

A matter of time? Assessing communism's shadow on Czech and Slovak politics since 1989¹

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Time is central to politics and scholarship. It shapes events and our perceptions of those events, but it also shapes our wider lives and perceptions. In my text I want to offer some insights and reflections on developments in politics in the Czech and Slovak Republics since 1989.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to a few people, not least Matěj Bílý and the wonderful organizers of the conference for inviting me to give a keynote talk. But I would also like to thank to my frequent co-author, Kevin Deegan-Krause. Among our many collaborations is a book, *The New Party Challenge*² published a few months ago. I will use some of the findings of that book in the final third of my remarks today. In addition, as I was putting together this text, I was reminded just how much I am grateful to a number of wonderful friends and co-authors over the years, people like Darina Malová, Marek Rybař, Sharon Fisher, Vlastimil Havlík, Seán Hanley, Kieran Williams, John Gould, Tereza Novotná and many more who have helped me understand better the development of Czech and Slovak politics since 1989. Scholarship is a collective enterprise. We achieve very little by ourselves alone.

To conform to cultural stereotype all good British academics begin their presentations with an apology. I begin with three. Firstly, I know that the primary audience of the conference was historians. I am a political scientist, not a historian. I am, though, of that group of political scientists that believes very strongly that you cannot understand politics without understanding history. The tree of political science has historical roots. To understand political phenomena, we need to understand history as well as contemporary politics. Secondly, over the years I have

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- 1 Keynote presentation at the conference *100 let od založení KSČ. Dědictví československého komunismu* (100 Years Since the Founding of the KSČ. The Legacy of Czechoslovak Communism) organised by ÚSTR (Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes), and ÚSD AV ČR (Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences) on 13., and 19.–21. May 2021.
 - 2 HAUGHTON, Tim – DEEGAN-KRAUSE, Kevin: *The New Party Challenge. Changing Patterns of Party Birth and Death in Central Europe and Beyond*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020.

conducted more research – and followed more closely – politics in Slovakia than the Czech Republic. Given that, I will say a little bit more about the former than the latter. Thirdly, although I will offer some broader reflections on politics, I am going to focus mostly on party politics. For a conference focused on the 100th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC̆) that is not an inappropriate focus, but I recognize that the shadow cast by Communism is much wider than just party politics.

I want to make four arguments. Firstly, time and timings matter. Lech Wałęsa once famously said, how you see things depends on where you sit.³ I would also argue very strongly how you see things depends on “when” you look back. Our perspective of developments 10, 20 or 30 years after the 1989 revolutions may be very different, and hence the point at which we look back may affect our judgment of the legacies of the communist period. Secondly, I want to emphasize the importance of contingency and choice in explaining the developments of party politics in both the Czech and the Slovak Republics since 1989. The course of developments was affected by decisions with options that could have taken parties, policies and countries in different directions. Thirdly, in the case of Slovakia, one argument that I make – and have done previously in print – is that the federal and the post-federal experience of Slovakia played a significant role in shaping developments, particularly politics in the 1990s.⁴ In some respects, we might even argue for Slovakia that it is the federal and post-federal experience which matters more than the communist or even the post-communist experience in the 20th century. Finally, I want to argue that we are witnessing changing dynamics of party politics in the 21st century, an era in which appeals linked to newness, anti-corruption and celebrity have become much more salient.

Time and timing matter. When we look back affects how we look at politics and history, and the judgments and conclusions we reach. This text is part of a monothematic issue looking back 100 years after the formation of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. In a century’s time when the communist experience may be viewed as a short and rather distant period in Czech and Slovak history, we may end up arguing something very different to today, but even if we just turn the clock back a decade or two our arguments and conclusions may be very different to those we reach today.

3 SANDECKI, Maciej: Będę ciął siekiarą złodziei. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 4. 7. 2008.

4 HAUGHTON, Tim – FISHER, Sharon: From the Politics of State-building to Programmatic Politics. The Post-Federal Experience and the Development of Centre-Right Party Politics in Croatia and Slovakia. *Party Politics*, 2008, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 435–454. A few other scholars have also pointed to the importance of the post-federal experience. See, for instance, SCHERPEREEL, John A.: *Governing the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Between State Socialism and the European Union*. Firstforum Press, Boulder – London 2008. For a broader account of non-communist legacies see BUNCE, Valerie: The National Idea. Imperial Legacies and Post-Communist Pathways in Eastern Europe. *East European Politics and Societies*, 2005, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 406–442.

