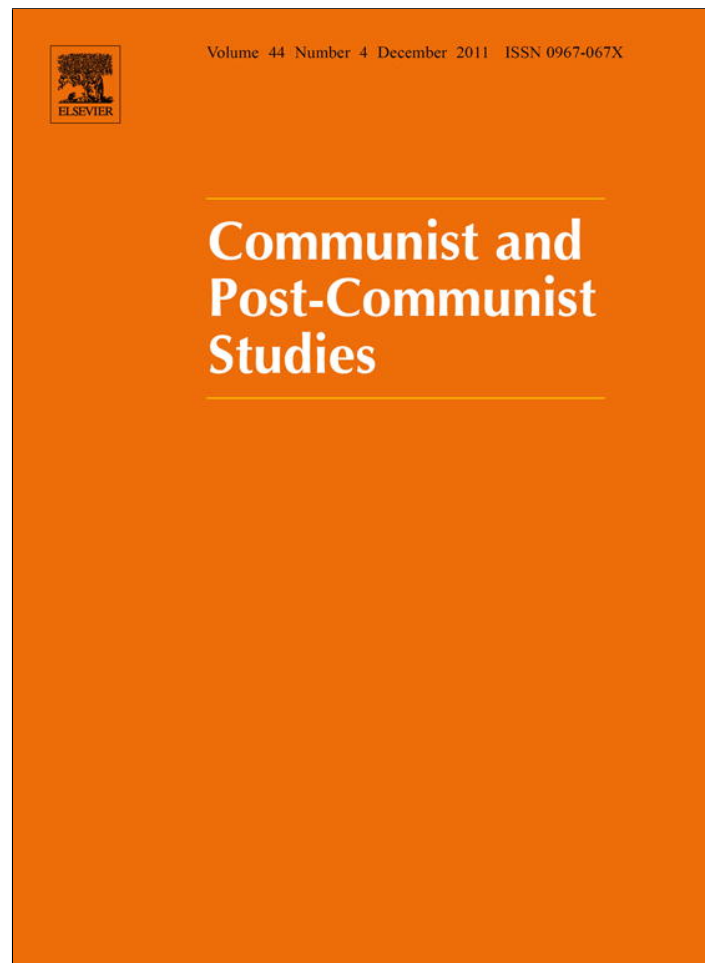


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Czech extreme right parties an unsuccessful story

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the extreme right in the Czech Republic, where, in contrast to several other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, this part of the political spectrum has been unsuccessful for the past ten years. The aim of this article is to analyse the position of the extreme right in the Czech party system and the internal ideological and strategic cleavages within the extreme right. The conclusion of this article is that organized party-political extremism is after two decades of modern political development only a marginal part of the Czech political spectrum, with many internal problems and without real chances of significant success in the near future.

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Introduction

In several countries of Central and East Europe, political parties of the extreme right have scored significant successes in the last couple of years; examples include Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria. Political science naturally concentrates mainly on the countries where the extreme right is a strong component of the political spectrum, but it is also important to look at the extreme right parties that are not strongly represented in political system. This is the case of the Czech Republic, where the extreme right occupies a marginal position in the party system (Minkenberg, 2009, p. 453). Since 1998 it has not been represented in the parliament, although there is a fairly strong militant extreme right scene in the country and several parties had and have strong political ambitions. This article describes the unsuccessful genesis of these parties in the Czech Republic and analyses their positions in the party system, including their rivalry in the struggle to win over voters, and outlines the future prospects of the extreme right in the Czech party spectrum.

First, the article analyses historical determinants of the extreme right from the pre-1989 era, then the rise and fall of the extreme right in the 1990s and the complicated development of small parties in the first decade of 21st century. The social base of voters of the extreme right and their arguments are characterised, as well as the position of the allies and competitors within the party system. Next part is a short overview of political science literature on the Czech extreme right, including research on this part of political spectrum in East Central Europe. The conclusion summarizes the basic stages of development of the Czech extreme right post-1989 and possible ways of the future development.

Ideological and historical determinants of the extreme right in the Czech Republic

In the period following the fall of the Communist regime, the following main factors have been determining the position of the Czech extreme right:

1. Ideological fragmentation, caused by diverse interpretations with which the various currents of the extreme right approach Czech historical traditions and prospects.
2. Traditional failures of the extreme right forces during the First Republic; discontinuity in the development of the Czech extreme right between 1945 and 1989; and present day negative perception of the historical regimes of the extreme right.

Ideological legacies

As to ideological fragmentation, the main cleavage concerns the relationship to the Nazi heritage and also to Aryanism and pan-Germanism. Although the Czech nationalists refuse to endorse the German Nazism and its pan-Aryan successors, they are divided over what tradition of Czech history to claim. One current refers to the struggle of Hussites against Crusaders in the 15th century, the heritage of progressive national revival of the 19th century and the specifically Czech national socialism of the first half of the 20th century but brings these to intolerant extremes. The adherents of the extreme line are sometimes called “Utraquists” (“kališníci”¹). Political scientist Jan Rataj calls them the Integral Nationalist current (Rataj, 2006, p. 176).

The second current draws on the conservative authoritarian tradition of the Czech history conceived from an extremist position. Czech fascism forms a radical variant of this current, but some of the fascists accept certain elements of the first current. Part of conservative authoritarianism blends with integral Catholicism, some of which is nationalist,² but the rest with its values of dogmatic universalism falls into the category of purely religious, non-nationalist extremism.

The third current of Czech neo-Nazis, on the contrary, draws on the legacy of Nazism and wartime collaboration and intends to incorporate the Czech Lands into the new German Fourth Reich, or at least strive for a position of equal footing of the Czech nation with others in the pan-Aryan society built on the national-socialist model. One has to bear in mind, however, that the description “neo-Nazi” is external to the movement; the neo-Nazis describe themselves as “nationalists” or “národovci” (a Czech term for “nationalist”, derived from “národ” nation), reserving sometimes “nationalism” (“nacionalismus”) for white European nationalism (Mareš, 2009, p. 4). The boundaries between the various types and sub-types (within which further nuances exist³) are often vague and several variants can co-exist in a single political party. The simplified classification provided above will be used in the fourth section of the article outlining the characteristics of the contemporary Czech extreme right.

Failure of the extreme right during the First Republic and after the WWII

Traditionally the Czech extreme right parties had weak position in the party system of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The National Fascist Community (Národní obec fašistická, NOF), active from the mid-1920s under the leadership of a general on discharge Radola Gajda, achieved its best result in 1935 polling 2% of the vote. The conservative nationalist bloc National Unity (Národní sjednocení, NSj) polled 5.6% of the vote in the same election which, given the context of the rise of the extreme right in Europe at the time, must be considered as a weak result. Factions with authoritarian right-wing tendencies also existed within otherwise democratic parties, however. These included the strong agrarian Republican party of farmers and smallholders (Republikánská strana zemědělského a malorolnického lidu) and the Christian Czechoslovak People's Party (Československá strana lidová, ČSL); they only gained more substantial influence towards the end of the 1930s.

One also has to bear in mind that Sudeten German parties were active in the inter-war Czechoslovakia. In the 1935 election the Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei, SdP) polled more votes than any other party in Czechoslovakia (15.2%), as it managed to secure most of the Sudeten German electorate. The party gradually adopted Nazi ideology. As the Sudeten Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia after World War II, only a very limited number of Czech neo-Nazis draw on their traditions, but they are supported by neo-Nazis of the Sudeten German exile organisations.

Although adored by the Czech authoritarian nationalists, the Czech authoritarian regime of the so-called Second Republic, which existed for a couple of months at the turn of 1938 and 1939, is viewed negatively in the major interpretations of Czech history as a turn away from the democratic traditions of the First Republic and the ideals of its founder, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Nazi occupation of the Czech Lands between 1939 and 1945, existence of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and collaboration are evaluated positively chiefly by a handful of neo-Nazis; they are generally understood as a national tragedy and resistance against these regimes is appreciated.

The defeat of Nazi Germany, system of limited democracy of the years 1945–1948 and the subsequent era of Communist regime between 1948–1989 meant that extreme right opinions were preached only by a few groups of internal opposition, with no influence over the mainstream of the dissent; and in exile, though outside the main exile structures.

The “Golden era” of the extreme right in the Czech Republic: the 1990s

The following groups played decisive roles in the establishment of the extreme right in the post-1989 political system:

1. New politicians espousing historical models of the extreme right in the Czech Lands or examples of the contemporary West European extreme right;
2. A few activists involved in the extreme right already in the pre-Communist era or individuals who have drawn on such traditions within their families;

¹ Chalice (“kalich” in Czech) was the symbol of the Hussite movement. The movement was primarily opposed to the power of clergy and the abuse by Church of its position. After the crusades begun it also gained a nationalist dimension. In 19th and 20th centuries, the Hussite movement was interpreted in a nationalist spirit. Even the Communists claimed the Hussite legacy, emphasising its egalitarianism and the alleged anti-Western orientation of the Hussites.

