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CHANGES IN MUTUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CZECH SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS AFTER 2000 AND STRENGTHENING OF ANTI-COMMUNISM IN CZECH SOCIETY AND POLITICS¹

Ladislav Cabada*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyse the development of anti-communist political attitudes and stances of Czech politics and society after 1989, particularly after the year 2000 in the connection with the changes in mutual relations between the two leading parties of Czech political left – the Social Democrats and Communist Party. In the first years of the first decade of the 21st Century, we can observe a number of stimuli, which, in our opinion, led to the revision and, at the same time, to the strengthening of anti-communism in the Czech Republic. The new form of anti-communism seems to be less forgiving than that of the 1990s, and it points to the essential importance of decommunisation for the development of a stable democracy. In the Czech Republic, two relevant left-wing political parties – the Czech Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia – can be seen as the main actors whose internal development and mutual relations can be understood as key for the understanding of the revitalisation of anti-communism in the country. In this text, we analyse the key programme and personal aspects connected with the anti-communism of the Czech Social Democratic Party and with the intraparty debates about its weakening or disappearance. We also present a more general context of the discussion about the stability and quality of democracy in connection with decommunisation processes and anti-communist attitudes.

Key words: Communism, Anti-communism, Decommunisation, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, the Czech Social Democratic Party, cordon sanitaire

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Introduction

The issue of coping with a communist past is one of the most crucial cultural-political topics we can come across, even more than two decades after the breakdown of the pro-Soviet regimes in East Central Europe. Activities connected with the so-called decommunisation constituted (and, in many cases, still constitute) an essential component of the conception of a new, democratic, political system in post-communist countries. However, decommunisation activities take different forms in particular countries – their trajectories, pace, emphasis concerning the fragmentary topics, as well as intensity vary. Nevertheless, these activities are always interconnected with an ideological and political attitude or programme, which can be labelled as anti-communism. However, as time goes by, anti-communism takes various forms, different intensity, and focuses on different fragmentary objectives.

The aim of our article is to analyse the remarkable periods, actors, and topics connected with anti-communism and its political programme in the Czech Republic, especially in relation to the strengthening of the anti-communist rhetoric and anti-communist activities after the year 2000. It is the strengthening of anti-communism, in particular, which leads us to look for the (dis)continuity in the development of this phenomenon after the year 1989 in Czech society and politics. In other words, we cast about for the causation of the different intensity of anti-communism in the Czech Republic in the first two decades of the country's democratic development. In connection with those research questions, we also want to analyse the decommunisation activities of a political nature after the year 1989, as well as their impact on the society and politics. Finally, in our analysis we focus on the modifications in intraparty politics within the two relevant left-wing parties in Czech party politics and changes in mutual relations between these parties. Logically, as regards the issues of decommunisation and anti-communism, our analysis has to be concentrated mainly at the case of Social Democrats and changes in their stances.

In our analysis, we start from the elementary prerequisite that the positive examples of the transition within the scope of the so-called third wave of democratic transitions, among other things, proved that the 'transition through transaction' setup of the situation has a crucial impact for the future development and stabilisation of the democratic form of government in a post-authoritarian or post-totalitarian country. The term 'transition through transaction' is connected with a text by **Giuseppe Di Palma** (Di Palma, 1980), who used it

to designate a model of transition to democracy, which integrates moderate/pragmatic actors of the old regime into the (at least) first phase of the development of the new regime. The above-mentioned idea was later reflected in the typology of transitions to democracy by **Terry Lynn Karl** and **Philippe Schmitter**, who distinguished between the unilateral and multilateral strategies of the actors of the transition (Karl – Schmitter, 1991). According to these authors, 'transition through transaction' is the key prerequisite for the stabilisation of consensual strategies as the tools for conflict resolution, or for the protection of the plurality of political actors and attitudes in (post)transition countries (Cabada, 2001). We identify with this attitude but, nonetheless, we want to confront it with a longer time scale, i.e. with our own transition, which happened already more than twenty years ago. We want to interconnect this confrontation especially with the matters of decommunisation, therefore with the process of decomposition or alleviation of the impacts of non-democratic form of government in post-communist countries.

The second prerequisite, which we are going to work with in this text, is our belief that both decommunisation and anti-communism are fully acceptable and democratic political programmes and tools, which determine themselves against the non-democratic Marxist-Leninist ideology and its application in the post-communist countries of East Central Europe. In this respect, we understand anti-communism as an important equivalent of anti-fascism and anti-Nazism, and, therefore, decommunisation as an equivalent of denazification. Naturally, particular types of anti-communism may vary in the level of radicalism of their requirements and strategies. In our analysis, we will be concerned with the matters of the variation and changes in the strategies and requirements of the anti-communist streams.

The aim of the article is to analyse the anti-communist discourse in the Czech Republic, with a special focus on the period after the year 2000. In this connection, we will be only marginally concerned with the more general issues regarding the matter of communism, anti-communism, and decommunisation in East Central Europe, and we will fully focus on the chosen case study. Generally, we will examine the development and the particular importance of anti-communism versus communism as a cleavage in Czech society and politics. Such an analysis can be considered very important as, up to the present day, anti-communism still plays an important role in electoral campaigns

as well as in party politics and societal debates in the Czech Republic in general.²

As mentioned and also stressed in the title of our article, special attention will be paid to the development, the pragmatics, and the position of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), which is the successor party of the former Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. This political party and its functioning seem to be a crucial impetus for the strengthening of anti-communism in Czech society and politics as well as the intensification of the discussions on the (non-)successes of decommunisation. In Czech society, the issue of coping with the past still keeps its conflict potential because “the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), with the support of more than a tenth of the voters, is a permanent and significant part of the Czech party system. The successor party of the former Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the Czech Republic has never undergone a thorough ideological transformation, and it still endorses Marxism-Leninism. Its representatives also more or less openly declare their positive attitude toward the era of the communist regime” (Kopeček, 2010, p.169).

