 c	III 2001 c	IV 2001 c
SOP	8,5	5,7	3	2,1	3,3	2,4	2,9	4,7	4,2	4	2,3	3,5	2,8	1	1,2	2,3

Sources: a - IVO; b - FOCUS; c - ÚVVM pri Štatistickom úrade SR.

As SMER was strengthening and SOP weakening, it was obvious that SOP had lost the fight for voters. In 2003 the party merged with SMER, as did several other center-left political parties and since 2004 SMER has been leading party in the system and is now moving to the left, to socialistic and social-democratic programs.

In the meantime, Rudolf Schuster began serving as the President of Slovakia, but in his new role he shocked many of those who pushed for his candidacy. He shortly after elections he started openly criticizing the government, and vetoed many laws passed by the parliament. He tried to be the President of the people and in this role he did not have a problem attacking the government, especially after the 2002 election when SOP was no longer present in the government, but he did so even before.

His criticism of the relatively unpopular government after 2002 probably had a lot to do with upcoming presidential elections in 2004. He expected significant support from SMER and labor unions since his opinions and criticism of government was in many aspects similar and their criticisms. SMER, however, decided to support Ivan Gašparovič and Schuster finished 4th, forcing him to leave office. His reaction for this loss was to isolate himself, not communicating with the media at all.

Conclusion

If we observe the maneuvers of Rudolf Schuster and his party, SOP, in Slovak politics we can characterize this behavior as populist. Rudolf Schuster was for most of his career, doing everything to help himself to reach the positions he wanted. His pragmatism during communism, during the transition to democracy and in the new democratic environment ensured him leading position in all periods and regimes. As very ambitious politician he was ready to do anything to accomplish his goals. To assure his personal success he was ready to even found a political party and let it die, and openly criticize the government that supported his candidacy and that his party was a member of. This may have been what lead to his failure in the 2004 presidential elections.

The party he founded is often being characterized as an instrument used by Schuster to gain the position of President of Slovakia. The party was labeled as the single-use party (Kopeček 2002), used to get Schuster in to the Presidential Palace. However, it was not just Schuster. Other SOP representatives benefited

from being members of the party and joining the coalition. From an ideological point of view, the party did not bring anything new to the system. It was a party for getting offices and seats, and its coalition strategy was definitely office seeking, not policy seeking.

References

Bán, Andrej (1997). Ať vybere lid! Reflex, 23.1.1997, s. 13.

Bobula, Peter (editor) (2001). Desať rokov kresťanskej demokracie na Slovensku. Bratislava: KDH.

Just, Petr - Hladká, Malvína (2003). Cesta k přímé volbě prezidenta na Slovensku. IN: Parlamentní zpravodaj, č. 3/2003, s. 10-12

Kerekeš, Ladislav (1998). Podle Schustera je o členství v SOP velký zájem. Zpravodajství ČTK, 12.3.1998.

Koaličná dohoda medzi SDK, SDĽ, SMK a SOP (1998)

Kopcsay, Márius (1997). Na Slovensku záhy půjde o moc. Zemské noviny, 17.1.1997, s. 8.

Kopeček, Lubomír (2002). Strana občanského porozumění - strana "na jedno použití". Středoevropské politické studia, roč. IV., č. 2-3, jaro - léto 2002.

Kopeček, Lubomír (2000). Transformace slovenské komunistické strany. Středoevropské politické studie, roč. II., č. 4, podzim 2000.

Leško, Marián (2000). Masky a tváre novej elity. Čítanie o dvanástich politikoch z piatich vládnych strán. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky.

Mesežnikov, Grigorij (editor) (1998). Voľby 1998: Analýza volebných programov politických strán a hnutí. Bratislava: Inšitút pre verejné otázky.

Mesežnikov, Grigorij - Ivantyšyn, Michal (editoři) (1999). Slovensko 1998-1999. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky.

Pacherová, Soňa (1995). SME: Premiér nabízel poslancům KDH dohodu o novém prezidentovi. Zpravodajství ČTK, 16.5.1995.

Program SOP (1998)

Prokopová, Michaela (2004). Komunista katolíkem. MF Dnes, 5.3.2004, s. A10.

Prokopová, Michaela (2004). Schuster: Říkají, že jsem žil tři životy. MF Dnes, 5.3.2004, s. A10.

Prokopová, Michaela (2002). Schuster: S Mečiarem se musí počítat. MF Dnes, 19.4.2002, s. A10.

Říchová, Blanka (2000). Přehled moderních politologických teorií: Empiricko-analytický přístup v soudobé politické vědě. Praha: Portál.

Schuster, Rudolf (1999). Návrat do veľkej politiky. Bratislava.

Schuster, Rudolf (1997). Ultimátum. Praha: Svoboda.

Stanovy SOP (1998)

Stupňan, Igor (2003). Schuster: Pittner mi ukázal, kto s kým telefonuje. SME, 20.10.2003, s. 3.

Svoboda Jindřich (2000). Slovenská vládní koalice: její typová charakteristika. Středoevropské politické studie, roč. II, č. 2, jaro 2000.

Syruček, Milan (1997). Mečiar o přímé volbě prezidenta. Zpravodajství ČTK, 24.4.1997.

Šantúr, Roman (1997a). HZDS vyzvalo své voliče, aby nepodpořili vyhlášení referenda. Zpravodajství ČTK, 14.1.1997.

Šantúr, Roman (1997b). Primátor Košic nevyloučil případnou kandidaturu na prezidenta. Zpravodajství ČTK, 20.5.1997.