² Rataj terms this the Integral Catholic Nationalist current (Rataj, 2006: 177).

³ The extreme right exerts a specific influence within the Moravian regional movement, part of which inclines towards neo-Nazism, and another part towards Slavic nationalism. However, the bulk of the structures of the Moravian movement tend to occupy centrist positions in politics.

3. Exiles who returned to Czechoslovakia, often adherents to US ultra-republican conservatism, to which they usually added anti-Semitic elements;
4. Adherents of the youth racist skinhead subculture which appeared on the Czech territory in the second half of the 1980s, inspired by the youth of Western Europe;
5. Individuals who originally joined mainstream revolutionary structures with a democratic zeal but were very soon frustrated that their own expectations and ambitions were not fulfilled and thus turned against the new democratic system;
6. Part of the dogmatic Catholics who were not satisfied with the position of political Catholicism in the new pluralist spectrum and viewed negatively the tendencies towards secularisation and the “decadent” displays of Westernisation: prostitution, pornography, the rise of LGBT movement and others.

The association for the Republic Republican Party of Czechoslovakia. Sládek's role

Out of the various groups and political projects of the extreme right, only the Association for the Republic Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro Republiku Republikánská strana Československa, SPR-RSČ) gained real importance. Although its name suggested a connection with the pre-war agrarian party and at the same time also with contemporary French and American republicans, it quickly gained an unambiguous identity of an extreme right party.

The charismatic Miroslav Sládek (born 1950), who was voted a party leader, was not engaged in anti-communist opposition,⁴ but very soon after the fall of Communism harshly criticised the new regime for corruption practices and allegedly unsatisfactory way of dealing with the communist legacy. To this he added anti-immigration rhetoric, aimed first of all against the Vietnamese who worked in the country on the basis of contracts between the Communist states, and second, against Roma. Sládek was against the division of the Czechoslovak Federation. This was the cause of his cool relationships with the Slovak National Party even after the federation's demise and he even campaigned for re-annexation of the Carpathian Ruthenia, part of the inter-war Czechoslovakia, which was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1945 and is today a part of Ukraine (Hloušek, Kopeček, 2010, pp. 213–214).

Under Sládek's leadership, SPR-RSČ failed to cross the 5% threshold and win the seats in the first free election in 1990. In a coalition with the small Popular Democratic Party (Všelidová demokratická strana or VDS), which targeted the emerging electorate of private entrepreneurs, it polled only 1.00% of the vote. In the next term, Sládek's aggressive anti-systemic populism with its numerous rallies and provocative media agenda addressed more voters. In the 1992 election, SPR-RSČ gained representation in the Federal Assembly (6.48% of the vote for the Chamber of the People and 6.37% of the vote for the Chamber of Nations) and in the Czech National Council (5.98%). After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the latter chamber was transformed into the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, effective from 1 January 1993.⁵ Sládek's scathing rhetoric targeting the right-wing coalition government brought him 8.01% of the vote in 1996, the best result ever of the Czech extreme right after the fall of Communism.

The early election in 1998 was shock for the Republicans: contrary to expectations, they did not obtain parliamentary representation, polling only 3.9% of the vote.⁶ The most often cited cause of their failure is a change in political culture, with many voters refusing any longer to recognise Sládek's excesses as a credible alternative. SPR-RSČ's voters left the party for other parties, mainly those of the left (Kreidl, Vlachová, 1999, p. 343). The situation testified to the instability of SPR-RSČ's electorate. About a third of its sympathisers only had a very lukewarm relation to the party and did not vote, which meant that the party failed to cross the 5% threshold (Hartl et al., 1999, p. 26). The party was not successful in capturing first-time voters, who represented an important share of the electorate in 1996 (Kreidl, Vlachová, 1999, pp. 346–347). Failure in the 2000 regional election followed: SPR-RSČ polled 1.29% of the vote.⁷ Mismanagement eventually led the party to bankruptcy.⁸

In 2000, Sládek's faithful formed a new party, initially called Independent Republican Youth (Nezávislá republikánská mládež, NRM) subsequently renamed in January 2001 to Miroslav Sládek's Republicans (Republikáni Miroslava Sládka, RMS) to clearly express the identity of the leader. The remaining membership of SPR-RSČ transferred to RMS, but it likewise remained marginal.⁹ At the beginning of the 1990s, Sládek managed to concentrate in his party various ideological branches of the extreme right, including anti-clerical nationalists, Catholic fundamentalists, neo-Fascists, later even some neo-Nazis.¹⁰ In addition, Sládek's supporters founded the Pensioners' Association of the Czech Republic (Sdružení důchodců České republiky, SDČR), which

⁴ Sládek's opponents reproached him for his employment in the Czech Office for Press and Information, which was among other things responsible for Communist censorship. Sládek claimed that his job mostly involved organising press conferences and that he had nothing to do with censorship.

⁵ The second chamber of the Czech Parliament, the Senate, was first elected in 1996. SPR-RSČ did not stand in the election of this chamber, because it opposed its inception.

⁶ The pre-election atmosphere played in their favour. However, the election was called due to a government corruption scandal. In addition, a group of Roma attacked Miroslav Sládek in a meeting shortly before the election, but they were subsequently pardoned by Václav Havel, the president at the time. Sládek immediately employed this in his anti-systemic propaganda.

⁷ The coalition standing for this election was called “Miroslav Sládek's Republicans” and comprised SPR-RSČ, Pensioners' Association of the Czech Republic (Důchodci České republiky) and Independent Republican Youth (NRM).

⁸ In 2010, Sládek received a two year suspended sentence from the Prague city court for bringing the party to insolvency in 2000.

⁹ Although it merged again 2008 with SPR-RSČ and some other groupuscules and continues to operate under the old-new name, it remains unsuccessful. In 2009, SPR-RSČ had issues with its obligation to submit financial reports to the Parliament.

¹⁰ Neo-Nazis were mainly active in the youth organisation Republican Youth (Republikánská mládež, RM), which existed from 1998 to 2002 when it was banned by the Ministry of Interior (Mareš, 2003, p. 216).

was to compete with the then-successful leftist party Pensioners for Social Security (Důchodci za životní jistoty) and provide Sládek with a partner for various elections. SDČR failed to carry out the task set, however (Mareš, 2003: pp. 213–214).

Republican splits

The above-mentioned heterogeneity led to internal disputes within the party and a number of representatives of dogmatic attitudes ceased to view it as credible. Besides, Sládek's authoritarian style led to various republican groups splitting off the party. The first wave of the secessionists founded the Radical Republican Party (Radikální republikánská strana) in 1990. This party incorporated other dissident groups in later years and was renamed several times. In 1992, it called itself the Party of National and Republican Unity (Strana národní a republikánské jednoty, SNRJ). In 1995, it changed its name to Patriotic Republican Party (Vlastenecká republikánská strana, VRS) with two MPs originally elected on SPR-RSČ ticket transferring over, but its position remained marginal overall.

Strong-minded adherents to the various ideological currents of the extreme right joined up with the more mature members of the various strains of the skinhead subculture¹¹ and founded political organisations that were initially non-partisan, but after SPR-RSČ's failure in 1998 served as bases for political parties that attempted to fill the space vacated by Sládek's party.

Post-skinhead parties

In 1993, the "Utraquists" grouped together in a citizens' association Patriotic League (Vlastenecká liga, VL). Part of the League's membership was later involved in the creation of the National Party (Národní strana) in 2000, but among its founders were also individuals without prior political engagement. Ministry of Interior refused to register the party, but its decision was overturned by the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic in 2002. The party did not manage to contest the election of the Chamber of Deputies that year (Kyloušek, Smolík, 2006, p. 80). The ranks of the extreme right claiming Hussite heritage were enlarged in 1999 by the Czech Social Democratic Movement (České sociálně demokratické hnutí, ČSDH) founded by several former social democrats¹² and republicans. In 2002, it polled 0.11% of the vote and subsequently renamed itself to Czech Movement for National Unity (České hnutí za národní jednotu, ČHNJ) (Kyloušek, Smolík, 2006, p. 86).

Since 1993, neo-Fascists have been involved mainly in the civic association Patriotic Front (Vlastenecká fronta), while Clerical Fascists have been organised in the non-registered Movement for National Unity (Hnutí národního sjednocení). Co-operation with certain authoritarian nationalists induced individuals from those groups to create the political party National Unity (Národní sjednocení) in 2002, which endorsed the ideas of an equally-named party from the era of the First Czechoslovak Republic (Mareš, 2003, p. 249).

