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Radicals in Central Europe
Real Danger or a Passing Fad

Abstract: The object of this article is to discuss various forms of political radicalism in Central Europe after 1989. This issue is made important by this region's impact on the Old Continent in its modern history and particular intensification of this phenomenon in countries undergoing dramatic social changes, system transformation in this case. Focusing his attention on Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, the author classifies radical groups as "classic autocrats" and "evolutionary populists." Differences in ideology, programmes and organization between them as well as their immanent qualities indicate that the popularity of radicals is but a transient phenomenon and poses no threat to the bases of democracy. However, one can consider it a lasting feature of this system, which materializes in the form of changing, disintegrating and yet again reborn groups.

Keywords: radicalism, populism, political parties, Central Europe, authoritarianism, democracy, system transformation.

Introduction

Central Europe has been undergoing transformation for as many as fifteen years, which is expected to make this region a model example of successful democratic changes. Economic and political reforms which started in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary are gradually spreading into other countries liberated from the rule of soviet system in late '80s and early '90s. The European Union expansion last year seems to symbolize this process (out of the 10 new member states only two (Cyprus and Malta) are in a different part of Europe), as does the NATO expansion (with addition of Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and the Baltic States). It would be wrong, however, to treat the region under discussion as a homogenous whole and to look in its history or present day for a common denominator for all political and social developments. Even the basic issue sparks controversies: what does the notion "Central Europe" actually mean? Which countries does it include? And lastly, does comparative analysis of countries with so different history (and consequently, cultural, religious, political and economic traditions) make any sense at all? The author believes it does. "Central Europe" seems to be more than just a geographical notion. It is also a political and cultural conception which, although changing in history

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(from Germany-dominated Mitteleuropa to cooperation of independent countries in organizations like the Vyshehrad Group or Central European Initiative) which has survived in many studies, analyses and projects tackling particularly the question of a further path of the region's development (Brix 2002). The present article will discuss the situation of six countries of which Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary form a nucleus, and those somehow standing aside and yet systematically going their own way towards liberal democracy—Romania and Bulgaria. It stands to reason that the process of changes is not linear in those countries. A road to democracy is a rough going, making the progress slower. The point of departure of each country in 1989 was also very different, which significantly impedes putting forward universal hypotheses. It seems, however, that the research workers' interest is justified if only by the fact that for its very diversified cultural and religious experiences, the region in question does gradually become a democratic political and economic unity heading for complete integration with structures of the Western world.

It is the object of this article to find out how radical parties are placed in the system transformation process. Parties which are often feared because of their programmes and activities so overtly discordant with assumptions that triggered processes initiated in 1989. Are the apprehensions justified? Does "radicalism" define a political movement or merely an attitude very popular at the moment but bound to disappear like any fad when economic situation improves?

Extremist Threat

Among threats to democratic changes, one often indicates a possibility of radical parties (also called extremist or populist)[1] assuming power, which can slow down or even stop reformation processes.

These fears, although not equally valid in each of the countries discussed, are not unfounded. A time of transformation is very advantageous for extremists to surface and win significant support. It is almost always coupled with specific civic re-education. Previous, drilled-in during dictatorship, forms of socio-political activity (de facto: passivity) are called into question. On the one hand, prospects of actual participation in political life open up—fair elections, freedom of speech, freedom of association. A party system and a market of media independent of the authority are established. Yet, paradoxically, freedoms which are the essence of democratic system can be taken advantage of by organizations questioning its legitimacy. On the other hand, changes meant to introduce a market economy (free prices, privatization, development of international trade) are accompanied by negative developments like unemployment, inflation, bankruptcy of big unprofitable businesses, crises in agricultural production. Ethnic questions (artificially suppressed and concealed for more then forty years)

[1] Authors dealing with these subjects (both referring to Western and Central Europe) give different names to the same groupings. S. Ramet in his work *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe* (1999) and Michael Shafir in *The Radical Politics in Post-communist East Central Europe* write about parties of radical right or simply "radicals," and Vladimir Tismaneau—about political extremism.

regain momentum; the old-new conflicts frequently trigger long-lasting wars (Croatia, Bosnia) (Sekelj 2001). A considerable group of "losers" emerges who look back nostalgically on their communist past, contest current changes (as inflicting losses on them) and are easy "prizes" for political radicals declaring similar views who offer simple recipes to redress errors allegedly committed by reformers (Antoszewski, Herbut 1998; Gill 2002; Domański 2002).

It would be wrong, however, to approach casually an extremist threat and reduce explanation to quotation of generally known and frequently described trends seen at a macro level, trends constituting the structural (economic and social) conditions of formation of political scene in post-communist countries. It is the view of Herbert Kitschelt (shared by the author of this article), who studied the New Radical Right in Western Europe, that in formation of radical parties of equal importance is the character of 'mainstream groupings and rivalry between them. The electorate's dissatisfaction and frustration, caused by e.g. deteriorated economic situation, can be increased by lack of a real alternative for the rulers. Socio-technically motivated (maximization of votes) similarity of programmes of conservatives and social-democrats and the ever more frequent great coalitions which, in their turn, are consequent on a strategy opting for maximization of attitudes, are the reason why the former division into the Left and Right is increasingly illusory. It can prompt a substantial part of the electorate to support parties that declare their independent and anti-system attitudes.

However, all above mentioned phenomena can be called just "catalysts" of the birth of political radicalism. They create what could be defined as a "demand." To satisfy it with "supplies," there ought to be also leaders capable of organizing a grouping and forming a message—a programme that will meet social expectations. The role of leaders needs to be particularly emphasized as (which will be discussed further down in this article) most populist groupings base their popularity on the leader's personal popularity. The fate of a party is often coupled so closely with that of its leader's that any change of the leader result in its outright marginalization.

Analysing political extremism in Central Europe one should keep in mind two questions.

First, this phenomenon is in many respects different from one abundantly described in Western scientific literature (Kitschelt 1995; Betz 1994; Marcus 2000; Ivarsflaten 2000). In West-European countries, it is believed that the emergence of radicalism is mainly caused by some social groups opposing the expanded welfare state (restricting economic freedom) and combined with it aversion to immigrants and to social policy supporting their assimilation at "native citizens' expense" (Scandinavian anti-taxation parties can serve as a model example). Things are different, however, in post-communist countries which become democratized. There, for above reasons, nobody questions the principle of a "welfare state." Just the contrary, they are an example to follow and an object of all activities for many groupings and their supporters. Which is why one has to agree with Kitschelt, who considers welfare chauvinism to be a version of populism which, although already marginalized in Western Europe,[2]

[2] This variety seems, however, to be gaining more and more popularity also in Western Europe in recent years. This is due to some extremist Right groupings taking over socio-democratic postulates (German

can find favourable conditions east of the Elbe. Programmes of those groupings feature both authoritarianism (dislike of "aliens"—also of national minorities, racism, anti-Semitism, nationalism) as well as advocate socialism reminiscences, like full employment, social protection of the poorest, free health care and they disapprove of international financial institutions and great industrial corporations (Kitschelt 1995).

