How to typologize Czech anti-communism
A reflection on three decades of memory conflicts

ONDŘEJ SLAČÁLEK

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts,
Charles University, Prague, The Czech Republic
e-mail: ondrej.slacalek@ff.cuni.cz
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Abstract
The paper is based on an analysis of Czech anti-communism. It starts with a brief definition of anti-communism. Then it presents six possible typologies of anti-communism based on various questions: type of political mission, political background, actual political function, proposed cure, and spatial scope. There then follows a presentation of various phenomena that are framed in an anti-communist way: the Communist Party, Social Democrats, liberals, the young generation, but also the contemporary West with its "progressivist" tendencies. In the two final sections the paper focuses on comparison in the Central European context. It shows that in the Czech context the transfer of German experience was (in)adequate for different reasons than in the Polish and Hungarian cases, namely because of the dynamics connected with the different trajectories of post-communist political subjects.[1]

Key words
anti-communism, memory of communism, politics of memory, Czech politics, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)

1 This study is a result of research funded by the Czech Science Foundation under project GAČR 18-18675S *Culture wars and national trajectories of secularization in Central Europe*.

During the last three decades, the term "anti-communism" has been strongly present in both political and historiographical and social science debates. Often, it has had different meanings. In this text, I will try to discuss various possible elaborations of this term in mutual relations. In other words, I will ask what happens to the term anti-communism if we start to typologize it.

The paper aims to show how anti-communism can be typologized, and which questions can be posed in order to differentiate the various forms of anti-communism which have been present in the Czech debate. I will work with various contributions to the debate on anti-communism as well as with my research into the topic.

In discussions of anti-communism, we face two problems when working with this word. The first of them can be formulated in keeping with Bourdieuan criticism of the term "identity" by sociologists Brubaker and Cooper.[2] They criticise the overlapping of the "categories of practice" and "categories of analysis": when scholars use terms which are at the same time objects of political struggle, they participate in these struggles and their research can be easily weaponized by political actors and/or disfigured by impotence to create a distanced position.[3] To some extent, Brubaker and Cooper are right, and anti-communism, being a term of political polemic and part of a political struggle and labelling, has similar problems to identity. However, this is a general problem of political science: our key topics are, at the same time, key topics of political debate. It does not make sense to try to find different terms for phenomena like war, democracy, the state, and terrorism; it is much more meaningful to try to reflect on their political nature and to include this reflection in our use of the words. We need to defend the relative autonomy of social science, including social scientific terminology, but not the complete separation of social scientific research from public debate.

Another problem is dependence on the image of "communism": the phenomenon of the 1990s–2010s is recognized as a negation of the 1917–1989 past. It is controversial, as anti-communism is a phenomenon of contemporary political struggles, and it is mostly reacting to these dynamics. To understand it as a negation of the "communist past" means to accept anti-communists' self-image and underestimate that their political enemies are mostly contemporary actors, often non-communists, as we will show in the section What is excluded? Framing of various objects of exclusion. In spite of this problem, I think it is better to analyse the self-identification of actors and to start our analysis with it.

This paper does not aim to "cover" the topic of Czech anti-communism.[4] Instead, it aims to present some conceptual hypotheses that help us to think about

2 BRUBAKER, Rogers – COOPER, Frederic: Beyond "Identity". *Theory and Society*, 2000, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 1–47.

3 Ibid., pp. 4–6.

4 See for example NAVRÁTIL, Jiří – HRUBEŠ, Milan: Contesting communism after its fall. Exploring two modes of anti-communist activism in the Czech Republic. *East European Politics*, 2018, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 6–26, doi:10.1080/21599165.2018.1423966.

Czech anti-communism in a more plastic way. First, I will try to briefly define anti--communism. Then I will present six possible typologies of anti-communism based on various questions that are politically the most relevant. After that, I will discuss various versions of anti-communist framing and show how different phenomena can be framed in an anti-communist way, and sometimes with different results. In the two last sections, I will try to use some of the results of my conceptual debate to situate Czech anti-communism in the Central European context. First, I will discuss political scientists Krastev and Holmes's term "German ideology" and I will show that in the Czech context the transfer of German experience was (in)adequate for different reasons than in the Polish and Hungarian cases. I will continue with an analysis of the dynamics connected with the different trajectories of post--communist political subjects. In conclusion, I will briefly summarize the results of the comparison and formulate three key paradoxes of anti-communism.

How to define anti-communism?