Neo-Nazis had been organised since 1998 in the civic movement National Alliance (Národní aliance), which was banned by the Ministry of Interior in 2000, and in the non-registered association National Resistance (Národní odpor). In March 2001, individuals from National Alliance and National Resistance became members of the Patriotic Republican Party (Vlastenecká republikánská strana) of which they took control. They changed the name to National Social Bloc (Národně sociální blok, NSB) and when the Ministry of Interior refused the new name, they opted for Right Alternative (Pravá alternativa, PA). Before the 2006 election, internal disputes within PA resulted in the party's operations being hampered, and it did not stand for the election (Čákl, Wollmann, 2005, p. 35). The militant National Resistance resumed its activities outside the sphere of party politics. Some of the activists left the Right Alternative for the National-Democratic Party (Národně demokratická strana, NDS),¹³ running unsuccessfully on its ticket in 2002: NDS obtained 0.11% of the vote¹⁴ (Mareš, 2003, p. 245).

Misery of the extreme right in the first decade of the 2000s

Restructuring of the extreme right spectrum

In 2002 the spectrum of the extreme right was thus in a stage marked by fragmentation into groups comprising a few dozen members each (with the exception of RMS, whose membership counted a couple of hundreds) and by general irrelevance. Miroslav Sládek's Republicans only polled 0.97% of the vote in the parliamentary election.¹⁵ Shortly after the electoral failure, several important members left the party and founded a new one, called New Force (Nová síla, NovSil) in 2002, renamed to Workers' Party (Dělnická strana, DS) next year. Tomáš Vandas, former member of SPR-RSČ and secretary of RMS,

¹¹ Within this framework, and inspired by the West, non-political and anti-racist tendencies also appeared, including SHARP skinheads and Red and Anarchist Skinheads.

¹² These social democrats were dissatisfied with accession of the Czech Republic to NATO and with the fact that the social democratic government did not prevent NATO attacks on Yugoslavia in 1999.

¹³ A small conservative party with occasional extreme right tendencies which exists since 1991 and draws on the tradition of equally-named party from the era of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

¹⁴ In what can only be called a total paradox, this party arrived at a pre-election agreement with the Roma Civic Initiative (Romská občanská iniciativa, ROI); the chairman of the latter was criticised for this step by the large part of the Roma political movement.

¹⁵ The splinter group of Republicans also contested the election, polling 0.14%. The group played no significant role afterwards.

became the party leader in 2003. The party was little known and had no membership aside from a few former republicans, however. Neither National Unity, nor National Party contested the 2002 election. The results achieved by the extreme right in the 2002 local election were likewise pathetic: gains of the individual candidate lists were close to zero, and together they polled 0.2% of the vote.¹⁶

Extreme right parties were looking into various options of co-operating. For the election of the European Parliament in June 2004, National Party and Czech National Social Party (Česká strana národně sociální, ČSNS) formed National Coalition (Národní koalice), which failed at the election (0.12%).¹⁷ RMS and Workers' Party ran independently and failed as well (polling 0.67% and 0.18% of the vote, respectively). The failures continued in the November 2004 regional election (RMS 0.20%, ČHNJ 0.02%, DS independently 0.09% and in coalition with the National Party 0.01%, National Unity 0.04% Marsák, 2007, p. 18).

With the parliamentary election approaching, representatives of the extreme right were aware of the misery of their groupuscules, bickering over ideological and personal issues. The situation motivated them to co-operate for a while. In 2005, they announced the creation of National Five (Národní pětka), a common coalition for the 2006 election, consisting of the National Party, Workers' Party, National Unity, Czech Movement for National Unity and Miroslav Sládek's Republicans. Their unity proved short-lived, however. Due to internal disputes, Workers' Party and National Unity left the project of National Five. The rest renamed the association to National Forces (Národní síly), but even within this smaller entity the relationships between the leader of Miroslav Sládek's Republicans and others became difficult (Kyloušek, Smolík, 2006, p. 87–88).

Eventually, only the candidate list of the National Party contested the election. ČHNJ decided to run independently in one electoral region (0.00%),¹⁸ elsewhere, members of ČHNJ and some individuals from RMS ran on the candidate list of the National Party which only polled 0.17% of vote. The coalition Law and Justice (Právo a spravedlnost, PaS)¹⁹ created in 2005 and inspired by a Polish party of the same name²⁰ which was successful at the time, fared marginally better with 0.23% of the vote (Rataj, 2006: 188). Its candidate list included members of the Workers Party, National Unity, Republican Party of Farmers and Smallholders, and Democratic Party of Social Justice (Demokratická strana sociální spravedlnosti).²¹ The overall result of the extreme right in the 2006 parliamentary election was nothing short of catastrophic, in sharp contrast with the contemporary successes of this end of the political spectrum in Slovakia and Poland.

Rise of activism without electoral success

The gains of the extreme right were likewise negligible in the 2006 local election.²² A new trend that affected future developments appeared here for the first time, however. The candidate list of the Workers' Party included activists of the neo-Nazi National Resistance, part of which was once again acquiring political ambitions. Autonomous Nationalists (Autonomní nacionalisté), a new sub-cultural political trend that attempts to make national socialism more attractive to contemporary youth by refusing the skinhead image, using the fashion of "Black block" type copied from the extreme left, endorsing the use of graffiti and new musical styles including hip hop and techno, and featuring a strong revolutionary anti-capitalist rhetoric. They have been gaining strength in the militant scene (Vejvodová, 2008).

The Workers' Party also provided a political platform for the Autonomous Nationalists: the co-operation began towards the end of 2006, developed in 2007 and manifested itself fully in 2008. In addition, members of the non-registered group National Corporatism (Národní korporativismus) were incorporated into Workers' Party and into Autonomous Nationalists (Charvát, 2007: 155), attempting to interconnect the nationalist and neo-Nazi spectra and organising a number of marches and events (Nejvyšší správní soud 2010). During the years 2007–2008, the Czech neo-Nazi scene was piqued by a number of crackdowns by the state. Co-operation with a political party was expected to bring a political weight to the scene; it was strongly inspired by the co-operation between the National Democratic Party of Germany (NDP) with the local Autonomous Nationalists and activists of Freier Widerstand. The co-operation is successful in Saxony, where NDP already gained seats in the state parliament (Landtag) twice. Saxony neighbours of the Czech Republic and the Czech neo-Nazis are well-connected (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010, p. 3).

In 2007–2009, the Czech extreme right was also inspired by another trend, this time coming from the East, mainly from Hungary. It consisted in attracting media attention and subsequently seeking popular support through the creation of paramilitary units. In August 2007, Jobbik founded the Hungarian Guard (Mayer, Odehnal, 2010, p. 51). The Czech National Party announced the creation of National Guard soon after, on 28 October 2007. This step must be considered in the context of

¹⁶ An exception to this was the success of a candidate list led by Miroslav Sládek called "Independents Security and Prosperity" in the district Brno-Útěchov (where Sládek lived). Sládek became deputy mayor in the council and in 2003 occupied the post of the mayor. After disputes in the council, early election was called in the municipality in 2004, however. Although Sládek's candidate list won the election with 38.77% of the vote, it was pushed into opposition by the other parties. Sládek subsequently moved out of Útěchov and thus lost the position of local councillor (Ustohalová, 2004). He did not stand in the next local election in Útěchov.

¹⁷ ČSNS traditionally belongs to the Czech political spectrum and is usually ranked among Centre-Left, but between 1998 and 2005, it also exhibited extreme right tendencies.

¹⁸ In the Ústí nad Labem regions, obtaining 0.00% of the vote (112 votes in absolute terms).

¹⁹ In legal terms, this was the former party of "Sládek's pensioners" the Pensioners' Association of the Czech Republic just renamed.

²⁰ Ideologically, however, it was closer to the League of Polish Families.

²¹ This party, initially without a clear ideological profile, was created in 2004 as the "Party of Citizens of the Czech Republic", and was renamed "Democratic Party of Social Justice" (Demokratická strana sociální spravedlnosti, DSSS) a year later.

²² Law and Justice: 0.08% of the vote and 6 seats, National Party 0.05% of the vote and 7 seats, but won the position of mayor in one small municipality; Workers' Party, National Unity, Czech Movement for National Unity, 0.01% of the vote each.

a series of various provocations with anti-Roma and Islamophobic tendencies which the National Party deployed in its attempt to enter the public consciousness at the time. With only a few exceptions, the National Guard remained a rather virtual project (Ministerstvo vnitra 2010, p. 7).

