Juraj Buzalka
Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology,
Halle/Saale, Germany

Religion and populism – some remarks on post-socialist politics[1]

Abstrakt

Religia i populizm – kilka uwag o post-socjalistycznej polityce

Jednym ze zjawisk, ciągle obecnych, w transformującej się post-komunistycznej Europie jest mobilizacja polityczna przez populizm. Wyrażający się w formie organicznego nacjonalizmu i/lub politycznej demagogii, populizm ma zniknąć wraz z pojawieniem się gospodarki rynkowej i zachodniej demokracji.
Artykuł ma udowodnić, że tak się dzieje. Populizm pozostanie istotną siłą polityczną w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, ponieważ niektóre czynniki wpływające na jego pojawianie się są wciąż żywe. Celem artykułu nie jest jednak wszechstronna analiza tego fenomenu, lecz skupienie się na powiązaniach populizmu z religią. Główna teza zakłada, że wybrane aspekty strukturalne, ideologiczne i narracyjne religii nakładają się z elementami retoryki populistycznej. Skupiając się na przykładzie Słowacji i częściowo Polski autor stara się udowodnić, iż jest to rezultat ważnej ciągłości społecznej reprodukcji religii i populizmu. Jest to skutkiem specyficznego przeplatania się religii i chłopskiego rodowodu narodów Europy Wschodniej oraz komunistycznej modernizacji i tego jak wpływa ona na region dzisiaj. Do sukcesu populizmu przyczynia się także brak poczucia bezpieczeństwa i stabilności. Zawsze jednak, na prawie każdym etapie transformacji, populizm mobilizuje i jest mobilizowany przez wybrane elementy religii.

As transformations in post-socialist Europe proceed, one feature, which has been expected to disappear, is political mobilisation through populism. Expressed in the form of organic nationalism and/or political demagoguery, populism is expected to decline with the introduction and accommodation of western-style democracy and market economy.

[1] Some parts of this paper were designed during my stay at Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Jeffrey C. Pratt and Jonathan P. Mitchell for their fruitful help with some of the issues developed in this essay.

This paper attempts to present the opposite argument, namely, that populism will remain an important political force in central and Eastern Europe, because some features that make populism to emerge and sustain, are of substantial vitality there. Nevertheless, the aim of this paper is not to offer an exhaustive analysis, the scope is rather narrowed to the phenomenon that link populism to religion. The main argument is that some structural, ideological and narrative aspects of religion interfere in populist politics. Focusing mainly on Slovakia and partly on Poland, the paper claims that this is a result of significant continuity in social reproduction of both, religion and populism throughout decades. This is mainly caused by specific intertwining of religion and peasant nations in Eastern Europe, ambivalence of communist modernisation and how it resulted in post-socialism. In the same time, the discontinuity accompanied by insecurity coming from post-socialist development also contributed to the success of populism. An overall argument is that in almost all of its forms and transformation stages, populism mobilises and is mobilised by some religious elements.[2]

In this paper I am not able to offer an exhaustive prediction of further development of populism in central and Eastern Europe. I am generally cautious to make any predictions of the type provided by some experts on politics who assume that the post socialist societies will logically approach the western European or North American types of democracy and market economy if they adopt some prescribed institutional parameters and rules. They argue that in order to achieve this new enlightenment ideal, one of the most important factors appeared to be a vital liberal-secular civil society, which, if not already existent, should be built and as a result of this development, free (western) democratic polity will be enacted. Consequently, the features like populism - usually ascribed to be characteristic for early transformation stages – will, according to this logic, die away. I do not share these expectations and, on the contrary, I rather argue for more 'culturally' based understanding of post-socialist development that takes into account the people's perception of and reaction to the transformation processes as well as the complex and long-lasting way during which the social changes happen in everyday life of

[2] I am mostly focusing on the main-stream institutional religion and predominantly on Roman Catholicism. The main interest is in Slovakia, the country I am most familiar with, but some comments will be made also in relation to Poland where I have gathered extensive fieldwork in 2003-2004.

these people (Buzalka 2003). In this sense, I rather intend to work with social continuity on the level of everyday life than rupture on the scale of a nation-state.

