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modrzejewski@ug.edu.pl

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CONTENTS

REGULAR PAPERS

Katarzyna Kamińska-Korolczuk

*Influence of the Media on the Integration of Society in Multinational States
on the Example of the Russian-Language Media in Estonia* 5

Mária Adamcová & Drahomíra Ondrová

*Centralization, Decentralization, Local Administration and Ethical Impacts:
Negative Aspects Evident in the Contemporary Public Administration* 18

Denisa Karabová

Europeanization of the political party SMER-SD 35

Eugen Gabor

*György Lukács and Stalinism: A Complex Relationship and Its Relevance
for the Politics of the 21st Century* 49

ESSAY

Alexandra Strážnická

Extremism in Slovakia – throughout analysis 60

REVIEW

Guy Standing, *Prekariat. Nowa niebezpieczna klasa* [Precariat: The New
Dangerous Class], 368 pp. (**Patrycja Rutkowska**) 69

REGULAR PAPERS

INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIETY IN MULTINATIONAL STATES ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA IN ESTONIA

Katarzyna Kamińska-Korolczuk

*University of Gdansk,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Institute of Political Science,
ul. Bażyńskiego 4, 80-952 Gdańsk, Poland.
polkk@ug.edu.pl*

Abstract

The article presents the structure of the Russian-language printed and electronic media available in Estonia and analyses their impact on the inclusion in the social system of people who do not use the national language of the country of residence. The analysis concerns the state where the level of readership of the printed and electronic press has traditionally been high. Thus, it can be assumed that the media are relevant to various social groups living in these areas. The applied research methods were comparative and quantitative methods. The study was supplemented by the behavioural method – direct observation.

Key words: *Estonia, minorities in Estonia, Russian-speaking media in Estonia, the integration of society through the media*

INTRODUCTION

In Estonia, as well as in other states that regained independence after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union), integration policy for representatives of many nationalities living in the newly created state was influenced by historical experiences. Difficulties with working out a system of law that would protect people living in Estonia and not having citizenship of the Estonian State stemmed primarily from this fact and the reluctance to grant the status of a national minority¹ to representatives of a nation which until recently had had a decisive influence on the current policy and whose status significantly worsened after the systemic transformation. It concerns Russians, or – when dealing with the problem more broadly – Russian-speaking people. Expectations of rapid and fruitful integration of all national groups living in Estonia after it regained independence have not been fulfilled. The transformations that were to shape civil society, with its strong side, which is the inclusion in the process of the digitalisation of social life [Kamińska-Korolczuk, Kijewska 2017], mostly have not applied to people who do not know the Estonian language.

The aim of this article is to present the media that can be used by representatives of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia and to show if and how such media affect the inclusion in the social system of people who do not speak the national language of their country of residence. The analysis is based on the example of Estonia, where the level of readership of printed and electronic newspapers has traditionally been high. Thus, it can be assumed that the media are relevant to various social groups living in these areas. After the breakup of the USSR, the structure of the press market in Estonia has changed, but the consumption of the media has not declined drastically. The analysis presented in this paper is part of an investigation at the interface of political science and media studies, notwithstanding the findings of other scientific disciplines that help to understand the mechanisms of action of different social groups living in the same space. The applied research methods were comparative and quantitative methods. The study was supplemented by the behavioural method – direct observation.

1. MASS MEDIA AS A MEANS OF INTEGRATION OF SOCIETIES

Many publications have been written on the role of the mass media in integration of societies. The subject has been of interest to researchers from various fields of study, such as political, sociological, historical, psychological, linguistic, cultural studies, and many more. Eduard Hall [Hall 1976], Manuel Castells [Castells 1997], or Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper [Brubaker, Cooper 2000] devoted their studies to this issue. Moreover, many Estonian authors, for instance, Triin Vihalemm and Anu Masso [Vihalemm, T., Masso 2003], Peeter Vihalemm and Marju

¹ I use the term “national minority” to define the groups the representatives of which do not belong to the basic nation. However, it does not refer to the legal status of such persons because one of the conditions for being recognised as a national minority is holding of Estonian citizenship. This country is the place of residence for Estonian citizens, citizens of other countries and non-Estonians – citizens of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), who after the collapse of the Soviet Union have not acquired the citizenship of any other country.

Laurstin [Vihalemm, P., Laurstin 2014], Maria Jufereva, Epp Lauk [Jufereva, Lauk 2015], and foreign ones, for example Neil Melvin [Melvin 1995], Magdalena Solska [Solska 2011], or Katarzyna Kamińska-Korolczuk [Kamińska-Korolczuk 2014, 2015] concentrated their research on the situation of Russian-speaking people, on changes in the press addressed to them, or reading habits in this group. On the basis of this broad literature it is not difficult to see that the subject is extensive, engaging and prompting to further reflection.

The problem of the lack of integration of multinational society is still valid in Estonia. Although there are countermeasures aimed at reducing the information gap between citizens who use the Estonian-speaking media and non-Estonians referring most often to Russian language sources, this gap is still wide. A characteristic phenomenon is exclusion due to the lack of knowledge of the language, which translates into formal and legal limitations in access to professions, offices or services [Kamińska-Korolczuk 2017]. This distorts the shape of the information society, which, according to universal aspirations, should arise on a global scale. A. Chodubski mentions the “strengthening of individualism, cultural participation of the individual” as features which modern societies would acquire [Chodubski 2015]. From the perspective of Estonia, this individualism largely does not apply to persons using a language other than Estonian.

Efforts to unify information for both groups are often ineffective due to the changing political situation in the region. The annexation of Crimean by Russia has significantly influenced the sense of security of Estonian citizens [Kuczyńska-Zonik 2017]. The events in Ukraine have made the Estonian public more aware of national security issues. Related changes in the functioning of, among others, the media are a challenge for polarised topics reaching two different, Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking circles of recipients. Freedom of the press, democratisation of access to it, also influenced by the new media, are undoubtedly values, but enable Russia to undertake propaganda activities, which are undesirable in the current political situation. The authorities of Estonia, aware of the fact that groups of Russian-speaking persons are manipulated by means of information flowing from abroad, undertake actions aimed at minimising the influence of Russian propaganda.

2. NATIONAL COMPOSITION OF ESTONIA AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA

The minority press is meant to maintain ties with the state from which the minority community originates, to preserve identity and the knowledge of the language. In the case of Estonia it is difficult to establish what ties are concerned, for example, in the case of persons coming from different republics forming part of the non-existing USSR and communicating in Russian. The population composition of Estonia more than a quarter of a century after regaining independence is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Estonian population, national composition, as of 1 January 2017

the total number of people living in Estonia	1,315,635
Estonians	904,639
Russians	330,206
other nationalities except Russians:	80,790
including:	
Ukrainians	23,183
Belarusians	11,828
Finns	7,591
Latvians	2,209
Jews	1,971
Germans	1,945
Tatars	1,934
Lithuanians	1,881
Poles	1,673

Source: own study based on Statistics Estonia, <https://www.stat.ee/34278>, accessed 13.09.2017.

The numerical data contained in Table 1 show that Russians constitute an overwhelming majority, incomparable with any of the other groups, among people declaring other than Estonian nationality. Ukrainians are the second largest group, with just over 23,000, followed by Belarusians, with almost 12,000 people. Residents coming from other states that belonged to the USSR, such as Latvia and Lithuania, represent a small percentage. It is worth emphasising that there are very few Germans, only 1,945 people declared this nationality, although before the Second World War Baltic Germans constituted a large population group. They influenced the development of the press on the territory of today's Estonia, they constituted an important link in the process of shaping the consciousness of national identity of Estonians [Kamińska-Korolczuk 2014, Kamińska-Moczyło 2015]. The substantial majority of the Russian-speaking minority, mainly Russians, influences the shape of the media market in Estonia – apart from Estonian-language ones, mainly texts in Russian are published.

Most Russian-speaking people live in big cities, such as Tallinn, Narva, where Estonians are in the minority, and Kohtla-Järve. Estonians rarely settle in neighbourhoods inhabited mostly by Russians. The process of separating the population from these two language groups – Estonian and Russian – is intensifying. Attempts to involve Russian-speaking minorities in emerging civil society have not produced the expected results. The media have also had an impact on this situation. The Estonian ones because they have not published information in languages other than Estonian and the Russian-language ones because the reality described in them has been not only significantly different from that

presented in the Estonian-language press, but often has been far from the truth. Despite the wide-ranging actions of the Estonian state to spread information about the Estonian language, 16% of the Russian population say that they do not understand the Estonian language, according to Maria Jufereva and Epp Lauk. Undoubtedly, the fact that Russian media channels are the main source of information for non-Estonians affects this situation [Jufereva, Lauk 2015: 52].

Information about the world, about changes taking place, whether desired or not, depends on the consumption of the mass media. The readiness to know the world results from openness and lack of fear of new conditions of life. If there is fear of involvement in society and all the facilities it offers, we will face frustration caused by the sense of injustice, or even inaction and reluctance to participate in social life. A state inhabited by many minorities, treating them as residents not fully deserving care, will be treated as alien. Possibly developed bonds will not be strong and attachment to values will be much weaker than in the case of full citizens [Kamińska-Moczyło 2014]. That is why a document has been prepared in Estonia on the strategies for integrating societies living in the state, explicitly emphasising the importance of the media and journalists in this process [Jufereva, Lauk 2015: 52].

3. RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE PRINTED PRESS

Newspapers and magazines prepared by Russian-language editors were published in the market of printed newspapers in Estonia. However, the process of title consolidation, changes in access to the printed press, mainly related to the development of a new way of receiving the press, involving the increasingly mass use of electronic devices, led to the closure of Russian-language newspapers. The opinion-forming newspapers “Molodjozh Estonii” (“Youth of Estonia”) and “Vesti Dnja” (“News of the Day”), which until 2004 was called “Estonija”, and was renamed in 1991 from the title “Sovetskaja Estonija”, finished their operation in 2009. Despite a limited circulation, they were opinion-forming journals. For example, “Vesti Dnja”, with a circulation of approximately 5 thousand copies, which constituted only one fifth compared to leading Estonian newspapers, e.g. „Postimees”, enjoyed huge popularity. The daily, however, did not survive, because the financial problems of “Vesti Dnja” got worse as a result of the withdrawal of advertisers from contracts concluded with the editorial office due to corruption scandals in the Centre Party [Kamińska-Korolczuk 2015a]. In 2005, in parallel with daily newspapers issued by Russian-speaking media owners, Estonian broadcasters began to publish in Russian the daily newspaper “Postimees” (“Postman”). This undertaking was initiated by Postimees Grupp, the publisher of the oldest Estonian daily “Postimees” published since 1875. The publisher decided to finish printing the Russian-language “Postimees” at the end of 2016. The decision of the media group Postimees Grupp to cease publication of the printed version and focus on the electronic release resulted from the unprofitability of publishing the printed version [BNS/TBT 2016]. The Russian-language “Postimees” was not strictly a minority press, but a printed version prepared for Russian-language readers by the publisher of the leading Estonian press title. They had an opportunity to get acquainted with the opinions expressed in the Estonian press translated into

Russian. This intentional information activity resulted from a wide-ranging policy of the Estonian State, whose main task is to involve non-Estonian speakers in the Estonian information circle. Events were presented in the same way as for Estonians. The Estonian perspective was presented, and the only difference was the translation of the text into the language understood by most people who did not know Estonian.

The so-called European edition of “Komsomolska Prawda” belongs to the Russian-language daily newspapers financed by publishers from outside Estonia and appearing in its territory. “Komsomolska Prawda” was founded in 1925 and has come out in Russia and many countries of the world to this day. The publisher of the European mutation is financially and ideologically linked with Russia. The materials are prepared not from the perspective of the minority living in Estonia, but from the perspective of Russia. The same event is often presented differently depending on whether the reader reaches for the press prepared by the Estonian or Russian editor. Chaos, disinformation, inconsistency in the reported events and the different setting of the daily agenda are the most frequently appearing terms for the activities of the two streams in the printed media in Estonia.

The most popular magazines for the Russian-speaking population are “Linnaleht” (“City Pages”), “MK-Estonia” and “Delovyye vedomosti” (“Business News”). “Linnaleht” is a free weekly, which is published in Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu in the Estonian and Russian languages and in Ida-Viru County – a province in the north-eastern part of Estonia. This part of the country is inhabited mainly by Russian-speaking minorities and as already mentioned most of the inhabitants of Narva are Russians. The weekly is distributed on streets of the towns, in shopping centres, at stations and in all places frequented by potential recipients. As in the case of all free publications, an important argument for potential advertisers is the widespread reception of the magazine and the matching of the content to the preferences of readers in these Estonian provinces. The publisher is AS SL Õhtuleht, which edits many other periodicals and magazines. Since 2015 it has also prepared an information and entertainment portal in Russian Vecherka.ee (“Evening”) [russ.delfi.ee 2015]. This is a typical gossip portal that contains basic news, interviews, life stories and tips for consumers, but it has an ambition to be an opinion-forming portal. For this purpose, the leading theme of the issue is prepared every day which is then discussed, commented and analysed.

The weekly “MK-Estonia” is currently one of the leaders among Russian-language journals. According to the publisher, Baltic Media Alliance Eesti, a media company operating in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the circulation of the magazine amounts to 14,000 copies. On the website of “MK-Estonia” we can find the information that the market position of the weekly is strengthening and it is read by 72,400 people every week. From January to June 2017 the number of readers increased by almost 20,000 people, that is by 38% [Baltic Media 2017]. The increased interest in the weekly results from the closure of the weekly “Den za Dnyom” (“Day after Day”) which till the end of 2016 was published by Postimees Grupp. “MK-Estonia” is a magazine addressed to a wide audience. Just like most publishers of printed journals and magazines, MK-Estonia also edits information posted on the portal www.mke.ee. This is the current form of functioning of press publishers who adapt their editions to the preferences of their readers because they are aware of the

phenomenon of media convergence [Kamińska-Korolczuk 2015a]. The publisher of this weekly, Baltic Media Alliance, is also the publisher of one of the most popular television channels for Russian-speaking minorities outside Russia – Pervij Baltijskiy Kanal (PBK, First Baltic Channel), which until recently was available on cable television.

For the Russian-speaking population living in Estonia one economic weekly “Delovyye vedomosti” is published in Russian. This is a specialised magazine, mainly addressed to entrepreneurs, but also read by people simply interested in business for whom it is easier to assimilate news from the Estonian and world markets in the Russian language. Materials, opinions and comments of specialists, analysts, celebrities contained in the weekly are available in sections entitled “Construction”, “Real Estate”, “Transport”, “Training”, “Letter of the Law”. The materials are intended for beginners and advanced investors, and once a month a special supplement is published.

In the Narva region Narva Prospekt-Media UU publishes the daily “Viru Prospekt” (“Viru Prospect”), which also has its e-editions “Viru Prospekt” and “Narvskaya Gazeta” (“Narva Newspaper”). The publishing company was founded in 1999. Recently, its actions, like of other broadcasters, have aimed at strengthening the position of the stable title, thus combining two previously functioning newspapers – “Viru Prospekt” and “Narvskaya Gazeta” and expanding the offer of the printed edition from 16 pages to 24, and the portal www.prospekt.ee for which a mobile version has been refined. Tatyana Zavyalova, editor-in-chief, hopes to increase the number of readers by addressing the offer to fans of modern technology. The publication is subsidised by the programme “Support for high quality multimedia materials in minority languages in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania” [Redaktsiya 2017]. It publishes materials on local events, as well as those of international importance, trivia, opinions of Estonian experts, and descriptions of journalistic interventions in everyday matters.

4. RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE ELECTRONIC PRESS IN ESTONIA

Public and private broadcasters operate on the market for traditional electronic media. The dependence of electronic media on foreign capital is evident. Radio is one of the most popular media in Estonia. The broadcasters’ market is very fragmented and local radio stations are also very popular. The public broadcaster, Eesti Rahvusringhääling (ERR, Estonian Radio and Television), manages five radio channels, three public television channels and several specialised portals. Eesti Rahvusringhääling, owned by the Estonian government, was created in 2007 under the Estonian National Broadcasting and Television Act by a merger of two separate companies Eesti Raadio (Estonian Radio) and Eesti Televisioon (Estonian Television) [Republic of Estonia 2017].