In January 2008, the Workers' Party created a paramilitary formation as well, calling it the Protective Corps of the Workers' Party (Ochranné sbory Dělnické strany, OS DS). On 4 October 2008, a guard of OS DS entered the Janov housing estate in the North Bohemian city of Litvínov where the relationship between the majority and the Roma minority became tense. A group of Roma waited for the DS members, whom they abused with vulgarities and threats in front of TV cameras; the police, although present, took no action. This aroused sympathies for the DS. On 18 October 2008 (the second day of the regional election), several dozens of neo-Nazis marched into Janov. Even bigger demonstrations and disturbance took place in Janov on 17 November 2008, with more than thousand of militants participating. Although DS officially distanced itself from the violence, it nevertheless used it in political propaganda, including the symbolism of the so-called "Battle for Janov". In the first half of 2009, guards of OS DS were active in several towns, especially in the North Bohemia; rallies of Roma and anti-racism activists awaited them (Albert, 2009, p. 31–32).

The Workers' Party poll rating improved, which was especially conspicuous in comparison with the abysmal score of the "utraqist" National Party. In the October 2008 regional election, the Workers' Party²³ polled 0.99% of the vote (28,865 votes in absolute terms), whereas the National Party scored 0.09% (it did not even run in all regions). In the June 2009 EP election, the Workers' Party obtained 1.07% of votes (25,368 votes and it was eligible for state funding) whereas the National Party only polled 0.26% of the vote (6,263 in absolute terms).

Already after the Janov events in November 2008, the government initiated a motion to ban the Workers' Party, but the draft was ill-conceived and rejected by the Supreme Administrative Court in March 2009. A new draft was presented by the government towards the end of 2009, and on 17 February 2010 the Supreme Administrative Court disbanded the Workers' Party. The decision was upheld by the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, which rejected the party's complaint on 27 May 2010.

Workers' Party members were ready for this, however. The adherents of the party already took control of the Democratic Party of Social Justice, its coalition partner from 2006 to 2008, and on 10 November 2008 renamed it to Workers' Party of Social Justice (Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti, DSSS). Hana Pavlíčková, mother of DS chairman Tomáš Vandas, became the chairwoman. After the ban of DS, most of its membership transferred into DSSS (Bezpečnostní informační služba 2010a).

DSSS polled 1.14% of the vote (59,888) in the 2010 election of the Chamber of Deputies, which despite being the best result of the extreme right since 1998 was rather disappointing for the party. Association for the Republic Republican Party of Czechoslovakia failed utterly at the election.²⁴ It contested the election only in two regions, polling 0.03% of the vote (1993).

The National Party was inactive and disintegrating since the end of 2009 and did not run in the 2010 election. Some of its members transferred into the Czech Movement for National Unity, assumed leading positions in the party and increased its activities, which were relatively subdued lately. National Unity did not run in the 2010 election either. Despite the slight increase in votes for DSSS in the most recent election the position of extreme right parties in the Czech Republic is very weak overall.

Arguments of the Czech extreme right and its social base

Main issues

The Czech extreme right attempts to define its place in the party system through several fundamental topics but is not appealing to the wider circles of the electorate. Anti-gypsyism is a traditional domain of the Czech extreme right, formulated in a number of ferocious expressions and present in the organisation of marches and patrols in areas with increased inter-ethnic tensions. The extreme right attempts to exploit these tensions to gain votes, but it succeeds in doing so in only a few places (Mareš, 2009, pp. 11–12). In their verbal expressions, the representatives of the extreme right do not use the politically-correct word Roma, but the term Gypsy ("Cikán"). The Czech nation is presented as a victim of an alleged mass "Gypsy crime and inadaptability" and solutions offered consist of segregation and employment of a harsh legal approach.²⁵

²³ The Workers' Party contested this election in a coalition with the Democratic Party of Social Justice, in most regions under the title Workers' Party For the abolishment of charges in healthcare; in Plzeň region, it was called Workers' Party No to the US radar station, thus protesting against the plan of the USA and the Czech government to place a radar station of the US anti-missile defence in the country.

²⁴ Since 2005, this party is once again called SPR-RSČ, after it was according to its own proclamation reunited with some smaller entities which earlier split off (Kyloušek, Smolík, 2008, p. 374). Due to dissatisfaction with the chairman Sládek, the Republican Party of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (Republikánská strana Čech, Moravy a Slezska, RSČMS) split off in 2010, but it is of marginal importance.

²⁵ A typical former member of the Workers' Party, Ladislav Malý, said on the party's website: "Czech citizens cannot bear the terrorisation by their Gypsy fellow-citizens, they simply had enough. And can one wonder? Whoever never lived with Gypsies together in one building, never had them for neighbours, can never understand what tribulations the Czechs are exposed to" (Malý, 2008). After describing negative forms of behaviour of some Roma, he proposes the following solution: "Given the co-existence with Gypsies is impossible for the Czechs, that the so-called integration is only adding oil to fire, their rigorous segregation from Czechs is seen as the best option. There is more than one million Gypsies today although they cannot be properly counted, as they do not declare their nationality (and why would they do if they are not obliged to do so by law). It would be good to concentrate them in a detached area, let's say two or three districts. At the same time it is necessary to give them the status of a nationality and of an ethnic group with all rights and obligations. In such a detached area, they could live as they please, but they would have to take care of themselves." (Malý, 2008).

Electoral gains of the extreme right, 2000–2010.

	Regions 2000	Chamber of Deputies 2002	European Parliament 2004	Regions 2004	Chamber of Deputies 2006	Regions 2008	European Parliament 2009	Chamber of Deputies 2010
RMS/SPR-RSC	1.43% ^a 33596	0.97% 46325	0.67 15767	0.20 4276	^b	0.15 4409	0.31 7492	0.03 1993
DS/DSSS			0.18 4289	0.14 ^c 3066	^d	0.99 ^e 28865	1.07 25368	1.14 59888
National Party			0.12 ^f 2944	0.01 ^c 313	0.17 ^b 9341	0.09 2711	0.26 6263	
National Unity				0.04 956	^d			
National Democratic Party	0.03% 897	0.11% 5532						
VRS/Right alternative	0.10% 2483							
ČSDH/ČHNJ	0.08% 2063	0.01 602		0.02 573	0.00 ^b 216		^g	
Law and Justice					0.23 ^d 12756		^h	
Republicans		0.14 6786						
Totals	1.64% 39039	1.23% 59245	0.97% 23000	0.41% 9184	0.40% 22313	1.23% 35985	1.64% 39123	1.17% 61881

^a Coalition of SPR-RSC, NRM and SDČR.

^b With the exception of one region, members of RMS and ČHNJ were on the candidate list of the National Party.

^c In one region, coalition of DS and the National Party, in one region, coalition of DS and Right Alternative.

^d Members of DS and National Unity on the candidate list of Law and Justice.

^e Workers' Party formed a coalition with the Democratic Party of Social Justice under the name Workers' Party For the abolishment of charges in healthcare; in one region, it was called Workers' Party No to the US radar station.

^f National coalition consisting of the National Party and the Czech National Social Party.

^g The chairman of ČHNJ ran on the ticket of Sovereignty (Suverenita).

^h Members of Law and justice ran on the ticket of Free Citizens Party (Strana svobodných občanů). Source: Czech Statistical Office (www.volby.cz), author's calculations.

The extreme right also criticises immigration, although this topic is not as important for the contemporary Czech Republic as it is for Western Europe. Related to this is the limited potential of Islamophobia in the Czech Republic,²⁶ manifested in the failure of the National Party, as the aversion to Islam was one of its main themes (Smolík, 2010: 80). Although part of the extreme right, especially the neo-Nazis, have a reserved attitude towards Islam on the Czech territory, they support the Islamist struggle against Israel and the USA.²⁷ Young neo-Nazis even carry flags of Palestine and Iran on anti-Israeli demonstrations. Extreme right political parties mostly mask anti-Semitism as anti-Sionism, but its appeal to voters is only very limited.

In the Czech Republic, as elsewhere in the world, the extreme right presents itself as the force of “law and order”. It strongly opposes efforts to legalise drugs, demands capital punishment and rejects enlargement of the concept of human rights. In addition to ethnic minorities, it strongly opposes rights of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transsexual community (in the Czech Republic, registered partnership of same-sex couples is recognised by law). It is anti-liberal, anti-capitalist and especially anti-communist. At the same time, it presents itself as victim of rule of “political correctness” and of the established forces.

In its expressions, the extreme right harshly attacks established political parties and the state apparatus, accusing them of corruption and of negligence of “ordinary people's interests”. They criticise police for inactivity in fighting crime (especially ethnic crime) and for allegedly unsubstantiated measures against the extremists. The extreme right also refuses the contemporary EU and promotes the concept of “Europe of Nations”. It is equally against the Czech membership in NATO and the foreign military missions of the Czech Army (Mareš, 2008: 41–42).