In addition to the KSČM, we will also be concerned with the second important left-wing political formation in the Czech party system – the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD). This party is a so-called authentic social democratic party, which survived the years of the lack of freedom in Czechoslovakia in exile, and later established itself as the strongest left-wing party in the system. Since the beginning of the 1990s, this party has been shaping itself as markedly anti-communist. In the long term, however, this approach is being disturbed by the party’s need to seek coalition partners on all the levels of governance, whilst, ultimately, the only possible left-wing partner is the KSČM. We suspect that it will be possible to find some correlation between the strengthening of the positive attitude of the ČSSD toward the KSČM and the

² Anti-communism developed from the initial form of political cleavage “democracy vs. Communism”, usually related with the first democratic elections after the transition, towards other forms. In our article, we will focus on anti-communism as the political strategy but in many aspects also as revitalised form of political cleavage. In our opinion, such cleavage is strongly interconnected with the impression of important part of Czech society (and part of political actors) that decommunisation failed. Naturally, such position has strongly normative character. Nevertheless, it grows up also from many examples of political and economic success and strengthening of post-Communist or ex-Communist actors in Czech Republic.

strengthening of anti-communism in the Czech Republic, particularly after the year 2000.

1 Democratic transition and the issue of coping with a communist past

The democratic changes inside the communist states in Central and Eastern Europe, which took place in the course of the 1990s, affected Czechoslovakia only marginally, in comparison with its neighbours, Poland and Hungary. The reason was, above all, the possibility to endanger the legitimacy of the power elite, which was established after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The military intervention in Czechoslovakia ended the most courageous attempt to reform the communist regime in a state of the Soviet type – the Prague Spring – and established a rigid regime under the rule of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, **Gustáv Husák**. “Husák’s method was primarily that of repression. Society was kept under strict control and the party was purged of all members who had supported the Prague Spring” (di Cortona, 1991, p.316).

“In the circumstances of Czechoslovakia in the end of the 1980s, there did not exist any influential reform wing within the scope of the leadership of the party” (Hloušek – Kopeček, 2002, p.23), and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) – together with the east-German Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) – was considered the representative of the most rigid interpretation of the Marxism-Leninism ideology. The absence of reformists in the leadership of the party was undoubtedly the cause of the fast enforcement of the basic requirements of the Czechoslovak opposition, which could publicly present itself not only in terms of content, but also morally, different from the pro-Soviet dogmatists at the head of the KSC. The unpreparedness of the leadership of the KSC for the possibility of negotiations with the opposition or even for the possibility of a change of the system provided opportunities for the pragmatic individuals with a communist past, who could be designated as gatekeepers. On the central level, the key person was **Marián Čalfa**, who was a member of the last purely Communist government before November 1989, and who became the key partner for the negotiations of a peaceful transition to democracy with the opposition formed into the Civic Forum (OF). It was **Čalfa** who became the one able to force the parliament dominated by the Communists to elect **Václav Havel** the President of Czechoslovakia. As a compensation for

this activity, he was given the position of the Prime Minister of the federal government for the transitional period until the elections of May 1990.

This agreement is often the subject of numerous critiques pointing out the pragmatism or even cynicism of its actors. Nevertheless, the critics do not doubt that the KSČ was, due to its rigidity, not capable of engaging in somehow constructive negotiations with the OF.³ The realists then point out the fact that Czechoslovak society was, in the first phase of its transition to democracy, very markedly inclined toward a consensus, and supported solutions, which, among other things, were referencing themselves to the Prague Spring. “Debates about a different, more radical anti-communist progression of the ‘revolution’ than what was carried out, are merely hypothetical and ahistorical. We also should not forget about a certain impact of the orthodox Communists, with their efforts to solve the situation violently, nor about the presence of the occupation armies...and, above all, about the common social mood and trends of the time, which were by no means unambiguous (for example the number of citizens, who wanted ‘socialism with a human face’ or the ‘third way’, was indispensable...)” (Mareš, 2000, p. 381).

It is important to emphasise that the peaceful transition was the most remarkable differential feature of the Czechoslovak transition. In accordance with the public, the OF built upon the ‘We are not like them’ slogan, by which they wanted to highlight their conciliatory, humane nature being in contrast with the violent character of the communist government. “The key, unifying priority of the OF ... was in the end of the year 1989 the peaceful disassembling of the old regime ... The decommunisation-liberal *Zeitgeist* was well reflected in the denomination of Čalfa’s cabinet as the government of ‘national understanding’ ... The fact that the in the elite of the OF, there was a number of former representatives of the KSČ, played an important role in the decommunisation moderateness of the OF elite. The former KSČ representatives were some of the protagonists of the Prague Spring in 1968” (Kopeček, 2010, p. 171). **Natalia Letki** also points out the significant role of the former Communists during the process of the inhibition of anti-communism, when she claims that the entry of

³ The agreement of a number of representatives of the OF with the skilful and cynically experienced communist manipulator Čalfa – with an individual rather than with the communist party, in which ... no changes, which would enable the party to take the role of the negotiation partner or at least a decisive political opponent, took place – led to Václav Havel being elected the President of the Republic.”

anti-communism was delayed in the cases when some of the important representatives of the anti-communist opposition had a communist past, such as in the case of Polish Solidarity and especially Czech Charter 77 (Letki, 2002, pp. 537-538).