Štatistický úrad SR (www.statistics.sk)

TASR (2003). "Schusterova" SOP ukončila svoju činnosť a spojila sa so Smerom. 3.3.2003.

Turčík, Peter (1997). Již 100.000 podpisů pod peticí za přímou volbu prezidenta. Zpravodajství ČTK, 19.1.1997.

Učeň, Peter (2007). Approaching national populism. The nineties and the present - similarities and differences. Contribution for the international colloquium "Challenging (National) Populism and Promoting Interethnic Tolerance and Understanding in Slovakia".

Žitný, Milan (1994). Padne mýtus Košic? Týden, 14.11.1994, s. 39.

POPULIST DISCOURSE
IN POLAND

MARIA STASZKIEWICZ

Volatile as it is the concept of populism is inseparably linked with several trou-
blesome constructs like democracy and "people". Taking it into consideration,
this study merely endeavors to outline the recent developments in Poland that are
referred to as populism or populist. The growth of political behavior conferred
with that attribute coincides roughly with the Polish accession to the European
Union. Was this event the determining factor which leads to populist backlash?
Or rather than fueling populism, the disappearance of the accession question from
political agenda made room for other issues to come forth? If the second assump-
tion holds true what would be the stimuli feeding populism? Examination of these
issues will constitute the major part of this article's discussion.

The main argument underlying in this study is that the recent instances of pop-
ulism were based on the use of polarized language, which was meant to aide
politicians (the Law and Justice party) establish their vision of political system
and political culture in Poland. In pursuing the questions posed in this article cer-
tain assumptions have been made that need to be addressed at the very begin-
ning. They refer both to the substance of populism, the context of its develop-
ment as well as to the methodology of scientific inquiry into the topic. In the sec-
ond part there follows a very brief discussion of the Polish political context, in
which the recent upsurge of populism has taken place.

The underlying substantive assumptions are delineated below:

■ In general, populism is perceived as an inherent feature of politics. In democ- racies but also in other political systems (at least at the level of discourse) politics is a process stimulated by the inputs triggered by various interests groups. Politicians receive these inputs and in order to gain or retain their official functions they have to react to them and integrate into their pro- grams. It seems therefore that there cannot exist a purely non-populist form of politics. Politics is not rational as it represents values, and that is why cer- tain extent of demagogy will always be involved.

■ Populism takes literally the condition of democracy to be the rule of the peo- ple. However, in modern heterogeneous (huge) societies the demand of direct representation is hardly viable.

■ Today's populism derives its power from the shift of both the left and the right to the centre. Development referred to as "the consensus at the centre" (MOUFFE 2005) points to the blurring of difference between the right-wing and social-democratic parties, which to a great extent converge on multiple issues.

■ Current strands of populism develop against the background of globalization processes which exclude certain groups out of the benefits those processes bring about[1]. Those excluded fall victim to populist politics, whose represen- tatives pretend to be defenders of the wronged.

■ In regional context it is Europeanization that constitutes the major change in political setting and requires alteration in traditional definitions of sover- eignty, state and representation. This philosophical shift engenders misinter- pretation as voters formulate their expectations in regard to the world as they have known before.

The main methodological premises are described below:

■ Populism is not treated as a doctrine proper but rather as a political practice or movement. It does serve a certain purpose thus it is instrumental rather than ideological since it is incoherent in regard to the values it adheres to. Populism does not offer any specific project for the arrangement of political reality. This should explain the volatility of populist parties. With that assumption in mind any analysis of populism will be descriptive.

---

1   See the research agenda of many populism researchers, inter alia Ch. Mouffe, N. Ferguson, S. J. Abrams

■ As such populism is context-dependent and appropriates ideas postulated by various ideologies. Such it is rather a mode of articulation of certain ideas in a given context. Thus, examining populism always involves an account of a concrete political development.

■ Taking this into account it should be obvious why Margaret Canovan postulated the perception of populism as a "family" in the Wittgenstein sense, i.e. a set of phenomena which share only some general common traits (CANOVAN 1981).

How could then populism be defined? In the light of the above mentioned assumptions there could not exist a single explanation of the concept. In the present study it will be generally understood as a tactics to attain certain ends, one that tries to contest the existing system and political culture (SZACKI 2006:17). Yet, populism does not equate with demagogy, which is merely a promise to offer simple answers to complex problems. Populist movements exploit the fears and sentiments of societies; general discontent is thus abused and problems dramatized. When this gloomy setting is being constructed there come the populist politicians with their programmatic visions, which they endeavor to implement.

The ghosts of the past?

Since populism was defined as context-dependent phenomenon, the specific Polish circumstances of politics, society and economy need to be highlighted in order to grasp the formative elements. They determined the particularities of Polish populism in the post-communist era. The contextual assumptions presented below derive from the historical background and political experiences not only of the communist regime but also of times as distant as the partition period in the XIX century. They include:

■ A distorted attitude towards legal principles and law in general. As for more than a century, they were imposed on Polish nation from the outside, the survival mechanism that emerged was to contest the legal body and disobey rules. Thus, cheating, exploiting the state and corruption was for a long time part and parcel of "appropriate" civic behavior.

■ Communism, on its part, exposed Polish society to the egalitarian model of society, which is unfeasible. This in turn shaped people's expectations as to the role of the states as the ultimate protector and supporter.

■ The definition of nation was based on the German concept of blood ties. Thus Polish identity very much revolves around the idea of nation state. This is being enhanced by unfortunate historical experience and still vivid memories of the last century's world wars (especially the German and Russian aggressions of 1939).

■ The feeling of national unity was later heightened by the nation-wide oppositional movement Solidarność. This popular front united people of miscellaneous political background in the struggle against the regime. Therefore it created a false impression of Polish oneness and integrity of national interests and visions.