The public consortium consists of television stations ETV, ETV2, ETV+ and radio ones Vikerraadio, Raadio 2, Klassikaraadio, Raadio 4, Raadio Tallinn [Eesti 2017]. ETV+ is another example, which we can find in the Estonian media space, of consistently conducted policy to inform the Russian-speaking community about important events in the Russian language from the perspective of the Estonian state. ETV+ was set up in 2015. As we can read on the ETV + website, it is an

independent public information and entertainment channel, which is part of Estonian public television and radio broadcasting (ERR). “The content is news, analytics, discussions, socio-political, cultural and entertainment programmes, as well as the most popular television series and contemporary art cinema” [ETV+ 2017].

Public radio and television in Estonia are subsidised by the state and do not use the means that they could obtain by broadcasting commercials. The public broadcaster fulfils the missions of its operation. It provides information and educates. It offers programmes for the youngest, dramas, religious broadcasts and those that help in preserving the national heritage. Its mission is also the preparation of broadcasts aiming at integration of the peoples living in Estonia, although the Russian-speaking audience mostly chose the First Baltic Channel, the rival of ETV+, from the offer of TV channels.

The content of the First Baltic Channel mostly consisted of programmes retransmitted from Russia. NTV-Mir and RTR-Planeta broadcast by Russia were available in the offer of cable television providers, however, the conflict in Ukraine has tightened the broadcasting policy, and now providers in Estonia do not offer these channel. The PBK station signal was suspended after it was accused of bias, journalistic dishonesty, and incitement to ethnic hatred. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have acted jointly, suspending broadcasting, simultaneously applying to the European Union for the creation of a news channel, and appealed to the international public opinion to draw attention to Russia’s efforts to mislead the public [Kamińska-Korolczuk 2015a: 447].

PBK is not the only broadcaster of Russian-language information in Estonia. „Sputnik News”², i.e. a multimedia company, is a project that has been implemented by the Russian multimedia group Rossiya Segodnya since November 2014 and carries out similar information activities as PBK. A part of its activity is “Radio Sputnik”, the largest international broadcaster, operating since 29.10.1929 and broadcasting in more than 30 languages in 160 countries around the world, using the FM band, satellite platforms, cable, Internet and mobile networks. The programmes are also prepared in Russian and addressed to Russian-speaking people living in various parts of the world. This is an impressive undertaking – according to the information on the radio’s website “The total volume of Sputnik’s radio broadcasts on websites and FM and DAB/DAB+ frequencies adds up to over 800 hours daily” [Sputnik 2017]. In addition to radio broadcasting, Sputnik in Estonia edits websites, social networking sites and mobile applications.

The goal of the multimedia project “Sputnik” is to present internationally events discussed in line with the Russian point of view. To achieve this goal in 2007 Russian President Vladimir Putin founded the Russkiy Mir Foundation (Fond “Russkiy Mir”, “Russian World”), the aim of which is to support Russian culture abroad. Thus, its way of financing and the amount of subsidies for information activities outside of Russia are authorised by the highest state organs. The Estonian government, with the budget of a small European state, is not capable of competing

² The current name is “Radio Sputnik”, and from 1993 to 2014 it was called “Voice of Russia” and earlier “Radio Moscow”. Since 2014 Radio „Sputnik” has been a part of International Information Agency „Rossiya Segodnya”, (23.10.2017).

with the media, their diversity, attractiveness and broadcasting time supported by money of the Russian power. The only way to increase the competitiveness of the media in this region is to establish cooperation between Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which already exists, and to obtain funding from other sources. One of them is aid from the Nordic countries in the form of grants provided by the Committee for Nordic Co-operation, which is an intergovernmental organisation. This support is particularly welcomed in Estonia, because, as is well known, it has the ambition of joining the Nordic family of nations. In Estonia the Nordic Council of Ministers' offices have been established in Tallinn, Tartu and Narva. Their task is to promote democracy, support the production of high-quality media materials, also in the Russian language. The main objective of the programme is to improve the quality of content in local, regional and national media products. Financing of the programme supporting the production of media, among others, in Estonia enables publishers to take the effort to compete effectively with the productions offered by Russia, although obtaining funding is a significant windfall only for small editors. The budget for 2017-2018 amounted to 1,200,000 DKK, that is 160,000 EUR. Editors publishing in minority languages could apply for a grant up to 10,000 EUR.

5. RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE NEW MEDIA IN ESTONIA

Changes in the use of the media have been visible in Estonia since the beginning of the twenty-first century. They have been fostered by the dynamic development of the Internet and a large-scale educational process aiming at shaping the society involved in getting to know new technical possibilities in the field of communication. The most influential information portal is the Delfi portal, established in 1999, which is edited in Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, English, Russian, Polish and Ukrainian. The content varies depending on the recipient, and nationality is the key. Delfi is the most opinion-forming portal in Estonia, often arousing extreme emotions among the readers. The content of the portal is edited from the Estonian perspective – and the very fact that in the article it is underlined several times that the news is constructed from the point of view of a given social group shows that for people who are unaware of the internal situation of this country there are many nuances in the media market in Estonia that can affect the perception of media broadcasters and the media themselves as not very objective. It would, however, deny one of the basic functions that the free media are supposed to fulfil – their objectivity. Although from the perspective of a researcher observing the media market but not using it on a daily basis it is not easy to find out who is right in this dispute, it is hard not to get the impression that some of the materials prepared and made available in the Russian-language media abuse the intelligence of even an uneducated reader. It is impossible not to notice persuasive messages in the information published by the Russian-speaking media. Instrumental use of the media is apparent in the content of programmes and news broadcast from the Russian-speaking information circle. A stereotypical image of Estonia as a country reluctant towards Russian-speaking citizens is presented. The information is characterised by a rhetoric that is disturbing, aimed at contesting the rules of the countries where Russian-speaking minorities live. Indeed, Estonia has tough conditions for obtaining citizenship, and a consistent policy of protecting the public sphere from excessive influence by representatives of minorities who do not apply

for citizenship and as a result do not know of the language and history of Estonia and do not receive the right to participate in political life [Kamińska-Korolczuk 2017]. Such a policy has its own negative side – the separate fields of functioning of linguistically different social groups have developed, there is little common activity, not so much aversion but indifference to each other. The field for encouraging cooperation and understanding remains small, and individual nationalities adhere quite closely to ethnic divisions and their social roles. Still, further initiatives undertaken by publishers in the print and electronic press market are aimed at creating more favourable conditions for the emerging social dialogue between language groups.

CONCLUSION

Access to the Russian-language press printed in Estonia is not hampered, and the emergence of the new media has improved the process of transmitting information. It is the case also in countries which do not give their consent to broadcasting from abroad and the Internet is widely available. For Estonians the use of broadband is one of the basic needs catered for by the state. It is not difficult to influence the Russian-speaking population living in Estonia, even if some of the channels have been withdrawn from the offered media services. Minorities not knowing the Estonian language use Russian-language media produced in Estonia and other countries, especially in Russia.

The integration policy pursued by Estonia has often been criticised by the European public opinion. It has been considered inflexible, not taking into account the standards adopted in the European Union. The reluctance of Estonians to give places in the public sphere to national minorities or the requirements imposed on non-citizens who try to acquire citizenship have been emphasised. In the face of the intensification of the conflict in Ukraine, various opinions on the role played by national minorities in the country have appeared in the Estonian media. Nurtured fears have become stronger because the coexistence of different nations in these areas has never been unproblematic. Doubts about the willingness of non-Estonians to participate in the activities of the multinational community have been expressed in the Estonian press and electronic media. It has not been conducive to tightening ties between citizens and the representatives of non-Estonian minorities. At present, the activities of publishers and broadcasters in Estonia are aimed at including non-Estonian-speaking groups in the information circle transmitting the news and setting the agenda of the day highlighting events that are important from the point of view of Estonians. The political, cultural, or economic realities presented in newspapers or portals are not interpreted as factors that may undermine the *status quo* of the Russian-speaking community because they are edited without a language barrier – in Russian. And it seems that shaping the public opinion can be more effective if we notice the needs of groups with a different cultural and linguistic identity. In Estonia this practice has been implemented. It is difficult to conclude if it will fulfil the role of broadening the horizons of both non-Estonians and Estonians because the change of the communication model with the Russian-speaking minority has had a short tradition, it is unknown whether it will be stable or whether it will change depending on the economic situation and the financial condition of the media. Even if socio-economic factors have a positive

impact on the ability to unite the identities of different nations living in Estonia, such as the idea of joining the Nordic countries, external and political factors show a clear tendency to reduce the potential for consolidating social groups living in Estonia. This includes the participation of the neighbouring state of Russia, whose desire to influence Russian-speaking minorities living in the world will be probably increasing. Publishers of the media edited in cooperation or on behalf of Russia differently perceive their role and tasks which are to lead to shaping the attitudes of recipients of the Russian-language media. Different events are presented as the most important, the ones that concern the common Estonian-Russian space are commented differently in Russian-language and Estonian media. Financial support from Russia affects the content and articulation of the facts contained in the prepared materials.

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CENTRALIZATION, DECENTRALIZATION, LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND ETHICAL IMPACTS: NEGATIVE ASPECTS EVIDENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Mária Adamcová

*Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice,
Faculty of Public Administration,
Department of Public Policy and Theory of Public Administration,
Popradská 66, 040 01 Košice, Slovakia
maria.adamcova@upjs.sk*

&

Drahomíra Ondrová

*Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice,
Faculty of Public Administration,
Department of Public Policy and Theory of Public Administration,
Popradská 66, 040 01 Košice, Slovakia
drahomira.ondrova@upjs.sk*

Abstract

Authors of the presented contribution put their attention on the relationship between the central government and the local self-government in connection with the constantly on-going processes of centralization and decentralization. Moreover, they take into consideration priorities as well as negative aspects of both levels of governing, the central government and the local self-government. Problem areas, such as the tension between the centralization and self-governing and the democratic mode of governing in relation to the local governments are dealt as well. An inseparable part of the article is created by the presentation of the lack of ethical aspects which are evident on all public administration levels in the Slovak Republic including the local self-governing bodies. Besides that it is emphasized the aspect of inevitability to leave the unethical practices or at least to eliminate them and thus create the more favorable conditions for the further improvement of the professional and ethical cultivation of public sector which is one of the basic preconditions if a democratic society has to live on.

Key words: *Government, local self-government, centralization, decentralization, priorities, negatives, ethics*

INTRODUCTION

Regarding the obligations and tasks of the work division between the local government and the central government the following rule might be valid; first of all it is necessary to analyze positives and negatives of the both mentioned approaches towards the solving of certain problem areas. Only after that the decision-making can be implemented whether to prioritize a centralized or decentralized territorial approach. In this connection, besides that the presented contribution tries to indicate the most important tensions which appear as a result of these continual going-on processes, and therefore in any case, they should be taken into the consideration. It is evident that processes, the process of centralization as well as the process of decentralization signify their own advantages and disadvantages [Batley, Stoker: 1991].

The priority of centralization is its unified approach, the approach of equality, better financial opportunities, concentration of information and resources. Last but not least it is the power to act and at least a definite theoretical coordination [Imrovič, Švikruha: 2015]. For the most part the decentralization deficiencies rest upon an insufficient sensitive approach concerning the local specifics. The result of this is that the citizenry do not share the decision-making-processes participation, and as regards the responsibility and accountability, they are likewise scarce and limited [Mihálik: 2015]. On the state level the minority interests are rarely taken into account and finally the processes are ended in the origin of the so called centralization spiral [Mosneaga: 2014].

On the other hand the priority of decentralization consists of an awareness of one's identity and in a greater range of the direct accountability, division of power, participation and the direct information transmission. When observing the subsidiarity principle and flexibility principle the more unified system of making-decisions is being created. The greater attention is paid to minorities which on the state level remain on the margin. Decentralization creates the conceivable conditions for a policy which can hardly be met by the wide consensus but, on the other hand, it might be implemented as an experiment on the local level [Smith: 1985]. Decentralization limitations are evident in the practice inequality and in endangerment of the appearance of harmful faults especially as regards an insufficiently coordinated procedure and the splitting up of force. What's more in the area of labor power the limited financial means bring about the lower level and range of the self-sufficiency. In an extreme case we can even come across with the undermining of the whole-state priorities.

Nevertheless, the presented summing up of the positives and negatives concerning both processes does not finish our contemplation concerning the existing topic. The attention is given to the chosen ethical impacts which are interrelated with the centralization and decentralization on the state and local levels as well. Besides that the contribution includes one of the many-sided reflections regarding the notion which nowadays is understood as democracy in connection with the constantly changing processes of the presented object matter.

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The local self-government has become an irreplaceable mode of implementation by means of which public policy and public services are operated and thus coming into the direct contact with citizenry and its field of activities [Lukáč: 2016]. On the other hand we cannot forget that at the same time the local self-government becomes a source of tension as simultaneously with its activities the central government, the central bodies of public administration, the regional public administration bodies, and of course, the local public administration bodies provide their own activities. It is without any doubt that Parliament and the Central government make decisions on many questions concerning the position of the local governments. The Central government only rarely encroaches into the activities of local self-government administration as the central government is more interested into such questions whether the local governments are capable to fulfil their tasks, and if their deeds and actions are in compliance with the democratic control [Rhodes: 1981].

From the point of view of an effective management and the supply of public services to citizens, it is needful to create an efficient organic structure of all self-government administrations in order to make their activities of a high quality and efficiency [Cibik: 2014]. The conception of local government is anchored in the Local Government European Charter which was approved by the Council of Europe on the 15th November 1985 and besides that the local government principle is often attached in the constitutions of individual member states. The right to make decisions directly belongs to the elected councils or assembly and to the executive bodies which are subject to them. For that reason public administration has a political character as well. Moreover, the local government enables to citizenry to participate in taking decisions regarding a certain territorial community to which they belong to and whose identity is specified by the administrative arrangement. Besides that the local communities must be encouraged to participate in the following activities: the preparation of their municipality's budget, decisions on the municipal services provision, monitoring and reviewing their municipality's performance, and the preparation, implementation and evaluation of their cohesive development plans.

Recently decisions and decision-making processes have become of such an importance that the rule to solve problems only on the one level stopped to be binding but, on the other hand, they started to be discussed on various administrative levels. What's more, the contemporary social development shows the strong centralization tendencies. Majority of the problems have turned out to be of such significance that they are becoming the subject of the entire state interests. With this phenomenon we can mostly meet when the most fundamental values, norms and principles of democratic administration are endangered. Many of them require decisions made on the European level, e.g. unemployment problem, migration, etc. Besides that many contemporary problems want such mobilization of financial and a lot of other resources which might be met only by the central government. Therefore, it is not a mere chance, when in cases of catastrophes and period of crises an appeal is mostly turned to the central government than to the

local administrations. In addition to the mentioned facts there are some hidden tendencies supporting the centralization tendencies which play an influential role. The central government can always use its influence and authority without using and presenting its reasons for its actions even if it concerns the solving of problems on the local level. This reality is mostly used by political parties and pressing groups as for them it is easier to persuade the central government about advantages of some solutions. This phenomenon is known as the centralization spiral.

Even the mentioned negative aspects do not vacillate and doubt the significance of the decentralization implication. Looking back at the European Charter concerning local government, we can find out that an importance is given to various reasons declaring acknowledgement and strengthening the independence of self-governing units.

In the first place the Charter affirms an assumption according to which the local bodies create an essential pillar of whatever type of the democratic system we have in mind.

The first argument rests in the citizens` right to vote their representative deputies and thus sharing their participation in the creation of local policy which is without any doubt a democratic principle.

The second argument is that the local administration bodies are the safeguard of upholding an effective management in a close cooperation with citizenry.

The last argument is connected with the idea that protection and strengthening of the local administration is considered to be an important aspect of building up Europe which is based on democratic principles and decentralization of power, fostering cooperation and partnership.

The needful part of discussion regarding the decentralization is considered to be the principle of subsidiarity. In this connection we cannot forget to take into consideration those authors who are of the opinion that there are many obstacles to implement and put into practice the subsidiarity principle. It is because subsidiarity comes from the assumption that we can exactly define which competences are more suitable for smaller local administrative units and which ones are better to be left for solving by the central government. The complication of a social structure and the higher rate of their economic and technical dependence hamper to divide competences in this way. However, in connection with this, we can come to the conclusion that those might be the reasons for larger expansion of closer cooperation among states.