The decommunisation moderateness suggested by **Kopeček** was also reflected in the discussion regarding the key issue: the conceivable ban, or, on the contrary, further functioning of the KSČ. As we have suggested, the representatives of the newly established Civic Forum preferred the 'transition through transaction' and thus the inclusion of the 'moderate' representatives of the Communist Party in the process of democratisation. Such a position was supported regardless of the organisation of the first democratic elections in May 1990, as a plebiscite on two options/cleavages – 'democracy' versus 'communism'. The decision to allow the further existence of the KSČ could have, therefore, been motivated by a number of factors: firstly, by the endeavour not to ban a clear rival in the elections, which were supposed to be a plebiscite; secondly, not to ban a political formation, which a great number of the OF and the new establishment representatives passed through; and finally, by the belief that democracy is characterised by its tolerance toward all political approaches, including the extremist ones. Another important motive was certainly also the 'social consensus' – according to public opinion polls from April 1990, only 36 percent of the respondents would have agreed with the ban on the KSČ, 58 percent would have been against it (Kopeček, 2010, p.173).

However, it is impossible to claim that anti-communism, as a political and social phenomenon, did not play an important role in Czechoslovakia after November 1989. On the contrary, anti-communism was systematically becoming a significant label which was, with the exception of the Communist Party, after its division into two national parties, in the Czech Republic called the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), endorsed virtually by everyone. "The term 'anti-communism' was one of the most pejorative terms, which the Marxism-Leninism dictionary was familiar with. After November 1989, anti-communist politics ... became, to some extent, a 'virtue' for pretty much all non-communist political powers, even though 'the intensity of anti-communism' varied" (Mareš, 2000, p.379). Considering the fact that every fourth citizen of Czechoslovakia was, at some point, a member of the KSČ and, on the other hand, Charter 77 as the most important oppositional structure gained an explicit support of only about 3000 signatories, it is, therefore, clear that many of the rhetorical anti-communists in Czech society were recruited from the base of the

former Communist Party.

The issues connected with decommunisation were accompanying the democratic processes in practically all post-communist countries of East Central Europe. Analysts, however, agree that it was a complex problem affecting a number of spheres of public as well as private nature. "The most visible and, at the same time, very controversial topic was the issue of lustrations, which represented the most observed and the most controversial element of decommunisation" (Kopeček, 2010, p.170). However, we should not forget the other dimensions of decommunisation – those of the political, economical, and mental (Tismaneanu, 1998, p.111).

In the course of the first few months of the democratic transition in Czechoslovakia, active anti-communism was not a crucial factor; the issues connected with the communist past were, nevertheless, subjects of the key political debate. This debate was, however, more explicitly focused on decommunisation. According to **Miroslav Mareš**, the discussion about decommunisation included three major questions: firstly, coping with the communist past including the attitudes toward the rectification of injustice and crime and the punishment of the contraveners. Secondly, the influence of the exponents of the communist regime in democracy after November 1989, and, finally, the existence of the Communist Party and generally the organisation of individuals promoting communism (Mareš, 2000, p.379). As the features of decommunisation in the Czech Republic, **Lubomír Kopeček** mentions, among other things, "the compensation and rehabilitation of the victims of the communist regime ... the not exactly successful effort to punish the former high representatives of the communist regime, how to treat the property of the Communist Party and the party itself, to, for example, the passing of the Law on the lawlessness of the communist regime and the protestation against it" (Kopeček, 2010, p.170).

The parliamentary elections in 1990 and the development following these elections became a significant turn in the discussion about decommunisation and, at the same time, a mechanism strengthening anti-communism. "As a result of the influence of president **Havel** ... a majority of the hitherto ministers remained in their office, including Prime Minister **Čalfa** ... For a considerable number of the OF activists, the follow-up selection of **Čalfa** ... was hardly acceptable, considering the fact that he was a former high representative of the communist regime. **Čalfa** could have been a good Prime Minister in the complicated period of the disassembling of the communist regime but, after the

democratic elections, leaving him in his office was perceived as disrespectful to the results of the elections ... An even more problematic issue ... was the Minister of Defence, general **Miroslav Vacek** ... He was eventually removed from his post, under strong pressure from the public media, in mid-October 1990, when his willingness to employ the army to protect the collapsing communist regime at the end of the year 1989 came to light" (Kopeček, 2010, p.174). The continuation in office of the head of the government of a former high representative of the communist regime meant, especially to the right-wing politicians operating within the OF, an unacceptable fact, which they acted against. The Interparliamentary Club of the Democratic Right-wing, which the liberally-conservative wing of the OF affiliated with and from which the subsequent right-wing formations – the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) – emerged, became a significantly anti-communist actor on the Czech political scene.