■ Specific life attitude referred to as Homo sovieticus (ZINOVJEV 1984, TISCHNER 1992 formed under the influence of communist regime. In the Polish context it was the type of citizen who did not discriminate between their own interest and the public good and demands that all solutions are delivered by the authority. Homo sovieticus readily understood other's activities and successes as the sources of their mischief thus they were suspicious of everyone.

After the fall of communism populism was reifying under the conditions of free political market and the factors listed above shaped its development. A considerable part of society was accustomed to paternalism and state intervention. The anti-communist opposition, which prior to 1989 operated against a visible foe (the regime) and was apparently united under the Solidarność banner, quickly fell prey to wrangles over the visions for the Third Polish Republic. The personnel and bureaucratic heritage of the past regime posed one of the most important questions. There were miscellaneous answers to these issues but one of them was quickly (mis)appropriated by the public opinion, despite the original intention of its author. It was the concept of "thick line" (gruba kreska) proposed by the first Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki in his 1989 address to the Sejm. What Mazowiecki wanted to achieve was to draw people's attention to the fact that new politicians were not responsible for the problems generated by the ancien régime. However, since Mazowiecki was related to the advocates of certain "continuity and change" approach (A. Michnik and many of his colleagues from Gazeta Wyborcza), the term was stolen by opponents of any conciliatory policy. Its meaning went distorted and the concept became associated with leniency towards the crimes of communism, and with total acceptance of communist politicians in political structure. Debates of decommunisation and background screening (colloquially known as "lustration") were to haunt Polish politics for the entire post-communist period and still remain one of determinants of the political discourse.

Problems inherited from the past era made it difficult for any political party to quickly level social disparities. The perception of politics was aggravated by party tribalism. Ubiquitous cronyism in the public sphere generated very pessimistic reception of Polish political culture which 1997 was summarized by famous phrase "Fuck, it's our turn!" (Teraz, kurwa, my) attributed to Jarosław Kaczyński. After a party's failure to implement its program, some of its members would often establish a new political grouping. There was an almost magical belief that a novel (untainted) name would delete the memory of political shortcomings and that new clothes would win the benefit of doubt from the voters. Such changes were conducted mainly on the very basic linguistic level.

The renewal
The disputes over the political past were taking place parallel to every-day politics. The major interest pursued was the project of "returning to Europe" and the terminal goal - the EU accession. This agenda stole the lion's share of social attention and engagement. However, once, this objective was achieved 2004, the unresolved issues of the transformational period re-emerged. Until recently lay dormant the ideas of total political renewal and of break with dysfunctional structures of post-1989 social and political life. After the EU-accession they claimed their place back to the political agenda. After the 1989 revolution, no true debate on the future of Poland took place, as civic and democratic potential were not yet developed; and naturally there were more immediate issues to be resolved without delay. The process of democracy and civic learning ran parallel to the real process of democratic changes.

Disillusion with democracy enhanced with every scandal of political corruption and mounted in the Rywin-gate in 2002, when the very democratic nature of policy-making bodies was put into question. In that year Adam Michnik, the editor-in-chief of Gazeta Wyborcza was asked by a film producer, Lew Rywin connected with Social Democratic Alliance (whose many politicians were politically active under the communist regime) , to pay 17,5 million dollars and to refrain from government criticism in return for a beneficial change in mass media law. Although an investigation commission convened to examine the case did not collect any direct testimony of "a group holding power", many circumstantial evidence was gathered that proved the existence of one, connected with many politicians of the past regime. What followed was a wave of moralistic admonishments in the academia, political parties and mass media, yet virtually no polit-

ical effort was invested into transformation of discredited practices. Third Polish Republic appeared as a failed democracy. It was against this background that the purification ideas began to thrive. In 1997 Polish conservative philosopher Rafał Matyja published his project of moral revolution and politician changes, the Fourth Polish Republic (Czwarta Rzeczpospolita). Third Polish Republic was seen as post-communist product whose very conception should be changed to allow for a truly democratic state. Unlike the demoralized predecessor that emerged after the fall of communism, the fourth republic was to mark a breach with exuberant corruption and fight against the "old boy network". In the most general terms, it was a project of ethical political cleansing. Being such a broad call for change, the concept could not be more susceptible to populist practice. The idea of Poland cured from all evil was appropriated by Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, hereinafter referred to as PiS), a party that employed the slogan of the Fourth Republic in its 2005 electoral campaign. Although the plan did not win PiS a massive support, it let the party establish a very coherent program that appealed to the public conviction of necessary changes.

Years following the EU accession coincided with the rise of populism in the new Central European member states. It seems however unlikely that joining the Union is the sole factor responsible for nationalist and demagogical backlash (KUCHARCZYK, FOMINA 2007) In Poland, the linkage of dysfunctional institutions of democracy and an ideational project provided the fuel for populist. Accession to an organization bearing some traces of supranationalism was an issue during the election campaign in 2005. Yet, as the membership proved not to be an immediate threat to Polish independence, the parties whose political language relied much on EU criticism did not fare well in the 2006 local elections. The battle of voters' hearts was taking place at the meta-level of substantial transformation of Polish political reality.