For a position to be identified as anti-communist, it is not enough that it refuses some communist premises and ideas or that it criticises communist parties, states, or ideologies. I consider three elements, all of them connected with the intensity of the negation of communism, to be of key importance in defining an anti-communist position. For a position to be considered anti-communist, it needs to fulfil three conditions:

1. Essentialisation of the communist. Anti-communists have typically perceived communism as a single subject, unifying everything from Marx to Pol Pot and from Lenin to any rank-and-file member of a contemporary (post-)communist party. The common denominator of such various subjects is the criminal nature of this essentialized and dehistoricised "eternal communism". To characterize this vision of communism, we may borrow from sociologist and critical criminologist Stanley Cohen his concept of the "composite image" of "folk devils": according to Cohen, during moral panics the evil actor is evoked by a relatively small set of characteristics and attributes, which have both an illustrative and depictive role, as well as a symbolical and explanatory role. This small set composes the stereotype of this folk devil, which serves at the same time as an evocation of it and a reminder and explanation of how bad he is.[5] Thus, to some extent, this evocation creates tautology, but tautology producing an explanation and moral judgment.

2. Exclusion from democratic recognition. This position is implied by the previous step. As a communist is "criminal" and diabolical, it is impossible to accept him in any case; it would be both amoral and dangerous, considering the crimes of this

5 COHEN, Stanley: *Folk devils and moral panics.* Routledge, New York 2011.

entity. This exclusion needs a particular intensity: it becomes one of the key factors when judging the legitimacy of actors and political regimes.

3. Importance for identity of actor. To constitute an anti-communist position, these two steps need to be important for the actors, to influence their political choices, inspire them to engagement and to create political commitments.

These definitional characteristics have ambivalent implications, especially for positions close to the status quo. From some point of view, a liberal democratic regime is superior to communism by definition, and any of its problems may be marginalized by pointing to the crimes of communism. However, this position of superiority can also bring some problematic issues: the legitimacy of a liberal democratic regime may be put in doubt at moments when it does not have an adequate (adequately excluding and repressive) position towards real or supposed remnants of "communism".

Also, the object of resolute exclusion is essentialized communism, evoked in the above-mentioned "composite image" of the communist. However, the "political" enemy of anti-communists cannot be the communist past (as the past has already passed), but its supposed or real remnants (post-communist political parties, some institutions, laws and so on) of this past, and/or actors who may be connected with communist evil or who adopt an inadequate position towards it.

Various approaches towards Czech anti-communism

There are various possibilities for typologizing Czech anti-communism. We will now present them schematically:

1. Based on the type of political mission. A possible division can by derived from the analysis of historian Petr Roubal, who declared the market liberalism of the small conservative party Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA) to be the *"anti-communism of the future"*: according to Roubal, they promoted the liberal market order (as well as some conservative political institutions like the senate) as a negation of the communist past.[6] We could use this analysis not only for the relatively small ODA, but also for the neoliberal nationalist hegemonic right-wing Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS): this party, too, focused on the future and the negation of the communist past by the design of economic and political institutions. This "anti-communism of the future" implies the existence of an **anti-communism of the past** (or in fact it is based on the idea that this "anti-communism of the past" is a self-evident basic form of anti-communism) – of moral activism focused on rehabilitation of

6 ROUBAL, Petr: Anti-Communism of the Future. Czech Post-Dissident Neoconservaties in Post--Communist Transformation. In: KOPEČEK, Michal – WCIŚLIK, Piotr (eds.): *Thinking Through Transition. Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989*. CEU Press, Budapest 2015, pp. 171–200.

past problems and grievances. While anti-communism of the future aims to build alternative system, anti-communism of the past focuses on the healing of an experienced or supposed trauma.

2. Based on the graduation of criticism of social change. Here, we can differentiate between the **anti-communism of denied justice** (criticism based on the idea that legal continuity with communist dictatorship prevented a complete reckoning with the past and justice both for particular victims of the regime and the society as a whole), the **anti-communism of denied revolution** (the idea that this legal continuity prevented the realisation of real fundamental changes, left significant power in the hands of former communists and their networks, allowing them to openly or secretly exert this power), and the **anti-communism of denied violence** (explicitly formulated mostly by marginal actors like emigrant publicist Rostislav Hedvíček; this is the idea that only harsh punishments, including capital punishment or mob violence, could make amends for communist rule).

3. Based on political background. We may schematically differentiate four basic forms of anti-communism: **liberal**, **left-wing**, **conservative** anti-communism, and **far right** anti-communism. Here, I will briefly review the main tendencies. Liberal anti-communism may be seen as negation of communism in neutral institutions, be they economic or political institutions. Communism in this context is understood as an extreme case of value-oriented politics. In the case of left-wing anti-communism, we may see the distance from communism as a re-legitimisation of the left-wing position, suspicious from participation in or similarity to totalitarian dictatorship. With conservative anti-communism, we can identify a quest for values that may be an alternative to communism. Communism in this context is a politics that forgot about correct values. Anti-communism of the far right sees communism as a confirmation of their position and diagnosis: the nation has to be defended against "international socialism" and adherents to various versions of previous far right politics (depending on their position) are re-legitimized as anti-communist warriors.