Electorate and activists

Although within the Czech electorate there is a demand for several topics that are important to the extreme right, the public either does not consider these topics to be dominant²⁸ or does not believe the extreme right competent to solve

²⁶ There are about 15 000 Muslims in the Czech Republic, but they are not concentrated in Muslim neighbourhoods as is the case in Western Europe and the community displays no significant tendencies towards radicalism (Bezpečnostní informační služba 2010b, p. 2).

²⁷ In 2006, about forty Czech neo-Nazis even asked the president Václav Klaus to allow them to serve in the army of the Islamic Republic of Iran in case Iran is attacked by Israel (Bezpečnostní informační služba 2007).

²⁸ According to the Public Opinion Research Centre, the most acute issues for the Czech public are unemployment, corruption, social security, functioning of authorities, health care and economic crime. Security ranked eight and immigration eighteen in the poll (Šamanová, 2010, p. 2).

them.²⁹ Given the minimal electoral support at present, it is not even clear who exactly constitutes the electorate of the extreme right, because few supporters of DS/DSSS and other extreme right parties appear in the samples of opinion poll respondents.

Even in the 1990s it was difficult to establish the social characteristic of SPR-RSČ's electorate, because it was rather unstable. According to the Factum agency, at the time of SPR-RSČ's biggest electoral success in 1996 the profile of its electorate was as follows:

Profile of SPR-RSČ's electorate in 1996.

Group	Percentage of the group voting SPR-RSČ	Group's share in the party's electorate
Men	11.1	63.7
Factory workers	14.9	42.2
Agricultural and forestry labourers	12.1	8
Workers in mining and processing industries	17.1	2.1
Workers in heavy industries	12.0	6.4
Members of armed forces and supporting staff	15.6	3.2
Individuals from households with average monthly income 5001 7000 CZK	10.5	23.8
Individuals with unfinished primary education	17.7	1.6
Skilled workers and individuals with secondary education without a school leaving exam	11.7	46.4

Source: *FACTUM*. 1997: Volební rok 1996. Sekundární analýza volebních výzkumů, p. 150.

According to sociologists Kreidl and Vlachová, higher support for SPR-RSČ appeared during the electoral term 1996–1998 in areas with high levels of unemployment and crime. In terms of the distribution of support, the party was more rural than urban (Kreidl, Vlachová, 1999, p. 344). Unemployed young people whose vocational training did not include school leaving exam were more likely to swing towards SPR-RSČ than others (Kreidl, Vlachová, 1999, p. 350).

The marginal position of the extreme right in the Czech Republic lasting already about a decade did not allow a meaningful study of its electorate. It was only with the partial rise of the Workers' Party since the end 2008 that researchers were again provided with at least some relevant data. It turns out that the support for DS/DSSS increases in areas with high levels of unemployment and crime and areas with tensions between the majority and the Roma minority, especially in Northern Bohemia.

According to STEM agency which examined the structure of DS/DSSS voters between January 2009 and April 2010, the electorate is predominantly male (71.6% were men and 28.4% were women). In terms of education, 25.6% had primary education, 40.2% had vocational training, 26.5% secondary education with a school-leaving exam and 7.7% university education. In terms of property and material security, the sample was dominated by people who feel their security is average (56.6%), followed by those who feel badly secured (31.0%), essentially poor (6.2%) and well secured (6.2%). In terms of social standing, the most important groups were employees (49.1%), unemployed (24.1%) and students (15.5%).³⁰ As far as distribution into age brackets is concerned, 47% of voters were 18–29 years old, 29.9% between 30 and 44, 17.9% in the category of 45–59 years of age and 5.1% were 60 or above (STEM, 2010, pp. 1–2). The relationship of voters to the party is given in the following table.

Relationship of DS/DSSS electorate to the party.

Intensity of relationship	% of DS/DSSS electorate
Very strong	9.1
Fairly strong	46.4
Rather weak	34.5
Very weak	10.0

Source: *STEM*. 2010. Trendy 09/01–10/04, p. 3.

We have even less reliable data about membership of extreme right parties. In the 1990s, SPR-RSČ stated that it had 50 000 members (Williams, 1999 p. 213), but this was clearly a stretch, as the real number was around 5000 and later around

²⁹ This is purely a speculation, as no trustworthy opinion poll on this issue was ever carried out.

³⁰ Important data was provided by a mock election in schools in 2010. This was a simulation of a parliamentary election among the students in high schools and vocational training, that is, young people without the right to vote (in Czech Republic, suffrage is limited to those over eighteen years of age). The Workers' Party of Social Justice polled 7.14% in the mock election, which indicates its popularity among adolescents and future first-time voters (Milward Brown Czech Republic, 2010, p. 1).

1000 members (Mareš, 2003, p. 213). The Workers' Party of Social Justice currently has about 500 members. The composition of the candidate lists of DSSS for the election of the Chamber of Deputies is given in the table that follows.

Candidates of DSSS according to age and gender, election of the Chamber of Deputies, 2010.

	Men		Women	
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
Total	283	84.23	53	15.57
Under 29 years	74	22.02	21	6.25
30–49 years	142	42.26	24	7.14
50 years and over	67	19.94	8	2.38
Average age	40.03		36.32	

Source: Czech Statistical Office 2010.

Other registered parties and organisations only count their members in dozens. The militant spectrum comprises about 3000 members, mostly young people aged twenty-five or less, but the scene's elites are often above thirty. The bulk is constituted by lowly educated, unemployed and manual workers, but the elite of the scene also includes individuals with university education and members of the middle classes. A rough estimate sets the share of women to 20% of the activists of the militant spectrum (Mareš, 2009, p. 15).

Extreme right in the Czech party system

Competitors of the extreme right in the Czech party system

A number of topics which could potentially make the extreme right successful are also exploited by established parties or opposition parties of other types. Although at the country-wide level pronounced anti-Roma attitudes are mostly taboo for the important political parties, various measures against Roma (not necessarily explicitly called as such) made popular a number of politicians at the local level. For instance Jiří Čuněk, mayor of the town Vsetín and later a senator and chairman of the Christian and Democratic Union Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU ČSL), moved Roma who were in rent arrears out of town and made xenophobic comments for the media (Albert, 2009, p. 23–24). Other harsh racist comments were made by Liana Janáčková, a mayor who wanted to enclose a Roma settlement with electric fence, and her deputy Jiří Jezerský, who said, hyperbolically, that he would shoot out the Roma (Romea, 2008).

In its refusal of the dominant line of foreign politics, the strong Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, opposing EU and NATO, is a competition for the extreme right. During the whole era since the fall of Communism, Communists have been garnering the potential of electoral protest against the establishment. Tough politics of "law and order" and traditional values are also promoted by the conservative right and various populist entities without a clear ideological profile. Given that extreme right elements are present in their policies and the fact that today they are probably the main competitor of the extreme right, and able to take over its potential voters, we will now focus on the populists.

The populists

The first such entity is currently officially called "Sovereignty Jana Bobošíková's Block" (Suverenita blok Jany Bobošíkové). This party was registered as a new party in 2011, however, its ancestor was founded in 2002 as Party of Common Sense, the word Sovereignty was added in 2009 and the present name dates from 2010. Petr Hannig was the chairman, but the main personality was Jana Bobošíková and she left this party in 2010. She was also the chairwoman of her own party Politics 21 (Politika 21), created in 2006, which has been co-operating closely with Sovereignty since 2006. Sovereignty was also supported by populist left Party of Dignified Life (Strana důstojného života) which split off the Social Democrats.

Jana Bobošíková, also known under the nickname "Bobo", (born 1964) gained prominence as a brusque TV anchor. In 2004, she was elected MEP on the ticket of the political movement Independents (Nezávislí), with whom she fell out soon afterwards and founded her own party, Politics 21. She remained Non-Inscrit during the whole of her term in the EP.³¹ In 2008, she contested presidency as a candidate of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, but was beaten by the incumbent, Václav Klaus. Bobošíková has friendly relationships with Klaus, however, and it is possible that her candidacy was only a tactical manoeuvre to take votes from Klaus' main competitor, Jan Švejnar.