It seems that populisms as a context-dependent phenomenon can assume two basic forms. First, a political grouping may be formed as a critical expression of the current socio-political situation, and thus become the spokesperson for the unsuccessful or the weaker. In that case, populist movement or parties are pooling general dissatisfaction, which often wins the seats in parliament. These cases epitomize a softer version of populism, which is of reactionary nature and usually operates exclusively on emotional and intentional level. The other variant comes into existence when programmatic parties resort to populist instruments as a means to

achieving their own ideological projects. Then, it is not a mere demagogy they use in order to accomplish short-term goals of getting into the Parliament, but rather a well thought strategy to gain power and representation, which allows for realization of long-term objectives. Here, behind the emotional rhetoric and clear-cut divisions between the good and the bad ones, there is a real intent to change the existing structures.

In the Polish context, parties like the League of Polish Families and Self Defense, responded in their programs to current issues (European threat to Polish sovereignty and specific values and fear of liberalization). Their members tried to reach out to the perceived looser of the transformational processes but did little to tackle structural problems, instead were preoccupied with cosmetic alterations of symbolic meaning. PiS won the elections with the call for establishment of new era in Polish politics freed from corruption and favoritism, cleaned from the communist nomenklatura. The ultimate goal was to change the 1997 Constitution and thus the quality of Polish politics. The pillars of the new fundamental act were:

- axiological backbone based on national traditions and catholic values,
- anti-communist character and link to Polish political tradition from before the communist regime,
- family as the elemental institution of social life,
- supremacy of national over the international law.

However appealing the project and righteous the aim to purify politics of cronyism might be, political activities of PiS remained mainly on the intentional level and gradually fused with the very populist banners the party applied to attract voters. The protection of social groups that fell victim to transformation was the second important election pillar PiS (embodied in its slogan of "Solidary Poland"). Quickly however, this goal was overrun when president Kaczyński (one of co-founder of PiS) declared that the government's main task is to fight corruption. And the promise to ease the failures of free market transformation became merely an instrument of new social divisions. Those who recently belonged to the excluded social groups (i.e. people who could not/ did not take advantage of free market) were now put in positive contrast against those, who fared well or at least decently in post-1989 circumstances. The successful became suspected and associated with the modernizing and liberal part of society, which in the populist rhetoric read as those who betrayed "Polishness" (SOSNOWSKI 2007:10).

Radicalism of the political language

Politics under the aegis of Law and Justice moved to the sphere of language and political discourse. The trend was set by PiS members to re-evaluate the heritage of the Third Republic. This process of re-writing recent history was bound to introduction of new terminology, which was meant to help better understand the post-1989 period, to pinpoint its shortcomings and name the names of groups responsible for failures. Apparently as a precondition to start a new quality of political life, mainstream politics of 2005-2007 was the politics of the past. It looked back upon transformational drawbacks. It appealed to the longing for "law and justice", and clearness of social life. In the attempt to achieve that PiS radicalized political language. Radicalization is always a manner of simplification because it relies heavily on 'binary pairs', i.e. the black-and-white picture of the world, which leaves no alternatives. Such language sustains simplistic view of political life and overlooks important nuances.

Short as it was the PiS incumbency generated a rich vocabulary that has already entered into daily usage. Phrases coined by PiS indeed indicated real and soaring problems, but they in turn were magnified and often juxtaposed in an endeavor to imply a direct causal relations phenomena of little real interdependence. Below are the most imminent examples of the newspeak[2]:

■ Old-boy network (układ): suggests a conspiracy theory; the idea derives from the communist nomenklatura from which the "network" emerged and was enlarged to contain some members of the Solidarność camp. Backed up by business the "faceless network" regulates fundamental elements of social life in Poland. The category implied that all who do not belong to PiS automatically belonged to the network.
■ "Intelligie" (wykształciuchy): as opposed to real intelligentsia, an arrogant, egoistic class of educated people, who lost contact with the rest of the Polish nation. Moreover, they are informed only by certain mass media, i.e. those opposed to PiS government.
■ Lumpenliberalism - used by Jarosław Kaczyński to a specific form of liberalism generated by the Third Republic being the co-operation of post-communists with liberal politicians

2   For more instances of the newspeak please refer to:
      http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,55670,3226296.html, or SZALKIEWICZ 2007.

- Lie-elites (łże-elity): employed again by prime minister Kaczyński, the term refers to "false" elites, whose members defending of the post-1989 liberal changes

These few instances of the new language were apparently intended to consolidate support for the project of purification. This polarization strategy generated two main results. First, PiS purloined the electorate of its two coalition partners, the Self Defense and League of Polish Families. PiS needed the support of these parties-idiosyncrasies of the Polish system to actualize its project of Fourth Republic. Thanks to picturesque language that relied on blaming those who fared well in the post-1989 circumstances (the elites, business, the educated) PiS was gradually accustoming its discourse to attract the voters of ultra-catholic, traditionalist and worse-off. This process of reshuffling at the political stage was jokingly referred to as "devouring of the trimmings" and resulted in total defeat of both parties in the 2007 elections, and a very predictable erasure from political life.

Second, the polarized language was deployed to preserve myths and ideational types in the Weberian sense. However properly might the project of Fourth Polish Republic have analyzed certain problems troubling the country (corruption, linkage between the business and politics), it only selectively attacked clichés piled up during the process of transformation, namely those of the liberal. Its political base relied on conservative platitudes borrowed from the end of XIX century and inter-war period, especially the National Democracy ("Endecja"). Most evident was the myth of the ideal states free of corruption with crystal-clear political elites, and Poland as the guardian of traditional catholic values. The danger consisted in that this belief envisaged revolution as the only feasible solution to change the situation instead of gradual improvement of flawed reality. Beneath the linguistic façade, spectacular detentions and investigations of people charged with but not yet convicted of corruption, little was done. Apart from the Central Anticorruption Bureau, a flagship product of the PiS tenure which nowadays is facing accusation of being politically biased[3], all major institutions of the III Polish Republic remained untouched.

