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The Meaning of the 1980s' Anti-Politics' Legacy within
the Contemporary East-Central European Civil
Societies

Intersections. EEJSP

1(3): 37-58.

DOI: 10.17356/ieejsp.v1i3.103

<http://intersections.tk.mta.hu>

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Abstract

Drawing on the framing perspective in the study of social movements, the article discusses the possible links between the concept of anti-politics developed by Czech, Hungarian, and Polish dissidents in the 1970s and 1980s, and formal and informal initiatives of the East-Central European civil societies nowadays. It is argued that the historic notion of anti-politics should be applied in the contemporary research on social movements and on any other form of civil activism in the region since it has immense analytical and methodological importance. It allows researchers to recognize different traits of social activity and civil society specific to East-Central Europe, and explain them in a more comprehensive manner. Referring to the historical concept of anti-politics enables the researchers to identify and appreciate characteristic regional discourses, repertoires, and forms of protest in historical and contemporary social movements and to perceive the continuity between them. It also helps identify the mechanism of civil activism. The article's argument is based on the writings of three dissident movement leaders, namely Vaclav Havel, György Konrád, and Jacek Kuroń. It is being explained how the concept of anti-politics worked as a collective action frame in the 1980s, and the examples of its legacies within the contemporary formal and informal civil activism are given.

Keywords: Anti-politics, East-Central Europe, civil society, social movement, frame analysis.

Introduction

The legacy of the democratic opposition and the Polish Solidarity movement in East-Central Europe has been discussed on multiple occasions. Yet, despite the abundant literature on the subject, there are at least a few issues that have been unsatisfactorily examined by researchers. One of them is the question of the influence exerted by ideas developed by dissidents and how these ideas shaped, directly and indirectly, the social and political landscape of the region, especially with regard to fields such as social movements and civil society. Investigations of these topics should mention the concept of anti-politics and the postulate of self-government stemming from it. Interestingly, the terms 'anti-politics' is used in social studies to describe and explain the current protests taking place across the globe, including the protests in East-Central Europe, but their distinct meaning, specific to this particular region, is either abandoned or forgotten. As Paul Blokker observed, 'the earlier [pre-1989] recognition of the more radical sides to dissident thought, as expressed in notions such as civil society, self-government, and anti-politics, has been «tamed» in the predominant liberal reading of democratization.' (Blokker, 2011: 221) In this article the concept of anti-politics will be re-examined, first by extracting its meaning from dissident writings of the 1970s and 1980s, and then by contrasting it with its widely used homonyms and demonstrating its usefulness as interpretive frame in studies of past and contemporary social movements. By making a distinction between Western and East-Central applications of this term, different traits of social activity and civil society in the region can be recognized and explained in a more comprehensive manner. This article is thus an attempt to answer the call voiced by Barbara Falk on behalf of some researchers to investigate 'the contribution of dissident legacies to social and cultural patterns in democratic politics' and 'their influence on inherited social networks, informal institutions, research groups, think tanks, and even internally referential mental structures such as the «generation of 1989».' (Falk, 2011: 347). Specifically, the article argues that the historic notion of anti-politics should be applied in the contemporary research on social movements and on any other form of civil activism in the region since it has immense analytical and methodological importance. It allows researchers to recognize different traits of social activity and civil society specific to East-Central Europe, grasp continuity and discontinuity between old and new social initiatives, and explain them in a more comprehensive manner. The article also discusses an application of the framing perspective as one of the possible ways of tracing these dissident legacies.