2. PRIORITIES OF THE LOCAL SELF-ADMINISTRATION

In spite of what was said, the local self-administration preserves its reasonable meaning. There are the following reasons for this:

- The first one rests in the fact that the self-governments accomplish projects which are aimed at the use of all community potential, it means that their usefulness cannot be denied which they have as the local self- government bodies knowing their local conditions best of all and therefore they try optimally to distribute the products.

- The second reason is connected with the principle of demands differentiation and the civil preferential safeguard. Demands and localities` preferential might differ from each other.
- The third reason lays in the fact that the local governments can complement plans which are prepared and approved on the central government level.
- The last reason has its source coming from the necessity to decentralize the central government competences. This necessity is done by the division of work but, at the same time, it is caused by the citizens` constant changing preferences and the flexible requirement to meet their needs.

The demand to take into account citizens` preferences is more suitably and most easily fulfilled on the local level, but it quite often happens that the self-governments come with such proposals which only later on in their further phases require the broader consensus. In case of need such proposals might become the component part of the state policy. Some authors emphasize that it is the essential precondition of the fulfillment of democracy to support decentralization and the need of having the local self-administration. Within this context the democratically elected and operating local self-governments are considered to be as an object where citizens can try their potential but, on the other hand, they are well thought-out as a kind of laboratory for the future “big-time politicians.” From what was said it follows that decentralization finally contributes to the maintenance of political stability [Smith: 1985]. Other authors bring to the fore the role of values and local democracy for citizens whereas the dominant accent is put on equality, liberty and responsibility, principles safeguarding democracy [Maass: 1959; Sharpe: 1970; Dahl: 1989 and others].

Experiences confirm that local democracy contains the following positive essentials:

- It creates the further potential for participation concerning political decision-making and in this way weakens *the concentration* of power in centralized governance which is mostly accompanied by rigorous bureaucratic structures and is usually a result of nondemocratic culture.
- It contributes to the greater government responsibilities for their activities and what`s more the citizen achieves a larger degree of freedom.
- Minorities, to whom not sufficient attention is paid on the state level, may try to use their powers and influence on the local level.
- On the local level problems and needs of citizens are met with a greater understanding since the local administration is more familiar with their life circumstances.
- Local administration is less over-bureaucratic and their capability for responsibility and accountability is more answerable to the citizenry needs.

3. TENSION BETWEEN CENTRALIZATION AND SELF-GOVERNMENT

If self-government is investigated as a result of political will, a certain tension issuing from the contradiction between centralization and decentralization is also apparent. The tension between centralization and self-government management brings along with it a lot of problem areas which, besides other things, are evident in a different share of the local governments regarding the total expenditures of

public administration. Even here the thesis that problems are the source of other problems is valid.

The first problem seems to be the level of autonomy of the political processes on the local levels. Nowadays the majority of local administration activities are not thought to be the issues of a local character. Furthermore, it is acknowledged by the fact that the central government shows their interests to solve problems which in the past had belonged to the local competences. As a rule the government enacts laws according to which the local administrative bodies have to respect and follow when solving certain problems, e. g. environmental problems, education, maintenance of the important local services etc. And here a question arises; what kinds of powers are delegated to the local self-government under these conditions? And another question: Is it not only the reduction of the local government function to become just a kind of tool?

The so called interactive administration has to be implemented where the necessary agreement is needed and mutual understanding among all individual stages of the administrative management.

Identified on the experience base the other form of tension appears among the local political control and the legal supervision. Generally a presupposition is valid that the administrative supervision acts in accordance with the norms of higher validity and the implementation of procedures which are in contradiction with the legal rules are not allowed. This presumption creates a loyalty base for the local government towards the existed political establishment.

Here comes another question if the observance of legal rules, respectively their violation, has to be judged exclusively by the legal institutions. And the question: Should not the higher stages of administration supplement the legal institutions in cases regarding the solving of misunderstanding in the area of respecting laws and norms?

Further on, the demand of congruence with the public interest as a criterion of control evokes many kinds of misunderstanding. A certain type of tension might appear on the base of unequal financial relations accompanied by the question to what kind of extent the local governments have to rely on the citizenry taxes, respectively to what kind of the extent they have to be financially independent from the higher administrative bodies.

Other types of tension might arise between the functions of self-government and the local state-administration, and the self-administration and the decentralization of responsibilities. It might be given by the fact that some representatives of the local state bodies mostly do not show a satisfactory interest in local affairs, this tension is more evident in the separate public administration model. Similarly, the unreasonable transfer of functions from the state administration to the self-government institutions causes tension in spite of the fact that the local self-government achieves its legitimacy by means of direct elections. These processes are frequently not under the political control and citizenry control, and consequently causing the problems.

The manner of the public administration accomplishment might even cause the tension between the legislation and execution. The extraordinary emphasis is put not only on the quality of government operation but the quality of legislation approved by the parliament is essential as well. The government is expected to

govern well and just and the parliament is expected to approve the legislation of a high quality to enable and promote this. The mentioned requirement quite often calls for a discussion, not only regarding the tasks how they are fulfilled by those institutes, but the quality and their political “(in) competence” are in the center of the general interest.

4. DEMOCRATIC MODE OF GOVERNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

First of all the democratic mode of governing ensures citizens participation in the management of society. Several conditions have to be fulfilled in order to carry out this requirement:

- All political structures must be transparent and open to all citizens.
- Political system must flexibly react to immediate demands while rule of adequacy has to be implemented.
- Component parts of governing structure must be adequately critical to each other but at the same time to be capable mutually cooperate; to follow common course of action, to agree on joint agreements etc.
- Within the system of public administration each stage of governing must strictly delimitate its responsibility.

Regarding the local administration it requires an effort and managerial qualities of its representatives which are of a paramount importance in order to act most effectively and democratically. The most important is the fact that the local governments must be able to satisfy the needs of its citizenry and to offer services which depend on an actual situation. Abilities and operation of the local government is considerably influenced by the demographic factor; by the number and structure of population, human, financial and technical resources, the level of independence, number and quality of competences and many other factors. The same is valid when we have in mind transparent and democratic ways of governing involving an open public administration, integrity, solidarity, courage, justice and the ethical conduct of public-sector executives. Responsive public-sector executives must be reactive, considerate, sensitive, and capable of feeling the public's needs and opinions comprehended in the dynamic and constantly changing public administration processes which require the developed systematic approaches to understanding them.

We can say that in their essence the abilities of the local self-government depend on their composition, efficiency and the democratic character of political elected bodies. In addition to that the professional qualification of individuals, financial means and the organizational work of management and administrative apparatus play a decisive role.

What's more, the abilities of local government as the bodies being elected by citizens are evaluated in accordance with the standards how they are proficient to meet the demands of citizens having in mind the role of a local élite, recently the relationship between the central and local levels is starting to be of an interactive character, it includes some political agreements and the shift of some competences to the local élite. That concerns only the local élite and the local cooperation and not the local government as such. Decentralized structures of governing regarding the local development do not create reasons that the local government

automatically plays the most important role in those structures. By experiences it is convinced that it might quite easily happen that the local community might be represented by the private actors, local industry and the local elite while the elected local government would only play the marginal role. Moreover, such opinion is increased concerning these political relations since the one sided relationship dependence model between the local élite and the dominant standpoint of the central government is applicable. This reality produces a space for political racketeering and the clientele strengthening-like political culture which is in a strong contradiction with the demands of democratic good governance of our society; we can only hope that local bodies and citizens would not become reconciled with such status quo as the citizens have the right to good administration which is guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in paragraph 41 and by the White Paper on Local Government. Paragraph 41 of the Charter referring to the right to good administration says: "Every person has the right to have his/her affairs handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by the institutions and bodies of the Union." Accordingly the White Paper on Local Government brought into play a new term called "the developmental local government" with its four inter-related characteristics maximizing social development and economic growth and putting into forefront integrating and coordinating democratizing development, and finally, leading and learning. The key developmental outcomes which are envisaged for the local government mentioned in White Paper are:

- Provision of household infrastructure.
- Creation of habitable integrated cities, towns and rural areas.
- Local economic development.
- Community empowerment and redistribution.

Besides that, the right to actively participate in public matters governance is guaranteed by the majority of the European countries constitutions, e.g. the right of the Slovak citizens to take part in public matters is stated in Article 30 of the Slovak Constitution. However citizens do not generally refuse their participation in political life, but they are of the opinion that it should not be excessively persistent, time consuming and complicated. In this context the model of communicative democracy seems to be the most optimal as it arouses from the increased and permanent communication lead between the elected representation and their voting public. Communication is not understood in a traditional way of meaning provided by participation in meetings, assemblies, or as a membership in political party, but at this time an essential role in communication is played by media, which appear to be the main communication devices between the political class and civic society. But, in this connection the important thing for media is to maintain their free and open character. The communicative democracy stays for a frequent discussion and it differs from the participation democracy which requires the direct participation in decision-making processes, even if we can admit that various democratic forms cannot be strictly separated from each other. Nevertheless, the communicative democracy requires citizenry interests in politics based on a certain amount of information concerning public matters. Of course, in this connection we have to account with a certain degree of ignorance and apathy on the side of citizenry, and

here the opportunity for the local government appears to play more pro - active and influential role in order to bring to become the subject of the public discussions. In relation to democracy the importance of public administration is marked by the following aspects:

- Firstly: It is most evident in the macroeconomic area and in using of the most effective devices, such as, e. g., providing a certain kind of service on the required level keeping an equal balance between costs and profits in a chosen region. It is much more effective procedure than if all services must be provided by a certain local government. The local government is capable to adjust services in such a way as to be well-matched to the short-term demands and changing citizenry requirements.
- Secondly: The local administration stands for a distinct democracy maxim; it means the diffusion of political power and at the same time it is the safeguard of the protection of control and balance within the political system. The existence of control and balance creates a space for dialogue among the central and local political levels as the mutual control system impedes the monopolization in making decisions. In this way the political system is more vigilant if it is evident that among the different stages of administration the elements of public control and public discussion exist.
- Thirdly: The argument to promote a strong local government rests in the validity of the decision-making processes dynamism and the creative problems solving. This scheduled plan to meet the citizenry demands on the local base will be later on accompanied by the central government when the central government takes into consideration that satisfying the mentioned needs regards all citizens.

The mentioned reasons might be briefly summarized in the following way:

1. Effective supply of services.
2. Democratic character of system.
3. Constant pressure on the requirement of higher quality of activities.

5. NEGATIVE ASPECTS EVIDENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

5.1. Epidemic citizens' mistrust to top executives and public administration servants

In many municipalities and self-governing units there is evident a wide amount of the lack of professional and ethical strategies going hand in hand with the spread of public distrust, suspicion, helplessness and cynicism which have become almost as epidemic disease throughout our society causing a wide spread disbelief and doubts towards political leaders, high executive leaders, judges, supervisors and public top administrative management in general. Besides that, such cynical attitudes in society are caused by the lack of trustworthiness of investment, lack of transparency and the existence of generally accepted ethical values, principles and norms. The result of this issues in people`s mood is that they feel weighed down by the pressure pushing them inescapably towards the self-interested behavior at the expense of their higher aspirations and wishes, and in this way consequently

contributing to their feeling of helplessness and submissiveness encouraging passivism and at the same time raising barriers for the active individual involvement in community affairs. OECD argued that: “*citizens trust public institutions if they know that public offices are used for the public good*” [OECD: 2000, 5].

5.2. Prevailing of the old orthodox practices in the local public management

The model of self-government on the local level has not only benefits and advantages but also its specific disadvantages, e.g. excessive particularism evident mainly in observing and following one’s own personal interests by the local representatives and administrators as well which might lead to mutual relations of the communal dependence which in some cases favors fostering clientélisme, nepotism, and generally is the reason of the abusive corruptive practices damaging the local community interests and welfare.

Sporadically, in the local levels it is observed the lower willingness to share, cooperate and to become a partner with citizens. Quite often happens that public administrators try to satisfy just some certain specific citizenry groups or individuals even if such actions are counter to the required public community interests. Every so often short-term considerations and popular decisions are put forward while the other long- term goals receive little or simply the unsatisfactory attention which is mostly influenced by the powerful ones pretending to be the opinions of many.

Another negative aspect is the excessive control and observance of individual citizens daily lives by the local administrative bodies having at its disposal much more effective means of control than the central government apparatus and thus creating a kind of pattern of coerciveness in the citizen-ruler relationship instead of a receptive and cooperative model of mutual collaboration and partnership. Therefore, from the local public administrators it is needed to be less concerned about keeping their power and control of citizens, but instead showing their concern for favoring to share community responsibilities with citizens and supporting a dialogue with them which will certainly lead to higher level of communal cooperation and partnership. In order to run public life more effectively, besides activating the direct citizen’s participation, another way how to stimulate citizenry in being interested in community affairs is to foster an indirect participation by means of the civic society multiply pluralistic engagement. That means to initiate individuals, voluntary interests groups, different organized citizens groups, the third sector, private sector and the diverse kinds of organized citizens’ activities. As it is remarked by Vigoda: “*investment in spontaneous behavior and activities is low cost and economical compare with other public administration reforms*” [Vigoda: 2002, 536] and, of course, creating necessary conditions for such involvement. At the same time it means to be open to media and citizenry providing necessary information how public resources are used, presenting community plans, strategies, programs, long- term initiatives, short-term initiatives and everything what is connected with the community life.

Last but not least, the local governments are not capable to cope sufficiently and effectively with the huge bundle of the obtained competences which have been

delegated to them by the processes of decentralization. The stated problem is mainly connected with the insufficient professional accomplishment of the local administrators 'discharging with their duties predisposed by their unprofessional background, lack of the appropriate qualification, education and professional training.

5.3. Lack of highly qualified professionals in public administration

Requirements for a highly qualified group of professionals whose main mission is to provide services to the state and public go hand-in-hand with increasing demands for a higher quality of services. Of course, such progress wants further professional and ethical cultivation as well as perfection of the public-sector executives and bureaucrats closely connected with their cultivated expression of their decent and professional approaches to citizens.

The prime moral virtues; wisdom, justice, compassion, and respect for individuals, courage, temperance, generosity, kindness, reliability and industry should be a part of the professional virtues of public executives and administrators being in the democratic society service. Having a post means at the same time to have a greater responsibility and personal accountability for one's deeds and decisions which might have an enormous impact on citizens. If we develop these virtues, we are more likely to act rightly avoiding misdeeds, dishonesty and fraud. Being an accountable suggests being not only responsible for something, but also ultimately answerable for one's actions, misjudgements, defaults in decision-making, and to be ready to undertake themselves to be controlled and judged by those to whom they have their obligation to serve. The term implies the idea of taking into account the consequences of one's actions for the wellbeing of others.

Being an accountable actor means to be subjective to external factors as he/she is liable for his deeds and decisions to a certain community and subjective to their control and judgment, praise or criticism. Even when people in public service know what right thing is, they often find it difficult to do because of the social, institutional, group or organization compulsion they meet with.

Besides that the responsive public-sector executives must be reactive, considerate, sensitive, and capable of feeling the public's needs and opinions comprehended in the dynamic and constantly changing public administration processes which require the developed systematic approaches to understanding them. A responsible actor in public sector is understood by Bivins „as one whose job involves a predetermined set of obligations that have to be fulfilled in order for the job to be accomplished” [Bivins: 2006, 20]. Bivins as well as many other ethicists emphasize the weight of a responsible- accountable-actor who is capable to keep his/her personal integrity and instead of having “robust traits of character”, term used by Törbjörn Tännsjö, possessing adequate professional virtues to make choices according to one's own insight, intuition and ethical consciousness, not neglecting the respect of basic ethical public administration values and norms to serve the people and to steer clear of being under the influence, pressure or control of other actors, e.g. financial groups, political actors, or someone's secular individual interests, and in this way to esteem the other side of the dimension of integrity [Tännsjö: 2008]. Leader actors and administrators possessing these quality traits

are according to Johnson “true to themselves, reflecting consistency between what they say publicly and how they think and act privately. In other words, they practice what they preach [Johnson: 2009, 71]. It seems to be that all those values and virtues had been relevant only in theory and, as we all know, their practical application had been in fact far away from what was theoretically and officially declared.