---

3   Its procedures are being currently investigated into by special Parliamentary commission

Conclusions

The strategy adopted by PiS and its coalition partners was instrumental negative populism in that it tried to exclude certain groups and promised concentrated on the elimination of perceived drawbacks brought about by the transformation: decentralization, lack of state's support, total liberalization of economy and values. They wanted to be the representative of the wronged citizen. The redress for the malfunctioning system was to point out the responsible people - they were equated with the excessively cosmopolitan and technocratic intelligentsia and business circles. The alleged source of the problems was the intangible and ubiquitous "network" fueled by evil forces (KACZYŃSKI 2007).

In democracies a political party needs to able to succeed elections and therefore it does resort to demagogical schemes. The winner of the recent October 2007 elections in Poland, Civic Platform under the leadership of Donald Tusk, employed a strategy of positive populism, trying to reach out to as many citizens as possible promising them a better future and avoiding introduction of new divisions in the society. If populist, the party can be categorized as balancing to attain the "the consensus of the centre" in the context of Polish politics, that is liberal-conservative. Unlike, PiS was frequently moving in dimensions of a super-reality conjured up by militant language. The major problem with this strategy is that explaining reality in binary pairs leads to their objectification, and thus to relinquishing any attempts to search for alternative solutions. The 2005-2007 government with the leading party, Law and Justice, seemed to assume populist approach in the first place to achieve its ideological project. Yet, in the search for new supporters of the undertaking PiS had to address voters of miscellaneous backgrounds.

Thus, it was trapped into the very danger of populism, i.e. the weakness of contents and total contestation of the past. Namely, it turned out that the project of Fourth Republic is not really an alternative but rather a populist reply to the Third Polish Republic with its flaws. The new design halted at the level of radical language and social polarization. Proponents of the way in which PiS was realizing its project of renewal would claim it was not given the chance to accomplish its goals, mainly to the allied forces of mass media, intellectual elite and business (i.e. the old-boy network). Yet, in the Polish context, where democracy has still not been entirely consolidated the populist calls for total restoration, or "regaining of the state" to use the Jarosław Kaczyński's phrase (KACZYŃSKI 2006) brought about political confusion. The ultimate positive result "devouring of the

trimmings" - the erasure of two peculiarities of Polish political landscape from the public stage - and a step towards the solidification of party system.

References

CANOVAN, Margaret. Populism. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981

FERGUSON, Niall, ABRAMS, Samuel J. Ofensywa populizmu. Globalizacja podburza masy. DZIENNIK 119, 12.07.2006

KACZYŃSKI, Jarosław. Convention of local government, Radom, 30.06.2007, retrievable at http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,53600,4279607.html

KACZYŃSKI, Jarosław. Speech to the Sejm, 17.02.2006

KRASOWKSI, Robert. Bunt mas w IV RP. DZIENNIK 180, 15.09.2007

KUCHARCZYK, Jacek, FOMINA, Joanna. Poland after the 2005 elections: Domestic Discontent of EU backlash? In: Democracy and Populism in Central Europe: The Visegrad Elections and Their Aftermath. IVO: Bratislava, 2007.

KZREMIŃSKI, Ireneusz. Szanse polskiego liberalizmu. DZIENNIK 175, 11.08.2007.

MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, Maria (ed.). Populizm na przełomie XX i XXI wieku . Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2006.

MOUFFE, Chantal. On the Political. Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2005.

Sejm RP, Załącznik do Uchwały Sejmu Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej z dnia 24 września 2004 r., retrievable at http://ks.sejm.gov.pl/proc4/pdf/2796_u_zal.pdf

SMOLAR, Aleksander. O populizmie liberalnym i nieliberalnym, DZIENNIK 164, 26.05.2007

SOSNOWSKI, Jerzy. Zawiedzione zaufanie intelektualistów, Dziennik 180, 15.09.2007

SZACKI, Populizm a demokracja. In: MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO, Maria (ed.). Populizm na przełomie XX i XXI wieku. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2006.

SZALKIEWICZ, Wojciech Krzysztof. Słownik polityczny IV RP. Wrocław: Atut, 2007.

ŚPIEWAK, Paweł. O bezrefleksyjnej modernizacji. DZIENNIK 172, 21.07.2007

TISCHNER, Józef. Etyka solidarności oraz Homo sovieticus. Znak, Kraków, 1992.

TODD, Emmanuel. Populizm zwyciężył. DZIENNIK 164, 26.05.2007

ZINOVIEV, Alexander . Homo sovieticus. London, 1984

ŻAKOWSKI, Jacek. Politykę ukradli wariaci, DZIENNIK 168, 23.06.2007

SPEAKERS AND AUTHORS

GWENDOLYN ALBERT
Gwendolyn Albert, born in 1967, is the Director of the Women's Initiatives Network at the Peacework Development Fund. She is a human rights activist and was a civil society member of the Czech Government Human Rights Council for 2006-2007. She has participated or is currently involved in the management of the following Czech non-governmental organizations: Organization for Aid to Refugees (2002- 2004), the League of Human Rights (2003-2006), Step By Step Czech Republic (since 2005), the Public Interest Lawyers Association (since 2006) and Prameni (since 2006). From 2004 to 2006 she was employed as the historically first director of the League of Human Rights, a member of the International Federation of Human Rights. Her focus is anti-discrimination, especially concerning the Roma community. She is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and was awarded a Fulbright grant to study in Czechoslovakia in 1989.