Second, one can also detect substantial internal differences in Central-European radicalism. Populist parties in countries of interest to the author are quite unique and exceptional. This is largely an effect of historical developments, often dating back to the period before the World War I. The following facts can play an important role: a specific social or ethnic structure of a country (super-representation of a social class, e.g. the peasants; a strong national minority concentrated in a region; a numerous diaspora in a neighbouring country), collective historical memory (conflicts; changed frontiers; a group's domination over the other; the way of toppling communism), socio-political traditions (popularity of an ideological option; positive or negative attitudes to monarchy; the influence of some social groups justified by their exceptional services).

Nevertheless, it is the author's opinion—as shown in a further part of this article—that a distinct line runs between Central European radicals irrespective of their specific national traits, separating "classic autocrats" from "evolutionary populists." This terminology is suggested by the author and its relevance will be shown further down.

Radicalism as a Target and as Means

Obviously enough, this typology cannot be an unquestioned instrument to classify groupings in one or another category, automatically and irrevocably. Over the past fifteen years, some of them have certainly modified their programmes and the rhetoric of their public pronouncements, and addressed their message to other sections of the electorate. Other vanished from the political scene, their members joining various groupings, not all of them radical. Lastly, there are groupings whose classification into a category may require more extensive and detailed studies than those employed when writing this text, and this is connected with the ambiguity of the notion populism. These reservations are meant to promote caution when using typology but do not question its utility. It is a proposal, an attempt at rearranging an area which—due to a large number of individual cases—has had to make do with a purely enumerative and descriptive analysis. The author of this article intends to point out similarities and differences between radical groupings and shows that it is wrong to automatically include all non-mainstream parties in one group, whatever its name.

One should first of all explain terminology employed in literature dealing with this subject. In that literature, the radicalism is unequivocally linked with the Right. Scholars analyse the extreme or the radical Right as a phenomenon present all populist

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Nationalist Party—NPD; Danish People's Party—DFP) and also due to the emergence of political bodies quoting "social chauvinism" in their manifestos (Electoral Alternative-Social Justice—WASG).

parties irrespective of differences in their programmes (Ramet 1999; Anastasakis 2000). The author, however, is of the opinion that a Right, whether radical or extreme, is just one of many versions adopted by the phenomenon described.

Defining political radicalism in Central Europe one should first indicate elements which are common to its both forms under consideration here. Extremism of views and methods is primarily seen in relation to the state which was established following changes in the system after '89s, its genesis and achievements. It is then the criticism of the post-1989 system transformation which is the chief aspect, the common denominator. From this perspective, of importance is not just the criticism of methods employed in the transformation and pathologies within it, but attempts at discrediting the very idea of changing the system. Thus nearly everything is called into question: from the direction and objective that were chosen, integration with international military structures (NATO) and political structures (European Union), to the actual course of events and key elements (privatization, market prices, changes in legislation—new constitutions) to the actual need for transformation (emphasizing positive aspects of the former system, defending socialism's "achievements" like free education). With these opinions come declarations of readiness to defend "one's own group" threatened with adverse reform results. Depending on the type of radicalism, that group of deceived or harmed people is defined according to different criteria—ethnic (Nation), social (class—workers, peasants, OAP's) or economic ("losers"). Radicals also identify their enemies—"aliens," "strangers." This "strangeness" can result from being a national minority member (consequently, anti-Semitism will often occur, although not always explicitly expressed) or being a citizen of a nation that maintains bad, historically conditioned relations with the ethnically defined "one's own group." "Classical autocrats" and "evolutionary populists" will also disapprove of people with a cosmopolitan attitude—who are not patriots in their opinion. Representatives of ruling elite are also defined "as strangers" almost automatically. They supposedly cooperate with enemies placed in international power structures or, distanced from daily problems of the country's "simple citizens," are unable to promote their good.

As seen by radicals, the attributes of social reality are a specific collectivism, anti-individualism and homogeneity. Only large groups do count and it is between them that history goes on, summed up in a number of statements of striking Manichaean simplicity. The world is divided into the "good" and the "bad" , and belonging to one group or the other determines an individual's fate. That is why the "ideology"[3] of extremism is made up of a whole conglomerate of myths and legends making the world stereotypical. Discrepancy between the reality and aspirations stoked by hopes connected with a change in the system in the case discussed produces a specific utopia, featuring a future (communist or even pre-communist) as the "land of promise." Events are reconstructed according to the adopted doctrine of "golden age." All

[3] As "populist/radical ideology" the author understands a group of opinions, points of view which, although not assuming to propose a new, systemized vision of an ideal world in all its aspects (as is in the case of classic ideologies—socialism, fascism) and are not of a theological character, yet they do offer answers, one-sided and not subject to polemics, to social and economic problems.

facts questioning the ideal, and critical voices pointing at its unsafe legal validity are condemned as provocations and the work of "enemies of the people." In this context, representatives of the types of radicalism discussed consider conspiracy theories of great importance as main instruments in explaining a complex reality. A "scapegoat" (in the form of Jews, Gypsies, masons, liberals, intellectuals) holds a special place in extreme ideologies. On one hand, it suggests the existence of a permanent threat to a group, which should ward it off having first closed its ranks, and on the other, it reduces its inferiority complex because—for all the fear it induces—it is condemned and scorned.

Views held by radicals cause ambivalence in their attitudes to democratic procedures and institutions. Even though the discord between "classical authoritarianism" and "evolutionary populism" is relatively big, one should emphasize that representatives of both types unanimously criticize representative democracy as causing corruption and belief in a party membership. They offer other alternatives, from dictatorship linked to traditions of prewar fascist and quasi-fascist groupings based on the "leadership rule" to a purely populist postulate of turning to "the will of the people" through augmenting the scope of issues settled in a referendum. In the latter case, defence of democracy is of a primarily verbal character because also in parties of this type of absolute priority is the role of a charismatic leader, who allegedly personifies that mythical "will of the people." Recognition of this assumption naturally opposes the validity of democratic procedures (Ramet 1995; Tismaneanu 1990).

The fundamental difference between forms of political extremism analysed below is found in the title of the present subsection. "Classical authoritarianism" wishes to implement its radical objects frequently employing radical methods—objects which are rooted in the movement ideology and are, thence, not to be negotiated. "Evolutionary populists" seem to be more pragmatic in their approach to politics, which is due to the fact that electoral success is their prime object. The radicalism of the programme is merely subservient and can be toned down to suit the changing social feelings (e.g. the ambivalent stand on the European Union). Vehement action, often disregarding the law (statements, protest forms) is intended to attract mass media attention and emphasize determination, which in reality can be very fragile.

To sum up: political radicalism, as the author understands it, is antidemocratic in the broad sense of the word—negative attitude to values (tolerance, liberty, equality) and to institutions (political parties) of liberal democracy, and in the narrow sense—questioning the need and aim of system transformation.