5.4. Lack of the competent and ethical leadership

A lot of authors and general public are of the opinion that leaders and generally the fair and constructive atmosphere of organizations are mainly responsible for the standards that govern the conduct and activities of individual employees within the public administrative institutions and organizations, that those are the leaders and their sense of being conscientious and personally answerable set the just, prolific and ethical tone. In public administration the emphasis on duty and fair ethical environment promotes the determination towards the consistent and answerable conduct. Respecting the right of others is an important guideline to keep in mind when making reasonable and ethical choices. As it is expressed by Johnson: *“seeking justice, truth and mercy is more inspiring than pursuing selfish concerns”* [Johnson: 2009, 142]. Leaders whether they are political, high ranking bureaucrats or local public servants must see themselves as being committed to citizens looking at them as partners who agree to be led or governed by them under the condition that their lives are continuously being value-added and enriched respecting democratic principles of equality, participation, cooperation and mutual understanding. The leaders who use their power ethically and reasonably leading their organizations toward the cooperative workplace atmosphere respecting majority opinions instead of the blind obedience to authority and at the same time supporting corporate accountability and social responsibility can achieve a higher level of effectiveness as it is acknowledged by Carole Jurkiewicz in her study *Power and Ethics: The Communal Language Of Effective Leadership: Effective executives, in the public sector as well as in the non-profit sector, tend to have high levels of power motivation and exhibit high levels of ethical reasoning* [Jurkiewicz: 2005, 96]. On the other hand the impulsive and selfish leaders make abuse of power easier by pursuing their private interests without considering the needs of others and community good. As it is mentioned by Craig Johnson *“they are likely to justify their actions by claiming that their rights and interests take priority over obligations to others...another significant ethical burden associated with leadership are the greater privileges they enjoy, therefore they must give the same careful consideration to the abuse of privilege as to the abuse of power”* [Johnson: 2009, 15]. Incompetent and bad leaders called by some authors “the toxic leaders” are likely to cause prevalence of destructive and unethical atmosphere in public administrative organizations where it is difficult to speak about following ones` responsibilities and accountability towards community. Unfortunately the abuse of power by the public administrators and elected representatives seems to be a common reality with which we can meet in public administration daily.

5.5. Existence of the red-tape bureaucracy

First of all the existence of the operation of traditional orthodox red-tape bureaucratic public administration model belongs among the widest spread negative aspects. It is still true that in many cases in public administration institutions and organizations on all levels the over-bureaucratic system of operation is an everyday reality. The red-tape bureaucracy of public administration considerably maximizes the formal bureaucratic procedures including commands and restrictions as it assigns them the significant importance which is often transformed into a kind of administrative ritual performance labelled by Adams and Balfour as an administrative evil [Adams, Balfour: 2004, 118]. According to Vigoda the red-tape bureaucracies *“embody a firm hierarchy of roles and duties, a vertical flow of orders and reports, accountability to highly ranked officers, fear of sufficient accountability dynamics constituting a work site that is anything but democratic. All of these signal that the natural state in public administration is authoritarian”* [Vigoda: 2002, 530]. The sign of such public executives' and administrators' behaviour, actions and decision – making processes in public administration are cases of the absolute standardization of the bureaucratic practices which are becoming in them the aims of all activities provided by the public executives and administrators entirely ignoring the probable negative impacts on their communities and citizenry. Their conduct often gives the impression of being bored, uninterested, helpless, ineffective, and last but not least moving towards the immodest misbehaviour and actions which every so often issue into the abuse of power. “The dissonance between the official rhetoric and the palpable reality have more than anything else contributed to cynicism among the general public and decline in public trust” [Garofalo: 2014, 18]. Such practices are in a deep contrast with the new concepts and missions of the modern democratic public administration which has to be in accordance with respecting the fundamental democratic principles and the ethical values facilitating the needful services to citizenry. It means that in their practical activities it is necessary to pledge the public dignitaries and administrators to be oriented more on the use of practical and critical reasoning striving to change all worthless and obscure measures which are applied in public service and to do away with the obscure measures which are applied in public service, finally it means to put away the contra-productive and time-worn policies.

On the other hand, to initiate them to respect and support the constitution principles of liberty, equality, fairness, representation, responsiveness and the consensus-oriented towards the community providing the quality of public services by means of applying the sound policies processes aimed at the protection of citizens requirements and community wellbeing.

One of the ways how to do it is to create effective communicative channels aimed at making dialogues with citizens. Communities and citizens have to understand and feel that their city, municipality are open-minded and interested in their problems and needs, and what's more, that they are willing to solve them. Municipalities should make such concepts and targets to be understandable and transparent for all participants of the decision making processes. Public executives sense for “small

things” and tangible minor decisions, which might substantially influence their everyday life, are the most important for the community public.

5.6. Extraordinary Politicization of the public administration

Politicization of public administration is another burden and a quite widespread phenomenon causing a lot of incompetent, non-professional even corruptive decisions which are in an alarming incongruity with the observing public interest by public-sector executives. One of the reasons generating this problem is caused by pressing political influences and constant changes of governments. It reflects a situation in which public administration is the right hand of politicians and thus must preserve power by means of centralization and control over decision-making processes and resources.

According to many experts it would be better for public sector not to be managed by politicians as to be a good politician does not immediately mean to be a good administrator. The achievements in public administration could be attained in a more reliable and successful way by the capable and competent managers without having their tough party affiliation. For that reason one of the public administrators’ requirements might rest in their political neutrality. In our country it is a quite commonly happen symptom and that is the tendency to change professionally and even the ethically competent public-sector executives immediately after the change of political garniture. Of course, such practices are in a sharp contradiction with the forward - developing democracy.

5.7. Implication of the Ethical formalism in public administration

In Slovakia there is a lack of the comprehensive system of an appropriate, consistent and context-based ethical system of professional values, principles, norms and standards for public sector representatives and administrator which might help to overcome ethical confusion in public administration, avoiding its motivational degradation and to stop PA professional erosion which leads to the loss of legitimacy and public confidence. The development of such ethical public administration standard system would certainly promote better fight with such severe problems like corruption, low employee morale and finally the lack of legitimacy and public mistrust. If there are any devices aimed at ethics and more ethical behaviour there are mostly of a formal character in content and form serving just to have something, e. g. if they have a code of conduct which is usually placed somewhere in the wardrobe and usually nobody knows that something like this exists, it is difficult to speak about of any kind of an active and influential tool of ethical device.

The adoption of a code of conduct should not be a goal but an instrument to achieve the objectives dedicated by ethical management. The code of conduct is the right step, which must be followed by some other actions. These should lead to the development of appropriate professional virtues of government employees and the overall ethical culture with an emphasis on the fulfilment of the obligations and pursue the public interest [Mitaľ: 2016].

Besides that, in Slovakia the constant public administration aim still remains in providing the most modern and more reliable, confident and safe system for communication of bureaus with citizens, a system which would be able to meet the sense of the most precious value resting in making substantially their lives better by saving their time when they come into contact with administrative bodies including all levels of public administration, and thus creating a prospect to use their time more sensibly by providing other useful activities. Moreover, it is necessary to establish an independent body to be responsible for the implementation of ethical values in public administration.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays the conservative idea on the local autonomy is difficult to be defended since the many tasks require the far above the ground financial means and many problems are concurrently the problems of several local governments. More often the local governments must move toward the common decisions and widen their cooperation with other subjects in order to fulfil their goals.

The mission of the contemporary local government is to fulfil tasks of a kind of a mediator among the individual levels of public administration, other local governments, private sector and citizenry. The local government has its validity and its role is particularly important in fulfilling public discussion. But, on the other hand, its activities should not be provided in isolation from the activities made by the actors of other political life areas. The ability to solve problems is in a direct proportion to the level of cooperation. In this connection the local government should play an active role, it should organize public discussions regarding mutual projects. Fulfilling these tasks the local government meets with two groups of obstacles, inner difficulties and outer ones.

Inner difficulties rest in rising demands concerning the governing and political level within the local government. Enhancing the political level is connected with the ability to lead community public discussions and, what's more, to play an active role in these discussions regarding the further community development. Enhancing demands on the management means to be willing to run the local government on the professional level. This requirement is related to the proper selection of highly qualified administrators who, when receiving a decent payment, will provide a good-quality work. Besides a good and decent remuneration, the requirements for highly qualified professionals contain an amount of ethical and moral qualities, such as common decency, honesty, integrity, openness, generosity, the character traits which esteem and pursue the prime ethical principles, the principle of humanism, justice and fairness, and the principle of honesty and diligence which create a common and universal foundation for a code of behaviour for everybody, every situation and every field of our life having particularly their predominance and validity in the public administration.

Finally, we can conclude that the outer impediment for the discharging their tasks by the local government rests in the size of territorial self-governing units. Current development shows that local governments will have to start with the inter-municipal cooperation even if it is a rather complicated problem caused by the conflict of interests among the local governments. The inter-municipal cooperation

is successful only in cases if it brings equal benefits to all local governments that are integrated in it. Anyway, in future the advancement of inter-municipal cooperation will depend on the state support and the potential of the local government.

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EUROPEANIZATION OF THE POLITICAL PARTY SMER-SD

Denisa Karabová

*University of Saint Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Social Sciences
Bučianska 4/A, 917 01 Trnava, Slovakia
denisa.karabova@gmail.com*

Abstract

Europeanization is a phenomenon that contains several possible roles of exploration, while the study of the Europeanization of political parties according to the five dimensions defined by Robert Ladrech is considered to be one of the most important. The aim of the paper is to map the changes in the program rhetoric of the political party SMER-SD which since its inception has become one of the most important opinion-forming entities within the Slovak society. SMER-SD was an important political player already in the period before Slovakia's accession to the EU, being present at all important milestones connected with the integration of Slovakia into the European structures. The paper seeks to explore the extent to which the SMER-SD party's program has been Europeanized since its establishment to the present.

Key words: *Europeanization, European Integration, Political parties, SMER-SD*

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the importance of Europeanization as such, it is important to clarify its main types, but especially its importance in the field of the European integration. Europeanization is most often perceived in terms of the impact of the EU, its policies or processes on the EU Member States. The first part of the article brings a comprehensive overview of the most important theoreticians of Europeanization, which will contribute to the understanding of the studied issue. As we decided to choose the Europeanization of political parties, the second part of the paper is more extensively devoted to the theories of Robert Ladrech and Peter

Mair. They are considered to be pioneers in exploring Europeanist tendencies within political parties but for our research we consider Ladrech's theory to be more relevant since Mair has been focused on party system as whole. Our attention will be therefore dedicated to the five dimensions of political parties that Ladrech considers to be fundamental areas revealing the degree of Europeanization. In the third part of the article, we chose to examine the SMER-SD political party and reveal the degree of Europeanization of its political program.

1. EUROPEANIZATION AND DIFFERENT VIEWS ON ITS EXPLORATION

The concept of Europeanization is a truly interesting phenomenon that has become a serious subject of interest for academics since the beginning of the new millennium, though scientific papers exploring Europeanization can be noted in the 1980s and 1990s. According to many experts, it cannot be considered as a new theory, because it combines and links existing theories of international politics, the theory of political processes, or the theory of governance [Radaelli; Exadaktylos, 2010]. John Borneman, along with Nick Fowler, came up with an interesting notion according to which the process of Europeanization appeared after the Cold War and replaced the processes of Western European Americanization and Eastern Europe Sovietization. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the weakened dominance of America, in their opinion, meant for Europe the need to define itself towards an international environment [Filipec, 2017]. Europe, however, can be understood much more widely than just from the perspective of the creation of the European Union. Right from the beginning there are many views on how to examine the Europeanization. We could even talk about diametrically opposed approaches to understanding this concept. Europeanization is, in general, a dynamic process that binds to the European continent and the individual historical integration processes associated with it. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio Radaelli clarify that the original work drew attention to four broad categories of Europeanization processes. The first type of so-called historical Europeanization is linked to the imperial demands of former naval powers that have exported the European values, authorities, norms, institutions, or cultural values and behaviors mostly outside Europe. Transnational cultural diffusion looks at Europeanization through the prism of cultural identities of standards and patterns across the different European nations. This can be understood very broadly, whether from the point of view of social activities such as education, or political culture and ideology. The third category of the institutional adaptation is one of the most widespread forms of the Europeanization research. Generally speaking, we are talking about domestic adaptation with the pressure of the European integration, and thus coming directly or indirectly from EU membership. In other words, it is a change of institutional players in the domestic political environment resulting from European integration and its associated processes. The division closes the so-called adapting Policies and Policy Processes, which is clearly the widest category. This may be the case for the two-way process, although surveys mapping individual policy shifts outweigh the impact of EU membership. [Featherstone, 2003]

For a clear understanding of Europeanization it is necessary to realize that European integration as such is only one of its elementary parts, but most

academics perceive euro- top-down process that captures changes at the domestic level of politics caused by building European institutions and policies. For a proper analysis of Europeanization we need to realize that this is a two-way process, it means they are not only the players acting on the national scene, but they are also involved in shaping European policies and institutions. Even though the top-down strategy is more widely recognized, which means the higher number of theorists consider the EU's impact on the Member States to be significantly more pronounced than the national actors towards the EU, it is still unclear who is the initiator of the change. One of the most frequently cited definitions of Europeanization comes from Robert Ladrech who sees it as a gradual reorientation of domestic policy to such an extent that the dynamics of European political and economic development become a part of its organizational structure as well as of policy making [Ladrech, 1994]. Equally important is the definition of Claudio Radaelli that describes Europeanization as the process of formation, institutionalization and diffusion of formal and informal policy rules and procedures, as well as shared values that are first created and consolidated at the European level and subsequently incorporated into the domestic political scene, general discourse, as well as public policies [Radaelli, 2003]. The Radaelli's definition is rather complex because it describes Europeanization of polity, policy and politics. In terms of polity occurs an institutional change, but also a change in judicial structures, intergovernmental relations, public administration or state traditions and collective identities, as well as relations between the state and society. Within the limits of the policy there is an individual national policy to be changed, which involves changing the standards, approaches and tools to solve the problems. In terms of politics, there is a change of mutual political interactions, thus the overall processes of formation, aggregation and representation of interests, as well as public discourse [Börzel; Risse, 2003]. The EU as such, but in particular the implementation of individual European policies brings about a number of changes in each Member State, especially the changes in the behavior of actors, their strategies, and institutional changes.

The theory of Europeanization and processes associated with it has been dealt with by other recognized authors, such as Featherstone. He sees this concept as a process of structural change influencing the actors, as well as institutions or ideas and interests. He argues that Europeanization is a change in the behavior of elites, but it is not a shift in the thinking of elites towards deepening integration as assumed by neofunctionalism. He concludes with his conviction that Europeanization has typically increased intensity, but its effects cannot be considered as permanent or imminent [Featherstone, 2003]. The impact of Europeanization may not even be regular and becomes asymmetric in time and space. This view is also supported by Risse, Cowles and Caporaso who state that countries or regions, along with their actors, may differ in their acceptance of European standards and the extent to which they are willing to change their domestic rules and patterns of behavior. On the other hand, we can also distinguish between the degrees of pressure imposed by the European institutions on the adoption of strict rules. They define Europeanization as the creation and development of different governance structures at the European level on the one hand and the political, legal and social institutions created to solve problems and formalize interactions between actors. They clearly perceive Europeanization in

particular from the perspective of European integration, thus the creation of transnational institutional structures generating universally binding standards, which are subsequently transferred to the national level. From this point, according to them, there is a further phase of Europeanization [Risse; Caporaso; Cowels, 2001]. Risse et al. follow up Checkel who adds that Europeanization involves, on the one hand, the strengthening of organizational capacity for collective action and, on the other hand, deepening the development of common ideas, standards, or collective understanding [Checkel, 2001]. Many other authors approach Europeanization very similarly, and their definitions could be compared to the theories of European integration. Many of the other theorists have blamed them for not being applicable to all areas of Europeanization.

Tanja Börzel understands Europeanization as a two-dimensional theoretical concept, and the process of European policy-making can be conceptually perceived as a "reciprocal relationship" between political negotiations at home and at the European level. This approach of the so-called two-tier game says that domestic political actors are exerting pressure on national executives to make changes at the European level that are in their interest. On the other hand, the representatives of the national governments are trying at the European level to push for changes that satisfy the domestic pressure while minimizing all potential adverse consequences [Börzel, 2002].

Johan Olsen [2002] recognizes five possible uses of Europeanization: (1) When it comes to changing external borders in order to achieve the degree of governance by which Europe has become a united political arena. 2) Development and establishment of common European institutions responsible for collective action. 3) Division of power between several levels of government- multilevel-governance. 4) Export of political organization and its principles outside Europe. 5) The European Unification Project which takes into account several factors - the unifying territory, the domestic adaptation but also how is the emerging political entity influenced by the system of governance or by international political processes.