On the other hand, though, it is impossible to disregard the fact that, as far back as the first half the year 1990, an important degradation of anticommunism, which continued up until the year 1993, took place. This degradation was caused partly by the entry of some reformist politicians at the head of the KSČM and by the hope for the social-democratisation of the party (see below), but also by the activities of some of the non-communist actors. In this sense, **Mareš** considers two political streams to be the important ones: the conciliatory-tolerant stream, which labels anti-communism as 'a witch hunt'; and the militantly-anti-communist stream, which understands the development after November 1989 as a Bolshevik conspiracy, in other words, prone to conspiracy theories (Mareš, 2000, p.379). Even though the streams are different in terms of both their ideologies and their personalities, we can consider the impact of their activities similar. The opponents of anti-communism, in many cases, respected representatives of the Prague Spring, Charter 77, and the OF, prolonged the 'We are not like them' slogan with indeterminate duration, and called for a consensus (from which the radical anti-communists were, paradoxically, excluded). On the other hand, the militant anti-communists often chose a very radical rhetoric as well as steps, which made them look rather odd, if not unacceptable, in the eyes of the majority of the society. We also cannot disregard the fact that, in the Slovak part of the federation, both anti-communism and the call for decommunisation were visibly weaker than in the Czech Lands. Nonetheless, from the beginning of the 1990s, the decommunisation precautions were an important part of the political agenda,

which also reflected the attitudes of the public. "Between 1992 and 1994 ... in the Czech Republic the percentage of those who considered the issue of de-communisation important was definitely the highest (mean from five surveys: 56.8%)" (Letki, 2002, p.536).

"The first lustration law was enacted in Czechoslovakia in 1991" (David, 2004, p.789) and "the Czech Republic continued to pursue lustration after the breakup of the common state in 1993, extending the law's period of enforcement twice" (Nedelsky, 2004, 65). Lustrations – not only in the Czech Republic – naturally became the subject of the discussion oscillating between the ideal types of the inclusivity of political pluralism on the one hand, and the need to punish the crimes of communism and compensate its victims on the other hand. Between those two ideal types, we unambiguously incline toward the second one, which we have already suggested in the introduction by the prerequisite that decommunisation is an equivalent of denazification. We consider the Czech lustration law to be rather moderate ("For instance, the law does not include former propagandists of Marxism-Leninism in schools, enterprises or the army. It does not target former prominent journalists as the professional fabricators of truth ... However, the law does not include members or leaders of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, which is at the edge of democracy ... In sum ... the Czech lustration law concerns only high Communist Party officials" (David, 2004, p. 795 and p. 803). Moreover, it was possible, in many different ways, to evade the law – a common practice was, for example, that a person, who was positively lustrated, could not have been appointed to a certain post, and that is why they were 'only' authorised to take control of it. Unfortunately, not even rehabilitation and restitution succeeded in solving all the cases of injustice committed by the communist regime.

Notwithstanding the previous sceptical statements, we associate ourselves with the arguments of **M. Mareš**, who reflected upon the first decade of the decommunisation of Czech society as follows: "The results of the anti-communist powers are visible. As far back as the beginning of the 1990s, rehabilitations and restitutions were carried out ... The Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (ÚDV) was established (Nedelsky, 2004, p. 65). It managed to pass the lustration law and to prolong its validity. The cooperation of the Club of the Political Prisoners and the left-wing parliamentary parties resulted in the passing of the law ... on the injustice of the communist regime and the protestation against it, which specified the criminality of the communist regime" (Mareš, 2000, p. 385).

2 The Development of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia after 1990

From the perspective of political science, “the issue of what will happen to the former monopolistic communist parties” is one of the most interesting phenomena connected with the democratic transition in the countries of East Central Europe. As **Hloušek** and **Kopeček** showed in their ten-year-old reflection of the development of post-communist parties, “we can describe the conceptions of the fast and full-scale political marginalisation of these political subjects as naive. The vision that the renewed ‘historical’ social-democratic parties will become the main force of the left-wing part of the emergent party spectra appeared to be equally inaccurate. Those parties, with the only exception of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), did not manage to establish themselves as a more significant political power” (Hloušek – Kopeček, 2002, p.10). In East Central Europe, some of the communist successor parties underwent social-democratisation, others, on the contrary, “kept a predominant part of their original ideological equipment and, in principle, did not disrupt the historical continuity with the ‘old’ Communist Party.” According to the authors, some of the examples of those unreformed parties are the communist parties in the Czech Republic and Russia (Hloušek – Kopeček, 2002, p.14).

The question of why the Czech Communist Party did not undergo any fundamental reform and did not become a social democratic party dominating the left-wing part of the national party system – which is what happened in a number of countries in this area – is often presented as one of the most important questions in relation with the development of the political system. Generally, observers agree that one of the significant reasons is the absence of a strong group of reformers within the party. In central European countries, the most distinct revisionist tendencies could have been observed in communist parties from the 1950s to the 1980s. Those tendencies signified the existence of more liberal alternatives to the pro-Brezhnev dogmatism. “Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic have environmental characteristics that are most conducive for the promotion of the democratic reformers in the ex-Communist parties ... However, the case of the Czech Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia ... does not fit this expectation” (Ishiyama, 1995, pp. 154-155). If we refer to **Jerzy Wiatr**, it is possible to say that the process and the results of the collision between dogmatists and revisionists inside the particular communist parties had a significant influence on the reformation process of these parties during the

democratic transition (Wiatr, 2000, p. 44). If we, therefore, consider the fact that when the Prague Spring was suppressed, one third of the KSČ members were excommunicated from the party and that the rigid leadership virtually did not allow for the creation of a pro-reform ideological fraction, it is obvious that from the very beginning, the KSČ(M) congenitally struggled to generate strong reformers from within the party. Moreover, the position of the party was naturally complicated because of the establishment of an authentic social democratic party.