4. Based on actual political function. Here, we can differentiate three basic types: **anti-communism of the defence of the status quo** (which is defended for being, in spite of its troubles, incomparably better than the criminal communist regime), **anti-communism of selective criticism** (anti-communism focuses on criticism of contemporary problems but in the form of selective analogy and framing, without overall criticism of the current regime) and **anti-communism of the criticism of the transformation** (where the whole transformation is described as spoiled by its intractable links to the previous regime and by some forms of continuity). All three forms of anti-communism, in fact, are based on the idea of the superiority of the non-communist (mostly, but not exclusively, democratic) order over the communist order. The differences between them lie in their focus as well as the fact that the last type of anti-communism considers the transformative regime to in

fact merely conceal the rule of communists by other means. Thus, anti-communist revolutions are considered unfinished.[7]

5. Based on the proposed cure. Here, we can differentiate between the **anti--communism of justice and punishment, anti-communism of prevention, and anti-communism of re-education**. The first type focuses on punishment of communist crimes with various forms of justice ranging from the criminal prosecution of communists to targeting their privileges (for example pensions). Its declared utopia is "Nuremberg trials for the crimes of communism".[8] The anti-communism of prevention partially overlaps with the anti-communism of justice and punishment, and mobilizes for a preventive ban on contemporary (post)communist actors, both for symbolical and practical reasons: without this ban, there can be no full reckoning with communism, but also the enemy may become stronger and once again threaten democracy. The last type of anti-communism focuses above all on the spread and promotion of democratic values (in the anti-communist interpretation), which are meant to prevent the return of communist evil in any form.

6. Based on spatial scope. Here we can differentiate between the **national, regional** and **global** focuses of anti-communism. The national focus is concerned with the struggle with domestic actors and thinking about the communist menace in terms of the nation-state. The regional can intervene in the framework of the region, and in this version anti-communism is also used to formulate a specific advantage, or some form of moral comparative advantage of the region compared to Western Europe or the US and/or other parts of the world without this experience. In this context, anti-communism was meant to be exported and motivated to international solidarity even with a distant context – not only with anti-communists in post-Soviet republics, but also with some Latin American countries considered to be challenged by the same enemy.

All the presented typologies are logical instruments. Their purpose is to differentiate the most important tendencies from the point of view of the question posed. Of course, in reality these differentiated aspects mostly overlap.

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7 ZNOJ, Milan: *Marečkův případ aneb vzestup a pád antikomunistické pravice* (Mareček's case or the rise and fall of the anti-communist right). Marek Konečný, Brno 2005; SUK, Jiří: Politické hry s „nedokončenou revolucí". Účtování s komunismem v čase Občanského fóra a po jeho rozpadu (Political games with the "unfinished revolution". Reckoning with communism at the time of the Civic Forum and after its collapse). In: GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – KOPEČEK, Michael – ROUBAL, Petr – SUK, Jiří – ZAHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš: *Rozděleni minulostí. Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989* (Divided by the past. The Making of Political Identities in the Czech Republic after 1989). Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, Praha 2012, pp. 17–60; MARK, James: *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe*. Yale University Press, London – New Haven 2010.

8 BEHR, Valentin – BLAIVE, Muriel – CONSTANTIN, Anenoma – NEUMAYER, Laure – ZOMBORY, Maté: An anti-Communist Consensus. The Black Book of Communism in Pan-European Perspective. *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, 2020, Vol. 51, No. 2–3, pp. 55–88.

What is excluded? Framing of various objects of exclusion

The primary object of exclusion for Czech anti-communists is the post-communist political party, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM). The party is attacked for its declared continuity with the party-state of the communist regime, its unwillingness to transform itself symbolized by its having kept the word "Communist" in its name. It is this name above all that symbolizes moral scandal for anti-communists and attracts repressive attention from various anti-communist actors. Especially after 2003, when the communists helped to elect the leader of ODS Václav Klaus president of the country, various petitions, articles, books and statements expressed indignation above all at the level of legitimacy (we could say "spatial position") of the Czech communists. While according to the Czech anti-communists the communists should be in exactly the same position as (neo-)Nazis, they in fact became influential players in Czech politics, which made the moral scandal even worse.

The character of the Czech communist party, unique in the context of post-communist Central Europe,[9] attracted a lot of attention from Czech anti-communists. But it was not the only party to attract attention, and according to some observers not even the most important. Anti-communism worked very well when transferred to other actors. Czech political analyst Václav Žák has shown how Václav Klaus's ODS used the anti-communist card in the 1992 election against its centrist liberal opponents in the Civic Movement (Občanské hnutí, OH).[10] While the latter party enjoyed considerable moral/political capital from the dissident activity of its members, ODS used a discourse homogenizing "communism" in order to delegitimize it, using the memory of the political prisoners of the 1950s to delegitimize the political capital of dissidents during Normalisation in the 1970s and 1980s (sometimes communists before 1968).[11]