Bobošíková is known for her resolute euro-scepticism, refusal of the demands made by the Sudeten German Homeland Association against the Czech Republic, and for her social populism. She co-operates with various currents of political

³¹ She did not act on the offer of the Italian MEP Luca Romagnoli of Fiamma Tricolore from 2006 to participate in the creation of a nationalist faction in the European Parliament (Fiala et al., 2007, p. 177).

protest, including the extreme right. In 2010, for instance, member of the Czech Movement for National Unity and former candidate of the National Party Ladislav Bárta ran on the candidate list of Sovereignty. In August 2010, Bobošíková signed the manifesto of the initiative Akce D.O.S.T. (the Czech word “dost” means “enough” or “stop” is in this case used as acronym for Důvěra [Trust], Objektivita [Objectivity], Solidarita [Solidarity], Tradice [Tradition])³² (Petřík, 2010). At the same time, Bobošíková strongly condemns neo-Nazism. With her on the candidate list, Sovereignty polled 4.26% of the vote (100 514 votes) in the 2009 EP election and 3.67% of the vote (192 145 votes) in the 2010 election of the Chamber of Deputies. According to some commentators, she takes votes from both the Communists and the extreme right (Golgo, 2010).

Another party which is an immediate competitor to the extreme right is the euro-sceptic conservative-liberal Free Citizens Party (Strana svobodných občanů, SSO). It split off the Civic Democratic Party in 2008 due to the resolute euro-scepticism of its long-term leader Václav Klaus, ODS itself was for a long time a competitor of the extreme right in this regard. Free Citizens Party's main themes are opposition to the EU and economic liberalism. Its profile is somewhat similar to the United Kingdom Independence Party. Thanks to its emphasis on state sovereignty, refusal of multi-culturalism and demands for large-scale freedom of expression, the party became at least temporarily acceptable for some adherents of the extreme right, but those were not sympathetic to its support of US and Israeli politics and pro-capitalist rhetoric. SSO is not a successful party: in the 2009 EP election it only polled 1.26% of the vote (29 846 votes) and in the 2010 election of the Chamber of Deputies it received 0.74% (38 894) of votes.³³

Public Affairs (Věci veřejné, VV), on the contrary, scored a success in the 2010 election. Although the party dates back to 2002, for a long time it was only active in Prague local politics. The breakthrough came in 2009, when popular investigative journalist Radek John joined its ranks, becoming the chairman and election leader; at the same time, the party started its expansion to the national level. Vice-chairman Vít Bárta also plays an important role in the party; before being elected MP, he was director of a large private security company ABL. People from ABL occupy other important positions in the party leadership as well.

Before the 2010 election, VV organised what it called “Social-intervention patrols” in uniforms which allegedly were to counteract criminals, homeless and drug addicts. Supposedly, they were to help citizens with legal advice, apprehend perpetrators of criminal acts in flagrante and hand them over to the Police (Pařízková, 2010). After a wave of critique from the media and political competitors of VV,³⁴ the party disbanded its patrols (Česká tisková kancelář 2010). The programme of the party also included “the rejection of positive discrimination, forced removal of those with chronic rent arrears or regarded as social misfits, increased police patrols in problem areas and a crack down on abuse of social payments and employment of foreigners” (Johnstone, 2010). The party gained seats in the election and became a partner in the coalition government, with John becoming the Minister of Interior.

But the party cannot be perceived solely through the prism of these phenomena and demands. VV emphasises direct democracy and agrees with the country's membership in NATO and EU. Among its supporters are people originating from the circles of “non-political politics” of the former dissident and President Václav Havel. VV established contacts with international liberal structures and attempts to show itself as liberal on the domestic political field as well. It refuses extremism and racism, yet its stern “law and order” approach and an ethos of protest apparently captivated part of the electorate which otherwise could vote for the extreme right and VV thus weakening this part of the political spectrum.³⁵

Repressive measures and the allies of the extreme right in the Czech party system

The extreme right finds itself isolated in the party spectrum and co-operation with it is usually perceived as unacceptable by the established parties. In 2009, the parliamentary parties at the time even signed a manifesto in which they distanced themselves from right and left extremism and pledged to act against it (Dohoda ústavních činitelů, parlamentních politických stran a občanů o společném postupu proti nárůstu extremismu a rasismu 2010).

In addition to facing the competition of the above-mentioned protest parties, the extreme right is also repressed by the state. The main manifestation of this repression was the disbanding of the Workers' Party in 2010, which was justified by reference to the promotion of violence by the party, co-operation with neo-Nazis, and the fact that its Protective Corps unlawfully took over tasks properly belonging to the organs of state (Nejvyšší správní soud 2010). Representatives of the extreme right parties, including leaders of the Workers' Party and some members of the National Party, were individually criminally prosecuted for racist expressions.

³² The manifesto was written in 2007 and the circle of its authors and signatories gradually evolved into a distinct conservative movement defending traditional moral values, fighting multi-culturalism and defending euro-scepticism. “Akce D.O.S.T.” brought together conservatives (including some close collaborators of the president Václav Klaus), fundamentalist Catholics and some representatives of the extreme right.

³³ SSO signed a pre-election agreement with Law and Order according to which members of the latter will be present on SSO's candidate lists. Some time before this, however, Law and Order shed its extreme right identity after a change of leadership and transformed itself into a conservative party. Its members are also involved in “Akce D.O.S.T.”

³⁴ After the creation of Public Affairs' Social-intervention patrols, the Workers' Party of Social Justice announced that it will continue the activities of the Protective Corps of the Workers' Party and founded in June 2010 Civic patrols of the Workers' Party of Social Justice (Studená, 2010).

³⁵ For example, Ladislav Paštěka, the leading candidate of the VV in municipal elections 2010 in Chodov, (Sokolov district), was a former member of the National Party and especially the National Guard (Kostlán, 2010a).

The extreme right does not have any long-term allies. Part of the Moravian autonomist movement forms a partial exception to this, but the movement has been very weak since the mid-1990s. Right extremists co-operated with leftist nationalists from the circles around the Communist Party on an ad hoc basis. This co-operation included protests against the NATO attack on Yugoslavia in 1999, the recognition of Kosovo and the demands of the Sudeten Germans. Some nationalists came together with euro-sceptic conservatives in initiatives against the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU. In 2005, the then-chairman of the Civic Democratic Party, Mirek Topolánek, had one meeting with the chairwoman of the National Party, Petra Edelmanová, but the meeting brought no results (Kyloušek, Smolík, 2006, p. 90). Speculations about a possible co-operation between some politicians of ODS and DSSS in Northern Bohemia on the local level, rejected by the party leadership (Kostlán, 2010b), remain unconfirmed.

Since 2007 the most important platform on which extreme right activists could meet with the conservatives and some nondescript personalities has been the above-mentioned initiative D.O.S.T., which on the basis of the propositions it published cannot be declared extremist however. The arrival of “Reaganists” from the circle of President Klaus further weakened the position of extreme nationalists in the initiative. Overall, the extreme right remains in a marginal position and isolated in the Czech political system.

Foreign links of the Czech extreme right

The Czech extreme right attempts to compensate its weak position in the domestic political system with bold activity in the international field which is in turn used in domestic political propaganda. Due to its weakness in domestic politics, the Czech extreme right is a partner with only limited value for the foreign parties and, particularly, for trans-national organisations. Some party links have been prefigured by earlier links established by non-party formations, including militant organisations and youth sub-cultures.

Pan-European extreme right organisations

The Czech racist skinhead scene connected with the Europe-wide structures already at the beginning of the 1990s. Patriotic Front established in 1993 contacts with the youth section of the French National Front. From 1997, Sládek's SPR-RSČ was the main actor in the co-operation with the National Front and Jean-Marie Le Pen; later, RMS took over this role. These parties were also involved in Euronat's activities, and the Republican Youth became member of Euronat Youth. As the influence of SPR-RSČ/RMS decreased, so did any substantial international contacts. Representatives of RMS and, later, of SPR-RSČ, have been participating since 2003 in the sessions of the World Congress of Patriotic Parties, organised in Moscow by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (SPR-RSČ, 2010), with the earliest contact between the two parties dating back to 1994 (Mareš, 2003, p. 207).³⁶

In the second half of the 1990s, the Christian current within the Czech extreme right became involved in the International Third Position and co-operated with Polish and Slovak Clerical Fascists. The Movement for National Unity was also involved in the founding of European National Front (ENF) in 2003; its position of Czech Republic's representative was eventually taken over by the political party National Unity. Due to disputes between Polish and German right extremists, the ENF split, however. Part of the ENF gravitating around the National Revival of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski, NOP) with which the National Unity sided, remained inactive for a long time (Fiala et al., 2007, p. 178–179).

Soon after its inception, the National Party established contacts with the youth organisation of the Slovak National Party. The contacts were broken off in 2007 after a meeting was held between the National Party and representatives of the Hungarian party Jobbik (which is known for its irredentist demands on Slovakia) in the Slovak capital Bratislava. The National Party fell out with Jobbik over the question of the so-called Beneš decrees³⁷ and there was no further co-operation of the two parties. National Party organised several events with the British National Party and the Swedish National Democrats. In 2009, its chairman Petra Edelmanová attended the Anti-Islamisation Congress in Cologne which was organised by the local Islamophobic movement “Pro-Köln” (Mareš, 2009, p. 25). The disintegration of the National Party towards the end of 2009 excluded this entity from negotiations about trans-national groupings at the European level, of which the most important result thus far has been the Alliance of European Nationalist Movements (AENM) (Williams, 2010).