2. THEORETICAL DEFINITION OF THE EUROPEANIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

I consider political parties that are a part of so-called politics within the political system of the nation state as important players at all levels of politics as they are one of the decisive opinion mobilizers that are the bearers of change in society. National political parties and their leaders are often perceived as an important intermediary standing between citizens and for them the unknown European policy that is reflected by their statements and activities. Through the creation of European institutions, European integration has created a space for transnational cooperation between national political parties which has evolved and strengthened over the years. The parties worked together, in particular, within the European Parliament, which, each Treaty adopted, strengthened its position and its influence on the decision-making on European policies and on the overall direction of the EU. National parties have been organized within the emerging European political parties with a broad membership base, in which they cooperate to exchange opinions, learn

from each other and this in principle creates scope for modifying the national party [Anderson, 2002].

Already in the 90s, some works emerged that were marginally devoted to the Europeanization process within the national party systems. However, the crucial breakthrough came to the beginning of the new millennium. One of the earliest authors was Peter Mair [2000] who saw only a small influence of European integration in this area and focused on the research of the party system as a whole. Robert Ladrech [2002], whose theory of Europeanization of political parties is considered to be a pioneer, examined rather political parties as independent players instead. Similarly to Mair, he perceives a party system as an area that is very difficult to change. Ladrech's exploration is based on the important divisions and conclusions of Hix and Goetz [2000] that examined the domesticization of domestic actors and found that domestic actors aspire to act and promote at the European political level, and also the European integration has an impact on the domestic political system that is changing. In this respect, they considered two different types of impacts on domestic actors: a) the transfer of competences to the European level can have several consequences, such as limiting elections or strengthening and changing the direction of institutional and overall political development in the country, b) creating new transnational institutions can provide new opportunities for national actors to open a new policy area and hence scope for circumvention of national policy.

This new political space also gives national players some benefits in terms of access to information. Robert Ladrech, in particular, relied on the fact that the increasingly widespread delegation of competences to the European Union in a certain sense involved the emptying of domestic politics. Thus, the ability of national actors is weakened, and this greatly affects the behavior of political parties and changes their ideology or program. [Ladrech 2002]

According to Robert Ladrech, the dimension of politics in the sense of Europeanization is an insufficiently invasive area, which has not been given sufficient attention for many years, especially to domestic political parties and their relationship towards European integration. Similar research has mostly mapped the coalitions, legislative or executive institutions, or impact on the legal system. [Ladrech, 2002]

Europeanization of Political Parties according Peter Mair

As I have outlined above, Peter Mair was primarily dealing with research of the Europeanization of national party systems, which, in the framework of one of the surveys (2000), compares each other since the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament. Western democracies have become more fragmented since then. His aim was to find out to what extent can be demonstrated the impact of European integration on national political systems, but his conclusions were rather skeptical. The basic feature of Mair's methodology is the two-dimensional structure of the Europeanization of party systems. The first dimension is the so-called format of the party system that denotes the exact number of relevant political parties in the selected system. In this case, he tried to find out whether Europeanization as such had an impact on the number of relevant system parties. The second dimension is

the mechanics of party systems, in which Mair distinguishes between the ways in which the parties interact, that may involve a change in the ideological distance that separates the selected parties or promotes the emergence of a new type of competition based on the European dimension. This is basically about how the party system works and what its interactions are. Consequently, it is assessed whether individual dimensions of party systems reflect the direct or indirect impact of the EU. He concludes that in terms of format and party participation mechanism within national party systems, there has been no or only a negligible direct impact of European integration. Also in the case of parties whose main feature of the program was the EU's support or rejection, since only a negligible percentage of them managed to maintain their positions in a longer time horizon. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the European cleavage line would be profiled. Most of the emerging European-oriented political parties then remain oriented towards the European level of elections. Since, according to Mair, there is no European party system, it is not possible for domestic party systems to be influenced by the European level of politics. Even according to him there is no evidence of the emergence of new alliances or hostility between the parties. [Mair, 2000]

On the other hand, the indirect impact of European integration cannot be denied. It refers to the depoliticization of party systems, with the possibility of some deterioration of the democratic process. In his view, the situation of the ever-increasing limitation of the freedom of the national governments is, in fact, supported by the emptying of electoral subjects and overall competition. European themes are emphasized mostly at the time when the country faces significant European decisions. In other cases, political leaders are not very happy to open up European themes. [Mair, 2000]

In the 2007 study, Mair supplemented his original conclusions, adding two more forms of Europeanization to direct/indirect influence. The first is the institutionalization of the EU political system, which deals firstly with the direct effects of the EU, namely the cohesion and strength of European political parties, as well as the difference between European and national elections. Indirect effect produces the emergence of alternative representative clusters such as lobbying and other types of interest groups. The second plane is the so-called penetration of European standards in the domestic political scene. Its direct variant speaks of the emergence of new sides on both levels - both European and national. [Mair, 2007]

The indirect effect of Europeanization in terms of penetration is seen by Mair as a shrinking political competition at national level, coupled with less space for party rivalry or the capacity of national governments [Mair, 2007]. In principle, however, the conclusions of both Mair's studies speak of Europeanization as a variable the effect of which is very difficult to prove within the party system and, if it exists, it is mostly an indirect influence.

Europeanization of political parties according Robert Ladrech

The second and for our research the most important theorist of the European political parties is Robert Ladrech. In his work he is engaged in a detailed investigation of the political parties, not the party systems as a whole, as the above-mentioned Mair. Ladrech's concept is currently the most cited in the field of

Europeanization of political parties. It can be said that he partly follows Peter Mair's work, nevertheless, he tried to come up with a more revolutionary and deeper analysis of political parties. Similarly to Mair, Ladrech acknowledges that Europeanization has a direct influence on political parties, which means that Europeanization pressure does not necessarily have to trigger a fundamental change of the party system. The empowerment of political competition, often referred to by Mair, has, according to Ladrech, a significant influence on the Europeanization of political actors. Political parties, as an important subject of the political system, are thus undergoing a fundamental change in their traditional functions, such as government roles, aggregation and subsequent articulation of interests, as well as electoral campaigns of individual parties and the recruitment of new members. However, a different situation may arise if the parties become part of a transnational party area, which in most cases brings new opportunities of different character, leading in particular to changes in the behavior and organizational structures of political parties. However, the overall impact of national parties at European level is very limited as they are not in contact with the European executive and therefore do not engage. By contrast, cross-border cooperation between national parties is not excluded. [Ladrech, 2002]

The 2002 breakthrough study of the Ladrech defines five key areas of research in which the political parties are being Europeanized. In comparison with Mair it outlines more of the impact of Europeanization providing a comprehensive and clear framework for an analysis in this area. Like many other academics studying Europeanization, I also consider Ladrech's concept as appropriate because it reflects a truly broad range of impacts of European integration on national party systems. According to Robert Ladrech [2002], under the influence of Europeanization, the following changes are taking place within the political parties:

1. Changes in the Political Party Program - One of the most bourgeois manifestations of Europeanization is the changes in party programs, in other words, the embedding of European issues in the party's programming documents. Methodologically, we distinguish in this context two different ways of determining the degree of Europeanization. This can be a quantitative change, reflecting the increasing number of references to EU policies and overall references to the EU and related topics. By qualitative research, we find out when the EU is referring to programs in the sense of a complementary factor in addressing policies that have traditionally been fully under the control of national governments. These changes therefore reflect the widening European integration into several areas. In the programs we will find more and more sophisticated references to the EU and its activities and with the space for party competition to be shrinking while increasing the demands on program experts of the parties. This requires the parties in general to strengthen their competences in the knowledge of European policies. On the contrary, the parties are beginning to refer to the EU also when referring to domestic policy and are increasingly reflecting transnational cooperation with the EU institutions.
2. Organizational changes - The gradually evolving relationship with the European institutions gradually brings about a number of structural and organizational changes within the party. In this sense, there may be several major changes,

such as the change of internal rules following the role of party representatives in the European Parliament. However, not all organizational changes are always found in official documents and party guidelines. Individual organizational changes can also be derived from linking the party and its actors to transnational organizations such as the European parties or the transnational party federation.

3. Patterns of Party Competition - Based on the degree of Europeanization of the parties in terms of the politicization of European themes, the voters take a pro-European or, on the contrary, Eurosceptic stance. On the one hand, the party's dynamics changes, the parties are transformed, which can generate the emergence of the new European cleavage, so the character of the competition is changing. Even new parties are emerging on the basis of a stance towards the EU.
4. Relationship between the parties and the government - this is based on the assumption of governmental participation in European negotiation and institutional negotiations, which can vary considerably their position within the party, as the change in their conviction often leads to bigger distance from the party's program positions.
5. Relationship of the party above the level of the national party system - Europeanization can lead to transnational cooperation between parties from different member countries, leading to mutual influence of party organizational structures or changes in the program. This is often about the party's participation in one of the European parties.

3. EUROPEANIZATION WITHIN THE POLITICAL PROGRAM OF SMER-SD

As part of the research on the Europeanization of political parties in the Slovak Republic, I see the current governmental party SMER - SD, the first party in the history of Slovakia to have created a one - color government and, since its inception in 1999, it has shaped the social discourse in the most significant way. The Europeanization of political parties, according to Robert Ladrech, contains up to five dimensions, but the most relevant one is the first one to examine the Europeanization of the program of the selected political party. So I will examine to what extent the program rhetoric, especially on the basis of its official program documents, has been Europeanized since the emergence of SMER - SD. The situation on the Slovak political scene during establishing the party SMER was characterized by a tense situation and the existence of two blocs, among which it was impossible to reach a consensus at the level of the government. The main cleavage was the line of Marxism - anti-mečiarism, which caused that classical ideological middle-left division of political parties was weakened. The Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, who filed an EU application for Slovakia in 1995, caused the international isolation of Slovakia [Leška, 2015]. As a result of several undemocratic practices, Slovakia was not invited to join the EU and NATO. Although HZDS was not against accession to the EU, its coalition partners proclaimed skeptical beliefs in this respect, with a fundamental rejection of NATO membership. Therefore, all actors from the international environment also perceived the HZDS as an opponent of the European project, and Slovakia did not see them as potential partners. The

opposition parties then opposed not only the HZDS, but the new cleavage line began to emerge, related to integration into Euro-Atlantic structures [Marušiak, 2006]. Shortly after the creation of the pro-European the so-called "big coalition" that brought Slovakia back to the negotiating table on the EU accession, the political party SMER was formed. Robert Fico, one of the most ambitious a popular politicians, had, as the former SDL Deputy Chairman at that time, really broad public support, and he therefore decided to establish a party that was initially profiled as a center-oriented with leftist rhetoric. Robert Fico, however, was seen from the beginning as a populist who presented himself and his party as the only alternative to Mečiar and as his preferences continued to rise, several parties sought to cooperate with him. [Octavian, 2008]

In general, it can be argued that after the 1998 elections, the Slovak political parties started to give a clear idea and indications of commitment towards the EU. Similarly, also SMER declared its Euroatlantic orientation in 1999, hence the support of Slovakia's accession to the EU and NATO. [Octavian, 2008]

In the general election campaign 2002 SMER took the opportunity to criticize the quick negotiation and the speedy conclusion of several chapters of the negotiations regarding the accession to the EU. Similar to nowadays, before the accession to the EU, SMER called for greater sovereignty of Slovakia within its structures. It can be said that they led the campaign with several negative attitudes towards the EU and expressed conviction that Slovakia was not ready to join the EU. Nevertheless, the party subsequently supported the integration of Slovakia into the EU and led the "YES" referendum campaign for entry and subsequently voted in favor of ratification of the Accession Treaty. Political scientists, for example, their pre-election billboard referring to the EU considered as bizarre and vulgar, as it depicted the bare background and with slogan: "To Europe, but not with bare asses". [Húsková, 2016] Thus, in its pre-election manifesto, SMER was profiled as a pro-European Central Party which, since its formation in 2002, has been profiled as the "third way", the party following the model and program of the British Labor Party or the German SPD, but paradoxically initially rejected their core socio-democratic values [Marušiak, 2008]. In the electoral program entitled "Choose Order and Decent Life!" they called for the guarantee of Slovakia's invitation to the EU and NATO, and declared their duty to do everything in order to join both transnational structures. They mentioned the EU just in terms of integration of individual aspects of public policy (education, transport, agriculture, etc.) into the European space, including the common market, without a separate chapter that would pay attention to the EU and the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic itself [SMER, 2002]. SMER did not win the election 2002 and was not as successful as predicted by the polls, and European integration as such was the main factor that influenced the party's decision not to join the HZDS coalition in 2002 and to act as its alternative.

After 2002, the program orientation of SMER can be seen as diverting from the "Third Way" and strengthening social democratic elements. SMER has changed its name to SMER – SD (social democracy), and later declared the effort to join the Party of European Socialists (PES) which clearly demonstrates the Europeanization changes within the party. In the election it was provided with the support of PES. The SMER-SD Manifesto for the first-ever election to the European Parliament was called "Stronger Slovakia in Welfare Europe," with Monika Beňová as the leader of

the Euro-list of candidates. The program is divided into seven main areas, while the party itself considered as the most significant of them, the general promotion of the struggle to create social Slovakia and Europe, with a significant impact on energy security or diversification of resources. The program can be viewed positively in terms of reflecting European themes, because its overwhelming majority is made up of European themes. The Party continued to insist on the promotion of Slovakia's own national interests. They strongly emphasized the importance of issues such as the Cohesion and EU agricultural policy. The party considered it necessary to allocate funds to socially less developed regions, as well as to promote direct payments for farmers, as we have negotiated the least favorable conditions among the Visegrad Group countries. They also declared efforts to remove earlier restrictions on work permits in several member countries for Slovak citizens. Interestingly, SMER – SD supported the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty for Europe in the manifesto [SMER-SD, 2004]. According to Jan Kovář, the election manifesto for qualitative aspects of important topics connected with European integration was discussed by the party very generally in particular the picture of its long-term goals within the EU membership, with many important topics covered only to a very limited extent [Kovář, 2014]. According to Marušiak, SMER-SD has put the European elections in great importance because they felt a chance to show themselves to voters or foreign partners as a stable pro-European party, an alternative to the current government coalition to become a full member of the PES and gain international respect. [Marušiak, 2004]

The 2006 electoral program entitled “Towards people” contains significantly fewer references to the EU, basically containing only a few references to it and all of them can be considered very general. It briefly refers only to the need to actively fulfill the obligations arising from the EU and NATO membership, and it mentions the same main themes as in the previous European manifesto. The most important element of the program in the sense of Europeanization can be considered as an indirect reference to support for the integration of Slovakia into the Eurozone when it talks about the need for political steps that will not endanger the planned adoption of the euro. [SMER-SD, 2006]

Tim Haughton and Marek Rybář, the period when the SMER-SD created a government together with SNS and HZDS is considered from a European perspective as significant. But, according to them, it was more about Europeanization affecting the political agenda of the government than the parties themselves. And since SMER-SD was a crucial part of the government coalition, it had to deal more with all the major issues behind the European integration that Slovakia was facing at the time. In particular, many preparations were made for joining the Eurozone and Schengen, whereby Robert Fico more publicly presented European themes and proposed that the governments should take part in day-to-day consultations at the European level which increasingly influence them more and more. [Haughton; Rybář, 2009]

Although the program for elections to the European Parliament cannot be found, according to Ján Kovář it can be based on very general topics related to the EU. In particular, SMER-SD traditionally mentioned building of a social Europe with emphasis on solidarity and security. It devotes a lot of space to national issues and criticism of the previous government, which, according to him, has caused a

financial crisis and has poorly prepared Slovakia for the euro adoption and joining the Eurozone. [Kovář, 2014]

Government participation in 2006-2010 and day-to-day European Affairs discussions probably caused that the SMER-SD's 2010 election program was considerably more comprehensive in terms of reflecting European issues a a separate chapter entitled "Strengthening the Position of the Slovak Republic in the European Union and in the World" is devoted to the EU [Drizová, 2011] In addition to classical issues such as stability or cohesion policy, the focus is on the need for active implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the need to bring the EU closer to citizens. In this respect, it aims to regularly bring citizens closer to European issues and thus help them understand better functioning of the EU and its processes. Many times, in the other chapters of the program, they refer to the Lisbon Treaty and the Europe 2020 Strategy in relation to several national policies. Based on these facts, we can clearly observe the Europeanization trends in the SMER-SD program which is increasingly being presented as a pro-European one. [SMER-SD, 2010]