9 PEROTTINO, Michel – POLÁŠEK, Martin: KSČM v perspektivě stranickoorganizační (The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in a party-organisational perspective). In: POLÁŠEK, Martin – NOVOTNÝ, Vilém – PEROTINO, Michel et al.: *Mezi masovou a kartelovou stranou. Možnosti teorie při výkladu vývoje ČSSD a KSČM v letech 2000–2010* (Between a mass party and a cartel party. The possibilities of theory in interpreting the development of the ČSSD and the KSČM in the years 2000–2010). Sociologické nakladatelství, Praha 2012, pp. 110–128; KUNŠTÁT, Daniel: *Za rudou oponou. Komunisté a jejich voliči po roce 1989* (Behind the red curtain. Communists and their voters after 1989). Sociologické nakladatelství, Praha 2013; HANDL, Vladimir – GOFFIN, Andreas: Czech Communists and the Crisis. Between Radical Alternative and Pragmatic Europeanisation. In: MARCH, Luke – KEITH, Daniel (eds.): *Europe's Radical Left. From Marginality to the Mainstream*. Rowman and Littlefield, London 2016, pp. 211–229.

10 ŽÁK, Václav: *Rizika mobilizační politiky* (Risks of mobilisation policy). Český spisovatel, Praha 1997.

11 HADJIISKY, Magdalena: Vznik Občanské demokratické strany. Pokus o sociologickou analýzu (Establishment of the Civic Democratic Party. An attempt at sociological analysis). In: GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – KOPEČEK, Michal (eds.): *Kapitoly z dějin české demokracie po roce 1989* (Chapters from the history of Czech democracy after 1989). Paseka, Praha – Litomyšl 2008, pp. 70–90. See also MAYER, Françoise: *Češi a jejich komunismus. Paměť a politická identita* (The Czechs and their Communism. Memory and Political Identity). Argo, Praha 2009; SOMMER, Vítězslav: Cesta ze slepé uličky „třetího odboje". Koncepty rezistence a studium socialistické diktatury v Československu (The way out of the

According to political scientists Radek Buben, Jiří Koubek and Martin Polášek, from the mid-1990s, the main object of anti-communist exclusion were the social democrats.[12] The mobilisation against the party was motivated both ideologically (the social democrats were considered to be a left-wing menace similar to the communists), as well as by their position on the political spectrum (the social democrats were considered to be the communists' possible ally). The strategic goal of this framing was twofold: to make the social democrats weaker, but also to make impossible a joint left-wing government of social democrats and communists. The history of cooperation between social democrats and communists (especially in 1945–1948) was remembered with a clear message: this cooperation leads us outside democracy.[13] Sometimes, the unity of left-wing actors was underlined. For example, the slogan "KSČSSD" (used by the right-wing ODS in the 2006 election campaign) connected the name of the party-state before 1989 (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ) with the name of the social democratic party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD).

But the target of anti-communism was not in any case limited by ideology. When the founder of the right-wing party ODS, Václav Klaus, was elected president of the country in 2003, with the support of the Communist MPs, it led to some anti-communist mobilisation, as we have already mentioned. In this case, the refusal of communism was framed as a moral issue above all, and Klaus was attacked as an unacceptable political pragmatist who was willing to bargain away the moral basis of the democratic society and state. A petition entitled *S komunisty se nemluví* (One Does Not Speak to Communists) presented communists as the negation of democratic politics. As such, any compromise with them meant being compromised entirely – they deserve complete exclusion. The name of the petition can be read in two ways: 1) any political bargaining with communists is illegitimate, and 2) communist evil should be radically excluded on the level of any human contact.[14]

dead end of the "Third Resistance". Concepts of Resistance and the Study of Socialist Dictatorship in Czechoslovakia). *Soudobé dějiny*, 2012, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 9–36; GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla: Poněkud tradiční rozchod s minulostí. Občanská demokratická strana (A Somewhat Traditional Break with the Past. The Civic Democratic Party). In: GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – KOPEČEK, Michael – ROUBAL, Petr – SUK, Jiří – ZAHRADNÍČEK, Tomáš: *Rozděleni minulostí. Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989.* Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, Praha 2012, pp. 107–134, KOPEČEK, Michael: Disent jako minulost, liberalismus jako projekt. Občanské hnutí – Svobodní demokraté v české polistopadové politice (Dissent as a past, liberalism as a project. Civic Movement – Free Democrats in Czech Post-Soviet Politics). In: Ibid., pp. 61–106.

12 KOUBEK, Jiří – BUBEN, Radek – POLÁŠEK, Martin: ČSSD a KSČM v perspektivě stranickosystémové (ČSSD and KSČM in the perspective of the party system). In: POLÁŠEK, Martin – NOVOTNÝ, Vilém – PEROTINO, Michel et al.: *Mezi masovou a kartelovou stranou. Možnosti teorie při výkladu vývoje ČSSD a KSČM v letech 2000–2010*, pp. 52–69.

13 BALÍK, Stanislav – FAJMON, Hynek – HLOUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina*: Dusivé objetí. Historické a politologické pohledy na spolupráci sociálních demokratů a komunistů* (A smothering hug. Historical and political science perspectives on the cooperation between social democrats and communists). Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, Brno 2008.