As far as religion is concerned, therefore, I would also challenge the traditional conviction of some legal experts and political scientists who presuppose that the fundamental condition for 'accurate' political development – that which is not too much vulnerable to populist mobilisation, for example – is, among others, conditioned by the separation of religion from the state, leaving religion in the private sphere. I suppose the separation of church and state in the countries like Poland and Slovakia is impossible and even not necessary. Although in the USA, for example, the clear division between the state and religion had been established by law, it does not mean that religion does not have any influence on US politics, rather the opposite is a case. More concretely, religion and politics are certainly not separated for many people in any of the three countries mentioned above and, therefore, the people's understanding of political institutions and values in the society can not be separated from the realm of religion either. Leaving behind the fact that modern politics itself has a lot in common with institutional religion (symbols, rituals, practices) the question is how (in what sense and forms) religion is a part of the politics?

In order to precise my focus on populism, the following questions are then of further interest: why do so many populists often use religious vocabulary when mobilising their voters and why so many clergypersons and believers feel the obligation to support more or less openly the populist politicians? More widely, where does the alliance between populism and religion come from? Why, for example, the Prime Minister of Slovakia in the 1990s, Vladimír Mečiar, enjoyed a substantial support from a part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and even had his own 'courteous priests' and why in Poland, so many populist politicians are winning the sympathies from among many priests and devote layperson? What is the source of inspiration for the unique and influential populist phenomenon in central and Eastern Europe, the Catholic Radio Maryja, and the entire subculture it represents?

I am fully aware of the fact that populists take support from many people and groups who do not have anything or do have just little in common with religion. It is also clear that religion is often not the only marker of populist mobilisation. I am also aware that Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia, for example, finally contributed to the defeat of politics of Vladimír Mečiar and that both in Poland and Slovakia, the referendums concerning the entry of respective countries into the European Union most probably would not have been successful without the support of the respective parts of Roman Catholic hierarchies. The Roman Catholic Church also played an important role in communist resistance and during the entire history provided influential intellectual and political leadership for its respective societies. I do, however, want to underline that in the same time, there have been powerful groups and individuals within Roman Catholicism strongly favouring populism and even more, they initiated and constructed it. I will, therefore, concentrate on these social groups and the ideologies they produce.

Before going into details, I would like to present basic facts about some political parties that usually use populist vocabulary in Slovakia and Poland. I will then turn to the characteristics of populism itself and how it is related to some religious ideologies and practices. Basing my arguments mostly on the case of Slovakia, in the end I would like to draw some conclusions on the relations between religion and populism in post-socialism.

Populist political parties

During the 1990s Slovakia was widely identified as the national-populist extreme of central and Eastern Europe. In the period 1994-98 the then ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar consisted of three parties: national populist *Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko* (HZDS - Movement for Democratic Slovakia), nationalist *Slovenská národná strana* (SNS - Slovak National Party) and ultra-left-populist *Združenie robotníkov Slovenska* (ZRS - Workers´ Union of Slovakia). Unlike the other three countries of V4, because of its alleged distinction Slovakia was rejected as a member of NATO in the first round of enlargement and was not invited for accession negotiations with the EU. It was argued that the country's politics were incompatible with

the democratic values Western civilisation embodies.[3] Without the Slovak population changing, however, this was all forgotten after 1998 when the new government was formed. Apart from HZDS, which still remained one of the largest parties, some other political streams with populist agendas gained strength. The success in the 2002 election of the hard-line *Komunistická strana Slovenska* (KSS - Communist Party of Slovakia) was grounded on rural votes, and the party entered Parliament. Other examples are the party *SMER* (Direction) led by populist rhetorician Róbert Fico, which became one of the largest in the Parliament. The conservative Catholic *Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie* (KDH - Christian Democratic Movement), the coalition party since 1998, has complemented these parties by stressing the importance of the patriarchal family, religion, and nation.[4]

The election results in 1990s Poland revealed that apart from plenty of small parties, there has always been a relatively moderate and stable agrarian party *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* (PSL - Polish People's Party). The other various populist streams either remained hidden within the *Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* (AWS - Solidarity Electoral Action) or stayed on the margins of the political spectrum. After the breakdown of AWS, however, these other streams successfully emerged in the elections of 2001. Indeed, the party of Andrzej Lepper *Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Self-defence of the Polish Republic) and the Catholic nationalist *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (League of Polish Families) now belong to the strongest representatives of populism in Europe. The party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice), another group renewed after Solidarity's fall, can also be included in this group.[5] A significant part of Polish politics does not only commemorate the pre-World War II populist ideal but it also mobilizes actual peasants. The number of people employed in agriculture amounts to 3.5 million, a quarter of Polish

[3] The then US Secretary of State, Madelleine Allbright characterized Slovakia as the 'black hole' of Europe.