"Classical Authoritarianism" i.e. the Victim of Political Fanaticism

This category is largely the same as radical return, a term proposed by Michael Shafir (1999). In reality it is a comeback of old demons—rebirth of organizations, which often directly (names, symbols, ideas) quote the tradition of prewar extreme right parties and vindicate governments they formed (if this was the case). The classical character is thus mainly connected with direct reference to prewar—quasi-fascist or

ultranationalist—past. In this case, "authoritarianism" means anti-democratic contents of ideology professed by representatives of this form of radicalism.

The two interwar decades, particularly the '30s, have furnished the present-day radicals with a wide gamut of examples to follow. In all the countries discussed (except Czechoslovakia), instable and "inefficient" democracy was replaced with regimes with different degrees of authoritarianism. The success of extremist groupings and failure of the II surge of democratization should be traced back to the complex geopolitical background in Central Europe following the First World War. The fall of empires (Germany, Austro-Hungary and Czar's Russia)[4] as well as the dramatic frontier reshuffling at the Versaille Congress triggered many international tensions over national status of some territories. This situation evidently fuelled nationalist feelings, which had been reactivated by the recently concluded war anyway. These problems overlapped with economic crisis consequent on industrial infrastructure destruction, the ruin of agriculture and a fall in population number. Some countries (Bulgaria, Hungary) were also plagued by a loser's complex, and the citizens charged the authorities with inefficiency, even treason. In this context one can easily understand the popularity of politicians who promised a quick recovery by removing enemies standing in the path of national affluence, particularly as the democratic system, introduced shyly after 1919, had not yet become deeply rooted.

Extreme quasi-fascist right won the biggest influence in Romania and Hungary.

Romania, the war winner, was spared atrocities of revolution. The elites kept power. However, the lack of emphatic economic reforms and the Great Crisis resulted in dramatic crisis of legitimacy of democratic order and in introduction of so-called royal dictatorship on the eve of war and, later, General Ion Antonescu's fascist rule. The feelings grew more radical under the growing impact of a grouping established by Corneliu Codreanu, called Archangel Michael's Legions. This organization, together with its paramilitary wing The Iron Guard, quickly won popularity, introducing into Romanian politics elements quoting fascist symbols (uniforms—"green shirts," salute with an outstretched arm) and ideology (anti-Semitism, xenophobia, anti-parliamentarism).[5] The Iron Guard rule were connected with extermination of Jews (up to 1942) and participation—with great loss—in the war as allies of the Axle states. Consequently, after the latter were defeated, Antonescu and his closest collaborators were deprived of power and sentenced to death for war crimes (Willaume 2004).

In early '20s Hungary's situation was incomparably more critical than any other state's in the region. Defeated in the war, shorn of two-thirds of its territory and

[4] The fall of the Ottoman Empire, although for Turkey itself it meant a very dramatic period of change, was not of key importance to Central Europe (particularly to countries discussed in this article). As independent countries, Bulgaria and Romania had been established as early as 19th century. The final defeat of the Ottoman Turks state was due to its successive weakening throughout the preceding century, and was no quality change from geopolitical point of view.

[5] Anti-Semitism of Romanian fascism had its roots in farmers' attitudes. Peasants, the chief group of Codreanu's followers, were ill-disposed to towns and town institutions. Jews, who held a high position in administration and trade and were the backbone of Romanian bourgeoisie, symbolized all their fears and bias.

economically ruined, it also had to pass through revolution and a period of counter-revolutionary "white terror." True democracy had no chance to develop there. The next two decades saw Miklos Horthy's conservative dictatorship in Hungary. Initially, there was a relatively liberal internal politics and a wide range of civic freedoms but deteriorating economy and failed reforms ended up in radicalization of the society. First organizations were formed taking German Nazism as their model (National-Socialist Hungarian Workers' Party, Hungarian National-Socialist Party). But most influence was gained by the Arrow Cross Party (earlier: Party of National Will) led by Ferenc Szalasi (second place in 1938, elections, 300,000 members in 1940). Yet it won power only in October, 1944 when Horthy, forced by the Germans to step down, handed power over to Szalasi and his followers (Kochanowski 1997).

A similar situation was also seen in Poland and Bulgaria, but conservative dictatorships in those countries were strong enough to nip fascist or ultranationalist dangers in the bud.

A grouping to pose most problems to Bulgarian authorities after the First World War was Internal Mecedonian Revolutionary Organization staging raids and terrorist assassinations in the territory of Jugoslavia. It was VMRO's target, which was in a way a state within a state, to have the whole of Macedonia incorporated by Bulgaria. Its activities affected relations with neighbors adversely as the terrorists' bases of attack were in south-east Bulgaria, where they enjoyed substantial social support. Making use of its paramilitary units, VMRO also participated in fight for power in Sofia, causing, among other things, the toppling and murder of prime minister Aleksander Stambolijski. Another group of organizations which made their activities seen from early '30s, were fascists. As a characteristic example may serve Nationalist-Socialist Movement directed by Aleksander Cankov, which failed to win large following, however. Radicals were suppressed by Czar Boris III following coup d'etat in 1935 and introduction of "royal dictatorship."

Also in Poland the strong position of the "sanacja" regime and the charisma of the country leader, Piłsudski, alive even after his death, significantly limited the nationalist camp's role, although it won the strongest social support after the war. After the May coup, which blasted chances of implementing nationalist ideas in a democratic way, National Democrats led by R. Dmowski founded the Great Poland Camp, whose chief element was the Nationalist Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne and its youth section—All Poland Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska). After the Great Poland Camp was delegalized, some members established the secret Nationalist-Radical Camp (Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny—ONR); it was subsequently into the more reform-minded faction "ABC" and Boleslaw Piasecki's extreme anti-Semitic "Falanga." The latter organization was notorious for starting anti-Semitic excesses at universities, demolishing shops, and attacks with explosives, whose ultimate object was banishing Jews from Poland and supplanting them in the social structure by Polish lower classes. The impact of the Nationalist-Radical Camp were, however, very slim on the Polish society.

But the most complicated is the history of parties that are a point of reference for present-day "classical autocrats" from the Czechs and Slovakia. Czechoslovakia

remained the only state where democratic system could be preserved all through the interwar twenty-year period. This does not mean that there were no extreme rightist groups there but their roles substantially differed, depending on the country region where they were active.

In the Czech region they were on the margin of political life, and a symbol of their ill-success is Rudolf Gajda and his Nationalist Fascist Commune. In spite of three attempts at coup (with no chance of success) and a very slight representation in the '30s Parliament, both the "leader" and his party were considered little serious members of Czech politics.