The program focus of the SMER-SD in 2012 was largely identical to the previous program due to unexpected early elections. It is also divided into seven chapters, with the EU part already appearing to be second and not last as before. This change can be justified by the events that caused the fall of the government, and thus the refusal to accept the European stability mechanism. Robert Fico was clearly aware of the importance of this issue, since the further developments within the EU and fixing the stability of the Eurozone depended on the decision of the Slovak Parliament. In any way, we can generally see a constant shift in SMER-SD's rhetoric appealing to the European themes. [SMER-SD, 2012]

Similarly to the previous elections to the European Parliament, it is not possible to find the SMER-SD manifesto. What is interesting, however, in connection with Europeanization, is the 2016 parliamentary election program, which cannot be called a program, but only a program priority, as the party itself entitles it. Out of five shortcomings, the EU document only mentions the use of European financial resources for regional development and wage increases in health and education. [SMER-SD, 2016] Thus, the European issues are significantly absent in the document compared to the previous ones. Robert Fico has changed his rhetoric, particularly with regard to the migration crisis, especially in connection with the radical rejection of the allocation of asylum seekers' according quotas. This was accompanied by an action against the Council of the European Union, which is in high contrast with the previous pro-European rhetoric of SMER-SD. Robert Fico began to use Islamophobic rhetoric and was for instance in favor of the adoption of a controversial measure to monitor Muslims living in Slovakia as a possible threat. In this regard, Pavol Baboš and Darina Malová believe that Eurosceptical rhetoric was highly connected with election campaigning, but according to them SMER violated humanitarian European standards which in principle can help reduce EU support and thus strengthen Euroscepticism. [Baboš; Malová, 2016]

CONCLUSION

Europeanization is indeed a phenomenon which touches the political system of every European country, especially a Member State of the EU at all of the levels of the political system with a significant impact on policy, polity and politics. Among the world's academics we can find a large number of theorists dealing with the Europeanization of the political system as such, but I consider Ladrech's Europeanization of political parties as one of the most groundbreaking and acknowledged one. Political parties are clearly Europeanized under the influence of European integration, which we have partly proved in the case of the current Slovak governmental party SMER-SD. We have studied it within the first of five dimensions defined by Robert Ladrech. We have mapped the changes in the program rhetoric of SMER-SD since its inception to the present, in particular by analyzing its program manifestos in parliamentary elections and European elections. Since its inception the party has been profiled as a pro-European one and, despite several euro-skeptic statements, it has supported Slovakia's accession to the EU. It expressed its skepticism in particular about the unpreparedness for joining the EU and criticized the conditions been negotiated by the previous government. However, SMER-SD was more pro-European in the following periods that many analysts saw as a consequence of their efforts to join PES. The most obvious Europeanist tendencies in the party were visible in manifestations for the elections to the National Parliament from 2010 and 2012 when there was a significant attention dedicated to the EU and its subjects, even a separate chapter. The turnaround occurred before the 2016 elections, after the outbreak of a migration crisis when Prime Minister Fico vigorously rejected the migration quotas and regularly criticized the EU which, according to some experts, helped mobilize Eurosceptic forces, even the extremist ones. This is in line with some of the previous research dedicated to the political development in Slovakia [Mihálik, 2015] Subsequently we were able to monitor almost smooth implementation of the program priorities for the Slovak Presidency in the EU Council which was personally represented by Robert Fico himself as the newly elected Prime Minister.

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GYÖRGY LUKÁCS AND STALINISM: A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE POLITICS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Eugen Gabor

*National University of Political Studies and Public Administration,
Doctoral School, Political Science,
Bd. Expozitiei, nr 30 A, sector 1, Bucharest, postal code 010643, Romania.
eugen.gabor@gmail.com*

Abstract

One of the arguments that is used frequently by the critics of György Lukács is built around the label of Stalinism, a label which obviously discredits the Hungarian philosopher in the eyes of those left wing sympathizers who are less familiarized with his writings and his activity. If for the neoliberal and/or conservative public it's usually enough to use the stamp of Marxist to damage the image of an author or the ideas he releases, for those who have progressive views, only bringing into discussion Stalinism, maybe the most horrible face of the left wing totalitarianism, can really be harmful for the target of the attack. Therefore, it is easily understandable why well intended critics, but also individuals who with clumsiness are trying to hide the anti-Semitism which fuels their contempt towards Lukács, equalize him with a doctrine which provoked so many destructions in Central and Eastern Europe. But how much truth there really is in this accusations which many take for granted?

My study focuses on some aspects from Lukács' biography, but the main component of the analysis is represented by fragments from books and articles written by the philosopher, and also from the interviews that he has given. To better understand these texts, I rely on volumes dedicated to Lukács's life and activity. For the clarity and depth of my conclusions, I also consult some elements from the writings of an important philosopher of the XXth century linked to the Marxist theory, Leszek Kolakowski. The main conclusion of my research is that we cannot label Lukács as a fully committed Stalinist.

Key words: *György Lukács, Stalinism, Marxism, Leninism, Leszek Kolakowski*

INTRODUCTION

György Lukács' work has so many meaningful and intellectually provocative components, that it is difficult to delimitate a certain area of it for a profound analysis. So, one might ask, why did I chose from such a large field the subject of the author's relation with Stalinism? Obviously, my choice has to do with the recent decision of the Budapest City Council to remove the Lukacs statue from a central park of the Hungarian capital¹. This decision is, without any doubt, a political one, and it is fuelled by a certain ideological vision. During his tireless activity, Lukács had periods of political involvement, but also had long periods when, voluntarily or not, he retired exclusively on the fields of philosophy, literature and aesthetics. Now, once again, and obviously against his will, after almost 46 years from his death, he is brought back in the political arena.

Those who supported the decision that was taken by the Budapest City Council, or advocated for it, explained their stance using several arguments. One of the arguments that was used very often is that in the 21st century, in the capital city of a country that is member of the European Union (EU), you cannot have a statue of an outspoken upholder of a murderous totalitarian ideology. In their view, having here a statue of György Lukács was the equivalent of having a statue of Martin Bormann, Alfred Rosenberg, Lavrentiy Beria or Vyacheslav Molotov. But is there any shred of truth on which this comparisons can be based? Inarguably, Lukács was a Marxist philosopher. He was also, as we will point out below, a faithful adept of Leninism until the end of his life, although he distanced himself from Lenin in certain points in his final years. But is this the kind of crime that a democratic regime cannot forget and forgive? If we look at the United States of America, the answer is no: in Bronx, New York, there is an entire monument built to honour Antonio Gramsci, another important Marxist-Leninist philosopher.²

But what if one can prove that Lukács was not only a Marxist-Leninist, but he was also a representative of Stalinism, maybe the most terrible face that left-wing radicalism has ever had? Obviously, in this case, the philosophers detractors are right: his statue's place is not in a public place of a democratic country. Therefore, the goal of my research is to try to determine, at least partially, what was the nature of the relation between Lukács and Stalinism. As I pointed out in the title of the study, this relation is a complex one, and, as I will explain in a more detailed manner below, those who analysed it were not able to draw some conclusions that could be unanimously accepted in the academic environment. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that my analysis will be able to highlight some aspects that will show us if those who accuse Lukács are right or not.

Firstly, I will present the manner in which some historians and political scientists define Stalinism and Leninism, what differences and similarities they see between the two political theories, and what approach is correct from my point of view. In the following section, I will expose the way Lukács sees Stalinism after 1956. After this moment, going chronologically backwards, I will try to identify some relevant details regarding the philosopher's positioning towards Stalinism during the years

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/lukacs-debate/>, accessed on April, 2017.

² Retrieved from <http://observer.com/2013/07/thomas-hirschhorns-gramsci-monument-opens-at-forest-houses-in-the-bronx/>, accessed on April, 2017.

when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was ruled according to this doctrine. Finally, before the conclusions, I will refer to Kolakowski's opinions on Stalinism, and on the relation between Stalinism and Lukács. The only methodological tool that I will use during this steps is the qualitative method of content analysis.

1. STALINISM: A BRIEF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Defining Stalinism has proven to be a difficult task for many intellectuals who treated this subject. The term, which at a first sight seems as clear as the terms „Marxism” or „Leninism”, is an ambiguous one, being both obvious and elusive. It may be used to describe a movement, a type of political practice, a political, economic and social system, or a belief-system/ideology [Dallin, Patenaude 1992: 1]. Although those who use it might not have in mind always the same thing, almost all of them tried to explain the nature of the links between it and Leninism. From this point of view, we can identify three main currents: many intellectuals consider that Stalinism is the natural successor of Leninism, and even without Stalin, the political practice in the USSR would have been the same in the decades that followed Lenin's death; other authors claim that Stalinism was one of the possible outcomes of the basis built by Leninism, and it maintained some of the characteristics of the mother-doctrine, while modifying others; finally, there are many voices that declare that the essence of Stalinism was counter-revolutionary and therefore this movement betrayed Leninism [Dallin, Patenaude 1992: ix].

The Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski is one of the main promoters of the idea that Stalinism was inevitable from the moment the Bolshevik Revolution triumphed [Kolakowski 1990: 2], and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Zbigniew Brzezinski are between those who share his views. Speaking about the current these two represent, the Russian political writer Roy Medvedev has the following observations:

„Stalin himself constantly maintained that he was first and foremost a loyal disciple of Lenin, merely continuing the work of his teacher, and that his activities in every respect represented implementation of Leninist designs. The same was repeated by people in Stalin's immediate entourage, who additionally made the point that Stalin was the best disciple, the one most steadfast in his continuation of Lenin's work. However, many none too objective Sovietologists also find it quite tempting to identify Stalinism with Marxism and Leninism and to portray socialism only in its perverted Stalinist form. This is very much the view proclaimed far and wide by Solzhenitsyn, according to whom there never was any such thing as „Stalinism”, since Stalin always followed in Lenin's footsteps and was only a „blind, mechanical executor” of Lenin's will. An approach of this is convenient not only for those who would like to discredit every variety of socialism as a matter of principle, but also for those who favour the rehabilitation of Stalin and Stalinism. Nevertheless, it's wrong.” [Medvedev 1979: 183].

The American political scientist and historian Robert Tucker also rejects Kolakowski's arguments, underlining that his theory does not explain the process of destalinization started by Nikita Khrushchev. Tucker claims that although Leninism

contributed to the birth of Stalinism, the latter is a distinct phenomenon which does not flow directly from the former [Tucker 1977: 78].

Returning to Medvedev, he also admits that from certain points of view, Stalinism was a continuation of Leninism. But, according to him, this continuities must be studied with sober, scholarly investigation, and not with sweeping generalizations or demagogic assertion [Medvedev 1979: 184]. Turning to the differences between the two doctrines, he states that the violent acts that they fuelled are not facts that could support their equalization, because of the different historical circumstances during which these acts were made. More precisely, the crimes of Leninism were made during a counter-revolutionary war, and were aimed to save the Bolshevik state; the crimes of Stalinism were made to strengthen a one-man dictatorship [Medvedev 1979: 185-188]. If we look at the policies the two leaders implemented, the differences are much more contrasting:

„Stalin’s policies were in no way a reflection of Leninist objectives: the abolition of NEP, the hasty implementation of forced collectivization, mass terror against well to-do peasants in the countryside and „bourgeois specialists” in the cities, industrialization largely by harsh administrative rather than economic measures, the prohibition of all opposition both within the Party and outside, the revival of the tactics of „war communism” in utterly different circumstances – in all this Stalin acted in defiance of clear Leninist directives, particularly those that appeared in his last writings of 1921-22”. [Medvedev 1979: 188-189].

Thus, Medvedev defines Stalinism as a form of pseudo-socialism, fuelled by conservative tendencies and built on a highly bureaucratized structure [Medvedev 1979: 194]. Nevertheless, he also highlights that Lenin was not some kind of saint who never committed political errors or who never resorted to cruel expedients in the course of political struggle. But, unlike Stalin, Lenin was never interested in personal power, he only wanted more power for the Party and for the proletariat [Medvedev 1979: 192].

If we were to accept Kolakowski’s vision as true, then the matter of the relation between Lukács and Stalinism would be clarified from the beginning. Considering that he never repudiated Leninism, we could draw the conclusion that his ideas and beliefs were also inextricably linked with Stalinism. But Medvedev’s and Tucker’s arguments build an overview that convincingly contradict those who claim that USSR’s history would have been unchanged even if Lenin had led the country until 1953. Therefore, in my analysis I will focus on what Lukács declared and wrote about Stalinism in the last two decades of his life, and also on earlier ideas and actions of the philosopher.

2. LUKÁCS ON STALINISM AND HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITY AFTER 1953

The information presented in this section tend to indicate that Lukács was a fierce opponent and critic of Stalinism. Before even mentioning the arguments he used to condemn this political practice/doctrine, we can say that he proved with his last major political action that he opposes Soviet totalitarianism and that he is willing to contribute to a reformation of the Hungarian communist regime in a way that could

erase from this regime the residues of Stalinism. This action is made in the context of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956:

„Lukács took an active role in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and was Minister of Culture in the government of Imre Nagy. Lukács was arrested when he fled to the Yugoslav Embassy by the Soviets as they repressed the Hungarian Revolution. He was exiled to Rumania for about six months. He was a supporter of the reform movement in Eastern Europe and the ideas of 1956 in Hungary and 1968 in Czechoslovakia fill these pages³.” [Lukács 1991: 4].

Although the revolution was against the Soviet rule imposed by the Khrushchev regime, a regime that was starting the process of destalinization, it is beyond any doubt that one of its major goals was to erase definitely Stalinist practices from Hungarian politics.

As the Canadian writer Norman Levine observes, Lukács was part of the revolution, but was not a representative of its main current:

„In my interpretation, Lukács was part of the Leninist opposition to Stalinism, which was a centrist position in the 1956 revolution in Hungary. By the phrase „Leninist opposition” I mean a political reform movement which did not want political pluralism, or a market economy, or to have Hungary withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, but which saw the Leninist tradition itself as offering possibilities for the reform of Stalinism and specifically looked upon the New Economic Policy of 1921 in the Soviet Union as the basis of such a communist reformation.” [Lukács 1991: 5].

So, we can see that the fact that Lukács never abandoned Leninism makes him automatically incompatible with Stalinism, although, as we will see below, he refused to expose this incompatibility during the years of Stalin’s rule. Nevertheless, this incompatibility with Stalinism does not mean that he was compatible with liberal democracy or the process of building open societies.

As the Hungarian philosopher G. M. Tamás affirms, in 1956 Lukács was part of a genuine Socialist revolution⁴. And no one could suspect that he joined the new and ephemeral government because of political opportunism. In the years that preceded these events, he participated at meetings of the Petőfi circle, which somehow prepared the revolution, and here he stated the necessity of a renaissance of Marxism. Also, the tensions between him and the Stalinist regime led by Mátyás Rákosi were of notoriety, as we will see below, even from the final years of the 5th decade of the 20th century.

The Process of Democratization is a book that Lukács wrote in 1968, in the aftermath of the Prague Spring, and which was published only at more than 10 years after the author’s death. According to Levine, this work represents the philosophers last pleading against Stalinism:

³ My note: the pages of the book *Process of democratization*.

⁴ Retrieved from <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-never-ending-lukacs-debate/>, accessed on April 2017.

„On a more political level, Lukács’s book is his final statement that Stalinist bolshevism is a deformation of Marxism. „The process of democratisation” is an effort to distinguish a Marxist theory of politics from Stalinist bolshevism. It is a dissident work, an expression of the „Lenninist opposition”, a statement that Marxism cannot be reduced to Stalinism and that Marxism is a refutation of Stalinism”. [Lukács 1991: 4].

Indeed, he sees Stalinism as a harmful form of bureaucratic totalitarianism, that betrays the core principles of Marxism, and he argues that the return to Leninism is the best weapon that can be used against this kind of deformed socialism [Lukács 1991: 26-27].