[4] As a special contribution of KDH to the debate about the future of Slovakia in united Europe could be considered the *Declaration about a supremacy of both member and candidate countries of the European Union in cultural and ethical issues*. The declaration, which has been approved by the Parliament, suggests that Slovakia should maintain its sovereignty in case that laws passed by the EU are in contradiction with Slovak values. Although nobody actually said what those cultural and ethical issues are, Christian Democrats wanted to include extended version of this manifesto into the constitution before Slovakia became member of the EU (Buzalka – Strážay 2002).

[5] For more details on Polish political parties see Szczerbiak 2002.

workforce today (Buchowski 2003). Populist ideology is catalysed through narrow-minded Catholicism and its definitions of Polishness.

This list of parties is not full and, obviously, the intensity of populist mobilisation among them varies. I have just chosen them in order to demonstrate the similarities between the two party scenes, especially as far as the mobilisation around the issues of nation, family and religion is concerned. Nevertheless, although populism shows many common features in Poland and Slovakia, there are also some differences between them. While in Slovakia apart from the Catholic-conservative populist stream works also quite strong anti-clerical populism, in Poland the populists seem more willingly to accept the leading role of Catholic hierarchy.[6] This does not mean, however, that the 'anti-clerical' populism in Slovakia misses religious elements or that it is neutral to the issues essential for religion – that of nation, family and 'people' – or that only non-Catholics vote for them. While politicians like Robert Fico are certainly anti-clerical, it does not mean they are also anti-religious or that devote people are not sensitive to their mobilisation tactics. Before showing how the religion and populism are interlinked in post-socialism, I will make some basic remarks on what populism actually is and how it appeared in modern times.

What is populism?

As a result of increasing division lines between the peasant tradition and industrial modernity, central and Eastern European populisms began to grow at the beginning of the twentieth century. These populisms started to be embodied in the ideologies of peasantism, which intellectually emerged as a reaction to both Russian populism and Western socialism (Mitrany 1951; Ionescu and Gellner 1969; Kitching 1989). Peasantism firstly, took the peasants explicitly as its social prototype and proposed moulding the society and its state on the peasant's conception of work, property and administration; second, blended its social-economic doctrines with a strong nationalistic concern for the

[6] The party *SMER* of Robert Fico as well as the party of media owner Pavol Rusko *Aliancia nového občana* (ANO - The Alliance of a New Citizen) which jointed the coalition in 2002 belong to this group in Slovakia.

emancipation of the 'people' from foreign domination; and third, claimed that the peasantry is entitled as a class to the leadership of the political society, 'not only on account of its electoral preponderance but also because of its innate spiritual and national values' (Ionescu 1969, 99). Rather a movement than party-like organized collectives, populism struggled against rootless-ness – against the feeling ascribed to modernity. Stressing order, morality and justice, it did not claim a tribal community but an agrarian *Gemeinschaft* (MacRae 1969). Since the early 1990s, the heirs of this anti-enlightenment project have often unconsciously followed the lines drafted in the 1920s – 1940s. As in the 1990s, populists placed themselves neither right nor left, they struggled against immoral, secularised westernisation, stressed virtues of simple people, defended pure traditions of their nations and often used a religious vocabulary as their shield. Although the social prototype of this ideology, the patriarchal heterosexual family living in an unspoiled countryside, had scarcely existed, they used it as a desired model (Buzalka 2003).

The central feature of populism is a real or discursively created friction between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' structures and cultures (Stewart 1969) and the foundations of populist ideology are universal: the defense of national tradition, pre-modern family, exploited hard-working people, Christianity (particularly against Islam, secularism, and sometimes also against Judeo-capitalist intrigues) and so on. The people – the main source of populist legitimacy – are characterised by populists as moral, hard-working producers living in traditional peasant households, although not necessarily in an agrarian era. The people's enemies, the 'others', are usually the modernising state, big foreign businesses, metropolitan cities, cosmopolitan life-styles, etc. (Pratt 2003). In all cases, certain social groups become aware of being peripheral to the centres of power (Stewart 1969) and this causes the conditions for populist success to emerge.