Slovak interwar radicalism focused around activities of Catholic priest Andrej Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSLS) and (in a lesser degree) the Slovak National Party, with its Evangelical background (it was established as early as 1871). These groupings ceaselessly contested the Unitarian Czech Republic, calling for autonomy and an equitable federation, and then division into two independent States. As Czechoslovakia grew dependent on Nazi Germany, postulates of HSLS, which increasingly adopted fascist ideology and symbols (the creation of Hlinka's paramilitary Guard, anti-Semitism introduced as a code patterned on the "Nuremberg statutes," corporations), were satisfied in some degree when a puppet state (yet, their first "own" state in history) was created, spitefully dubbed "the priest republic."

The above nutshell description of the history of interwar radicalism is meant to show the reservoir of traditions, experiences, collective memory and ideologies which inspire modern radicals representing "classic authoritarianism." Just as was mentioned above, the citing of precommunist tradition is one of the main traits of groups from this category.

The message referring to a distance past, which the "classic autocrats" wish to spread, does not seem, however, to find much support among electorates of the countries discussed. Many issues—once the gist of public discussion—have become marginal. Due to the World War II extermination of Jews, the question of anti-Semitism so vital, if not central to radicals seventy years ago, has no more than atavistic implications in Central Europe today. A "people's anti-Semitism" does persist—traditional, deeply rooted in social traditions—and can be used by some politicians for short-term contests and short-lived victories, but is no longer a universally adopted worldview or programme. Indubitably, the whole ideology behind prewar successes of the movements analysed has been discredited. Open citing of fascism or Nazism can only blight the chance of winning new followers. The extreme nationalism potential has also become clearly weaker—overtly xenophobic or racist attitudes seem to belong to the past[6] in a uniting world. Although antipathy to neighbouring states and peoples, which might have increased in early years after system transformation (Beyer 1995)

[6] In the past twenty years, Western Europe which is allegedly a model example of intercultural integration, has been a scene of ever more frequent attacks against immigrants, and parties whose programmes feature postulates of restricting pro-immigration policies gain a meaningful percentage of votes in elections. Yet the parties that have 'monopolized' the subject of foreigners in Western Europe are not classified as "classic autocrats." They are rather "evolutionary populists," who dexterously play on prejudice against foreigners, ingrained in human subconscious but officially repudiate all links with xenophobia, fascism and racism.

it seems that as more treaties on "friendly cooperation" are signed, trade contacts develop (also at the micro-level) and time passes, conflicts caused by nationalist issues seem to be on the wane.

Nevertheless, in spite of adverse conditions mentioned above, the extreme right continues to exist in Central Europe and wins in successive elections permanent, if not very high, support. The strongest in Poland (among those discussed) is the League of Polish Families (LPR), a party which in a recent election to the European Parliament won 17% votes and came in second. This success is easier explained if one monitors the process of internal changes in the LPR in the past four years—leaving the position of one of many extremist national-Catholic organisations, dependent on the radio support ("Maryja"), which does guarantee about 5–7% of votes but at the same time takes away the chance of securing many more. At present, the grouping led, among other, by Roman Giertych, Marek Kotlinowski (chairman) is moving toward the centre of political scene taking the place of so-called hard Right. Worth noticing is first of all "pragmatisation" (rare in the ranks of "classic autocrats") of the programme, seen eg in the changed stand on the European Union (from negative to skeptical) after the access referendum result was published. An important trait of the new LPR image is also a mitigated clericalism, which could otherwise alienate many potential voters.[7] The strength of this organisation also manifests itself in its resistance to splits, which destroyed every initiative on the right side of political scene over the past fifteen years. It is true that the League was deserted by some MPs with well-known names (Łopuszański, Macierewicz and Janowski) but they failed to create an alternative for the LPR which strengthened its position. They remain leaders of small extremist groupings they established (Polish Accord—Porozumienie Polskie, Catholic-National Movement, Alliance for Poland) without a chance of any electoral success (even with Radio Maryja's support).

The national-socialist trend of Polish extreme right, claiming its roots from ONR, enjoys a marginal support. Organisations like Polish National Community (Polska Wspolnota Narodowa—PWN), National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski), Polish National Party (Polska Partia Narodowa) and the National-Radical Camp (ONR) have a few hundred members each and their activities are evident only in street demonstrations (often with groups of skinheads participating) and, perhaps, during clashes with police or representatives of another political option. In 2001 election to the Sejm, the PWN received 2,644 votes (Ost 1999).

Of relatively high importance are also groupings citing the traditions of prewar nationalism in Slovakia. The Slovak National Party (SNS) holds the dominant position, which is a situation slightly different from that before the war. The Slovak People's Party (SLS), connected with Hlinka's party merely with its name, is a small neo-Nazi grouping. As for the SNS, it changed its character—in its first form, it was rather an exclusive party whose members were chiefly Protestants. After its "renaissance" it demanded division of Czechoslovakia with determination, firmly defended the

[7] This stance is manifested by emphasizing independence from Radio Maryja, polemic with the Episcopate over the attitude to European integration, and giving priority to economic and political issues in European debate, and not just voicing the necessity for defence of Christian values.

fascist "republic of priests" and tried to rehabilitate priest Tiso, who wished to make Catholicism the state religion. It won its permanently dominant position among Slovak extreme rightist parties thanks to V. Meciar's government position in 1994–98. It is the only case of co-formation of government in Central Europe by a party of "classic authoritarianism." This situation is worthy of notice as nationalist radical parties have as a rule (due to their intransigence) a small coalition potential. However, the SNS case can be explained by the type of partners with whom it cooperated (HZDS—the populist right and "national communists" from ZRS). The presence in parliament and administration (in 1990–2002) ensured organizational continuance despite many divisions. Crisis struck in 1999 when chairman Jan Slota, ousted by his successor H. Malikova, founded his own organisation, the True Slovak National Party (PSNS). The split was not to the nationalists' advantage—in 2002, neither of the groupings crossed the 5% vote limit although they secured the 7% support when acting jointly. Successive developments (more splits, conflicts) push this until recently important grouping into the chaos which has been hitherto meant for small neo-fascist groups, like SLS or Slovak National Unity (SNJ) (Cibulka 1999).

The Czech Republic, the other state which emerged after Czechoslovakia's disintegration, also had its representative of "classical authoritarianism"—Association for Republic—the Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ), whose leader was—paradoxically—communist censor Miroslav Sladek. Even the name of the party indicates its chief object—defence of the federal state of Czechs and Slovaks. This is why SPR-RSČ put up its candidates in both federal republics, but winning in the West in 1992 nearly 6% of votes, it won just about 0.3% in the East. After the 1993 "velvet divorce," "Czechoslovakism" lost all importance. To survive, Sladek's grouping had reach for ultranationalist ideology and rhetoric, which featured Romanies and Germans as the main enemy. Also politicians responsible for system reforms were targeted—Republicans believed they betrayed the ethos of the 1989 revolution. Initially, this strategy was effective—although the party was deserted by a majority of deputies during 1992–1996 term, it received 8% of votes in new elections. But it was a "swansong" of this formation. The Czechs did not like its extreme radicalism any more especially as a part of the SPR-RSČ programme was taken over by communists in the late '90s (see below). Since 1998 election (3.9%), the grouping's permanent marginalization starts (today it is active under a different name—the Republicans of Miroslav Sladek (R-MS); incidental excesses of skinhead groups linked with it are the only remaining sign of its existence.