For the sake of clarity, the argument in this article is based on the writings of three dissident movement leaders, namely Vaclav Havel, György Konrád, and Jacek Kuron, whose respective milieus of course included numerous other influential figures. This approach, however, may have obvious disadvantages when applied to other contexts. For example, focusing on the dissident elite does not do justice to the actual diversity of the dissident movement. Furthermore, it strengthens the bias towards history shaped by superheroes alone, ignores conflicts of ideas, is blind to social embeddedness and socio-economic representations, and, as such, this 'superstar narrative' is widely criticized by scholars (Falk, 2011: 342). Focusing on the 'big names' already known to the international audience has the advantage of making it

easier to present the argument, but we choose to do so with the awareness that the authors of the ideas are not as important as the ideas themselves. To paint a full picture of the dissident movement, researchers must include different discourses of resistance and resistance sources (especially in the particularly complex Polish case), however, writing a comprehensive history of dissident thought is not the intention of this article. Havel and Konrád developed the concept of anti-politics, while Kuroń wrote about the related ideas of self-government and self-organization. By self-government he meant an authentic participatory democracy, local government, and workers managing their own factories. Self-organization consisted in establishing independent institutions and informal groups of friends, where knowledge and experience could be shared without the control of the authoritarian state. The change was supposed to emerge from deeply moral attitude of the dissidents, which idea was also familiar to Havel and Konrád. Naturally, their thoughts cannot be considered the essence of the opposition's intellectual output, and other ideas and intellectual traditions need to be studied and taken into consideration when speaking about the legacy of the dissident movement, e.g., non-violence, Christian moral teaching, the concept of human dignity, and human rights. As Alan Renwick correctly observes, anti-politics was merely one of the strategies (along with the pressure group approach and political opposition) employed by dissidents against the policies of the state, though the reality of the dissident movement appears to be even more complex than the author claims (Renwick, 2006). It is also worth noting that its value as a strategy was doubted by some of the opposition as early as the 1980s, while criticism of anti-politics intensified after 1989, both on the part of former dissidents as well as contemporary theoreticians of liberal democracy. Some examples of this critical stance include the initiatives of Janos Kis in Hungary, Aleksander Hall's Young Poland Movement, the milieu of Marcin Król's *Res Publica* journal, and other initiatives such as the Movement for the Defense of Civil Rights in Poland and the Movement for Civil Freedom in Czechoslovakia (cf.: Falk, 2003; Renwick, 2006). We will examine a few strands of this critique in a later part of this article. For now, let us emphasize the fact that anti-politics cannot be said to have been a dominating strategy, but it was an important one and served as a point of reference for – and left its mark on – other opposition projects.

The article's argument develops as follow: firstly, we will discuss the frame analysis as a method helpful in tracing the dissident legacies. Secondly, we will provide the context of the anti-politics' emergence and compare its East-Central European understanding with the popular understanding worldwide. In the next section we will analyze the writings of Jacek Kuroń, Vaclav Havel and György Konrád briefly in order to retrieve the East-Central European meaning of anti-politics from them. Then we will show how anti-politics has functioned as a frame. Finally, there will be examples provided indicating where the researchers may look for the dissident legacies.

Methodological comments

The terms 'frame' and 'framing' used in social movement studies come from Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974). They are used to mobilize people around the