Before moving to the general points of my argument, I will present some historical facts about the role of religion in Slovakia, the country I am most familiar with. Although there are some features making this country different – especially those linked to the nation

construction - I assume the basic relations among the entities like nation, family, and religion remain very similar in the entire region of central and Eastern Europe.

Religion and social transformations

There have been three major social transformations in central and Eastern Europe applied during the last century: the first one is related to nationalism and nationalisation, the second became known as communist modernisation and the third is the recent shift towards multiparty democracy and market economy. To start with, we should go back some one hundred years ago when all the modern nations were born.

Although in the past particular religions already had helped to define nations, only with the appearance of nation-states did this became fully visible. The Roman Catholic Church was perhaps most openly united with former St. Stephen's Hungary, but after 1918, however, the same Catholicism was invented as a distinction-making category. During 1920s and 1930s Slovakia, Catholic intelligentsia strengthened the idea that Slovak and Catholic should be congruent. This stream of national feeling became the decisive one in Slovak Republic (1939-1945) when the official ideology was Christian (i.e. Catholic) nationalism. In addition, in the duration of the Czechoslovak Republic rule (before and after the war), Catholicism was used as an identification of Slovaks, especially in opposing the Czechs and their alleged protestant secularism, as well as atheist socialism.[7]

The proper inventors of the Slovak nation were in fact predominantly Protestant (Lutheran) priests and village teachers who started to think about Slovaks as a distinct group towards the end of the eighteenth century. The role of Protestants in the 'Slovak National Renaissance' in the 19th century was later (in the 20th century) suppressed. Their role among the contemporary representatives of the national idea has died away

[7] It is important to note that Masaryk's invention of Czech (Czechoslovak) identity as secular-protestant, democratic, full of humanity and working virtues - apart from being a myth - was not congruent with Slovak Catholic understandings and even not with Slovak modernist approaches. Many members of Slovak modernist intelligentsia perceived themselves as different from both the Czechoslovak construct and Catholic identity representatives however they perceived the Czech 'culture' as modern and superior to the Slovak one.

because the Catholic majority started to become more decisive in the definition of 'Slovakness'. Some members of the Protestant minority identified more easily with secular modernity. It is usually described as the product of the influence of a kind of 'Protestant ethic', but their self-perception as a forefront minority following the European nation-state ideology should also be taken into account. This orientation toward influences from the West also logically contributed to the strengthening of a deep historical division of Slovaks – into Catholics and Protestants. Even today it is possible to roughly distinguish two elite groups: on the one hand there exists a more cosmopolitan group, which continuously aims to modernize 'backward' Slovakia; and on the other hand, there is another more conservative, Catholic and nationalist group, which aims to preserve the 'moral traditions' of the nation.

The strength of religion during nationalisation was emphasised by the fact that the only people able to successfully mobilise peasant societies were Church employees. Not only were they speaking in the vernacular but also almost always their social origin was rooted in the lower social strata. As a result of the Church's higher hierarchy being mostly Hungarian (especially in political sense) and in contrast, the deprived Church proletariat of Upper Hungary being predominantly Slovak by mother tongue, the 'Slovak' Catholic clergy participated in the establishing of a new high culture after 1918. During this process, the Church was Slovakised and new saints were found or (re) invented.[8] This contradicted the interests of Masaryk's project and weakened his Czechoslovak construction. The situation of Protestant priests and the Protestant Church was quite different from Catholics because the Lutheran reformation was predominantly based on Slovak language and ethnicity (Magyar-speaking Protestants were predominantly of Calvin's confession). This is probably why it was initially easier for Protestant elites to adapt to the new Czechoslovak high culture than for their Catholic counterparts.[9]

[8] Apart from Virgin Mary of the Seven Pains – the Patron of Slovakia, the most important Saints became Cyril and Method. Their name-day is the 5th of July and this became in the 1990s also a bank holiday (together with the 15th of September which is the Fest of Virgin Mary). The importance of Cyril and Method was strengthened after the 1918 as a counter-tradition to the Hungarian state saints, and especially to Saint Stephen.