Classic authoritarian parties in the Balkans are certainly the weakest, and for various reasons. Romania, where prewar fascism was extremely strong, has not developed practically any organisation of the type discussed relevant to the political system. Groupings overtly citing the "Legionary Movement" tradition were set up even in early '90s (the Party of National Right—PDN; Movement for Romania—MpR) but they never managed to enter parliament on their own. They won an estimated 1,000 votes countrywide in successive elections. Equally unsuccessful was the activity of Party for Motherland (PPP) or Romanian Right (DR) founded by the "Iron Guard" veterans. Yet it seems that this failure was not caused by a lack of poten-

tial followers. Extreme nationalism—the "Romanism" ideology with its undisguised xenophobia and anti-Semitism, revisionism, the emphasis of the Orthodox Church role and glorification of the fascist rule era do seem to enjoy a relatively strong backing in some sections of the Romanian society. The problem here is rather the existence of a very powerful rival—the "evolutionary populist" Party of Greater Romania (see below). This party employs extremely nationalist rhetoric but is much more pragmatic. Its readiness for compromise and inclusion in the programme of elements which are attractive also to groups rejecting rightist extremism gives it advantage at the start reducing Romanian "classic autocrats" to the role of political plankton (Shaft 1999).

Bulgaria has de facto no fascist heritage, and less still its modern imitators. The Bulgarian National Radical Party (BNRP), which was designed to defend "national interest" threatened by extension of the Turkish minority's civil rights, and post-fascist (because founded by prewar activists) Bulgarian Democratic Forum (BDF) are the only little groups that can be classified in this category. The first of these organisations scored its biggest electoral "success" in 1991, winning an estimated 3,800 votes in the only election it participated, the other joined the rightist coalition United Democratic Forces (SDS). Much more important is the nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation—Association of Macedonian Communities (VMRO), referring to tradition not just with its name. Its object is to defend Bulgarian character of Pirin (a region inhabited by a Macedonian minority) and fighting (frequently—even physically) advocates of annexation of this part of Bulgaria by Macedonia. Ideas promoted by the VMRO find many followers in the Bulgarian society (in spite of its antipathy to political radicalism), which explains why it won nearly 4% of votes—in coalition with St George's Movement—in 2002 elections.

There is a specific situation in Hungary; there is no radical party in current parliament, and over the past fifteen years, the Hungarian Party of Justice and Life (MIEP), belonging to the trend of classic authoritarianism, occupied MP chairs only between 1998 and 2002. The organisation was established (1992) by prominent democratic opposition activist, a co-founder and co-chairman of Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) Istvan Csurka. Csurka, who was considered member of that grouping's national wing from the very beginning and, in the early years of transformation, won popularity with his sharp attacks against liberal media and demands for more thorough decommunisation of politics and economy. His final resignation from the MDF was connected with his public criticism of the party line, personal attack against prime minister Antall and many accusations of anti-national attitude meant to destroy Hungarian culture and tradition, and of participation in an international conspiracy ("directed from New York and Tel Aviv") (Góralczyk 2000) leveled at his political opponents. The Hungarian variety of "classic authoritarianism" has since then had primarily Istvan Csurka's face, who, in spite of a poor result in elections to the European Parliament (c. 2.5% of the vote), can still count on a steady group of supporters apprehensive of Jewish influence in the media and subordination to international financial (IMF) and political organisations (NATO, EU). The MIEP also declares for revision of frontiers and the care of Hungarian minority from the

former Kingdom's territory.[8] This last issue, on the one hand, brought Csurka closer to FIDESZ in 2002, which exerted pressure to adopt the "Hungarian's Charter," conferring special rights on persons living in neighbouring countries if they declared their nationality as Hungarian, and on the other, it included the whole party into a wider strategy of the Union of Young Democrats, which intended to incorporate some postulates of other rightist parties into its programme and thus intercept their followers (a similar thing happened to Independent Smallholders Party—FKgP and Christian-Democratic Party—KDNP). A polarized political scene and mixed (proportionate majority) electoral law still more restrict the significance of small radical groupings.

To sum up: radical organisations belonging to the "classic authoritarianism" stream are marked by ideological intransigence, based on nationalist assumptions which are often traced back to groupings active even before the World War II. They are linked to xenophobia, anti-Semitism, racism (sometimes); these attitudes are usually manifested openly and are an element of official programmes. The main point of reference of ideologies of "classic autocrats" is thus Nation, understood solely as an ethnic community, whose traditions, culture, religion and "perennial" values will be defended by radicals, and which are jeopardized by variously defined "enemies." Danger is looming large virtually everywhere: coming from representatives of other political orientations—communism, "postcommunism," liberalism; national minorities—first of all Romanies and Jews but also—depending on the country's domestic situation—Germans, Hungarians, Czechs and Turks; international, cosmopolitan organisations, which try to deprive the Nation of its identity—NATO, the European Union, IMF, World Bank. With its nearly axiomatic approach to ideological questions, the potential for entering coalitions of "classic authoritarianism" parties is nought. So much so that more internal splits are more likely for them than reaching an alliance which would force them to accept a compromise. This situation, combined with the fact that economic and social issues, much more important to the average voter, are considered of secondary importance by the programmes of parties discussed (they only crop up in the context of protecting the country against "selling it to foreigners," "stealing everything away" or "demoralization") provides ample explanation of the present weakness of parties of "classic authoritarianism" type. They receive constant support from a small group of supporters, and there is little indication that it might grow and ensure them durable representation in national parliaments. Although a lasting characteristic of all societies and always supported by a group of devoted adherents, nationalism does not seem likely to increase its following in the modern world, if only for reasons presented by the author above. For the same reasons the role of leaders (although some of them can be very charismatic) is not as important as in the case of "evolutionary populism," which will be studied below. Here it is ideology that evokes the voter's loyalty (or its lack), not the "leader's" personality.

[8] The Hungarian Party of Justice and Life does not refer to the heritage of Arrow Cross Movement but to Miklos Horthy's conservative authoritarianism (neo-fascists were many times removed from rallies held by MIEP).Even the name of the grouping overtly refers to prewar Hungarian Party of Life, led by prime minister Pal Teleki. Comp. L. Karsai, 1999.

Seen from this perspective, the LPR's relative success should not cause surprise. The party is currently undergoing an evolution—not populist but rightist, admittedly—and is going down the road marked out by the Italian National Alliance, which having adopted a formula of democratic and modern rightist grouping, has grown from a post-fascist organisation into a respected element of domestic and European political scene.

"Evolutionary Populism"—the Future of Radicals?

"Evolutionary populism" lends itself to description and analysis in a lesser degree. Even the second part of the name adopted by the author poses an enormous problem of definition and engaged scholars in discussions lasting many years, which the author will not quote here. Yet, drawing on his own experiences and relevant literature, he wishes to identify the basic characteristics of populism, whatever the geographical, historical or contextual situation.