14 S komunisty se nemluví. *Sds.cz*, 9. 6. 2003 – see http://www.sds.cz/docs/prectete/e_kolekt/s_k_s_n.

Another case of anti-communist framing is Andrej Babiš in the 2010s. A Czech oligarch, indeed the second-richest Czech, he founded an anti-corruption populist movement Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (Akce nespokojených občanů, mostly known only under acronym ANO, which means Yes) and started to attract electoral support in 2013 and especially 2017, when he won the election with a programme of managerial competence and "running the state as a business" pragmatism. While he was criticised by other political parties as well as by the strong civic movement as a menace to democracy for his concentration of political, media and economic power, he was also seen as a "communist": because of his membership of the Communist Party before 1989 as well as his collaboration with the communist secret police. While criticism of his position as a wealthy entrepreneur is complicated for right-wing liberals, it is exactly his communist past that is able to delegitimize him both as politician and as entrepreneur, throwing a dark shadow on his entrepreneurial success.

Sometimes, anti-communist framing is connected with deeper divisions in society. The very ambivalent view of the older generation was produced by various anti-communist discourses. Very often, the younger generation was seen as unspoiled by communism, its role being to finish off the remnants of communism. The older generation is sometimes seen as a generation connected with the historical guilt of participation in the regime, something that even influences contemporary positions. In the hotly discussed 2010 election video by director Petr Zelenka and actors Martha Issová and Jiří Mádl *Přemluv bábu* (Persuade Granny), "the Left" (both "socialists" and "communists") was connected with the older generation, living mostly in the countryside. The video used various, often hyperbolic, arguments to proclaim the inferiority of the Left ("everywhere in the world, the right hand is used for greeting or to pick up food, but people everywhere use their left hand to wipe their ass").[15] This inferiority, connected with undertones of conflict between solidarity and quality, was connected with the older generation – but without hyperbole. Even its willingness to vote for the left is caused not only by lack of political judgement, but also by "selective memory", and thus it becomes an intellectual defect. Even the vulgarity of the video has a political meaning and can be read as not only hyperbole: by interrupting meaningful communication with insults, it puts communists in the appropriate place and answers the call *S komunisty se nemluví*. (Similarly, we can interpret the popular stand-up video by actor Tomáš

htm (quoted version dated 30. 11. 2021).

15 Cf. Kateřina Kirkosová who considers the clip a failure of political communication, originating in the authors' failure to understand that fiction and politics have different rules, and that hyperboles present in popular culture do not work in the context of political speech, which needs clear and serious positions. While I sympathise with this thesis, I think also that behind the hyperboles we can identify serious basic stereotypes about politics and generations which cannot be "de-hyperbolised". KIRKOSOVÁ, Kateřina: Přemluv bábu, pobav sebe. Postmoderní estetika v občanském politickém diskurzu (Persuade Granny, amuse yourself. Postmodern aesthetics in civil political discourse). *Filosofie dnes*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 175–207.

Matonoha *Otevřený dopis KSČM*/An open Letter to the KSČM/, which is composed almost exclusively of vulgarities.)[16]

However, the role of the older generation can change. In another version of anti-communist framing, the older generation (or its braver part) is recognized as the bearer of the key medium of resistance to the communist past: memory. This is the idea behind the initiative Paměť národa (Memory of Nation) which collects and publishes interviews with witnesses of the communist regime.[17] During the promotion of these interviews as a key component of the anti-communist project, the hierarchy between generations is inverted: the older generation has key knowledge and the younger generation has to record it, reproduce it and follow it. Anti-communist framing may also have a more general focus. It can find its challenge in a feeling of the ignorance of society, of apolitical forgetting or ignorance of the communist past. But it is not limited to the post-communist countries. Since the beginning of the 1990s, this framing has been used to critically describe some aspects of Western societies at the time of overall acceptance of the West and re-integration with it. From the early 1990s, right-wing public intellectuals, journalists and politicians framed, in particular, "political correctness", feminism and environmentalism as phenomena somehow close to "communism". "Political correctness" was understood through the prism of George Orwell newspeak as once again limiting freedom of speech. Feminism was understood as a new collectivist ideology dividing people according to one innate characteristic into groups of oppressed and oppressors and postulating a conflict between them. Environmentalism (sometimes described as "ecoterrorism" or "green extremism") was reconstructed as a new movement challenging Western civilisation with a radical alternative.

This negation developed continually, with these images being perceived mostly as details sullying the otherwise mostly accepted West. After the financial crisis of 2008, the euro crisis of 2010 and the refugee crisis of 2015, the image of the West changed. It started to be seen as being ruled by "new leftist ideologies", "progressivists" and so on. For an important part of the Czech right, "Communism" now comes from the West. While at the beginning, the experience of communism was recognized as something damaging, crippling, requiring rehabilitation (which mostly meant transformation to "normal", "healthy" Western societies),[18] now, it is understood as a source of immunity to the naive Western approach, which does not have the experience of collectivism.[19]

16 MATONOHA, Tomáš – SEDLÁČEK, Lukáš: Otevřený dopis KSČM. *HBO, Na stojáka*, 28. 7. 2010 – see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SObrK0DIuhU (quoted version dated 30. 11. 2021).