Nevertheless, the parliamentary elections of 1990, in which the KSČM gained more than 13 percent of votes and became the second strongest – and the most significantly left wing – subject, affirmed the party's legitimate position in the society (Kopeček – Pšejja, 2007, p.40). “At the beginning of the 1990s, people with reform-orientated opinions broke into the leadership of the party, and externally declared a change of the ideological orientation ... after the after-revolution wave subsidised ... the inheritance of the party predecessors, whose orthodox leadership was strictly particular about the ideological ... rigidity of the membership ... appeared to be a huge burden” (Hloušek – Kopeček, 2002, p.26). Subsequently, the KSČM became, due to this, pretty much entirely isolated in the party system.

Ishiyama, with reference to **Huntington**, works with three groups of (post-)communist parties, which are reforming themselves internally: ‘standpatters’, ‘liberal reformers’, and ‘democratic reformers’ (Ishiyama, 1995, pp. 148-149). When we examine the situation in the KSČM, then we almost entirely lack the democratic reformers. “Even after the collapse of Communist rule, the CPBM [KSČM, note by author] remained under the control of standpatters grouped around then chairman **Vasil Mohorita** ... Tensions between standpatters and democratic reformists ran high at the ... congress of October 1990 ... Although the election of a new democratic reformist leadership grouped around ... **Jiří Svoboda** ... the democratic reformists have since been continually thwarted in their efforts to forge a new social democratic identity for the party” (Ishiyama, 1995, p.160).

In the 1990s, the three basic demands of the reformists were: 1) to change the party's name; 2) to distance the party from its past more clearly and 3) to accept the new system as better than the one before 1989 (Mareš, 2005, p.131). The non-success of the party liberalisation process was “symbolically demonstrated by the issue of the party name, in other words, the elimination of the word communist, on which there was an intraparty referendum held as far

back as the end of the year 1991. In the referendum, three quarters of the voting members voted against the change of the name” (kopeček – Pšejja, 2007, p.42). After this non-success, **Svoboda** and the leaders close to him left the party and made space for a soft version of standpatters, led by a nostalgic chairman **Miroslav Grebeníček**. In the 1996 elections, the KSČM managed to eliminate its reformative seceded rivals entirely, and experienced a phase of existence in the course of which the party, by its relative successes, internally ensured the rehabilitations of the pre-1989 biographies of those members (Mareš, 2011, pp.145-146).

After **Grebeníček's** accession – and also after he was replaced by **Vojtěch Filip** in 2005 – “inside the party, the more dogmatic, non-communist wing, which blocks any more significant changes to the party profile, dominates. Even though there exists a reformist-orientated fraction in the KSČM (at the present time, it is bound to the European Parliament party club), it is mostly used for the purposes of the external presentation of the party, while neo-communists and dogmatists merely put up with it” (Mareš, 2011, p.146). The KSČM did not manage to disavow itself markedly from the repressive policy of the KSČ (see more in Balík, 2005) and “very calculatedly keeps a certain aggregate of symbols, rituals, and means of expression, through which it ties its voters, nostalgically remembering the old regime. The so far disapproving official attitude of the party toward November 1989 and the subsequent development also shows some evidence that the KSČM prefers a passive usage of this nostalgia to an active pursuit for its own way of a radical democratic left wing, which could potentially be an alternative for the way of social democracy. ... The majority of the KSČM voters are recruited from smaller towns ... and also from regions which were significantly affected by the post-war expatriation of the German population” (Bureš, 2010, pp. 54-55). It is the anti-German and general nationalist rhetoric, which makes the party radical or even extremist, regardless of the issue of its attitude toward the past (Toole, 2007, p.59).

“The Communist Party is fairly often labelled as anti-system ... it is necessary to mention that, especially in some of the party programme documents, which have filtered out in the past couple of years ... it is possible to find some opinions and attitudes pointing toward the non-acceptance of the basis of the contemporary political and market economy system. What we have in mind is, for example, the defence of the principle of the depriving of the instruments of production ... Those attitudes are in a sharp contrast with the attitude toward the public and other political partners of the KSČM. The party

leaders act consensually, more or less democratically and pro-system ... The KSČM, therefore, seems to be leading a double life – one of its membership and electorate, and the second of the life of its party elite” (Bureš, 2010, pp.55-57). This denoted ‘doublethink’ is entirely in compliance with the strategy supported by the member subjects of Stalin’s Comintern in the 1930s and in the wake of the Second World War, and it should, generally, rather lead to some wariness toward the KSČM. It is, therefore, understandable why the party is, by both the Czech political parties and observers, usually considered “a political untouchable” (Nedelsky, 2004, p.91).

3 The Czech Social Democratic Party – between anti-communism and the temptation to cooperate

The functioning of two relevant and very specific left-wing political subjects in the Czech party system provides a number of issues connected with the mutual relations of those parties and, more generally, the profiling of left-wing politics in the Czech Republic, including the possibility that anti-communism can be mistaken for a critique of the left wing. Such tendencies appeared as far back as spring 1990, when, during the election campaign, some of the OF representatives labeled the ČSSD as ‘the second communist team’.