Primarily, very much like in "classic authoritarianism," there is a society polarization into the "people" and the "elites." Also—and this is an immanent trait of this doctrine—the two groups are not clearly defined. They can assume different forms according to a local situation. Populism can be seen as a chameleon, leaning towards extreme nationalism as often as towards extreme left. Yet it always avoids explicit ideological declarations. Political tradition of groups belonging to that trend has not been rooted in any political ideology—in, fact they often have no tradition at all. Admittedly, the utopia they are building is retrospective in character (as in the trend discussed above) but, first, it refers to various aspects of the past (not only ethnic) and second, a part of it is always nostalgia for the days of so-called people's democracy. Its "evolutionary" quality is due to the fact that nearly all parties of that type who scored an electoral success had to reshape its profile earlier, and "hide" or remove excessively radical elements from it, according to political marketing principles.

Slovakia seems to be a "basin of radicalism" in Central Europe. Next to a relatively strong right (see above), there are strong populist parties in that country, which are not only successful at the polls but also participate in government. The best (and newest) example to illustrate this situation is the fact of Ivan Gasparovič being elected president—a candidate supported by populist "Smer," former vice chairman of Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), another group of similar character. The latter is an organization which dominated Slovakia's political scene in the 1990s. It emerged as the only meaningful successor of the winner of first democratic (still within Czechoslovakia) elections—the movement Society against Violence (VPN) (29.3%). The capital in the form of ideologically varying electorate, which was taken over from VPN, offered prospects of its further increase by launching the catchy slogan of national sovereignty. Even though most citizens of what was then a federal republic were indifferent to above question, yet those who wished a split or at least a confederation voted for HZDS leader Vladimir Meciar in 1992 (Sabal 1995; Madera 2001). The Movement, often using nationalist (anti-Hungarian) and authoritarian rhetoric, won

over 37% of the vote, which turned out to be a result never ever repeated by any party. More than that, it won all elections that followed and ruled (with a short break: March-December, 1994) until 1998. An ambiguous programme, a special HZDS[9] pragmatism and the fact that potential opposition was much divided, paved the way for the coalition of the extreme right (SNS), the left (ZRS) and Meciar's populists to country rule in 1994. Yet it would be unfair to call those latter a "circulating" group. They were the main force in the government and they made decisions about co-opting allies. However, the Movement's real coalition potential was very limited, which showed successive elections (in 1998 and 2002). HZDS, with its 27% and 19.5% vote and thanks to the backing of a large group of devoted followers, remained the strongest faction in parliament, but in view of its isolation it stood no chance of entering the government. Its isolation was further deepened by a negative attitude of foreign partners who refused Slovakia's possible integration with Euro-Atlantic structures if Meciar assumed power. Of no avail were even attempts at changing the image and evolution of views, so characteristic of populists—departure from nationalism, support for NATO and EU, focusing on criticism of Mikulaš Dziurinda's[10] economic activities and corrupted cabinet. The former prime minister was pigeonholed to such a degree that his duel against Ivan Gasparovič (formerly, a close associate and HZDS chairman for many years) in the second round of presidential elections was depicted in the West as combat for preservation of democracy, while in fact both rivals little differed in their "achievements" and programmes (Madera 2001; Antoszewski, Fiala, Herbut 2003).

Meciar's defeat is symbolic inasmuch as it was connected with success of another populist party (backing Gasparovič)—"Smer" ("Direction"). Established in 1999 by Robert Fico after he resigned from post-communist Party of Democratic Left, it was quickly gaining popularity not only at the latter's expense, but first of all at the expense of the Movement for Democracy. The success is a result of a very efficient combination of populist rhetoric and political marketing techniques. Critical of the ruling Dziurinda cabinet, Fico distanced himself from Meciar as well (without ruling out cooperation with his party). He supported integration with EU but objected to the process itself (one of "Smer" electoral slogans was: "Joining the Union—yes, but not with naked arses"); he also shirked transparent ideological declarations. This last strategy was symbolized in the party programme called "The Third Way"—neither leftist nor rightist. Admittedly, "Smer" will belong to a socialist faction in the European Parliament, but in his speeches Fico does not evade nationalist phraseology, particularly anti-Romany, so distant from socialist phraseology. This strategy, supported by the experience of Fedor Flašik, Slovakia's best image

[9] Meciar's influence on media and administration ensured him access to a huge number of posts with which he could entice potential coalition members. This happened in the case of Slovak National Party, which was offered the post of minister of education, one the party prized very much.

[10] Adding "People's Party" to the party's name symbolized change of its profile. According to an entry in its statutes, it should mean a reference to the idea of Christian democracy, but in reality it is also a typically populist activity, indicating universal support and the will of representing interests of "common people." Ideologically, HZDS has remained rather opaque and enigmatic. The inner party structure is quite authoritarian, and the leader's impact (Meciar's) on main directions of the organisation (eg making electoral lists) was overwhelming.

specialist, gave the party a meaningful success (13.5% of votes and the third place) in 2002. Two years later, in elections to the European Parliament "Smer" outdistanced them all. The importance of Fico and his party can yet increase, what with the HZDS still growing weaker and the doubtful fates of government coalition members (Haughton 2001).

Countries where populism plays a significant role but, in the author's opinion, stands no chance of official participation in power, are: Poland and Romania. In the two countries, also the genesis of radical parties is deeply rooted in the society's special traits resulting from its specific structure—social and ethnic. A very obvious example of a party pursuing activity within the trend discussed, is certainly "Self-Defence of Polish Republic" (Samoobrona RP) in Poland, but its first representative, who scored a meaningful success straight away, was Stan Tymiński and his "Party X." The name of the latter party is an additional argument in favour of the thesis of ideological vagueness of populism. Tymiński, a businessman from Canada whom nobody knew and who unexpectedly won a second place in 1990 presidential elections, based his campaign on two pillars: downright criticism of reformations effected until then, and creation of a myth of himself, who became successful in conditions of capitalist economy. He cleverly played on emotions and made speeches about conspiracy of elites. He clearly lost to Lech Wałęsa in the second tour, but the 25% support provided foundations for his attempts at building an organisation which—as he said—would ensure his victory in parliamentary elections. Yet 1991 saw his smashing debacle, largely due to the fact that PKW (Polish Electoral Committee) questioned the party's most regional lists. It finally won a bare three mandates, and not even one two years later (c.2% of votes) slowly succumbing to marginalization (it was struck of the register of parties in 1999) (Żukowski 2000; Geremek 2000).