LUKÁŠ BENDA
Born in 1973, Brno, Czech Republic. Studied Hungarian language and literature, French language and literature and the political sciences at the Masaryk University in Brno. Since 1999 he has published more than ten studies concerning the political system in Hungary, focusing mainly on the Hungary´s political party system. He works as a translator and interpreter.

KLAUS VON BEYME
Klaus von Beyme is Professor of Political Science Emeritus at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences of the University of Heidelberg. He studied at the universities of Heidelberg, Munich, Paris and in Moscow. His major research fields

are Comparative Politics and Political Theory. Von Beyme is widely regarded as one of the most important German political scientists of the 20th century. Along with Sartori and Duverger, he is also regarded as a leading expert in modern political party theory. He is a Member of the Academia Europaea (a European non-governmental scientific academy). Klaus von Beyme is also a former member of the Advisory Council of the Social Science Research Center in Berlin. From 1982-85 he was President of the International Political Science Association. His works include Right Wing Extremism in Western Europe, Transition to Democracy in Eastern Europe, Das Zeitalter der Avantgarde. Kunst und Gesellschaft, and America as a Model: the Impact of American Democracy in the World.

BOJAN BUGARIČ

Bojan Bugarič is a law professor at the University of Ljubljana who has raised concerns about the practicality of seeking administrative standardisation across the EU. BugariČ has worked as a member of a consultation body at the International Institute for Peace in Vienna and as a Visiting Professor at Harvard University (1995-1996). At the end of 1998 he lectured at the UCLA School of Law as a Visiting Professor on economic reform in Central and Eastern Europe. At the beginning of 2001, he lectured on European Union legislation and on law and globalisation at the same School of Law in Los Angeles. In 2001, the University of Trento in Italy awarded him the title of "Jean Monnet Visiting Professor". He has written many works on comparative constitutional law and public administration as well as many critical legal studies.

JIŘÍ DIENSTBIER

Jiří Dienstbier is a Czech politician, writer and former dissident. He is currently one of the possible candidates for President of the Czech Republic in 2008. In 1977 he was among the first 250 signatories of Charter 77, and later became its spokesperson. He was also a founding member of the Public against Violence Organization in 1978. In November 1989 he became a member of the Civic Platform; from 1989 to 1992 he was Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister and a deputy in the Federal Assembly (representing the Civic Platform and later the Civic Movement). He was the leader of a liberal party called The Freeborn Democrats from 1993 to 1996. He also taught as a visiting professor at many universities during the 1990s. From 1998 to 2001 he was the Special Rapporteur for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for the former Yugoslavia.

MARIE GAILOVÁ

Marie Gailová is chairperson of the Romodrom civic association and the coordinator and financial advisor of its Vinařice Prison Work Programme Project. In the year 2000 she worked with Romani families for the Municipal Office of Prague - Uhříněves. This experience led her to establish the Romodrom organization, a team of people aiming to resolve the complex problems of the Roma community. She is a member of the Prague City Hall's Committee for National Minorities.

JOSEF JAŘAB

He is former chairman of Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security of the Senate but also literary historian, theoretician, and Americanist. Between 2000 and 2004 he served as President of the European Association for American Studies; he co-founded Collegium for African-American Research. He was visiting scholar at New York University, Brandeis University, University of California in Berkeley. In 1989 he was a visiting professor at the DuBois Institute for African American Research at Harvard University. After 1989 he became the first feely elected rector in the country at Palacký University, Olomouc, and later he was Rector and President of Central European University in Budapest and Warsaw. Member of Czech Writers Association, Czech PEN-club, and Learned Society of the Czech Republic. For eight years he was member of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In 2005 he was awarded the Woodrow Wilson Freedom Prize from U.S. Embassy for his long-term contribution to Czech-American relations. Author of numerous works on American literature, cultural pluralism, issues of higher education and media, such as Popular Culture and Democracy: An Easy/Uneasy Relationship, Understanding African-American Culture: A Central European View, Academic Freedom and University Autonomy, Media and Democratic Culture. Member of the Advisory Board of the Association for International Affairs.

PETR JUST

Petr Just (b. 1978) graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague, majoring in Political Sciences. He currently finishes his Ph.D. studies there. Since 2005 he has been teaching at the Faculty of Social Sciences courses related to Czech, Slovak, Czechoslovak and Central European Politics. In 2006 he joined the Metropolitan University in Prague, where he - besides teachings - serves as the Vice-Rector for Students Affairs. Previously he had worked as the journalist in Parliamentary Courier and as the Researcher at the Center for Social and Economic Strategies

TOMÁŠ KAFKA

Head of Central European Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Graduated from Russian studies and history from the Charles University in Prague in 1988, entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1991; he has worked as an expert for German speaking countries since this time, which also included an 8-year-long break, when Tomas Kafka was appointed as the director of the secretary of the Czech-German Future Fund. During this time Kafka actively participated in funding a number of activities aimed at the process of reconciliation in Central Europe (negotiation and execution of the humanitarian payments in favour of the former victims of National-Socialism).

MICHAL KOPEČEK

Michal Kopeček is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, Charles University, Prague in 1998 and received a doctorate from the Faculty of Social Sciences from Charles University. He has interned at Endicott College (Massachusetts, USA) and István Bibó Szellemi Mühely (Budapest, Republic of Hungary), and was a Robert Bosch Junior Visiting Fellow at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (Vienna, Austria) and Humboldt Universität (Berlin, Germany). He has published several books and articles, including Bolshevisms, Communisms and Radical Socialisms in Czechoslovakia.