When we look back not only affects our perceptions of what has happened, but it also changes our views of events and people. We may have come to a judgment at a particular point in time of a politician and what he or she did during a period in history. Our judgments of what they did during that same period of the past may, however, be affected by what has happened since we reached our initial verdict. Take a politician well known to this audience, Miloš Zeman. If I were to proffer my opinion now in 2021 I would be critical of his time as Czech president, both for the content and conduct of his presidency. But turn the clock back to 2002 and I would offer a much more positive view of Zeman the politician. Zeman's 1998–2002 government achieved much, not least most of the work needed to ensure Czech accession to the European Union, and Zeman himself played a central role in that government's major successes.⁵ The subsequent events since he stepped down in 2002, particularly his time as president, colour our judgments not just of Zeman's life and legacy as a whole, but also those events on which we had previously forged views. Moreover, viewing Zeman's writings, speeches and actions in the late 1980s just before and during the Velvet Revolution from the vantage point of today we might revise our judgements of Zeman that we reached back in the mid-2000s.

It is not just our judgments of politicians, but also of regimes and their legacies that are affected by the point of time at which we reach a verdict. It is instructive to turn the clock back to 1989–1990 and reflect on what was expected to happen and how significant the legacies of communism might be. This audience of historians knows better than me about the four decades of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Communism was a political system which aimed at a total transformation of Czechoslovak society. Given that the regime's tentacles stretched into every aspect of Czech and Slovak life, we may well have expected the shadow of communism to be very long and very dark.

In those febrile days of the late autumn and winter of 1989–1990 politicians were faced with political, economic and social choices that could have profound consequences for the fate of democracy and the future of the federal state. Czechoslovakia, and indeed all the other states that emerged from the communist bloc, faced not just these forward-looking choices about what kind of political and economic model to adopt, but also a crucial set of choices which were backward-looking, but would have forward-looking consequences: how to deal with the past? Who did what to whom during communist times mattered. Life chances were limited, lives were ruined and injustices were committed. In contrast to other states in the region such as Poland, which opted to sweep the question under the carpet, Czechoslovakia chose a path of punishing those who had collaborated with the communist-era security services.⁶ But while the theme of reckoning with the past

5 NOVOTNÁ, Tereza: *How Germany Unified and the EU Enlarged. Negotiating the Accession through Transplantation and Adaptation*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke – New York 2015.

6 WILLIAMS, Kieran: Lustration as the securitization of democracy in Czechoslovakia and the Czech

rumbled on and resurfaced in Poland,⁷ in contemporary Czech and Slovak politics it appears to have little resonance. Although what Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš did or did not do in the 1980s has generated some media coverage and activity in the courts, it does not seem to have much political resonance. What matters much more to the electorate in 2021, especially those whose lives and life chances were not directly impacted by communist rule, are other sets of questions swirling around Babiš linked to the (mis-)use of European funds, allegations of corrupt behaviour and the ability of the Czech government to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. If we look at the theme of lustration we see that certain choices made in the initial post-revolutionary period can help defuse an issue, or at least reduce the magnitude of its potential potency. In short, agency and the choices made by political actors matter.

Although some decisions can diminish the political power of the burdens of the past, few would deny that communism bequeathed an inheritance in institutions, attitudes and behaviour. One of the most significant recent attempts to assess the legacies of the communist experience is an excellent book written by Grigore Pop-Eleches and Joshua Tucker, *Communism's Shadow*.⁸ Distinguishing between what they labelled “living through communism” and “living through post-communism”, they argued that the former had a greater impact on the attitude of citizens across Central and Eastern Europe than the latter. Based on some extensive number-crunching they concluded that there is a significant leftist bias in attitudes, but they suggest that this “leftist surplus” across the region was largely limited to those people with low levels of support for democracy. Amongst the pro-democratic post-communist citizens, the post-communist left-wing bias disappears. Nonetheless, they emphasize that left authoritarianism is indeed a communist legacy. They maintain that respondents who had been exposed to the full four decade dose of East European communism were more than twice as likely to express left-authoritarian values as their non-communist counterparts and more than three times more likely than their compatriots who came of age after the fall of communism.