Andrzej Lepper adopted a different method of building his political support. He emerged at the political scene when Tymiński's star began to lose its brilliance, but he could not cross the threshold of political importance for a long time. His electoral results were poor (from 0.08% in 1997 to 3.1% in 2000), and he was present in social consciousness only thanks to spectacular farmers' protests, extensively presented by media. That is why the party "Self-Defence" actually remained in hibernation in 1992–1999, making room for a Farming Trade Union, which bore the same name. Farmers had become the social base of the whole grouping (in Party "X"—young workers from great industry), and only after securing permanent support in rural areas could it be successful nationally. This happened in the winter of 1999, thanks to the greatest social unrest since the fall of communism (roads were blocked all over the country in what was called "peasant revolt," in protest against excessively low prices of cattle sold), headed by Lepper and his organisation. In parliamentary elections in 2001, amid disenchantment over AWS rule and distrust of the whole political class,[11] "Samoobrona RP" won support of more than 10% and attempts were made at transforming it into a populist catch-all party. All dissatisfied were addressed

[11] The electoral slogan "They had been here before," which included all members of political struggle except "Self-Defence," perfectly fitted into the society's "anti-establishment" attitude.

and, amid dexterous criticism of activities of the Third Republic governments by that time, a programme of the "Third Way" (full of empty economic promises) was presented as the only chance of making good the liberals' erroneous decisions. Despite an ambiguous attitude to European integration ("for accession, but against these principles") Lepper also created in social consciousness his image as leader of the Eurosceptic camp. It seems, however, that the "Self-Defence" is at present going through a crisis produced by expectations outweighing the real possibilities. Brilliant results of opinion polls held in April, 2004 made politicians of that party openly speak of taking over power. A large part of that backing seems to have been "virtual," coming from disappointed and frustrated people, who however did not go to the polls at the crucial moment (elections to Europarliament) (Marks 2003; Piskorski 2004).

Romanian radicalism of evolutionary type contains an important trait of nationalism. Its point of reference is, activity of Hungarian minority on the one hand, and on the other—revisionism opting to a union with the Republic of Moldova. Against the backdrop of these two issues emerged the Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR) and the Party of Great Romania (PRM). The formed started its activity as early as April, 1990, setting out to defend Romanians living in Transylvania, who were allegedly menaced by irredentist attitudes of the local Hungarians. That question was raison d'ętre of that grouping over the next decade; it scored its greatest successes when led by Mayor of Cluj—Gheorge Funar (1991—7.7%, 1996—4.4%). When he joined a rival party, the backing for the PRM (which adopted a very strong anti-Hungarian rhetoric) unexpectedly grew and the PUNR was marginalized at the same time (2000—1.4%). The bare 4.7% of 1996 grew to 19.5% four years later, and party leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor won as much as 28% of the vote in the second tour of presidential elections. Yet neither PUNR nor PRM is a radical party in the classic sense. They do not refer directly to the Codreanu Legions tradition but are more ready to quote Gen. Antonescu as the example of a strong and efficient leader. They also look back with affection on the Ceausescu epoch, which may be explained by the fact that many members of both parties are the former military as well as agents and collaborators of "Securitate." The similarity of biographies might have been another reason for a two-year ('94–'96) semiformal support of the government of post-communist PDSR and frequent parliamentary cooperation. Brutal, often abusive language, accusations without evidence, the specific rhetoric employed by Tudor, which, however, landed him in political isolation. To get out of it, he initiated in the beginning of 2004 activities which ought to change his negative image: he proclaimed himself a philo-Semite (!) and offered apologies for the Romanian holocaust and his earlier slanderous statements (Nowakowski 2004). How risky is this strategy, particularly with a programme so ambiguous even in questions like EU, corroding one of the party's trump cards—its distinctness, was seen during the parliamentary election in 2004. The Party of Greater Romania won a mere 8% of votes, losing half deputy mandates. C. V. Tudor is, however, aware of his party lacking coalition potential, and he continues an evolution of its programme and image. His basic target is to make PRM a Christian-democratic party, which was first seen in its name changed to: People's Party of Greater Romania (PPRM) in March, 2005. This strategy is combined

with a conception of making PPRM the only Romanian representative of European People's Party (Shafir 2000).[12]

The specificity of evolutionary populism in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic is firmly founded on their political culture. One can be positive that parties of this type would not score electoral success in other countries of Central Europe. The former country experienced a development unprecedented in stable democracies—when a party established just three months before an election, wins it with a huge margin. It was possible in Bulgaria because of great respect with which the citizens treated monarchy, respect born out of positive memories of the prewar rule of Czar Borys III. His son, Symeon II, forced to abdicate after a three-year rule, spent in Spain nearly all his life. However, when he visited his motherland in April, 1996 for the first time in fifty years, he was greeted by enthusiastic multitudes. He decided to transform his personal popularity into political support only in 2001, founding the National Movement of Symeon II (NDST).Success was made easier by the fact that the society has been disenchanted with parties ruling the country since 1990.[13] The promise to improve the living conditions of Bulgarians "within 800 days" was another "argument." This was to be effected by doing away with corruption and nepotism in administration, tax reduction and (a rare phenomenon in the case of populists) integration with EU and NATO. The Movement's electoral slogan was the essence of this "royal populism" and it said: "Trust me!" The final result—42.7%—meant not only that Symeon (who employed his patronymic Sakskoburggotski) had won half of the votes and would be nominated prime minister, but also that a government coalition would have to be formed. NDST did not rule out any option (in spite of its former scorching criticism of the left and right alike), but finally also representatives of the Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms and two members of a socialist party joined the new government. But power turned out to be a "kiss of death." The czar's personal popularity as well support lent to his party began to diminish quickly and plummeted right down in 2003 self-government local elections, when NDST got just about 10% of the vote. There were also internal splits in the party. Formed in a hurry, it had no mechanism to control moral qualifications of new members. More secessions finally resulted in the loss of parliamentary majority, and principled corruption scandals eroded the remnants of social trust. It seems that NDST may be one more populist party (after FPÖ and Pim Fortuyn's List) to pay a horrendous price for departure from anti-system strategy. The NDST's only chance of survival is its—still unquestioned—leader Symeon II and the evolution which is intended to make the party a mainstream grouping (joining the Liberal International).

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[12] At present, EPP is represented in Romania by PNTÇD (Peasant National Christian Democratic Party)—a grouping with prewar traditions, which ruled in 1996–2000 but became totally marginalized following 2000 elections. Another representative of EPP is the Hungarian majority party UDMR, which cannot count on social support exceeding 10% of the electorate, due to its ethnic character. Above data let PPRM count (after making necessary changes in the programme) on favourable attitude of leaders of the Christian Democratic International.