The strengthening of the position of the ČSSD in the mid-1990s and, at the same time, the enclosure of the stable electoral support of the KSČM, represent one of the important and very specific features of Czech politics. This specificity does not lie in the strength of the left wing; “in the Czech lands, the values and attitudes of the left-wing (not only in the cultural but also in the economical dimension), in the long run, outweigh the values and attitudes of the right-wing” (Novák, 2010, p.42). As **Kopeček** and **Pšeja** state, even though in the post-communist countries of East Central Europe there were certain fluctuations toward the right wing after the transition to democracy, the left wing gradually renewed its positions. “This left wing was usually represented by parties which identified themselves with the principles of social democracy, even though – which is historically paradoxical – in terms of their organisation, they followed the path of the former state parties. ... The left-wing rivals, referring to their linkup with the pre-communist social democratic (or socialist) tradition found themselves in the position of marginal formations. ... Nevertheless, in Central Europe, we can find one remarkable exception – it is the Czech Social Democratic Party. ... The fact that, in the Czech Republic, there, aside from a

successful social democratic party, also exists a relevant and minimally reformed communist party is, however, even more unusual” (Kopeček – Pšeja, 2007, p.36). Similarly, **Miroslav Novák** notes that “after the first and the second democratic elections after November 1989 (1990 and 1992), in the Czech lands the Communists represented the second biggest political power. ... This, consequently, disallowed any political alteration. ... In fact, the Czech Republic is the only country in Central Europe where a fairly unchanged communist party, which, for a long time, disallowed the healthy alternation of governments of different political orientations (in particular the participation of the left wing in the government), has been maintained” (Novák, 2010, p.39).

The major problem of the democratic left wing, from the mid-1990s represented by the ČSSD, turned out to be its coexistence with the KSČM. The ČSSD, however, from as far back as November 1989 profiled itself as non-communist, or even anti-communist. “The decisive experiences, which were, at the beginning of the 1990s, confronting each other in the creation of attitudes and programmes of the ČSSD, were anti-communist – including the aversion for reformatory communism and to the people, who, after being excommunicated during the party clean-out after the year 1969, went through another twenty years of persecution and who later become either signatories of Charter 77 or political prisoners” (Profant, 2010, p. 21). **Profant’s** attitude is, in this case, rather single-sided, and it disregards the fact that after 1992 at the latest the ČSSD opened itself to individual defectors from the KSČM. In other words, on an individual level, it did not pose any *cordon sanitaire*. On the other hand, though, it is necessary to emphasise that, under the leadership of **Miloš Zeman**, the party profiled itself as clean-cut anti-extremist. The ČSSD party congress in April 1995, forbade “political co-operation with extremist political parties – which included, among others, the KSČM ... The resolution virtually confirmed the ostracism of communists from Czech politics” (Kopeček – Pšeja, 2007, p.43). In 1996, the ČSSD, therefore, entirely reprobated the possibility of negotiating the mathematically possible majority coalition with the KSČM and with the right-wing radicals, and supported the creation of a minority centre-right-wing government. Similarly, in 1998, the party created a minority government with the support of the right-wing ODS. This distance from the Communists was, after **Zeman’s** vacation from office, taken over by his successor, **Vladimír Špidla**.

Nevertheless, the parliamentary elections of 2002 brought results, based on which “for the first time since the beginning of the 1990s, the distribution of

power provided the possibility to create an alliance of the ČSSD and the KSČM, with a majority in the parliament. ... The KSČM was, however, aware of the prevailing strong aversion of the public to its open entry to the cabinet. It was willing to support a minority government of the Social Democrats ... The primary objective of the KSČM was not to gain a big share of the power, but to get rid of the 'depressed class' party label, and to, at least partially, interconnect the political isolation of the party" (Kopeček – Pšeja, 2007, pp.49-50). **Špidla**, however, resisted this temptation and formed a fragile centre-left-wing coalition with two hinge parties. It is obvious that a minority single-colour government with the support of the KSČM would "be more beneficial for the Communists ... because the KSČM would not be directly responsible for governance ... a direct government coalition with the KSČM would, from the perspective of the Social Democrats, probably be the lesser evil. However, if all the key ministries were held by the Social Democrats, there would not be many communist ministers and they would, therefore, be a part of the more moderate wing" (Novák, 2010, p.43).

The most significant change happened in 2005, when, under dramatic intraparty circumstances, the pragmatic **Jiří Paroubek** worked his way up and became the leader of the ČSSD. With his entry at the head of the party, for "the first time since November 1989, there arose a systematic and close parliamentary co-operation of both of the left-wing parties" (Kopeček – Pšeja, 2007, p.51). The Social Democrats, however, were still sharing power with two smaller subjects. Nevertheless, at the same time, they formed a parliamentary coalition with the KSČM (Černý, 2006), and they "took advantage of the co-operation with the Communists to put through a number of laws, which they intended to use to address the voters in the election campaign" (mares, 2011, p.151). **Paroubek** himself defended the co-operation with the Communists by the legendary statement: "We will pass those laws, which are necessary for the well-being of this country, for the people of this country, even if we have to do so with the Communists ... and if the Martians landed here, I will pass those laws with the Martians".

Jiří Paroubek dreamt up a minority government of the ČSSD, with the support of the KSČM. The Communists reacted to this vision by replacing the orthodox **Grebeníček** by the pragmatic **Filip**. In the parliamentary elections of 2006, however, the two subjects combined did not win enough mandates, and found themselves in opposition to the centre-right-wing government of **Mirek Topolánek**. Nonetheless, after the regional elections in autumn 2008, the

ČSSD formed two open and at least two hidden coalitions with the KSČM (Vodička – Cabada, 2011, pp.401-402). This step meant a significant breakthrough and a sign that the objective of **Paroubek's** leadership could have been not only a hidden, but even an open coalition with the KSČM on the all-state level. However, in the parliamentary elections of 2010, the support of the ČSSD dropped by one third, which meant a collapse of the **Paroubek** leadership. The possibility of forming either a hidden or an open governmental co-operation between the ČSSD and the KSČM was, therefore, again mathematically only hypothetical.