In other words, one of the central arguments of their book is to underscore the generational or cohort effect. This type of cohort effect was also discussed in an insightful article by Lukáš Linek in which he asked, when will the voters of the Czech communist successor party, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), die off?⁹ The article was published back in 2008, but reading the article

Republic. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 2003, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 1–24; APPEL, Hilary: Anti-Communist Justice and Founding the Post-Communist Order: Lustration and Restitution in Central Europe. *East European Politics and Societies*, 2005, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 379–405.

7 SZCZERBIAK, Aleks: *Politicising the Communist Past. The Politics of Truth Revelation in Post-Communist Poland*. Routledge, London 2018; MILLARD, Frances: *Transitional Justice in Poland*. I B Tauris, London – New York 2020.

8 POP-ELECHES, Grigore – TUCKER, Joshua A.: *Communism's Shadow. Historical Legacies and Contemporary Political Attitudes*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 2017.

9 LINEK, Lukáš: Kdy vymřou voliči KSČM? K věkové struktuře elektorátu KSČM (When will the voters

again from the vantage point of 2021 what is striking is that by about this point in time Linek's modelling was suggesting KSČM would be receiving about five, six or seven percent of the vote depending on overall turnout levels which is in line with current polls. Indeed, although popularity for KSČM has fluctuated, we can see the development of the support for the party has, to a greater or lesser extent, followed Linek's predictions. There is a real chance it will not garner enough support in October's elections to cross the threshold.

The conference was focused on the fate of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia from its creation. In terms of party politics, what is striking are the differences between the Czech and Slovak cases after 1989. The former is marked by significant continuity, the latter by significant change. On the Czech side, we witnessed the emergence and endurance of KSČM: its red colour became an evergreen on the map of Czech party politics for the subsequent three decades, its name sending a strong signal of links to the past. In contrast on the Slovak side we saw significant churn. The emergence of the Party of the Democratic left (SDL) as the formal communist successor party – its very name symbolizing a desire to distance from the past – became a major player in Slovak party politics in the 1990s. Not all from the communist-era were happy with the new direction. Hardline communists set up their own parties including the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) whose name indicated continuity and a strong association with the past. KSS was largely a marginal grouping, although it mustered enough support to cross the parliamentary threshold in 2002.

The 2002 elections were a significant moment in the history of the left in Slovakia. Not only did KSS win seats in parliament, but SDL slumped to just 1.36% of the vote. It had experienced a split in the run-up to the election when a reformist faction of leading figures in the party broke away to form the Slovak Democratic Alternative (SDA). But also, more significantly, not long after the 1998 election Robert Fico left SDL to form his own party, Smer (Direction), that would go on to attract a large slice of the vote at subsequent elections and become the dominant party of Slovak politics, even able to form a durable single party government in 2012. The remnants of SDL were fused into Smer in 2004 when Fico's party added the suffix "Social Democracy" to its name. But following defeat in the 2020 election, Smer itself suffered a split with a new party Hlas (Voice) being formed by a former prime minister, Peter Pellegrini, which quickly achieved high levels of support in the polls. Indeed, by the summer of 2021 we could even suggest that the most popular party in Slovakia was the successor of the Communist successor's successor party!

The fate of KSČM, SDL, Smer etc. only makes sense when placed within the wider framework of Czech and Slovak party politics. In terms of Czech party politics what is striking is that it was dominated by four parties for a long period of time:

for KSČM die off? On the age structure of the electorate of KSČM). *Politologický časopis*, 2008, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 318–336.

the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL), the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and KSČM. Indeed from the mid-1990s until 2010 Czech politics could be largely described by reference to these four parties. But this system of the same four parties just reinforces my argument about our reflections and judgements being contingent on “when” we look. If I were writing this text 15 years ago, I would be talking mostly about the stability of Czech party politics. Reflecting on Czech party politics today in 2021 – a few months before elections – we might be keener to refer to the instability, churn and change of party politics. But one constant of party politics has been KSČM. Its support has waxed and waned, but it has been a perennial on the party scene of the Czech Republic. Nonetheless, to underline the kinds of transformation of Czech party politics we have seen – and are continuing to see – in Czech politics, it is striking that the combined support for KSČM and ČSSD is currently running at around 10%. Both parties face an uphill battle to ensure their continued parliamentary representation. Moreover, if we take KSČM and ČSSD and add in the two other perennial parties (both are now part of a broad electoral coalition), the combined force of those four parties amounts to the support of less than a third of Czech voters; a figure which stands in stark contrast to 87% won by those four parties back in 2006.