[9] The Czechoslovak nationality was officially proclaimed in 1918 and a separate Slovak nationality was neglected; in official censuses and statistics they refused to allow a distinction to be drawn between Czechs

Religion under socialism

After 1945, however, everything Catholic began to be perceived as anti-Czechoslovak (anti-Czech) and after the Communist party came to power in 1948, Catholic religion (and religion in general) was officially presented as anti-communist. Nevertheless, the connections between Catholicism and nationalism remained very close and through everyday Church practices, Catholic dissent circles and Catholic ideology very much based on agrarian ideology persisted, and were fully re-invented after 1989.[10] After 1989, it became clearer that nationalism had not frozen before the fall of communism, but that communist ideology – except Catholicism – adopted almost everything that supported nation narrative: peasant roots, national freedom, working diligence and moral virtue of the population, importance of the family (with more children for economic growth), and so on.

Industrialisation, urbanisation, technical modernisation etcetera, together with state-managed atheisation meant that from the 1950s to the beginning of the 1990s, Church membership became increasingly unimportant for one's own identity, even if some religious rituals (funerals and baptisms) still remained part of people's everyday lives. Indeed, although the importance of baptisms and funerals continued, the younger generations were slowly yet significantly reducing their visits to Catholic Mass and Protestant services.

Prior to 1948, two important tools for social reproduction of religion were the Church's schools and religious education in the public schools. During the communist regime these were expelled from the school system and religious education for the younger generations

---

and Slovaks. The Czechoslovaks comprised 64,1% of the total population and the Slovak minority estimated at 16% of the total (Bakoš 1999).

[10] The role of the Pope (himself of the nationality which is for Slovak Catholics the closest 'in the soul' to their own), his visits in Czechoslovakia, and especially Slovakia (his third visit after 1989 took place in September 2003), as well as the role of Vatican diplomacy and Catholic hierarchy during the 1990s has not been fully investigated yet. However, their eventual role in Slovak (as well as Croat, Lithuanian, etc.) separationist nationalisms is important to remind.

became strictly the private arena of the family. For the middle class Christian families (initially the vast majority of intelligentsia), however, this atheisation was particularly difficult to overcome. If they showed their religious affiliation, they usually faced heavy sanctions in the workplace. It was impossible for a teacher to enter the Church, for example. Nevertheless, many people travelled from the cities to villages where religious life was much less restricted and more private – there they baptised their children and attended services.

The relaxed political situation in the second half of the 1960s allowed religion back into the public sphere. Religious education was introduced in schools once again, and new churches were built. However, after 1968 the normalization period again criminalized people's religiosity. In contrast, religious affiliation of the Catholic youth in the 1970s and 1980s gained some strength. This was to some extent a resistance towards the communist regime. Youth associations began to work illegally or semi-legally in the parishes, and they were fully revived after 1989, very often accompanied by the beliefs in the rebirth of the nation.

Rebirth of a nation in Europe

Following the changes after 1989, Slovak national identity was lacking some components. Therefore, religiously painted national symbolism experienced a revival, especially before and after Czechoslovakia was set apart on 1st of January 1993. Shortly after 1989, religious identification became more visible, both politically and socially.[11] Apart from the introduction of religious freedom, religiosity and religious identity became increasingly important due to the following reasons: firstly, it was coupled with the worsening of living standards due to the economic transformation; secondly, because nationalism and the construction of Slovak Catholic national identity began to coincide very effectively; and thirdly, due to the structural similarity of communist secular religion

[11] According to the census in 2001, from the whole population of Slovak Republic, 84,1 % of citizen consider themselves as to have a confession, out of which 68.9% are Roman-Catholics, 6.9% has Evangelic a.v. (Lutherans) confession, 4.1% are Greek-Catholics (Uniats) and 2% are from the Reformed Church (Calvinist). The rest, 15.9% of population belong to no religion or are of unknown confession (www.statistics.sk). Comparing to the census from 1991 the number of people who claim they belong to some confession increased from 72,8 % in 1991 to 84,1 % in 2001. The highest increase (from 60,4 % to 68,9 %) registered the Roman Catholic Church.

and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church. For example, former male communists discovered their religious allegiance very soon after communism dissolved.