4 The revision and the strengthening of anti-communism in Czech politics after the year 2002

We presume that the above analysed considerations of (a part of) the leadership of the ČSSD of the possibility to cross the *cordon sanitaire* of the KSČM and to openly co-operate with the party on all the levels of governance became, at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st Century, a significant impulse for the strengthening of anti-communism in Czech society and politics. In this respect, we identify with the statement of **Ondřej Slačálek** – the author of the so far most extensive analysis of the ascension of anti-communism after the year 2000. **Slačálek** claims that anti-communism in Czech politics after November 1989 can be divided into two periods:

1) the period of distant anti-communism (1989–2000), when the ‘We are not like them’ slogan meant tolerance but, at the same time, also distance; the Communist Party will not be banned, which will confirm that we will not stoop as low as they did. “The Communist Party was, within the frame of distant anti-communism, tolerated, but also not accepted” – there existed a fairly clear consensus on this matter.

2) the period of exclusive anti-communism (prevailing since 2003). Exclusive anti-communism made its appearance shortly after the 2003 presidential election, in which one of the candidates – **Václav Klaus** – was, supposedly (the election was secret), supported by the communist members of the parliament (Slačálek, 2012).

According to **Slačálek**, the crucial mobilisation of the anti-communist attitudes toward the ČSSD under the leadership of **Paroubek** took place in the years 2005 and 2006. We associate ourselves with this view (we would only add that, after being elected president, **Klaus** was also looking for a way to

approach the Communists⁴). The author points out the fact that **Paroubek** was being blamed for the renewal of the repressive communist approach, among other things in connection with his support of violent police interference at the illegal techno party 'Czechtek' in July 2005. In the following election campaign, the Civic Democratic Party attacked the ČSSD for its symbolic interconnection with the KSČM (the abbreviation 'KSČSSD' signified the existence of a single left-wing formation including the orthodox Communists).

The period of a remarkable mobilisation of anti-communism suggested by **Slačálek** also includes the culmination of the efforts to establish, after the fashion of Slovakia and Poland, the Nation's Memory Institute. The Institute was to become the place where documentation of the crimes of totalitarian regimes in the Czech Lands would be stored. The proposal of the creation of the Institute was filed in November 2005 – in the time of the dominance of the parliamentary coalition of the ČSSD and the KSČM. The bill on the foundation of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes was passed in May 2007. At the Constitutional Court the bill was attacked by a group of ČSSD deputies, and the new institute was not brought into existence until a decision of the Constitutional Court was made in March 2008. It is definitely extraordinary that the bill was attacked by the deputies of the ČSSD, not by those of the KSČM.

The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes was, according to its advocates from the Czech right-wing and also from the anti-communists from the liberal-centre environment of the former dissent, supposed to become a research centre, which should familiarise the public with the criminality of the Nazi and consequently the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, and demonstrate the criminality of those systems with particular examples. Moreover, the Institute also became the administrator of the archives concerning the totalitarian past, for instance the undestroyed files of the communist State Security and the like. The critics of the establishment of the Institute pointed out the primarily political, not scientific, background of its foundation. This was partially confirmed during some of the causes connected with the media's publication of the research outcomes. Usually, the most

⁴ "Ota Ulč points out that Václav Klaus was elected president patently also by the votes of the communist deputies and senators. He proclaimed himself the president of the consensus, which he demonstrated by inviting the Communist into the negotiations. "This consensus, however, lacks any sympathies for anti-communists, whose attitudes, as he assures us, he never identified with" (Ulč 2012).

exclamatory is generally considered to be the publication of the information about the alleged whistle-blowing of the writer **Milan Kundera** in the 1950s, which the historian **Adam Hradílek** came up with in September 2009. It was shortly revealed that there does not exist enough definite archive evidence, or more precisely evidential material, for such accusations, and the Institute was accused of an attempt to scandalise. Nevertheless, regardless these unfortunate steps, under new leadership the Institute took a number of positive steps toward the familiarisation of the public with some examples of heroism during the fight against the totalitarian regime. In this respect, the Institute significantly contributes to the deepening of decommunisation, which is something **M. Mareš** called for more than ten years ago, when he wrote: “An important task of anti-communists is to make sure that, in the future, the public is still generally aware of the negatives and crimes of communism, including the knowledge of the communist propaganda and the ways of gaining power” (Mareš, 2000, p. 387).

According to **Slačálek**, the contents of Czech anti-communism altered after the year 2003. Its contentual frame, however, remains similar. According to anti-communists, communists are considered an anachronism (the so-called time exclusion), and something which, value-wise, does not belong to European society (the so-called spatial exclusion). This discovery, coming from a discourse analysis, is, in our opinion, correct. We, however, differ in the view on whether it is justified. We consider the key difference in the polemics with **Slačálek** the question of whether we regard communism as an equivalent of another totalitarian ideology – namely Nazism. In the introductory part of this text, we have already stated that our arguments stem from this equivalence that is why we necessarily have to identify with the key argument for the ban of the Communist Party, which means the symmetrisation of communism with Nazism. (In addition to this reason, **Slačálek** names four other reasons: the denomination of communism as a threat for democracy; the identification of some kind of an essence of communism and its declaration as criminal; the critique of the KSČM for its relationship with its own past; the appeal for veneration of the victims of communism).