In contrast to the stability of the Czech system until the earthquake election of 2010, the Slovak party system has been stable in its instability with new parties breaking through into parliament at virtually every election.¹⁰ In fact, the fissions and fusions of the communist-successor left, are part of a wider story of splits, splinters and mergers, of party breakthroughs and death. If we were to transport someone from the early 1990s back to Slovakia today, they would only recognize one party, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), that according to current opinion polls would get into the next parliament. But they may be surprised to know that KDH does not currently have parliamentary representation.

Returning to my theme of drawing judgments at particular points in time, we first reflected on the position in 1989–1990, but let’s fast forward ten years and reflect on the perspective a decade after the fall of communism. Several prominent scholars including Anna Grzymała-Busse¹¹, Mitchell Orenstein¹², and a raft of political scientists in a volume edited by András Bozóki and John Ishiyama¹³ sought to explain the diverging levels of success of communist-successor parties across Central and Eastern Europe linking them to choices and the paths they chose to

10 HAUGHTON, Tim: Exit, Choice and Legacy. Explaining the Patterns of Party Politics in Post-Communist Slovakia. *East European Politics*, 2014, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 210–229.

11 GRZYMAŁA-BUSSE, Anna M.: *Redeeming the Communist Past. The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2002.

12 ORENSTEIN, Mitchell A.: Genealogy of Communist Successor Parties in East-central Europe and the Determinants of Their Success. *East European Politics and Societies*, 1998, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 472–499.

13 BOZÓKI, András – ISHIYAMA, John T. (eds.): *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*. Routledge, London 2002.

follow. Grzymała-Busse and Orenstein focused in on the contrasting fates of these parties in the Visegrád Four.

During that first decade the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) and the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) in Poland were electorally very successful, more than SDL in Slovakia, and much more than KSČM in the Czech Republic. For Grzymała-Busse the contrasting levels of success were linked to whether reformists were at the helm of the parties. What she described as the “portable skills” and “usable pasts” of these reformists were put to good use, helping to build electorally successful modern centre-left parties in the Hungarian and Polish cases. To that, Orenstein added the role played by trade unions as key allies in the transformation of the communist-successor parties in Poland and Hungary. The arguments of Grzymała-Busse and Orenstein help explain the lower levels of electoral success of KSČM. There were battles between different factions within the party in that first decade over the ideological stance of the party, but none advocated a reformist path. It is, therefore, no real surprise the party did not transform itself in same way as their former ideological brethren in Poland and Hungary. The very fact the party kept the word “communist” in its name speaks volumes and underlines the limited distancing of KSČM from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The decisions made by the KSČM leadership had electoral ramifications. Whereas the centre-left vote went to the communist-successor parties in Poland and Hungary, in the Czech Republic that slice of the electorate went to the Social Democrats under the leadership of Miloš Zeman.

The story of the communist-successor left in Slovakia, however, is more complicated. Here the arguments made by Grzymała-Busse and others are less compelling.¹⁴ Like in Poland and Hungary reformists did come to the fore. Indeed, the “Young Turks”, Peter Weiss and Pavol Kanis, were instrumental in moving the party in a social democratic direction and renaming the party, the Party of the Democratic Left. Nonetheless, SDL was not as electorally successful as its sister parties in Poland and Hungary. The reason lies in the second main argument I want to make in this talk: the importance of choices.

The SDL leadership made a series of decisions that had a deleterious impact on the party’s popularity. Firstly, buoyed up by the electoral success of the communist-successor parties in Hungary and Poland, the SDL leadership pushed for early elections in 1994 even though the new government, formed after the fall of the 1992–1994 government led by Vladimír Mečiar, could have continued in power for two years. Moreover, the party chose to run as part of the Common Choice coalition (*Spoločná voľba*) in the elections in the autumn of that year. But a few months of governing only sought to highlight the challenges facing the country and the difficulties for centre-left parties. In those elections, the party not only saw

14 HAUGHTON, Tim: Explaining the Limited Success of the Communist-Successor Left in Slovakia. The Case of the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL). *Party Politics*, 2004, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 177–191.

a significant slice of support grabbed by a breakaway party led by Ján Lupták, but also the return to power of Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS).