Populism and religion

The religious revival and the success of populist politics went hand in hand after 1989 and both religion and populism happened to be among the winning ideologies of post-socialism. Never fully excluded from central and Eastern European politics, populism after 1989, therefore, mobilised and was mobilised by some peasant elements and gained its legitimacy also from religion. I am not implying that Roman Catholicism automatically supports populism. The only thing I would like to stress is that there are some similarities in the appeals made by the Roman Catholic Church and those of populist leaders and that this is not an accident but a result of significant social continuity throughout decades as well as post-socialist transformation policies.

There are three main social features linking populist ideology with that of religion together: the pre-eminence of patriarchal family, the obsession with the nation and the role of 'the people'. As far as the nation is concerned, especially in Poland the Roman Catholic Church is among the most exclusive bearers of national identity. There is not possible to organise any national feast - neither in the village nor in the capital - without the assistance of the clergymen. The issues particularly concerned with the family and reproduction law (divorce, abortions, etc.) are under the high observation of the Church in Poland both on the level of nation-state as well as in the local communities. The less dominant position of Roman Catholicism in Slovakia means the clergymen are publicly not so much visible as those in Poland, but even there the strong presence of Roman Catholicism in some public ceremonies as well as the role of the Church in the discussions concerning education, family issues and the interpretation of history is obvious.

As I mentioned above, the main source of populist legitimacy are 'the people'. Churches like the populists, address its appeals to the people, to the 'oppressed', too. Some

clergymen usually define themselves as being a part of people, coming from the people, working for the people and devoted to God and its people (Stavrakakis, 2002). The Church in Slovakia and Poland often represents the nation and facilitates the relations between people and God. Another characteristic comes from the conviction of both the Church leaders and populists (and, obviously, politicians in general) that they speak in the name of majority. If some populists as well as some Church leaders attempt to speak in the name of majority, they most probably overshadow the needs of minorities. Stavrakakis (2002) mentions that Church also defines itself often in opposition to the 'modenisers' (the people who initiate and manage crucial reforms, especially when these reforms have significantly cruel influence on people's lives), not mention the populists who gain major strength from this opposition towards the power holders. According to many representatives of both Church and populism, 'modernisers' live apart from 'the people' and they are isolated from everyday popular ways of life.

A very influential feature common for both the Church and populism is martyrology. The Church was always attacked by the power-holders but always emerged victorious. It was attacked because it did not subordinate itself to secular power, because it remained in 'Law of God'. There are, obviously, some forces of evil fighting against the Church aiming De-Christianisation of Europe, or its Islamisation, etc. the Church must oppose. Populism likes to portray itself in a similar way. Populists claim they are not properly understood by the power-holders, they pretend to suffer with the people when facing the thorny results of modernisation policies and usually also mobilise xenophobic ideas among whose the anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish (capitalist) strings are the most known. Both the Church and populism are often significantly anti-intellectual and they safeguard the tradition, anyhow vaguely it is defined. There is a discourse of struggle among populists and some of the Church's representatives against 'enlighteners', i.e. those who always want to modernise the society. The strong animosity towards foreign enemies, usually made up from conspiracy, is also very much present (Stavrakakis 2002). More important feature is that there is a fear from the loss of 'traditional' (Christian) character of Europe shared by both populists and majority of the Church leaders.

Although both the Church and populists claim they unite the entities such as nation and both the Church and populists underline that there are the others (modernisers, for example) who make the divisions, both, institutional religion as well as populist nation are highly exclusive categories, there is 'us' and 'them' antagonism made by them as well (Stavrakakis 2002). On the other hand, there is also a strong construction of brotherhood and solidarity in society that is similarly built (not only, but also) by populism and religion. Last but not least, the intimacy religion offers, makes the Church particularly powerful during the times of crisis. Populists most often enter the public sphere when the insecurity in the society achieves the highest levels as well. In this situation the Church and populists address their mobilisation strategies and assistance predominantly to those who are in need, usually the 'losers' of the ongoing transformations.

Nevertheless, there are obviously also some differences. Church's ideology and practices are very slowly changing entities. In some nation-states, as in those of Slovakia and Poland, thanks to the favouring agreements (concordats), the Roman Catholic Churches also enjoys privileged position. This even strengthens and conserves their exclusive roles. In this sense, obviously, the Churches are not only addressing their assistance to some segments (those in disadvantageous position) but they aim to cover all the domains of the society. In addition, the Church has structurally a much better chance to penetrate people's everyday life than populists. It has its own channels (confessions, masses, pastoral visits and sermons of the priests) for spreading its messages. People are incorporated into a larger world with the Church's assistance immediately after they are born. In this sense, the influence of the Church is not only channelled through the mass media (such as Radio Maryja) but the Church representatives also control the local interpretations of moral order in the society. This moral order is by a composition often very close to the one advertised by populists.