At the end of 2009, after Jobbik became member of the AENM, the Workers' Party also expressed interest in membership, making reference to allegedly good relations of the chairman Tomáš Vandas with Jean-Marie Le Pen, which probably date to the period of Vandas' engagement in SPR-RSČ (Dělnická strana 2009). The Workers' Party or its successor the Workers' Party of Social Justice, are yet to integrate into the organisation, however.

³⁶ At the beginning of the 1990s, Sládek attempted to co-operate with the German Republicans, but it came to naught and Sládek later decided for a harsh anti-German rhetoric. In the first half of the 1990s, Sládek attempted to portray himself as an ally of the Republican party in the U.S.; the contacts were mediated by certain Czech emigrants living in the States. There was no substantial co-operation between the two parties, however. Sládek also lacked contacts in Slovakia, where after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia the project of a partner party which took over the few local organisations from the period of the federation, Združenie pro republiku Republikánská strana Československa (ZPR-RSČ), failed. Sládek did not keep contacts with the Slovak National Party due to differences over whether Czechoslovakia should be split up. (Mareš, 2003: 207).

³⁷ These are the decrees of the Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš which among other things served as the basis for post-war expulsion of individuals of German and Hungarian nationalities; their property was forfeited.

Czech-German extreme right cooperation

In 2008, the Workers' Party established close contacts with the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD). The groundwork for this co-operation was established in earlier contacts of neo-Nazi militants of the National Resistance and the Autonomous Nationalists of both countries. Tomáš Vandas, Workers' Party chairman, also made appearance at the "Festival of Nations", organised regularly since 2005 by the neo-Nazi scene in Thuringia. NPD representatives spoke at several Workers' Party demonstrations in the Czech Republic, where representatives of Free Resistance and neo-Nazi free cells of Germany and Austria also appeared (Nejvyšší správní soud 2010: 15–16). DS also established close co-operation with the civic movement Slovak Community (Slovenská pospolitost') on which basis the People's Party Our Slovakia (Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko) was formed in 2009. Here again the contacts of the militant scene played an important role.

From the end of the 1990s, the militant scene participated in the projects of Free Nationalists (Freie Nationalisten) and National Resistance, which find their roots in the strategy of German neo-Nazi movement of the mid-1990s. Due to state repression against registered organisations at the time, the German neo-Nazi scene transformed into a network of free local and regional cells that were not united by one leadership. In some cases, these cells co-operated with the National Democratic Party of Germany or its youth organisation Young National Democrats (Jungen Nationaldemokraten). The wider circles of the nationalist extremist groupings started to be called National Resistance (Nationaler Widerstand).

At that time the elites of the domestic neo-Nazi scene (then mostly employing skinhead image) were already in contact with German neo-Nazis. In 1999, Czech neo-Nazis attempted to register a civic association with the German name Jungen Nationaldemokraten; this was refused by the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic,³⁸ to whose objections the neo-Nazis did not react. They used this name temporarily on several demonstrations and then chose the designation National Resistance (Mareš, 2003, p. 490). The character of their movement corresponded more to what was called Free Nationalism in Germany.

German neo-Nazis view the territory of contemporary Czech Republic as a Reich territory. For this reason the building of resistance structures is understood to take place in the presumed space of the Fourth Reich and National Resistance mostly uses symbolism of the Third Reich on the Czech territory. The decisive forces in the National Resistance gradually accepted a strong pro-German course, a fact that is testified to by the Basic agreement of the Czech and German comrades. This agreement included the cancellation of the Beneš decrees and the activists of National Resistance from the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria proclaimed in the document: "we purposely build on the tradition of German Reich and its allies as the core and buttress of Europe" (Národní odpor 2009). In 2010, activists of the Resistance founded the Circle of Czech-German Friendship (Freies Netz Süd, 2010).

The Czech militant neo-Nazi extreme right also has close contacts in Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Russia and Sweden. It participates in spreading the concepts of National Resistance, and of autonomous nationalism. The Czech scene gained Europe-wide recognition due to the mass unrest in Janov in which German and Slovak neo-Nazis also participated. After the Czech police carried out raids against the leading activists of the Czech neo-Nazis in 2009 and the Workers' Party was disbanded in 2010, a campaign of solidarity with Czech activists facing prosecution was organised in the European neo-Nazi scene (Mareš, 2010, p. 10–11).

Czech extreme right in political science studies

The extreme right in the Czech Republic has developed as part of post-communist politics and in this sense it was first researched in the context of the extreme right during the transformation process in post-communist Europe and respectively Eastern Europe (Beichelt, Minkenberg, 2002; Ramet, 1999). Due to the process of Europeanization the extreme right in Central and Eastern Europe can be researched also in the context of the whole Europe (Mudde, 2007) and now it is possible to explain the position of the extreme right in various countries.

Several theories have been elaborated for the explanations of success of the extreme or radical populist right. Nevertheless, the general theoretical explanation of its failure is missing. Cas Mudde differentiates demand-side (on macro-, meso- and micro-level) and supply side (external and internal) of the explanations of success of the extreme right (Mudde, 2007, p. 202). On demand side, or macro-level, he analyses theories of modernization, crisis and ethnic backlash, on micro-level populist radical right attitudes and insecurity are analyzed (Mudde, 2007, pp. 201–231). On external supply side he uses institutional context, political context, cultural context and media for the explanation; on internal supply side are: ideology, leadership, organization and internationalization.

According to Lenka Bustikova and Herbert Kitschelt in post-communist Europe "ethnic endowments predispose countries with small minorities to be susceptible to the radical right appeals. This deep legacy has to be considered in the context of institutional legacies" (Bustikova, Kitschelt, 2010, p. 57). Both authors came to the conclusion: "Legacies are static, and change slowly at all, so they cannot fully account for abrupt changes in vote shares from one election to another" (Bustikova, Kitschelt, 2010, p. 57). However, not only legacies of the communist regime are important, but also the legacy of the extreme right development, including inter-war period (Frussetta, Glont, 2010, p. 157).

The weak position of the extreme right in the Czech Republic resists at the first glance explanations of success of this party family (Mudde, 2007, pp. 201–231), at least in the categories of modernization, crisis and ethnic backlash. In the 1990's these

³⁸ In 1999, they attempted to register another party, National-Social Alliance (Národně sociální aliance), but likewise failed.

approaches could be important for the explanation of the rise of the SPR-RSČ (Beichelt, Minkenberg, 2002; Kreidl, Vlachová, 1999); although not for its failure in the 1998 during the time of political crisis and economic recession; and not for the unsuccessful development of the extreme right during contemporary economic depression. The ethnic tensions, interconnected with consistent level of anti-Roma prejudices, and anti-establishment attitudes are also theoretical conditions for the rise, not for the decline of the extreme right. Institutional context mostly the proportional electoral system can be helpful for the extreme right, however, the 5% threshold limits the chances of small parties (Šedo, 2007, p. 129). Also the concept of institutional legacies by Bustikova and Kitschelt (2010) is not able to explain the Czech case.

Political and cultural context are more important for the failure of the Czech extreme right. During the Czech history the extreme right parties of Czech (not German) origin were weak, with the exception of the 1990's. Nationalist ideas represented parties in the broad political spectrum. The perception of the extreme right is mostly negative in the Czech milieu. Despite relatively high media attention to the extreme right, its coverage is rather negative. The Czech party system is able to produce non-extreme right anti-establishment alternatives and strong position is occupied by the "patriotic" communist party. The number of traditional electorate young male voters declined due the demographic changes (Smolík, 2011, p. 108).

The ideological supply of the extreme right causes problems because of the affiliation with the minority streams of the Czech political thinking on the one hand (Fascism, Christian Fundamentalism, Neo-Nazism), and the inability to create a trustworthy and attractive program within the mainstream nationalist orientation on the other hand. The organization structure of the extreme right parties is weak. The network of local organizations can be found only in some regions. Small consolidated centres in Prague are the dominant actors of the internal party life. After Sládek's decline there is no strong and charismatic party leader of the Czech extreme right. The international activity of the Czech extreme right is on relatively high level, but it has no impact on domestic electoral success.

Political scientist Jan Maršák identifies the cause of the long-term failure of the Czech extreme right as a combination of several factors: "absence of a coherent programme and a strong leader; strong internal tension; constant pressure within new parties pushing them towards disintegration; inability of the parties to appeal to wider segments of the electorate; and the turn of the protest electorate to other parties" (Maršák, 2007, p. 26).