Secondly, when SDL returned to government as part of the broad based coalition formed after the 1998 elections, it took a number of portfolios including the finance ministry. Arguably the policies introduced by SDL finance minister Brigita Schmögnerová were necessary to tackle the problems of the Slovak economy and get the country back on track towards EU membership. Many of the tough policies introduced, however, were felt particularly hard by voters whom we would see as part of the usual pool of voters for social democratic parties. The slump in support for SDL in 2002 mentioned above owes much to the policies of the 1998–2002 government, but also the success of KSS and especially the emergence of Smer.

Thirdly, there was also another important strategic error arguably made when the party came into government in 1998 and that was not to give Robert Fico a significant position in the new government. Hindsight makes us all wise. No-one knew in 1998 that Fico would (or could) go on to form a highly successful political party that would become the dominant party of politics in the country for a decade and a half. Nonetheless, he was clearly an ambitious and talented politician who could be a real asset. His departure from SDL and the creation of his new party, Smer, which would go on to win 13.5% in 2002 is a key plank in explaining the failure of SDL to cross the electoral threshold at that election.

The explanation for the limited success of SDL, therefore, lies partly with these choices: strategic errors that harmed the party's chances at the ballot box. But this is not the whole story. Not only would we also need to consider the choices and decisions made by other political actors, particularly Mečiar and his HZDS which helped them achieve electoral success,¹⁵ but to grasp fully the motors of Slovak party politics in the late 1980s and 1990s, we need to understand that politics in this period was not just communist and post-communist, but also federal and post-federal. Indeed, the politics of the 1990s in Slovakia was not just about democratization and (the extent of) marketization, but also about the politics of independence. The debates around the future of the federation in the early 1990s and the break-up of Czechoslovakia at the end of 1992 help explain HZDS's success at the ballot box and much of the patterns of party politics in Slovakia in that first post-communist decade. Moreover, we should not underestimate how significant a step January 1993 was for Slovakia: it was just as important for politics as November 1989. Furthermore, and provocatively, we might want to suggest that whilst many scholars have debated the legacies of communism,¹⁶ perhaps other legacies have played a more significant role. Indeed, when we look at the politics in Slovakia

15 HAUGHTON, Tim: HZDS. The Ideology, Organisation and Support Base of Slovakia's Most Successful Party. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2001, Vol. 53, No. 5, pp. 745–769.

16 For an insightful essay on legacies see WITTENBERG, Jason: Conceptualizing Historical Legacies. *East European Politics and Societies*, 2015, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 366–378.

in the 1990s and early 2000s the position of the Hungarian minority and the stance towards the government in Budapest were salient themes, both of which are intimately linked to pre-1918 patterns of governance and the decisions made at the Treaty of Trianon, before the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had been formed. In short, that mix of the federal experience, coming to terms with the post-federal experience and the politics of independence was a potent brew for Slovak politics and helps explain the limited success of SDL in the 1990s.

So far I have looked at the perspective at the time of the Velvet/Gentle Revolution and a decade after 1989, but if we fast-forward to the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Communist regimes how might our conclusions change? Reflecting on developments over three decades, Anna Grzymała-Busse discussed the paradoxical fate of the communist successor parties. She opined that the very same factors that allowed SLD in Poland and MSzP in Hungary to gain widespread electoral support, win elections and govern in the short-term led to their long-term demise.¹⁷ Both of those failures are crucially linked to the issue of corruption, a theme to which I will return. In contrast KSČM did not experience such electoral highs, but has persisted albeit, as mentioned above, subject to a slowly declining level of support that does not bode well for its long-term survival on the Czech political scene. Part of that endurance lies with the manner in which other parties treated KSČM as a pariah party, excluding it from power. Endurance is sometimes aided by not being in power, away from its temptations and pitfalls. That is not to say KSČM has not at times played an important and active role in politics. Indeed, following the 2017 elections Andrej Babiš's ANO and ČSSD formed a coalition, but required the support of KSČM deputies to achieve the confidence of parliament.