Populism, on the other hand, with a great vitality emerges particularly in the times of crisis. The crisis is usually related to the larger social change and it is based on structural discontinuities as well as on the crisis of the previously dominant discourse. Especially in these times of crisis, populist appeal on continuity, tradition and durability, the certainties that have been allegedly tested throughout the times. Because the domain of 'tradition'

and ‘history’ is particularly safeguarded by institutional religion, populism legitimises itself through the alliance with this religion.

Modernity, religion and populism

The dominant Catholic ideology based upon pre-modern myths and rural imagery helps to create an enemy, a wealthy capitalist and/or godless socialist society (the coexistence of both is possible). As much as EU integration became a cause for concern, this anti-enlightenment ideology also offers an angel of salvation for the West. Ultimately due to the fact that the West is not pious enough and will possibly face a decline very soon, it has to accept spiritual help from east European Catholicism. As in many other Catholic peripheries of contemporary Europe - remarkably observed by Mitchell (2002) in Malta, for example - EU integration – if not rejected at all - is by many Catholics perceived as a Christian project. What Mitchell explains as ambivalence towards modernity - EU symbolises affluence and stability, whilst at the same time it threatens ‘traditional’ morality - in central and Eastern Europe usually emerges in politics as populism.

As I have shown above, the populists have many perceptions of modernity similar to those held by some employees of the Roman Catholic Church. I am not saying that religious leaders consciously support populist politicians, but that there are some common features in populist and religious agendas as well as some structural and discursive conditions that allow populists to legitimize their activities through religion. On the other hand, the Church can also gain some power from the alliance with populists. On the local level the alliances are rather ad hoc oriented, but the Church employees can gain significantly more power in the local community when they act accordingly with the local leaders and vice versa, local leaders make profit from the alliance with religion.

Keeping in mind that in the countries like Slovakia or Poland there is not possible to build a tolerant society outside of religion, there is no discussion of how to separate religion from the public sphere, as some legal purists would argue. The question rather is what kind of religion is most appropriate for helping the inclusive tolerance in the society

to flourish. If the religion is predominantly linked to populism, the capacity to retain tolerance significantly decreases.

Bibliography

Vladimír Bakoš, 1999. *Question of the Nation in Slovak Thought.* Bratislava: Veda.

Juraj Buzalka, 2003. 'Is rural populism on the decline? Continuities and Changes in Twentieth Century Central Europe – The case of Slovakia'. Brighton: University of Sussex, SEI Working Paper No 73. http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/wp73.pdf

Juraj Buzalka and Tomáš Strážay, 2002. 'Does Political Culture Matter? The "Westernization" of Slovakia after the year 1989', *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, Vol. I, No. IV.

Michał Buchowski, 2003. 'Coming to Terms with Capitalism: An Example of a Rural Community in Poland', in *Dialectical Anthropology* 27: 47-68, 2003.

Gavin Kitching, 1989. *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective. Populism, Nationalism and Industrialization*. London and New York: Routledge.

Donald MacRae, 1969. 'Populism as an Ideology' in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

David Mitrany, 1951. *Marx Against the Peasant: a Study in Social Dogmatism*, London: Weidenfeld.

Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Ghita Ionescu, 1969. 'Eastern Europe', in, Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

Jon P. Mitchell, 2002. *Ambivalent Europeans. Ritual, Memory and the Public Sphere in Malta*, London and New York: Routledge.

Jeff Pratt, 2003. *Class, Nation and Identity: the Anthropology of Political Movements.* London: Pluto Press.

Angus Stewart, 1969. 'The Social Roots'. in, Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, eds, *Populism, Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson

Stavrakakis Yannis, 2002. 'Religion and Populism: Reflections on the "politicised" discourse of the Greek Church.' The Hellenic Observatory, European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science, Discussion Paper No.7. http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/hellenicObservatory/pdf/StavrakakisDiscussionPaper.pdf

Alex Szczerbiak, 2002. 'Poland's Unexpected Political Earthquake: The September 2001 Parliamentary Election' in, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol.18, No. 3, pp. 41-76.