EDUARD KUKAN

Eduard Kukan is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic from 1998-2006. Mr. Kukan graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 1964 and also received a Doctorate in Law from Charles University in Prague. After the fall of the communist regime he became the Permanent Representative of Czechoslovakia to the United Nations in the years 1990-1992. After the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic on 1st January 1993, he became the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the UN. He was a candidate in the Slovak presidential elections in 2004 and is a member of the SDKU party.

KAI-OLAF LANG

Kai-Olaf Lang was born in 1967. He is a researcher at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (the Foundation for Science and Policy) in Berlin. He is a member of the editorial board of the Czech magazine "International Policy" and an expert on the foreign and security policies of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

ONDŘEJ LIŠKA

Ondřej Liška is a Member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament, Chair of the Chamber's European Affairs Committee, and a member of the Green Party since 2002. He completed his studies in Political Science and Religious Studies in Brno. He is a member of the Prague Global Policy Institute. Since 2004 he has been a consultant on Regional Development and Structural Funds for the Green Party in the European Parliament.

PAUL LUIF

Paul Luif habilitated for political science at Salzburg University. Since 1980 he has been a member of the scientific staff of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP), Vienna, responsible for the EU, in particular for the common foreign security policy. His research areas at OIIP also include the foreign policy of small states, neutrality and non-alignment in Europe, European integration, internal security of the EU, and EU enlargement. Paul Luif has lectured at universities in Vienna and Salzburg and has worked as a Research and Senior Visiting Fellow at universities in New Delhi, Stockholm and Paris. His most recent publications include Austria in the European Union, Internal Security, EU Cohesion in the UN General Assembly, and The Changing Role of the Non-Allied Countries in the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

MARIA MARCZEWSKA - RYTKO

Professor Marczewska-Rytko is a member of the Faculty of Political Science in the Political Movements Department at the University of Maria Curie-Skłodowskiej in Lublin, Poland. As a researcher on Poland she has contributed by analysing the phenomenon of democracy and populism in the context of modernisation. Her research interests are populism, democracy, extreme right-wing parties, nationalism and fundamentalism. She has participated in numerous international scientific conferences and has authored more than 200 publications, including Religion in a Changing Europe: Between Pluralism and Fundamentalism, Selected Problems, and Populism at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Century.

JURAJ MARUŠIAK

Juraj Marušiak is a Research Fellow at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Chairman of the Society for Central and Eastern Europe. He is considered an expert on Belarus and has published numerous articles in both Slovak and international journals. He has written several important books on Central European

political history, including The Hungarian Revolution 1956, Poland, Slovakia and the Regime of Normalisation and Slovak Literature and Power in the Second Half of the 1950s.

GRIGORIJ MESEŽNIKOV

Grigorij Mesežnikov is President and co-founder of the Institute for Public Affairs, where he leads its Domestic Politics programme. He was Secretary of the Slovak Political Science Association from 1994 to 1998. He worked at Comenius University from 1983 - 1993 and at the Slovak Academy of Sciences' Political Science Institute from 1993 - 1997. He has published papers in various mono-graphs, anthologies and journals in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia, Taiwan, Ukraine, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Canada, the USA and Great Britain. He regularly analyses the Slovak political scene in both the domestic and international media. Since 1993 he has been a freelance correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He is the co-editor and co-author of numerous books, including A Global Report on Slovakia. He also cooperates with Freedom House and The National Endowment for Democracy in Washington and with the Open Society Foundation in Budapest.

JIŘÍ MUSIL

Jiří Musil is a leading specialist in the theory of sociology, urban sociology, cul-tural sociology and demography. He has he earned six medals and awards for book publications and for research in the field of urban sociology. After graduat-ing from Charles University (in sociology and philosophy) he conducted research at several institutes of architecture. In 1990 he restored the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, where he was the director. He was also the director of the Central European University in Prague. He was a pro-fessor at the Central European University in Budapest and Warsaw and simulta-neously at the Charles University, Prague from 1993 to 2003. Jiří Musil is a mem-ber of Academia Europaea (London), Academia Scientiarum et Artium Europaea (Vienna), and the World Academy of Art and Science (USA). From 1998 to 2001 he was President of the European Sociological Association.

VÁCLAV NEKVAPIL

Václav Nekvapil is Research Director of the Association for International Affairs (AMO) and a PhD. student and lecturer at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at Charles University since 2005. A graduate in political science from the Charles

University, from 2003-2004 he studied at the Institute of Political Studies in Grenoble, France. Among the publications he has edited (or co-edited) are Agenda for Czech Foreign Policy, Czech Foreign Policy and the 2006 Election, We Are in Europe, What Next?, and Impulse for Civil Society. He specialises in France, EU affairs, Israeli politics and society, the Middle Eastern conflict and its impact on contemporary European anti-Semitism.

EDVARD OUTRATA
Former vice president of the Czech Senate, former chairman of the Czech Statistic Office. Vice president of European Movement International. Member of the Advisory Board of the Association for International Affairs.

JIŘÍ PEHE
Mr Pehe teaches at Charles University and at the New York University in Prague, of which he is also Director. Pehe studied law and philosophy at Charles University in Prague. He fled Czechoslovakia in 1981 and eventually settled in the U.S.A. In 1985 he graduated from the School of International Affairs at Columbia University. He serves as Chairman of the Programme Committee of the Forum 2000 Foundation, which organises annual international conferences under the auspices of former Czech President Václav Havel. He was Director of the Political Department of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic from 1997 to 1999 and worked as Director of Central European Research at the Research Institute of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Munich, Germany. Until 2005 Pehe was a member of the board of directors of CEELI, a U.S. organization that educates lawyers in post-communist countries. He has written hundreds of articles and analytical studies on developments in Eastern Europe for Czech, German and US periodicals and academic journals and is a regular contributor to various Czech newspapers.