It is obvious, therefore, as Levine points out, that Lukacs’s anti-Stalinism after 1956 is irrefutable [Lukács 1991: 26-27]. In *The Process of Democratization* he explains that Stalin in the same time destroyed Leninism, and used Lenin’s heritage to consolidate his own power. Using arguments similar to those seen at Medvedev, he underlines that Stalin also destroyed the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry which fuelled the Revolution and rejected NEP [Lukács 1991: 111]. More than this, Stalin used war communism, a form that was repudiated by Lenin, both theoretically and practically. Thus, Lukács can be considered not only an opposer of Stalinism in the last years of his life, but also a theoretician of the differences between Leninism and Stalinism. Differences which also include the cult of personality, nationalism (the theory of socialism in one country) and even anti-Semitism.

Preoccupied until his last days not only with the reformation of communism through a renaissance of Marxism, but also with the best tactical approach to globalize the revolution, the philosopher sees the residues of Stalinism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as a barrier in front of the exportation of socialism in the Occidental countries:

„...I would like to stress again and again the tremendous importance that the genuine liquidation of Stalinism in the socialist countries could have for the movements in the capitalist countries (...) I always say that we are for the time being demolishing Stalinism in a Stalinist way, and a genuine demolition will only succeed when we break radically with Stalinist methods.” [Pinkus 1974: 102-103].

According to his views, there are two alternatives for the countries from the socialist bloc: Stalinism and socialist democracy, and only the latter can be appealing for those who live in capitalist countries [Lukács 1983: 21].

All the information presented above leave no place for doubts: Lukács was not a Stalinist, and this fact highlights even more the irrationality of the decision to remove his statue from Budapest. But we must take into account that the actions and declarations exposed in this section were made after Stalin’s death. The philosopher actually never rejected or condemned Stalinism before 1953. So can we say that this makes him only a post-Stalinism anti-Stalinist?

3. LUKÁCS DURING THE STALINIST ERA. KOLAKOWSKI’S ARGUMENTS

The Romanian Political Scientist Daniel Barbu explains that in Romania, in the last years of Ceaușescu’s rule, a genuine anti-communist dissidence did not exist.

Nevertheless, after the Revolution of 1989, many intellectuals who lived comfortably and even enjoyed some privileges during the Socialist years, now started a vigorous skirmish with the phantom of Marxism and with almost every left-wing political program. He called this attitude „*post-communist anti-communism*” [Barbu 2004: 107]. Can we find any similarities between what Barbu describes and the way Lukács reacted to Stalinism and its collapse?

In 1949, the philosopher was obligated to step back from public life, after he was harshly criticized by the writer and politician László Rudas, in a text requested by Mátyás Rákosi [László et al. 1993, volume 2: 434]. Even before this moment, his views regarding the building of communism in Hungary were not following entirely the Stalinist line, at least as respect to cultural issues. Thus, we can say that his activity between 1945 (the year when he comes back from the exile he spent in the USSR) and 1953 (the year when Stalin died) does not allow us to label him as a „post-Stalinism anti-Stalinist”.

The situation we analyze gets much more complex if we focus only on the years when Lukács was in the USSR (1930 and 1933-1945). As I pointed out above, during this period he never rejected or condemned Stalinism. He managed to survive during the great purge that killed many intellectuals, and also many members of the Hungarian community. Most of those who accuse him of being a Stalinist argue that otherwise he could not have been able to escape the execution squad. In my opinion, this kind of argumentation is wrong. Firstly, we must take into account that Lukács did not have a privileged position in Stalin’s USSR. On the contrary, in 1941 he was arrested by the NKVD for two months [László et al. 1993, volume 1: 232]. Secondly, it is absurd to suppose that every foreign intellectual that was not killed by Stalin voluntarily embraced Stalin’s values or his vision.

Recalling what happened in that period, Lukács exposes three reasons that, according to him, kept him alive. Firstly, he refused to meet with Nikolai Bukharin and Karl Radek in 1930, because he thought Radek was unscrupulous and Bukharin had bad ideas. This saved him, because prevented Stalin from seeing him as an enemy. Secondly, after publishing the Blum Theses, he was no longer a member of the Hungarian Communist movement. If he had remained a member of this movement, in the first years after 1929, he could have been killed after an order given by Bela Kun; after Kun’s fall he could have become a victim of Kun’s successors. Thirdly, he states that his apartment was in very inferior living quarters and it was less attractive to the NKVD [Lukács 1983: 18-19].

Lukács also explains that he did not oppose Stalin at the beginning of his regime because he considered that none of the alternatives were guaranteeing a faithful continuation of the steps made by Lenin:

„No one remained dedicated to Lenin’s burning desire to construct a socialist democracy through the extension and strengthening of the foundations already in place (...). Above all it was Lenin’s successors who abandoned the priority of historic-strategic considerations.” [Lukács 1991: 108-109].

The list of this successors obviously included Stalin, but it also included names like Lev Trotsky, Nikolai Bukharin, Lev Kamenev, Grigory Zinoviev or Yury Pyatakov. With some of these, Lukács had some contradictions during the 1920s. For

instance, Zinoviev accused him in 1924 of being an „*ultra-left deviationist*” [László et al. 1993, volume 1: 212]. Therefore, there is no surprise that Lukács preferred an USSR led by Stalin, and not by Zinoviev. We can also identify additional explanations for why the philosopher did not oppose Stalin in the late 1920s or the early 1930s. According to Roy Medvedev or to the American historian Stephen Cohen, Stalin distanced himself from Leninism only after 1929. According to Nikita Khrushchev or to the German journalist Rudolf Augstein, the year of the rupture is 1934 [Medvedev 1979: 195-197]. Therefore, it is easily understandable why Lukács had not criticized Stalin before these years. Much more complicated is to establish why he did not criticize him after 1934.

Some authors argue that the philosopher's opposition to Stalinism is very clear even from the first years of existence of this type of political practice. For example, Norman Levine has the following observation:

„I argue that his anti-Stalinism, at least in the area of cultural studies, becomes evident in his work of the 1930s.” [Lukács 1991: 26].

Also, the British historian Rodney Livingstone considers that Lukács's anti-Stalinism is indicated by his retirement from politics in the 1930s, when he chooses to focus on philosophy and literature. This withdrawal can be seen as a sign that „*he was the source of an alternative view of Marxism.*” [Lukács 1972: xx].

Instead, Lukács, highlighting that he was not a Stalinist, never claimed that he opposed this doctrine. He argues, and some of his arguments are pretty disturbing, that he was loyal to the regime because of tactical considerations:

„My party, right or wrong» seems a strange sentence in the mouth of a philosopher, but he used it to explain why he had never resisted Stalinism, even during the purges. Not even inwardly! And of course, he justifies this on historical grounds – for example, in the interview he gave to the »New Left Review« which did not appear until after his death. He explicitly reiterated here his convictions that »one could only fight effectively against fascism within the ranks of the Communist movement. I have not changed in this.« (...) He frequently explained his attitude by maintaining that, while the conflict between Stalin and Hitler was still unresolved, it was a moral necessity to postpone any criticism one might have of the Soviet Union. (...) »I have always thought that the worst form of socialism was better to live in than the best form of capitalism.«.” [Lukács 1983: 10-11].

A fragment from a letter written by Lukács after 1945 exposes one more possible reason for his loyalty towards Stalinism:

„In Moscow I had a good time that I could never experience before. After unending daily engagements in Vienna and Berlin, it was a novel thing to be able to pursue my research aims (...). There were major polemics over the questions of literature and literary theory. I was subjected to criticism several times. But, all in all, I can describe my life in Moscow as rather enjoyable.” [László et al. 1993, volume 2: 418].

Therefore, we can assume that the plans and the ambitions of the intellectual were a barrier in front of taking a political stance that would have brought prison in the best case scenario.

Concluding, we cannot label Lukács as a fully committed Stalinist, but nevertheless, it would be absurd to see him as an anti-Stalinist dissident. Many of his statements are entirely anti-democratic, like the one regarding the life under capitalism or socialism. Lukács is not a champion of liberal democracy or a promoter of building open societies; but still, we cannot consider him an apostle of a murderous religion without committing a major error.

Leszek Kolakowski certainly would not agree with my conclusion. He considers Lukács an actual Stalinist and eulogist of Bolshevik totalitarianism, stating that „...*he accepted despotism in principle, although he later criticised some of its extreme manifestations.*” [Kolakowski 1990: 302]. In my opinion, he accepted despotism in times of war and counter-revolution, but after that he wanted a socialist democratization, although that democratization could have taken place only between Marxist boundaries.

Also, Kolakowski argues that:

„His dogmatism was absolute, and almost sublime in its perfection. In his critique of Stalinism he did not step outside its fundamental bases. Lukács is perhaps the most striking example in the twentieth century of what may be called the betrayal of reason by those whose profession is to use and defend it.” [Kolakowski 1990: 307].

Obviously, sometimes Lukács sacrificed reason in favour of dogma, but I think that considering his entire work as a betrayal of reason can be in the best case labelled as an exaggeration. Regarding the discussion about the fundamental bases of Stalinism, for Kolakowski, to step outside these bases would have meant to abandon Leninism. In my opinion, one can be a Leninist, which obviously makes him an opponent of liberal democracy and open societies, but also stay outside of Stalinism’s fundamental bases.

4. THE RELEVANCE OF THE SUBJECT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY POLITICS. CONCLUSIONS

Tactics are a fundamental component of the subject of the relation between Lukács and Stalinism. Lukács stated that he was loyal to Stalin because of tactical considerations, but, ironically, also built his critique of the doctrine around this term. He considered that „...*the crux of Stalin’s methods rested on the principle of the priority of tactics over strategy, and even more the priority of tactics over the total evolutionary path of mankind which is the content of the ontology of social being.*” [Lukács 1991: 117]. In his vision, Stalin and his opponents definitively betrayed Leninism when they „...*allowed politics to be totally controlled by tactical considerations.*” [Lukács 1991: 128].

According to Lukács, the prioritization of tactics over strategy was a grave mistake that characterized not only Stalinism:

„The priority of tactics (...) was the dominant trend within late nineteenth and twentieth century European socialism and this hegemony was

manifested in different forms. It was the prevailing tendency in European social democracy...” [Lukács 1991: 117].

After many years, Lukács’ verdict seems to be still accurate. The „Third Way” movement, theoretically based on the work of Anthony Giddens, and brought on the field of policy making by politicians like Tony Blair, Bill Clinton or Gerhard Schroder, moved social-democracy further right on the political scene, and contributed to the transformation of some left-wing parties in catch-all parties that are upholding the current neoliberal status-quo. After this so called modernization, social-democrats became more preoccupied with winning elections than with governing, and when in power, the main goal of them was not to resolve the main issues affecting contemporary societies, but to adopt a stance that offers them the best chance to win the next round of elections. In other words, they subordinated strategy to tactics. Therefore, they partially lost their identity, and this favoured the emergence of the populist wave that today threatens liberal democracies in many countries.

Of course, social democracy did not neglect strategy always. In the decades that followed the end of WWII, this doctrine played a key role in building the welfare states in Western Europe. So not all the criticism that Lukács directed towards social democracy is valid, and not every reformist or revisionist move is harmful per se. But the philosopher’s warning, that allowing politics to be controlled by tactical considerations can be suicidal, has never lost its actuality.

As I pointed out above, Lukács was not an actual Stalinist, but in the same time, we must acknowledge that idealizing him can be almost as harmful for his legacy as demonizing him. The solutions he proposed were not always the proper ones, but this does not erase the fact that he very often offered the right diagnoses, when talking about global capitalism and the social inequalities or the lack of democracy that this system can produce.

I will conclude saying that, when I decided to write this study, I was convinced that György Lukács was not a Stalinist. Nonetheless, while reading and researching, at one point I had the feeling that I am on a road that leads towards the conclusion that actually he was a Stalinist. However, I never reached this destination.

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ESSAY

EXTREMISM IN SLOVAKIA – THROUGHOUT ANALYSIS

Alexandra Strážnická

*Comenius University in Bratislava,
Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences,
Research Centre for Human Rights,
Mlynské luhy 4, 821 05 Bratislava, Slovakia,
alexandra.straznicka@fses.uniba.sk*

Abstract

Political extremism has its wider historical and social context. There are multiple factors that contribute to the rise and the spread of extremism and political radicalism in various countries. The paper describes the situation of extremism in Slovakia, with a special focus on the recent happenings connected with the far-right party of Marián Kotleba – People’s Party – Our Slovakia. The author tries to find answers to the issue, why extremist tendencies are so „in“ and popular among today’s young generation.

Key words: *extremism, radicalism, young people, human rights, democracy*

INTRODUCTION

Activities of nationalist, populist, xenophobic and extremist forces in any country should be considered in their authentic context. In Western Europe the influx of high number of immigrants from the countries with different cultural and confessional background and the difficulties that have accompanied migrants’ intergration into the „majority“ society provoked strong anti-immigrant feelings on the side of some segments of local population. Xenophobic and isolationist political forces are trying to strengthen themselves politically and electorally on the wave of these feelings. In Central and Eastern Europe, however one can identify some other reasons behind activities of the populist, nationalist or openly extremist groupings. Immediately after the fall of communism, the newly restored free socio-political discourse included representatives of an opinion stream that in various proportions combined ethnic nationalism, historical revisionism, xenophobia, non-liberal

concepts of power execution, anti-minority sentiments etc. Some of them tried to be incorporated into the regular political system and portray themselves as genuine upholders of „national patriotism“. Their activities were more or less on the border between the official landscape and the „forbidden area“, in some kind of grey zone. They used the existing legislative framework to found civil associations or political parties to advertise their views and concepts, very often in contrast with the basic democratic and human rights principles. Their members and supporters have been using radical and extremist methods, such as intimidation, violence and physical assaults on members of ethnic, racial or religious minorities, foreigners, proponents of another ideologies [Mesežnikov, 2015: 137].

Radicalization especially of young people, further aggravation of violence and terrorist attacks are only some demonstrations of growing loss of trust to state authorities and politics, caused mainly by the financial and migration crisis in Europe. Right-wing and anti-immigrant parties have been on the rise across Europe after years of slow economic growth and the arrival of more than a million migrants and refugees from the Middle East and Africa. These factors encouraging extremism and radicalism are present not only in Slovakia, but elsewhere in Europe.

There are three successful extreme right parties gaining seats in national parliaments of an EU member state, after Greece's Golden Dawn, Hungarian Jobbik, it is the People's Party –Our Slovakia led by Marián Kotleba [Nociar, 2017]. The far right tendencies connected with Freedom & Direct Democracy Party of Tomio Okamura have also won in the Czech elections in October 2017.

1. SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA

In Slovakia there exists a set of social pre-conditions that creates the context of activities of the extreme right.

The social transformation following the fall of communism caused dramatic changes in society's development, it changed the social status and living conditions of large groups of population and led to different reactions, ranging from endorsement and active support through passive acceptance to overt opposition and protest. In this situation the nationalism serves as a tool for mobilization, as an opportunity to recruit new members, to penetrate into sociodemographic groups more deeply or to organise their activities in those locations where social problems are caused by the transition process or by the combination of newly-emerged and/or old but longlasting negligency of the bad situation.

In 2006-2010, during the government of Direction–Social Democracy (Smer-SD), Slovak National Party (SNS) and Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), in many cases the police in Slovakia was inactive against extremist activities, starting to act only after criminal acts were committed and aftermath publicized by media. Extremists, feeling the evident decline in police commitment to fight extremism and to protect its possible targets started organizing public events, manifestations and concerts of neo-Nazi rock-groups. Under the pressure of NGOs and independent media the police conducted several spectacular actions against extremists, however, without serious legal consequences. It encouraged the extremists to be even more active. In 2006-2010, country's strong nationalist public and political discourse, as well as the government doctrine of boosting „Slovak patriotism“ played in favour of

extremists and radical nationalists, giving them opportunity to present themselves as the authentic part of the „patriotic“ trend [Mesežnikov, 2015: 140].

In 2010 the centre-right coalition government formed by the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ-DS), Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS), Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and Bridge (Most – Híd), led by Iveta Radičová, included provisions on necessity to intensify the fights against extremism into its program manifesto. By doing so the government recognised the importance of this issue. In March 2012 Iveta Radičová’s multiple cabinet was replaced after early elections by single-party government of Smer-SD, led by Róbert Fico [Ibid.: 140 – 141].

There is a today’s ruling coalition of Smer-SD, Slovak National Party (SNS), Most-Híd, and Siet’. Most-Híd and Siet’ explained their decision to join the government with Smer - SD and the Slovak National Party (SNS) to “build a dam against extremism”. Observers label this the *raison d’être* of the current government, as extremists tendencies are increasing. According to the latest polls, if the elections were held now, the extremists would reach 10% [Focus polling agency, 2017].