The suggested and later also actual co-operation of some of the Czech mainstream political parties with the KSČM – firstly the ČSSD, but repeatedly also the Christian and Democratic Union – The Czechoslovak People’s Party – is, therefore, in our opinion, a logical reaction to the weakening of the decommunisation processes, or, more precisely, the suggestion of drawing the

so-called thick line under the past. For anti-communists, this thick line could be drawn by the abolishment of the KSČM, but not by its 'domestication', which – considering the doublethink typical for radical and extremist political subjects – they, entirely rightfully, do not really believe in. Naturally, this statement of fact does not, by any means, doubt that many Czech anti-communists were once Communists,⁵ or, more precisely, they were definitely never determined anti-communists, as some of the observers point out.⁶ The vision of the KSČM as an enemy can be naturally instrumental for the self-definition of the entire post-November 1989 regime or some of its political actors. This concerns both political parties – the ODS, for instance, promotes decommunisation in the long-term (we have already mentioned the role the ODS played in the passing and prolongation of the validity of the lustration bill. We should also mention that at the 'ideological' conference in May 1999, the party ... expressed its belief that it is "desirable to push through the analogy of the juridical alterations concerning the so-called 'Auschwitz Lie', for the cases when communist crimes are being denied" (Mareš, 2000, p.386/) – and some individuals (the most obvious being the senators **Martin Mejstřík** and **Jiří Štětina**). The coalitional governments of the ODS Prime Ministers **Mirek Topolánek** (2007–2009) and **Petr Nečas** (since 2010) as well played the anti-communist card, including the attempts to find enough arguments and evidence for the conceivable impulse for the courts to dismiss the KSČM. At the beginning of March 2012, the Minister of the Interior announced that his ministry did not manage to gather enough evidence of the anti-democratic character of the KSČM – unlike in the precedent successful legal proceeding with the extremely right-wing Labour Party in January 2010,

⁵ "The younger and more intelligent part of the communist apparatus was most frequently represented by a purely cynical manipulator of power ... The ascension of anti-communism at the time when communism became the past ... is not very surprising. It was nourished by yesterday's industrious assistants and powerful representatives of the former regime. They did so through fear that if they did not tax the others with their past, someone else would tax them with theirs, and also from the pure hatred toward those who they bet on and who lost and put them in a hole" (Profant, 2010, p.25).

⁶ "The moral condemnation of communism is often indistinguishable from the politically forcible 'battering' of communists. The fight with today's images of communism is being relativised by the general inability of Czech society to cope with the past ... Many people, who now fulminate against communists for allegedly moral and political reasons, were once fairly connected with either communists or some of the aspects of the communist regime" (Pehe, 2006).

which was concluded by the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court to ban the party.

Conclusion

Decommunisation as a process of the partial rectification of injustice committed by non-democratic political systems is – with the exception of the nostalgic supporters of the former communist regimes – in Czech society generally regarded desirable. Nevertheless, decommunisation processes can also be understood in a different way regarding the stereotypes and historical connotations connected with some of the actors. Within Czech society, for example, in the long term prevails a strong antipathy toward the idea of the rectification of proprietary injustice against the Catholic Church. This was, among other things, proved, for instance, by the discussion on the possible settlement of the relations with the church, for which the centre-right-wing government, led by **P. Nečas**, strives. In this discussion, the attitude of both the ČSSD and the KSČM toward the idea of the rectification of the (especially proprietary) injustice against the Catholic Church was very critical. The objections of the left-wing parties are then based on the traditional Czech anticlericalism and atheism.

The consonance of the ČSSD and the KSČM not only in this discussion, but also in some other cases connected with decommunisation (for example the aversion for the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes analysed above), shows that both parties consider decommunisation to be a virtually finished process. Their attitudes obviously differ in their views on the need of decommunisation itself and its profundity; in this matter, within the KSČM, the belief that unambiguously dominates is that decommunisation should be minimal. The question is to what extent can the ČSSD and the KSČM agree on the issues relating to anti-communism? In this case, the crucial problem is the fact that the KSČM cannot logically endorse anti-communism. This rules out any compromise and puts the ČSSD in the position of the actor who would be the only one to have to change or bend some of its standpoints.

It is, nevertheless, obvious that, after **M. Zeman's** and **V. Špidla's** vacating of their offices, the tendencies of the party leadership to surpass the *cordon sanitaire* and to co-operate with the KSČM on the state level (which is the only one the parties are not already co-operating on) are strengthening. On the other hand, in the ČSSD, there is so far still present a very anti-communist fraction. In

the event of such open coalition co-operation between the ČSSD and the KSČM (all the public opinion polls suggest that, after the next parliamentary elections, the left-wing, represented by the ČSSD and the KSČM, will have a majority in the Czech National Assembly), this fraction would denounce loyalty to such a coalition, or, more precisely, such a policy of the ČSSD. It is logical that the ČSSD is considering the so-called Mitterrand solution to this dilemma within the Czech left wing, including the defence of such a step by the semantics of consensus, democratic inclusion and the like. We are, however, definitely confident that the alliance of the ČSSD and the KSČM would eventually result in the disruption of the consensus, the need of visible decommunisation, and at least moderate anti-communism both in Czech society and the ČSSD itself. This could also result in a situation where the alliance of the ČSSD and the KSČM subverts the only social democratic party in East Central Europe without a communist past. We presume that the pursuit for a consensus between the ČSSD and the centre and moderate right-wing parties, which has been the main ČSSD strategy so far, poses, with regards to all we mentioned above, a significantly smaller risk to the stability and quality of Czech democracy, let alone the risk of the ongoing fragility of coalitional governments.

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