ALICE SAVOVOVÁ
Alice Savovová, director of the Association for International Affairs since 2007. She is currently finishing her M.A. studies in International Relations and Diplomacy at University of Economics in Prague. She absolved a scholarship program at the Hong Kong University for Science and Technology in 2006. She also took part at various working programs in Germany, Brussels and China. She specializes in the Asian region and its impact on global economy.

MICHAEL SHAFIR

Professor Michael Shafir teaches at the Faculty of European Studies, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, where he has been the Chair of International Relations since September 2007. Shafir was born in Romania and received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1981. He taught Political Science at the University of Tel Aviv and has worked as the foreign news director at Kol Israel, deputy director of Radio Free Europe's Audience and Public Opinion Research, and chief of the Romanian Research Unit at the Radio Free Europe Research Institute in Munich, Germany. Between 1995 and 2005, Shafir lived in Prague, his last position being that of European Affairs Coordinator at Radio Free-Europe/Radio Liberty and editor of East European Perspectives, a journal published by RFE/RL and distributed online. He is the author of Romania: Politics, Economics and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change (Frances Pinter, London, 1985) and Between Negation and Comparative Trivialization: Holocaust Denial in Post-Communist East-Central Europe (Polirom, Iasi, Romania, 2002). He has published over 300 articles on communist and post-communist affairs in British, German, French, Austrian, Dutch, Israeli, Hungarian, Slovak, US and Romanian journals, and has con-tributed chapters to books published in Great Britain, the USA, Austria and the Czech Republic. Professor Shafir is the head of the Romanian delegation to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF).

SOŇA SZOMOLÁNYI

Soňa Szomolányi is a professor of political science and until recently was the head of the Political Science Department at Comenius University in Bratislava (1996-2007). Her main areas of interest are comparative politics focusing on democrati-sation and elite research. She has published widely on Slovakia's post-communist transition and its democratic consolidation in comparison with that of other coun-tries of East Central Europe. Szomolányi is the author of the monograph "The Crooked Path of Slovakia towards Democracy" and co-author of "Spain and Slovakia - Two Paths towards Democracy". Recently she edited the book Spoločnosť a politika na Slovensku - cesty k stabilite (1989 -2004). ("Society and Politics in Slovakia - Paths toward Stability"). She is a member of the editorial board of the journals of the Central European Political Science Network and Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs.

CYRIL SVOBODA
Cyril Svoboda is currently a Czech Minister without Portfolio and Chairman of the Legislative Council of the Government. Since 1998 he has been an MP for KDU-ČSL (the Christian Democrats). He also served as Interior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs (2002-2006). He worked as state registrar and from 1990 to 1992 as a consultant to the Deputy Chair.

EVA VAN DE RAKT
Eva van de Rakt (born 1973) has been the Director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Prague since 2004, focusing on Human Rights and European Affairs Issues. After her study of dance education at the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in the Netherlands she worked for several years as a dance professor at Duncan Centre Conservatory in the Czech Republic. As an artist and teacher she has been involved in several international dance and film projects.

1. Eva van de Rakt and Alice Savovová

2. Alice Savovová and Tomáš Kafka

3. Eduard Kukan and Cyril Svoboda

4. Josef Jařab, Ondřej Liška and Eduard Kukan

5. Josef Jařab and Ondřej Liška

6. Bojan Bugarič and Maria Marczewska-Rytko

7. Professor Klaus von Beyme

8. Professor Jiří Musil

9. Conference plenary session

RESEARCH CENTER OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

amo
asociace pro mezinárodní otázky
association for international affairs

The Association for International Affairs (AMO) is a non-governmental organization founded to promote research and education in the field of international relations. Our main goal is to increase awareness of international affairs. Thanks to its activities and more than ten-year tradition, AMO has established itself as the preeminent independent foreign policy think-tank in the Czech Republic. Today, AMO represents a unique forum in which academics, business people, policy makers, diplomats, the media and NGOs can interact in an open and impartial environment.

AMO strives to:
■   publish analyses and research papers;
■   organize international conferences, expert seminars, round tables, and public briefings;
■   carry out educational projects;
■   provide critical assessment of current affairs for Czech and international media;
■   foster development of a new generation of foreign policy experts and scholars;
■   encourage interest in international relations among the general public;
■   cooperate with like-minded institutions in the Czech Republic and abroad.

Research Center
Founded in October 2003, AMO's Research Center has been dedicated to carrying out research into and raising public awareness of international affairs, security and foreign policy.

Recognizing the absence of a similar institution in the Czech Republic, the Research Center has been organized to conduct independent expert research in the field of international relations as well as to expend cooperation with partner institutions abroad. The Research Center strives to identify and analyze issues important to the Czech foreign policy and the country's position in the world. To this end, the Research Center produces independent analyses, encourages expert and public debate on international affairs and suggests solutions to tackle problems in today's world.

The Center's activities can be divided into two main areas; First, the Center undertakes research and analysis of foreign policy issues. Second, the Center fosters dialog with policy-makers, the expert community and the broad public. The Research Center's area of interest lies mainly in the Euro-Atlantic area, Eastern Europe, Middle East, Far East and Latin America. We analyze a wide range of issues such as the Czech foreign policy, European integration, economic diplomacy, European Neighborhood Policy, energy security, and development issues.

The Research Center provides the human capital on which innovative analysis and policymaking can rely. It does so through a pool of research fellows, who conduct research projects, draft research papers and comment on current affairs in media. Our fellows also provide expertise for AMO's educational projects; take part in expert discussions as well as international conferences.