17 Memory of Nation – see https://www.memoryofnations.eu/en (quoted version dated 30. 11. 2021).

18 KOLÁŘOVÁ, Kateřina: The Inarticulate Post-Socialist Crip. On the Cruel Optimism of Neoliberal Transformations in the Czech Republic. *Cripistemologies. The Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, 2014, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 257–274; doi:10.3828/jlcds.2014. 22.

19 POLÁK, Michal: Komunismus nás paradoxně ochránil před genderismem a feminismem, prohlásil Klaus (Paradoxically, communism protected us from genderism and feminism, Klaus said). *Aktuálně.cz*, 11. 9. 2019 – see https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/komunismus-nas-paradoxne-

This use of anti-communist framing is not exclusive to anti-communists as they were defined in the previous section. It applies even more to another group of framed phenomena: various characteristics of political, public or media culture which become the object of criticism for their supposed similarity to various aspects of the communist regime. They could be personalized attacks accenting a person's history (screening – "kádrování", exclusion, ideological fundamentalism). Here, refusing practices connected with communism became to some extent an empty signifier, usable by and used by many actors, even including communists. Various versions of this trope are open and attractive also to those criticizing and satirizing anti-communism.

"German ideology" and "memory of nation". Central European comparison I

For a majority of anti-communist discourses, a key reference point and complicated inspiration is the German memory of national socialism. It fits the framework described by Stephen Holmes and Ivan Krastev, who labelled the function of Germany as a "role-model" for CEE states ironically "German ideology".[20] While the experience of southern Europe with authoritarian right-wing dictatorships is mostly omitted,[21] the German story of de-Nazification (and to some extent, also coming to terms with the communist past of the former DDR) becomes a pattern used to inspire, compare and judge Central European and also Czech work with the memory of communism. In fact, the German experience was simplified and idealised in most discourses so as to be understood as a case of successful "coming to terms with the totalitarian past", omitting the fact that Western Germany in fact tolerated a very partial de-Nazification of society.

While the German approach was considered a role model and inspiration, in fact, there were two barriers which prevented CEE countries from gaining a deeper understanding of the German approach and especially from complete identification. The first reason is the fact that, especially after *Historikerstreit*, the symmetrisation of communism and Nazism (as the key aspect of CEE anti-communist discourse) became a problem from the point of view of the singularity of the holocaust as one of the key presuppositions of the German politics of memory (in fact the key presupposition).[22] While the symmetrisation of Nazism and communism in the

-ochranil-pred-genderismem-a-feminis/r~550cc428d48811e982ef0cc47ab5f122/ (quoted version dated 30. 11. 2021).

20 KRASTEV, Ivan – HOLMES, Stephen: *The Light that Failed. A Reckoning*. Penguin, London 2019.

21 With a few exceptions like philosopher Václav Bělohradský or political scientists Jiří Kunc and Radek Buben. See for example KUNC, Jiří: *Stranické systémy v rekonstrukci. Belgie, Itálie, Španělsko, Československo, Česká republika* (Party systems under reconstruction. Belgium, Italy, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic). Sociologické nakladatelství, Praha 2000.

22 ZOMBORY, Maté: The anti-Communist moment. Competitive victimhood in European politics. *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, 2020, Vol. 51, No. 2–3, pp. 21–54; BARŠA, Pavel: *Paměť a genocida*

German context worked as a belittling of Nazi crimes, the criticism of symmetry in the Central European context could be read as a belittling and marginalisation of communist crimes.[23]

The second reason for the difference between the post-Nazi German experience and post-communist CEE experience was analysed by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes. It consists in the legitimacy of nationalism. According to them, the selective transfer of German norms and results of specific German coming to terms with Nazism became the "gold standard" of transformation (the unattainability of this standard by the CEE countries is, according to them, the source of the frustration). But, while the Nazi past to a large extent delegitimizes German nationalism and its lesson leads to a vision of liberal post-nationalism, this definitely does not apply to many post-communist countries and their relationship towards nationalism. In the case of Poland and Hungary, the communist past (as well as earlier Nazi occupation, especially in the Polish case) could be easily viewed as a story of violent foreign usurpation, which re-legitimizes rather than delegitimizes nationalist stances.[24]

This is exactly why the "memory of the nation" became an important concept for "coming to terms with communist past" and why this claim became part of the name of institutes which were meant to deal with the communist past. The position of the nation was identified in this metaphor with that of collective victim of ideological usurpation and violence, and its memory of it had to be preserved and to serve as a lesson.[25]

It is symptomatic that this ideology did not work very well in the Czech context, and part of the compromise behind the creation of the Czech Institute of the Memory of the Nation (Ústav paměti národa) was indeed that its name should be changed to make it more "scientific" and to exclude the national component: it was instead called the Institute for Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, ÚSTR). While this change of name reflected the relatively naive idea that the "truth" of memory and the "truth" of historiography is the same "truth", it also illustrated an important Czech difference from Polish and Hungarian memory.[26]

This difference lies in the relatively successful fusion of Czech nationalism and communism in the 1940s. The success of the fusion led to the domestic legitimacy

(Memory and Genocide). Argo, Praha 2011.