Mention of Babiš reminds us of some legacies of communist times, of individuals with communist pasts. But arguably the more significant point to make relates to the legacies of the early post-communist period. The first few years of the 1990s was a period pregnant with possibility in which politicians and businessmen were able to enrich themselves. Babiš was very successful in that period, laying the foundations for him to become one of the country's richest men. Moreover, his business acumen provided the basis for his pitch to voters when he launched ANO encapsulated well in the 2013 election slogan *We are not like politicians. We work hard* [and by implication get things done].

ANO was not the first new party to achieve success in Czech politics with a cocktail of anti-corruption, competence, celebrity and newness. Indeed, the success of Public Affairs (Věci veřejné) in 2010 owed much to this recipe, albeit with different portions of the ingredients. What is striking is the way in which once Czech voters

17 GRZYMAŁA-BUSSE, Anna M.: Victims of Their Own Success. The Paradoxical Fate of the Communist Successor Parties. In: LOXTON, James – MAINWARING, Scott (eds.): *Life After Dictatorship. Authoritarian Successor Parties Worldwide*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018, pp. 145–174 (especially p. 145).

have cast their ballots for a new party at one election, they seem to develop a taste for newness, voting for newer parties at subsequent elections, in what we can label a new party subsystem. Such a phenomenon is not unique to Czech politics. Indeed, as we chart in our book *The New Party Challenge*, by studying voters flows we find strong evidence of this dynamic in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe such as Slovenia.

The appeal of the new has also been a strong driving force in party politics in Slovakia. If we look at the 2020 election results, it is striking how young the parties are that made it over the electoral threshold.¹⁸ Indeed, most of the parties are a decade old or younger. By the 2020 parliament, the grand old dame of Slovak parliamentary politics is actually Robert Fico's party. The fact that Smer – the successor to the Communist successor party and only two decades ago the new kid on the block – is the oldest party in the Slovak parliament in the summer of 2021 underscores the drive for newness in party politics. The fact that after the election we have witnessed a breakaway from Smer to create a new party Hlas, plus a fission in the neo-fascist Ludová strana naše Slovensko (LSNS) party and the fusion of the previously fractious ethnic Hungarian parties into one new entity, Aliancia (Szövetség – Aliancia), underlines that Slovak party politics seems in no mood to settle down into stable patterns of competition.

Some of the dynamics of party politics can be explained by the traditional left-right socio-economic division of politics around the role that the state plays in the economy. Some of the dynamics can be explained by the values dimension between a liberal, open and progressive view of social questions and a more traditional conservative and national view of politics. Some more of the dynamics can simply be explained by the politics of ego and the decision of individual politicians to take the exit route rather than remaining and trying to change a party from within. But returning to the argument above about a new party subsystem we see how important the clean versus corrupt dimension of politics is for many countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, in addition to left-right and the liberal versus conservative values dimensions of politics we can argue there is a third clean versus corrupt dimension of politics. New parties launch themselves as whiter-than-white, but if they enter into power they all too often demonstrate their less than angelic behaviour. Such parties lose their anti-corruption appeals and need to find other bases for their support. Some succeed, others do not. But what they all do is to create space on the political spectrum for yet another new party to launch itself as the new anti-corruption party.

You may be asking yourselves am I not moving far away from discussing the legacies of communism? Indeed, I am arguing that in many respects the key dynamics

18 HAUGHTON, Tim – RYBÁŘ, Marek – DEEGAN-KRAUSE, Kevin: Corruption, Campaigning, and Novelty. The 2020 Parliamentary Elections and the Evolving Patterns of Party Politics in Slovakia. *East European Politics and Societies* (online early, 2021: doi:10.1177/08883254211012765).

of party politics in both the Czech and Slovak Republics in 2021 have less to do with the legacies of communism and much more to do with newness, governability and with corruption. It is worth reflecting a little more on where we are today and where we might be in the future. Looking back in the summer of 2021 it is 31 and a half years since the communist period came to an end, a length of time not that shorter than the length of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. In a few years' time we will be up to four decades since the fall of the communist regime. Perhaps when the length of post-communism will be the same as the length of communism we will have an appropriate vantage point to assess the legacy of communism, the legacy of post-communism and the legacies of pre-communism, allowing us to consider the permanent and temporary transformations brought about by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the regime it led. For now, we can observe the shadow of communism is still visible today, but it is fading, blurring around the edges, and in places obscured by newer and older shadows.