From the comparative perspective of East-Central Europe (this area can be restricted to the Visegrad countries) the Czech Case is exceptional. So far, the extreme right was only successful in the Czech Republic during the 1990s, that is, in a period of political and economic transformation, which created specific conditions for the development of this political current in post-communist countries (Williams, 1999). In the mid-1990s, SPR-RSČ and the Hungarian party MIÉP were viewed as parties which character approached that of the contemporary West European populist radical right, attempting to prove themselves against a relatively established party system (Beyme, 1996, p. 426). In reality, SPR-RSČ became a representative of the sub-type "protest-transformation party", present at the time in the post-communist space (Fiala et al., 2007, p. 168) and which potential was exhausted by the rise of Europeanised political culture and of politically more trustworthy alternatives. It is interesting that at the turn of the century both the SPR-RSČ and MIÉP lost their parliamentary representation.

In the 1990's also the Slovak extreme right received a strong position within the party system thanks to the Slovak National Party (SNS). This party was established in 1990 as a separatist party and it won parliamentary seats in the first elections in the same year. After the division of Czechoslovakia it occupied the extreme-right spectrum. It was successful during the whole 1990's and even during the so-called Meciarism-era it was a member of the party coalition (Kopeček, 2007, p. 492). It lost parliamentary representation in 2002 due to the split of a strong party faction into the new party. But it won it again after re-unification in 2006 and has kept it also after the election 2010. In 2006–2010 it again became a member of the governmental coalition (Kupka, Laryš, Smolík, 2009, p. 45–46).

Only in Poland in 1990's the extreme right was at parliamentary level without representation, but it changed in election 2001. The extreme-right catholic League of Polish Families (LPR) and the populist Self-Defense were elected into the *Sejm* in 2001 and after the elections in 2005 these parties joined the governmental coalition with the conservative party Law and Justice (PaS). However, this coalition failed and both the LPR and Self-Defense fell into non-parliamentary position in 2007 (Kupka, Laryš, Smolík, 2009, p. 80).

In the same year the significant rise of the new strong Hungarian party Jobbik The Movement for better Hungary started. It was founded in 2003 and in 2007 it created the strong medialized paramilitary Hungarian guard. In election 2010 it won 6.67% of votes and 47 seats (Bélaiová, 2011, p. 91).

With the National Guard and the Protective Corps of the Workers' Party, also the Czech extreme right joined a specific trend in East-Central Europe: creation of paramilitary formations. It is a phenomenon which evokes memories of the first half of the twentieth century. These units are not primarily destined for such combat use in the way they had been used during the period of the rise of the fascist regimes in the 1920s and 1930s, however; above all, they are a good marketing move. Nevertheless, in the Czech Republic, they have not yet had such an effect as in Hungary.

In the specific geopolitical region of East-Central Europe the Czech extreme right in the first decade of the 21st century stayed outside parliamentary gates and on the domestic scene it was not able to win similar successes as in the 1990s or as the extreme right parties in Slovakia, Hungary and Poland.

Conclusion: conception of the Czech extreme right and its perspectives

The extreme right in the Czech Republic is still conditioned by the tension between tradition and post-modernity, like in the rest of East-Central Europe (Hloušek, Kopeček, 2010, p. 217). Attempts at a more modern conception of the populist

extreme right, represented mainly by the National Party in the beginnings of its existence, failed. Most of the contemporary Czech extreme right party spectrum falls into the category of dogmatic and anti-democratic parties which are called the “nonpopulist right” by Cas Mudde (Mudde, 2007, p. 49). The close alliance between DS and the German NPD in the last couple of years is characteristic in this regard.

The events unfolding on the Czech extreme right cannot be understood if one follows only registered political parties. One has to bear in mind the transfers of various groups of activists and even of influential individuals³⁹ who migrate between parties, transforming their ideological profiles, and who occupy various “dormant legal boxes” which the previous membership had “made available”. This results in a heterogeneous and constantly changing conglomerate of registered and non-registered entities which is very difficult to describe.

The development of the Czech extreme right after 1989 can be divided into several periods:

1. A period in which the extreme right was constituted (1989–1992) in which SPR-RSČ rose as the dominant force; a militant racist skinhead spectrum was created in the Czech Republic at the same time;
2. A period of success for the extreme right (1992–1998) when it was represented in the parliament, when racist skinheads made their presence manifest on a large scale, involving even racist murders, and when a number of non-party organisations with a relevant member base and articulated ideologies appeared;
3. A period when the weakened extreme right regrouped its forces (1999–2006) and several parties arose from the previously non-party organisations and attempted to fill the place previously occupied by SPR-RSČ, the party now in disarray due to internal disputes. A partial politicisation of the militant spectrum also took place at this time;
4. A period of partial rise of the extreme right (2007–2010), characterised by increased militant activism and gradually developed ability of the Workers’ Party to concentrate votes, rather than by an increase in votes for the extreme right as a whole (the electoral gains of the whole remained on the level of the beginning of the decade). The Workers’ Party successfully linked with militant neo-Nazi structures and became known, thanks to their involvement especially in Janov in 2008. The party partially took over the heritage of SPR-RSČ/RMS. This period ended with the disbanding of DS in 2010 and the failure of its successor, DSSS, in the 2010 election of the Chamber of Deputies.

Further development among the Czech extreme right could take various courses, however the following three seem the most probable options:

1. The extreme right will remain in its entirely marginal current position with its constant organisational metamorphoses; its potential voters will be taken by protest parties of other ideological leaning created on an ad hoc basis;
2. The present dogmatic representation of the extreme right concentrated around DSSS and other parties, or their future mutations, will gain a stronger presence in certain regions and will threaten to spill over to the national level, but this spill over could only succeed at a time of heightened crisis;⁴⁰
3. Sovereignty or a similar entity will establish itself as the platform of the new populist right, will penetrate the parliamentary level, while the dogmatic extreme right will remain in a marginal position alongside it.

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List of party and movement acronyms used in the text:

AENM	Alliance of European Nationalist Movements
AN	Autonomous Nationalists (Autonomní nacionalisté)
ČHNJ	Czech Movement for National Unity (České hnutí za národní jednotu)
ČSDH	Czech Social Democratic Movement (České sociálně demokratické hnutí)
ČSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická)
ČSL	Czechoslovak People’s Party (Československá strana lidová)
D.O.S.T.	Trust, Objectivity, Solidarity, Tradition (Důvěra, Objektivita, Solidarita, Tradice)

³⁹ For example, Jan Skácel (born in 1934) was first the vice-chairman of the National Democratic party in the 1990s, subsequently chairman of the National Unity, a candidate of the Czech Movement for National Unity, later attempted (unsuccessfully) to create a new National Democracy, then he was the vice-chairman of the National Party only to become in 2010 the chairman of the Czech Movement for National Unity.

⁴⁰ This is essentially the current “German model” where the extreme right is only successful in some of the states of the federation and most of the times only for one electoral term.

DS	Workers' Party (Dělnická strana)
DSSS	Workers' Party of Social Justice (Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti)
ENF	European National Front
Jobbik	The Movement for a Better Hungary
KDU	ČSL The Christian and Democratic Union Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie Československá strana lidová)
KSČM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)
LPR	League of Polish Families
MIÉP	Hungarian Justice and Life Party
NDS	National-Democratic Party (Národně demokratická strana)
NK	National Corporatism (Národní korporativismus)
NovSil	New Force (Nová síla)
NPD	National Democratic Party of Germany
NRM	Independent Republican Youth (Nezávislá republikánská mládež)
NS	National Party (Národní strana)
NG	National Guard (Národní garda)
NO	National Resistance (Národní odpor)
N5	National Five (Národní pětka)
NSj	National Unity (Národní sjednocení)
NOF	National Fascist Community (Národní obec fašistická)
ODS	Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)
OS DS	Protective Corps of the Workers' Party (Ochranné sbory Dělnické strany)
PA	Right Alternative (Pravá alternativa)
PaS	Law and Justice (Právo a spravedlnost)
RMS	Miroslav Sládek's Republicans (Republikáni Miroslava Sládka)
ROI	Roma Civic Initiative (Romská občanská iniciativa)
SDČR	Pensioners' Association of the Czech Republic (Sdružení důchodců České republiky)
SdP	Sudeten German Party
SNS	Slovak National Party
SPR-RSČ	Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa)
SSO	Free Citizens Party (Strana svobodných občanů)
VDS	Democratic party of All People (Všelidová demokratická strana)
VL	Patriotic League (Vlastenecká liga)
VRS	Patriotic Republican Party (Vlastenecká republikánská strana)
VV	Public Affairs (Věci veřejné)
ZPR-RSČ	Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Združenie pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa [Slovak branch])

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