23 TODOROV, Tzvetan: *The Abuses of Memory.* In: MARCHITELLO, Howard: What Happens to History. The Renewal of Ethics in Contemporary Thought. Routledge, New York – London 2001, pp. 11–22.

24 KRASTEV, Ivan – HOLMES, Stephen: *The Light that Failed*.

25 MARK, James: *The Unfinished Revolution*.

26 SLAČÁLEK, Ondřej: Léčba nemoci a splácení dluhu. KSČM a ÚSTR v diskurzu českého antikomunismu (Treatment of illness and repayment of debt. KSČM and ÚSTR in the discourse of Czech anti-communism). *Forum Historiae*, 2013, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 106–137 – see http://forumhistoriae.sk/documents/10180/191412/slacalek.pdf (quoted version dated 30. 11. 2021), cf. HOLY, Ladislav: *The Little Czech Nation and the Great Czech Nation*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996.

of the Communist Party, manifested in its electoral victory in 1946. This legitimacy was lost through the harsh Stalinism of the 1950s and the Soviet occupation in 1968 (and its acceptance in the subsequent "normalisation" programme of the Communist Party).[27] Thus, Czech nationalism was to some extent delegitimised by its fusion with communism, and some forms of anti-communism were connected with criticism of Czech nationalism (and sometimes even with Austro-Hungarian nostalgia).[28]

However, there is also another meaning of "German ideology" in this context. The simplified version of Germany's coming to terms with Nazism (in the form of the myth that "de-Nazification" was very successful, despite the important role of former Nazis in post-war Germany) became the inspiration for the proper reaction of a post-communist society: nothing less than "decommunisation" could be an adequate answer to the totalitarian twin of Nazism. As we have seen, the paradox of German ideology is present in the very fact that it is unfollowable in this way. If the key presupposition of German ideology is the uniqueness and singularity of Nazism, it implies that communism cannot be equalized with it and thus also that it is problematic to transfer its solution to another problem.

Visegrád difference? Central European comparison II

This leads us from a comparison of Germany and CEE countries to a comparison of various Central European countries themselves. While in Poland and Hungary (as well as in Slovakia) state socialist parties transformed into reformed social democratic parties which became an important part of transformation politics, the Communist party of Bohemia and Moravia declared its continuity with the past, which led to its exclusion from the political mainstream. While Polish and Hungarian socialists participated in transformation reforms, Czech communists became important and principal opponents of transformation.[29]

This difference from the beginning of the 1990s turned into another difference in the 2000s. In Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic there were anti-communist mobilisations, but with a different tendency, depending partly on the position of the former communists. In Poland and Hungary, anti-communism became an important component of the rise of national conservative forces, which gained considerable legitimacy by merging criticism of transformation, conservative values, anti-communism and nationalism. They could criticise transformation using anti-communist rhetoric and present it as a defect because of the participation of

27 KOPEČEK, Michal: Czech Communist Intellectuals and the "National Road to Socialism". Zdeněk Nejedlý and Karel Kosík, 1945–1968. In: TISMANEANU, Vladimir – IACOB, Bogdan C. (eds.): *Ideological Storms. Intellectuals, Dictators and the Totalitarian Temptation*. CEU Press, Budapest 2019, pp. 345–389.

28 SLAČÁLEK, Ondřej: The Paradoxical Czech Memory of the Habsburg Monarchy. Satisfied Helots or Crippled Citizens? *Slavic Review*, 2019, Vol. 78, No. 4, pp. 912–920.

29 PEROTTINO, Michel – POLÁŠEK, Martin: *KSČM v perspektivě stranickoorganizační*; KUNŠTÁT, Daniel: *Za rudou oponou*.

former communists. They also received some legitimacy by accenting the "memory of the nation", suppressed by Nazis and communists (and then both by domestic post-communists and by some spoiled parts of the West).[30]

In the Czech context, the post-communists played a different role, and the same applies to anti-communists. It was the Communist Party that merged nationalism, plus some conservative values, with protests against transformation. Thus, it played part of the role which was played by the conservative nationalist anti-communists in Poland and Hungary. While the anti-communists were sometimes openly critical of transformation, this criticism was mostly limited to the fact that the protagonists of the transformation process were not brave enough to ban the Communist Party.[31] Mostly, it was meant to defend liberal democracy against the Communist Party. Schematically, we can say that in the Czech Republic in the 1990s an "anti--communism of the future" prevailed, while in subsequent decades it was replaced by an "anti-communism of defence of the status quo".