[13] An estimated 40% of people entitled to vote said they did not know who they should support, or they would not vote at all. After Symeon II announced his decision to establish NDST, this percentage fell by half. See: studies by the Institute Alpha Research, www.aresearch.org

However, the 2005 parliamentary election saw the unexpected arrival of a totally new populist grouping, significantly more radical than the czar's party (its rhetoric similar to that of C.V.Tudor's PRM); it partly repeated the path of NDST. The National Movement "Attack"—this name it adopted—was created just two months before the elections, and yet it won the support of as many as 8% of voters on 25 June, 2005. This success (although more analyses are required) can be the result of the Bulgarian society growing disenchanted with reforms (the czar's rule yielded better macro-economic indices and integration with NATO, but pay continues to be low, and prices—even of food—too high for the average citizen). Directing its censure against transformation, particularly against the Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which has participated in all governments after 1991, the "Attack" added a new, nationalist trait to Bulgarian populism. The future of the new party is still an unknown—the other parties boycott it, and the formation of new "great coalition" (BPS-NDST-DPS) was meant, among other things, to free the government from political blackmail of the "Attack." Still it seems to have a big potential for development; it has already taken over many former voters of the czar (30% of "Attack" are former NDST followers); it can win the popularity of post-communist electorate with radical criticism of transformations, and gain the favour of extreme rightists with its "Great Bulgarian" chauvinism.

The ideological roots of Czech populism are at the opposite pole. It is represented by the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), the direct heiress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia established back in 1921, which offered strong opposition, backed by eg a big group of intellectuals through the whole prewar period of twenty years. The positive communist legend was made still stronger by their activity in anti-Nazi resistance movement. For a long time after the war, the KSČ enjoyed real support on the part of the society; the support changed into silent approval during the period of so-called normalization. The "Velvet Revolution" produced dramatic changes, which made also KSČ introduce reforms within its own ranks, the first since 1968. The most disgraced activists, who were responsible for persecution of the opposition, went away and the programme was given a democratic "face-lift." It was then (in March, 1990) that the KSČM was established, initially as a regional organisation of federal party. Yet no radical changes were effected, including a change of the party name, suggested by some members. In spite of that, communists won over 13%[14] of votes both in Bohemia and Slovakia in the 1990 election. The next two years saw the final formation of the party's character. The controversy between reformers (Svoboda) and supreme leftists (Stepan) was of most advantage to the median option represented by Miroslav Grebeníček, who became chairman of the organization in 1992 and holds this post to—date. Politicians assembled around Svoboda left the grouping but—what is worthy of note—quickly lost all influence. Isolated by the other political forces including President Havel (he would not hear of consultations and talks), KSČM (an independent party after 1993) received stable support of 10–15%[15] in successive elections. There was a break-through in 1998; as there was no

[14] This percentage increased to as many as 17.24 in self-government elections in November, 1990.

[15] 1992 (as Bloc of the Left)—14.05%; 1994 (self-governments)—14.7%; 1996—10.33%; 1998—11.03%; 1998 (self-governments)—13.58%.

possibility of forming a government coalition, social democracy assumed power by virtue of so-called opposition agreement, supported in major issues by the right in exchange for some high state posts. The vague situation, the impression that the deal was made over the citizens' heads, the many scandals and an economic crisis boosted the chances of a party of protest. This was certainly the party of communists, who also took over some support of the divided, broken and demoralized Republicans (see above). To achieve their aim, they added nationalist elements to the programme which was extremely leftist in the economic sphere—xenophobic elements and opposition against integration with EU and NATO. The last element constituted an important point of strategy attracting anti-globally-minded youth. Due to this evolution, the KSČM, which was unsullied by any sleaze connected with the exercise of power, claimed to be a party with "clean hands;" winning 18% support and 41 mandates in 2002, it became a force relevant to the party system. This came home to, among others, current President Klaus, who was elected thanks to communist votes. Their coalition potential is not so impressive but is steadily improving, believes the author. Disintegration of a government coalition, which occurred in Bohemia after elections to the European Parliament, provoked by a poor result of ruling parties (KSČM—20.3%) may end up in social democrats losing their determination to boycott the communists (Pehe 2002; Antoszewski, Fiala, Herbut, Sroka 2003).

Summing up the part dealing with parties of "evolutionary populism," one should primarily emphasize their specific attitude towards the system, believes the author. They are not (unlike the parties of "classic autocrats") explicitly opposing democracy but they rather take advantage of its weaknesses to achieve their end—win power. Characteristic traits of populist radicalism are ideological amorphousness and the aspiration to obtain a catch-all party formula, giving the party specific fluidity and freeing it from tough principles. Which is why they do not appeal to a concrete social group or a class, but they appeal to the "people," who is in opposition to "elites" and "enemies" who are scheming against them. On the one hand, programmes of populists from central Europe criticise the authors of transformation, considering them to be responsible for economic and moral crisis (corruption, crime). They are mostly in favour of a large part of socialist heritage, promising a comeback of the past—at least in the sphere of social aid and welfare. On the other hand, populist parties can very expertly play the tune of nationalism and traditionalism. They indicate—depending on their roots and domestic situation—a concrete social or ethnic group (farmers, the nation), or a historical period (the rule of Borys III, the "republic of priests," "Great Romania" (1918–1940), CSRS (1948–1989), when all the positive values concentrated which would form the backbone of a state after populists take over the power. The vagueness of programmes described above (frequently the result of a party's current evolution) facilitates reaching of alliances and agreements. The absence of populists in government is due to isolation imposed by "mainstream" groups rather than to hard terms offered to potential coalition members. However, participation in government is as a rule the beginning of an end of organisation which is unable to satisfy its electoral promises. It is also a common phenomenon that party members are not prepared to perform important state tasks, and this ends up in scandals and sleaze. A sudden

debacle of a party belonging to the "evolutionally populist" type can be also caused by "dependence on the leader." The role of a charismatic leader (usually founder of the party) is clearly more important than in the case of the other radical trend under discussion. It is not accidental that all the parties described that changed leaders (except KSČM, led for 13 years by the same man—Grebeniček) found themselves very quickly at an absolute margin of political scene.

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Considering the question included in the title of this article, one should give the paradoxical reply that radicals, who are not a passing fad but a durable and universal element of political scene ("classic autocrats"), pose no significant danger to nascent democracy as the support they secure is small, and they are plunged into utter isolation. As for "evolutionary populists," they not only score very good electoral results (c. 20% on the average) but also—thanks to tactical smoothing of the original radicalism and integration with the system, they more and more often participate in government (not only in Central Europe). But their success is rather short-lived as a rule, being based on the voices of protest, frustration and citizens' discontent with "mainstream" parties. The popularity of ruling populists wanes rapidly and is not easily retrieved.

One should also answer the question whether the mere fact of radical party representatives assuming power can topple democracy and introduce dictatorship. This vision seems excessively disastrous and is not borne out by empirical experience. Arguably, examples of governments with populist members show a large fall in prestige of the institution of state in the wake of numerous scandals and conflicts. Also the processes of transformation and integration with international structures (vide Slovakia in 1994–1998) can slow down, but it does not mean the threat of dictatorship. All the more so as populist parties have the pragmatic tendency to softening their programmes when power is approaching.

The essential positive influence of radicalism on democracies is its ability to detect the real problems, which often go unnoticed by the "mainstream" parties, allotting to themselves posts like in a cartel. The real or exaggerated danger of radicals makes the latter parties dedicate more attention to the micro-scale economic and social developments.

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