common definition of a problem and its potential solutions. They are defined as a 'schema of interpretation' that enable individuals to 'locate, perceive, identify, and label' what is happening around them and in the world as such (Goffman, 1974: 21). Frames organize experience, guide action, simplify and condense aspects of the outside world in ways that are not only intended to 'mobilize potential adherents and constituents,' but also to 'garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists' (Benford and Snow, 2000: 614). According to William A. Gamson, collective action frames are important in a social movement's external communication (especially in mass-media coverage) and in the process of mobilizing consensus within the movement. The collective frames have three components: injustice, agency, and identity (Gamson, 1992; 1995: 90). *Injustice* refers to moral indignation, which is not just an intellectual judgment but also a 'cognition laden with emotions' (Gamson, 1995: 90). *Agency* means the awareness that 'it is possible to alter conditions or policies through collective action' (Gamson, 1995: 90). *Identity* is a process of constructing an 'us' versus 'them' (Gamson, 1995: 90). In the definition he proposes, Hank Johnston moves the emphasis away from mobilization processes towards strategic planning, cultural currents of international scope, and cognitive schema at the micro-level (Gamson, 1995: 218). The definitions and observations discussed above are the most frequently cited in the literature on social movements and will be employed in this article. In general, frames as mental constructs have hierarchically organized contents, are *both* individual and social, have *both* fixed structures and emergent processes, and are based on texts such as written documents as well as speeches, slogans, songs, and pictures (Johnston, 2002: 64-65). Because of its relationship with texts, frame analysis is linked with discourse analysis and ideologies, yet the former and the latter cannot simply be equated (cf. Snow, 2004; Ivancheva, 2007; Steinberg, 1998). The distinction between frame and ideology seems especially important from the perspective of this article. In social life, the relationship between them is problematic: sometimes ideology informs interpretive frames, while at other times ideology is a result of some interpretive frames. The general and unavoidably simplified observation one could make for the sake of this article would be that ideology represents a more stable and coherent set of values, beliefs, and goals than any frame usually does. Frames seem to be more flexible and spontaneous than ideologies, even if they are rooted in them or in any other generally held views defined by the cultural environment of a given social movement (cf. discussion in Steinberg, 1998; Snow, 2004). This distinction is important when speaking about dissident thought in East-Central Europe. The East-Central European dissidents had distanced themselves from any form of ideological thinking.

In order to move our reasoning further, two other methodological comments need to be made. First, the concepts of anti-politics will be treated here as similar to a Weberian ideal type, therefore, to some extent and for the sake of clarity of argumentation, the individual differences between empirical examples will be ignored. Second, anti-political frames were naturally not the only frames operational within the dissident milieu. For example, in the complicated Polish case, divergent ideological strands e.g., corporatist and individualist, liberal and socialist, more or less coexisted, and there were numerous competing narratives of the situation in 1980 and in 1989 as well, e.g., national uprising, workers' revolution, religious gatherings, democratic self-

liberation, the 'return to Europe,' Westernization, and many others. In this article, it is argued that anti-politics was one of the most important, but not singular, frame in the region. In our view understanding how anti-politics functioned as a frame in 1980s will help us recognize and understand its potential legacies in contemporary social movements and other civil initiatives. One of the ways to achieve this would be to compare the frames of the historic dissident movement and the frames of the contemporary movements and other civil society's agents. The aim of this article, however, is more modest. By reminding us of the historic concept of anti-politics and indicating the possible anti-political niches within today's civil society, we would like to lay foundations for the future research.

It should also be noted that the interpretive framing perspective, one of the theoretical trends in the social movements studies, employed in this article, has previously appeared in discussions on the legacy of the dissident movement. John K. Glenn III uses it in his book *Framing Democracy* (2001), devoted to the democratic transformations that occurred in Poland and Czechoslovakia, where he focuses his attention on the events of 1989 and applies the theory of social movements correctly, albeit superficially. The framing approach was also used by Mariya Ivancheva in her unpublished M.A. thesis (2007) and the article summarizing it (2011). In these texts, and in many others that do not directly address the theories of social movements, the concept of civil society is presented as the best summary of the events of the 1980s and early 1990s in East-Central Europe (cf. e.g., Cohen and Arato, 1994). Frames perspective is also applied in the article of Marek Payerhin and Ernesto Zirakzadeh on the First Solidarity Congress in 1981, where they argue for the utility of combining two approaches – one that focuses on frames imposed by leaders, and the other that stresses the role of intra-movement discord and decentralization (Payerhin and Zirakzadeh, 2006). Elżbieta Matynia used the John L. Austin's idea of acting with words and performatives to describe and explain the dynamics of the 1989 events in Poland and the fall of apartheid in the South African Republic (Matynia, 2009). Matynia is far from applying frame analysis to the fall of communism but stresses the importance of naming collective and individual actions. Indirectly, her work may support the idea of paying a closer attention to frames used to guide social movements activities. This article takes as its interpretive frame not the broad idea of civil society, but one of its specific elements: anti-politics. Civil society is understood here as a network of the state independent, not for profit, both formal and informal civil initiatives. Social movements would be a part of civil society understood in this way. Anti-politics may be an attitude taken by a social movement or a non-governmental organization, a frame to mobilize and guide their members, and a strategy developed by citizens.