However, while this applies to the main part of Czech anti-communism, a strong anti-communist component can also be identified in Czech Euroscepticism, which is right-wing, neoliberal and mostly conservative. This approach is closer to the Polish and Hungarian national conservative anti-communism, but until now it has not been as important in the Czech context. One of the reasons is that in the person of Václav Klaus, Czech Eurosceptic nationalist conservativism sometimes allied with the Czech nationalist communists, and while Klaus exploited anti-communism in the 1990s especially, he also criticised it, especially later on. Another reason is that this form of Euroscepticism did not create a viable and relevant political party.

Conclusion: Paradoxes of anti-communism

There are many ways of possible conceptualizing and typologizing anti-communism. It has been strongly present in the past three decades in the Czech political system, but it was not one single entity and this typologization can help us to understand the differences.

Anti-communism played an important role in Czech politics after 1989, but this role changed over time. It was an important component in the promotion of the neoliberal programme in the 1990s, and thus we can speak about an "anti--Communism of the future". While an anti-communist component was also present in the 2000s (when anti-communism contributed to the delegitimisation of the Left and helped to block the creation of a left-wing government), it did not work very efficiently and the core of the argumentation had to move towards the practical

30 Cf. MARK, James: *The Unfinished Revolution.*

31 DRDA, Adam – DUDEK, Petr: *Kdo ve stínu čeká na moc. Čeští komunisté po listopadu 1989* (Who waits in the shadows for power. Czech communists after November 1989). Paseka, Praha – Litomyšl 2006, pp. 90, 94.

politics of the day. The "future" in the "anti-communism of the future", had to prevail over "anti-communism". A visible example of the problems of anti-communist discourse is Andrej Babiš, who is on the one hand a successful businessman (the ideal hero of the neoliberal market concept of politics and "anti-communism of the future") and on the other hand a former communist and collaborator with the secret services in the 1980s. Using anti-communist discourse sidelines criticism of Babiš for being a successful oligarch in the new regime.

The trajectory of the Czech post-communist Communist Party provided an attractive goal for anti-communist frustration. While some forms of anti-communism channelled frustrations with the new regime and transformation, the form of anti--communism that mostly prevailed was one which defended the status quo against all challenges, be they "communist", or "populist". This version of anti-communism could not provide a good source for conservative nationalist criticism of transformation, as it did in Poland and Hungary. Three other factors also contributed to this development: 1) the conservative nationalist Václav Klaus was the main architect of the transformation in the 1990s; he played the anti-communist card and at the same time he was also very opportunist in relation towards the Communist Party in the 2000s. 2) both Klaus and the communists shared Czech nationalism, which in its prevalent form was not attractive for liberal or even conservative (for example Habsburg- nostalgic) anti-communists. 3) communists were attractive for many losers of the transformation with conservative values (while in Poland and Hungary ex-communists were compromised because they helped promote the policies of the transformation).

While the weak results of anti-communist mobilisations, together with the success of Babiš, led to deep frustration on the part of anti-communists, different topics were more important in the 2010s: the quality of democracy, the power of oligarchs, the refugee crisis, and the relationship to the EU. Anti-communism, much more than being a political identity, worked as a framing accessible to a large number of political actors. The most important use of these frameworks is now paradoxically in Eurosceptic criticism of the West: now, the West is recognized as both declining (losing its power) and transforming into a new left collectivist world (losing its political identity).

To some extent, the political weakness of anti-communism can be attributed to some of its paradoxical moments. At the end of this conclusion, we may formulate them in the form of a questions:

Denial or continuation of the past? Anti-communism has to be a clear break with totalitarian dictatorship. But paradoxically, given that the basis of its identity is negation of the past, it gives the past key relevance. To make it even more complicated, anti-communism is based on a relationship to the past, but it is moral criticism of the present. It influences mostly present actors and it moves debate on contemporary issues towards evaluation of present phenomena through the prism of the past.

Negation or continuation of un-democratic political culture? Anti-communism presents itself as a principled refusal of un-democratic political culture and a precondition for the building of a democratic political culture. However, as suggested by some authors whom I have discussed, anti-communism also contained some problematic elements from the point of view of democratic political culture. Václav Žák speaks about "mobilisation politics" which contaminates politics with qualities connected with inimical conflict and the logic of total victory or total defeat.[32] Radek Buben, Martin Koubek and Martin Polášek describe exclusion as an important principle of anti-communist politics, and we have seen how the object of anti-communist exclusion does not have to be limited to communists.[33]

Does anti-communism necessarily have a conservative tendency? We have tried to differentiate various versions of anti-communism, liberal, left-wing, conservative, and far right. Sometimes, anti-communism is considered to be necessary part of liberalism. In the end, however, we have to ask whether anti-communism does not have a clear tendency towards conservativism, and/or to criticism of liberalism. As anti-communism has to contain at least some element of values and moralisation of politics, this makes anti-communism alien to liberalism (especially if we understand the latter as a concept of politics free of moralisation) and makes it at least close to conservative stances. Both this moralisation and the element of exclusion connected with a tendency towards repression leads to at the very least a tension between anti-communism and liberalism.

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