Kotleba’s path to the Parliament

The first Kotleba’s party Slovak Community (Slovenská pospolitost) was banned by the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic in 2006. The manifesto of this party had proposed the abolition of the democratic system and establishment of „class state based on national, Christian and social principles“. It was for the first time after 1989, that a political party was banned.

The extremist and revisionist party People’s Party – Our Slovakia (Ľudová strana - Naše Slovensko, hereinafter referred as „LSNS“) was created in 2010 as a direct successor to the Kotleba’s former political project. The party ran in two recent parliamentary election (in 2010 and 2012). However the party failed to overcome 5% threshold to qualify into the Parliament as well as to overcome 3% - threshold for getting money from the state budget for reimbursement of expenses for participation in elections.

In 2013 Kotleba surprisingly won the second round of regional elections in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region in central Slovakia. He became the first elected regional chairman with a neo-Nazi background.

In general elections in 2016 the Kotleba’s party suddenly gained 8% of the vote nationwide, that means 14 seats in the 150-seat national parliament. To compare the party received only 1,6% of the popular vote in the previous general elections. Besides that a very alarming issue is the fact, that 23% of first-time voters (aged 18-22) decided for extremist ideology!

2. CAUSES FOR RISING EXTREMISM AND POLITICAL RADICALISM

How is it possible, that today’s young people, who live in democracy, who never experienced a totalitarian regime and who are able to enjoy all the benefits of open borders, voluntarily decide for anti-democratic political forces whose programmes and activities contradict the basic principles of liberal democracy?

2.1. Insufficiencies in Human Rights Education

In post – communist Slovakia the attitude to Dr. Jozef Tiso and the Slovak Republic 1939-1945 was shaped shortly after the fall of communism. As a result of the earlier taboo of the period by communist historians, this controversial subject was uncritically idealised in early stages after 1989. Before the public was even able to learn about the objective historical truth of the 1930s and 1940s, this period began to be celebrated [Mesežnikov, 2015: 126].

Any discussion with young people, their radicalization, and their electoral preferences for the extreme right must begin with education. The poor and steadily deteriorating standard of the Slovak education has been regularly documented by the comparative PISA surveys (The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training). In addition to the parameters of the OECD the Slovak students have demonstrated extremely poor knowledge of national history, with especially poor knowledge of the history of the wartime Slovak Republic, a Nazi Germany vassal state that deported thousands of its Jewish citizens to extermination camps (OECD 2014). Moreover, present-day high school students know very little about the 40 years of communism and are not taught very much about the Velvet Revolution of 1989 either. As some sociologists emphasise that a weak historical awareness provides a fertile soil for extremism, with young people falling for the appealing lure of extremist, fascist-leaning ideologies and populist ideas proposing simplistic solutions to society's most complex problems. From this it is only a short step to creating the image of an enemy [Gyárfašová 2017].

2.2. Mobilisation of Youth

The members of extremist groupings in Slovakia came up recently with the new tactics. They started to communicate directly with their potential supporters in localities organizing public events (rallies, manifestations, marches, pre-election meetings) in reaction to strong disappointment of a substantial portion of local population with social and living conditions and inability of authorities to solve disturbing problems. Clashes between the police and extremists during such public events offered the latter opportunity to propagate their views, presenting themselves as martyrs fighting for „national and social justice“ [Mesežnikov 2015: 139]. According to Gyárfašová, it is no coincidence that the second most frequent reason people gave for voting LSNS in 2016 was its „anti-corruption program“.

The extremist agenda of LSNS has been visible especially in public assessment of World War II, marking the foundation of the Slovak Republic on 14 March or different anniversaries of key politicians and figures of that regime. The influential personalities of the authoritarian Slovak Republic 1939-1945, especially Dr. Jozef Tiso, have become role models for potential first voters in parliamentary elections 2016 who see this period of the Slovak history from a revisionist perspective, despite the fact, that this regime persecuted political opponents, led to restriction of human rights of certain groups of population because of their religion, race or ethnic origin [Mesežnikov 2015: 118].

Members of LSNS usually wear uniforms similar to those of military units of People's Party militia and at the same time they use symbols, flags and uniforms

with slight alteration of colours in order to avoid charges for the promotion of Nazism [Ibid.: 119].

Slovak politicians and the public at large have underestimated the activities and statements of the representatives of ĽSNS, who have been working on mobilisation of especially young people for several years. The party has approached an incredible number of young people.

As a good example serves the fact, that members and supporters of ĽSNS have been often reconstructing castles and taking young people, their siblings and friends with them, where they had many opportunities to agitate for the party's ideology. Simply say, it was a way for manipulating and brainwashing them [The Slovak Spectator, 15 March 2016].

2.3. Professionalism of political leadership and political culture

The case of election of the representatives of the overt political extremism to public office draws an attention of many politicians to the political agenda of Marián Kotleba. Mainstream politicians at first tried to present his election as an act of political delusion. Yet, they themselves attempted to incorporate the extremist agenda using anti-Roma and anti-European sentiments in political campaign and public debate in order to win similar electorate. Thus the elements of extremism became more visible and increasingly present in political discourse.

As Anita Világi from the Comenius University in Bratislava observed, many statements that would previously have been considered unacceptable because they are offensive to some groups or individuals living in the society, are today part of the political debate also among politicians who are not from ĽSNS.

Sixty percent of the people in Slovakia believe that many or all politicians are corrupt. Political corruption, scandals involving politicians, the interconnectedness of political and economic power, and the „oligarchization” of democracy have dominated the headlines over the past few years. Many suspicions have been raised, but the number of prosecutions and convictions has been close to zero. As Gyárfašová stated it is quite natural that in such an atmosphere the public confidence in established institutions and mainstream political parties has declined and a radical party that opposes the system and promises to „stop robbing the state” and „crack down on thieves in suits” is seen as an alternative [Gyárfašová 2017].

Pervasive corruption is not, however, the only failing of the establishment. Statements by government officials and other political actors (with the notable exception of President Andrej Kiska) created a sense of imminent threat especially with regard to the migration crisis.

The professionalism of political leadership in Slovakia is questionable. The entry of ĽSNS to the Parliament has influenced not only the work of the Parliament, but also the general discourse in the country towards the radicals.

2.4. New means of communication versus the right to be free from hate crime

Over the last decade the Internet has become the most efficacious and widely used means of communicating facts, information, feelings, opinions and judgments.

Dissemination of ideas by individuals independently from newspapers, radio and/or television has significantly changed the traditional role of these mass media. Not only have they lost their monopoly on the diffusion of ideas, but they have above all ceased to be a privileged source of information [Zeno- Zenchovich 2008: 99-112].

The Internet has changed the way we communicate. It has many positive values, but it also has allowed offence to be spread to a broader audience without editorial control and often behind a veil of anonymity. The growing reliance on the Internet as the main source of information for many people enables the fast spread of often unverified statements that could also incite to hatred.

Today data can be accessed by anyone, anywhere and at any time. Continued and unrestricted dissemination of intolerant statements on-line, by media and in a political discourse could lead to incitement to discrimination, hatred and violence. Statements posted on-line can go viral almost instantly, making it difficult to challenge them and to remove them completely.

A poll carried out by the Focus agency for the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) think tank in July 2017 on 1,025 respondents older than 18 years of age, shows that 63 percent of the Slovaks are concerned by the spread of hatred and intolerance via social networks and consider it a serious problem in society. Only 5 percent of young people between the ages 18–39 do not follow news of social and political activities on the Internet at all. Although young people frequently encounter hate speech on the Internet, as many as three-quarters admitted that they do not actively respond to haters. Radical content of this nature is clearly spreading without being countered at all (or minimally at best), indeed many young people assume it is part and parcel of the freedom of speech [Institute for Public Affairs, 2017].

LSNS is one of the parties that have employed social media as a powerful vehicle. The only other party with a comparable reach on the Facebook is Richard Sulík's liberal Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS), a long-term leader on social media. In response to the block on the satirical fanpage, Zomri (Die) on Facebook, people started to report that the Facebook pages of the Kotleba's LSNS party were in violation of the social network's community guidelines. Facebook reacted by blocking several pages, including the main one Kotleba – LSNS which had almost 81,000 fans [The Slovak Spectator 10 April 2017].

CONCLUSION

There are specific factors encouraging extremist policy that derive from peculiarities of the historical development of Slovakia. They include traditions of authoritarian nationalist policy from the interwar period and ideological heritage of pro-Nazi collaborationist regime that existed in Slovakia during the World War II. The country's multi-ethnic composition of the country's population offers nationalistically oriented forces an opportunity to use the so-called „ethnic card“ for voters' mobilization. Long-term problems associated with the situation of the Roma minority create a breeding ground for anti-Roma racial prejudice and discrimination. These problems serve the extremist groups for justification of their radical stances and proposals gaining a certain support from the part of local population [Mesežnikov 2015: 139].

As sociologists observe, despite the resultant high growth rates, the majority of people in Slovakia do not universally approve of the reforms, because they are associated with a drastic loss of the social security. An economic boom is not always a guarantee of social peace, if this growth is not distributed fairly among citizens. High disappointment and afterwards social revolt is also possible [Hetteš 2013].

People are unsatisfied, frustrated, they just passively accept afforded „manipulated“ information and therefore they welcome single populist slogans of representatives of radical groupings and their „quick and easy“ solutions.

And what is to be done? Without any change in society's general outlook, it is not realistic to expect any change neither in general public nor in political attitudes. Crucial is an adoption of a consistent approach to law violations, adoption and/or amendments of relevant national legislation. The judiciary should contribute to the fight against extremism and radicalism by increasing the enforceability of laws in cases of committing crimes related to racism, extremism and other forms of intolerance.

To raise awareness among the population about the malicious effects of extremism and incitements to hatred, it is necessary to improve the standards of human rights education in schools curricula and to develop public programmes supporting civil society organisations that are active in the fight against extremism and radicalism.

There are already some arrangements and measures in the area of legislation, prosecution and education:

- a) According to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) hate crime reporting, Slovakia regularly reports police data and data on sentencing. The Criminal Code includes substantive offences and a specific penalty-enhancement clause affixed to a large number of base offences. While sentencing data only comprise hate crimes, the police data also include hate speech offences. The Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Prosecutor's Office collect hate crime data [OSCE-ODIHR 2017].
- b) General Prosecutor Jaromír Čižnár filed the motion with the Supreme Court in May 2017 to dissolve the ĽSNS party. Despite the fact that the party denies any links to fascism or racism, the party's conduct and statements might constitute violations of Slovak law [The Slovak Spectator, 25 May 2017].
- c) The leader of ĽSNS Marián Kotleba has been charged in July 2017 by police with promoting extremist movements. The charges are related to pictures the People's Party posted online in March. Those pictures showed an enlarged copy of a check donated to a charity for disabled children -- for 1,488 euros. The numbers supposedly carry a white-supremacist and pro-Nazi message. The 14 refers to the 14 words in a slogan used by white supremacists: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." The 88 is short for "Heil Hitler" -- "H" is the eighth letter of the alphabet. Kotleba faces a prison sentence of six months to three years. If sentenced, he would also lose his parliamentary mandate [Reuters, 28 July 2017].
- d) In some regions of Slovakia police units launched educative projects in cooperation with NGOs, schools and organs of local and regional self-government. The projects were aimed to increase knowledge about racism and extremism among youth (pupils, students) and teachers, to improve abilities of

policemen and public administrative officials in fighting extremism. However, the tendency to prefer repression to prevention and education still prevails in approach of state organs, including police [Mesežnikov 2015: 141].

- e) Nearly thirty high school students graduated in *Summer School: The Young Against Extremism and Radicalism* in July 2017, that was organised by the Slovak Security Policy Institut with support of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic and by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Banská Štiavnica. The discussions and trainings were focused on the alarming problem of rising extremism and radicalism in Slovakia especially among young people [Slovak Security Police Institut, 2017].
- f) According to the results of the regional election of November 4, 2017, Marián Kotleba will not continue in his office as a chairman of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, as he was defeated by an independent candidate Ján Lunter with 84% of votes in the region [The Slovak Spectator 5.11.2017].

Despite the official defeat of Nazism and fascism in Europe after the World War II, it did not, however, automatically warrant the eradication of political radicalism in its extreme nationalist or racist form from the public life in many European countries. The virus of extremism continues to live latently within societies and in times of proper conditions it resurfaces in places. It is exactly the case of Slovakia-therefore it is to be believed that the results of the recent regional elections in November will keep the values of liberal democracy and observance of human rights still alive in the Slovakian society and politics.

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REVIEW

Guy Standing, *Prekariat. Nowa niebezpieczna klasa* [Precariat: The New Dangerous Class], Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2017, pp. 368.

Global crises that destabilize the world's economic situation, and therefore also political ones, are not unreal. Job instability and economic insecurity create in society reluctance to the surrounding system. Precariat is a concept that gradually appears in the economic and political debate. According to Guy Standing, this is a social group that brings together the poor but also the impoverished, uncertain what tomorrow may bring to them, unemployed, indebted, young people without a chance to have work, but also those who work but are exploited or work on junk contracts or work in the informal sector. This definition that was presented here comes from Guy Standing's book, 'Precariat: The New Dangerous Class'. The notion of precariat in the Polish debate has appeared just recently, but it is not often used by the political class mainly due to the fact that it presents unfavorable phenomenon to the ruling classes.

In the introduction the author determines and presents the book's construction to the reader. The book consists of five questions to which the author answers, namely: Why this group is called precariat, who is in it, why this group is expanding, why should we care about its growth and where can it lead? All these questions are answered by the author in separate chapters. The answer to the last question was divided into two chapters, which was also mentioned by the author already in the introduction.

Guy Standing in his book presents a thesis on the fragmentation of social structures, and therefore decides to present seven social layers that are related one to another. The first is the elite which consists of wealthy people who rule the world with their fortunes. The other one is the salariat that consists of employees of public administration and corporations. Another group is working class that consists of professionals and technicians who are usually mobile and have specialized skills. Next, according to the author, is the working class which constitutes gradually a smaller part of society due to the fact that it shrinks. Below that layer is precarious precariat, followed by the unemployed unable to adapt to society and excluded.

The book consists of seven chapters. In the first one the author defines the precariat and presents it above the hierarchy. He also tries to convince the reader that the process of the precariousness of society is developing. In the next two chapters the author responds to the questions he had asked at the beginning of the book, namely, why the precariat is gradually increasing, and who really creates precariat. His reflections are based on concrete examples, which is an undoubted advantage of this book, as these examples are reflected in real situations. The

author distinguished various social groups that are characteristic of precariat. It is also positive that despite the distinction of particular social groups within precariat, the author notes that not every member of such a group must belong to it.

The fourth and fifth chapters are devoted to the problem of migration and time, respectively. The author notes that migrants are one of the largest groups among the precars, and one of the fastest growing. The author also draws special attention to the so-called labor export regimes, in order to win the tenders of companies from other countries, or hire migrants as a cheap labor force. The key problem that was raised in the fifth chapter is time. The author of the book review draws attention to the time spent on work by the precariat, forcing the reader to reflect on how precars are supposed to find time for consumption and rest.

The last two chapters, the fifth and sixth one, are reflections on how the world could prevent the precarisation of society, which is becoming more and more extensive. The author illustrates this with opposite notions, depicting the politics of hell and the alternative policy of heaven. This is an excellent summary and presentation of the situation because the author refers to concrete examples of what leads to precariousness and what can prevent it.

Jacek Żakowski, a journalist who wrote the preface in the Polish edition of the book, undoubtedly in an interesting way introduced the reader to the subject through the references to Poland.

The reviewed book was released in 2001 and the translated version appeared on the Polish market in 2014.

In summary, Guy Standing's book - 'Precariat: The New Dangerous Class' is one of the few that represents the phenomenon of socioeconomic precariat, referring to concrete examples and objectively presenting a problem that more and more countries will face. Undoubtedly, Guy Standing is a specialist in this field. He is a professor of economic security at the University of Bath in England and a co-chair of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) as well. In the view of the above, this publication is most recommendable on the Polish publishing market.

Patrycja Rutkowska,
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń,
Faculty of Political Sciences and International Studies,
ul. Batorego 39L, 87-100 Toruń, Poland.
patient@op.pl