Anti-politics in the East-Central European context

Today, the term 'anti-politics' is usually applied to activities that contest official politics and economics. In this sense, 'anti-politics' is a word used to describe a broad spectrum of different phenomena, including voting abstention or voting for populist movements, all sorts of anarchist initiatives, street riots, sit-ins and new urban

movements, and, last but not least, any rhetoric undermining the importance of politics, political parties, voting, etc. It is not just a mere lack of interest in politics or indifference to it, which would characterize an apolitical attitude, but actual contestation. Using the term 'anti-politics' to describe the activities of non-governmental organizations (e.g., Fischer, 1997) or to discuss the boundaries and tasks of civil society is also fairly common. As we can see, many different symptoms of dissatisfaction, many forms of protest, and many social practices can get tied up in the 'anti-politics' narrative. Anti-politics as a concept certainly needs careful defining. Paul Blokker noted that one of the ways of understanding 'anti-political politics' is by 'highlighting critical views on formal, instituted and instrumentalised politics, as for instance articulated in such movements as Occupy or the Indignados' (Blokker, 2012: 4). Blokker, however, is aware of the many meanings of the term 'anti-politics.' He considers the concept of 'anti-politics' as elaborated by East-Central European dissidents as a 'related' and a 'rich tradition,' but also as one that is 'not only about rejecting formal politics and elites, but involves a positive moment of self-organizing democracy, seeking individual and collective autonomy, and «living in truth»' (Blokker 2012: 4). Blokker is right in pointing out these differences between the modern, Western understanding of anti-politics, and the 'old' and East-Central European one, yet in my view, the difference between the two is much greater and will be examined further in this paper. Evoking the idea of anti-politics 25 years after 1989 also means dealing with their social and political legacies, as well as the legacy of Communism, including the conformism and passivity it instilled.

In the narrow sense, anti-politics can be viewed as an idea with a handful of adherents. However, in the broader sense it is one of the constitutive phenomena of East-Central European dissidence, which should be examined from several perspectives. First, in relation to the ideals of Europe's 1968 generation. Second, from the perspective of the dissidents' own reflections and experiences, including their unsuccessful attempts at reforming socialism and confronting the authoritarian system. Also relevant to our understanding of the roots of East-Central European anti-politics are the attempts on the part of the dissidents to enter into dialog with the non-violence movement, the human rights movement, and, last but not least, Christianity. Dissident thought did not comprise a homogeneous set of ideas, and if we were to follow the request of its authors, we would not even call it political thought, as they themselves would reject the name. We would also be careful about using the very word "dissident," as the interested parties had reservations about the term (cf. Havel, 1985), preferring instead to refer to themselves as the "democratic opposition," before eventually succumbing to the linguistic custom of the West for the sake of mutual understanding. In view of dissident activities and their outcomes, anti-politics was clearly a contradiction in itself, for some commentators even a mystification of reality: the dissidents claimed that they were not engaging in politics, while at the same time being deeply involved in it and transforming it in the long run. This is one of the reasons why as early as the 1980s, and particularly after 1989, anti-politics as an ideal was rejected by some former dissidents: in their view, anti-politics is what one does when one cannot become a politician. Yet there were other reasons for abandoning the concept. Jerzy Szacki, for example, remarked that the main weakness of anti-politics was 'its programmatic aversion to designing concrete political arrangements

that could be instituted after the fall of communism,' as well as its language, which 'from the start had been an obstacle to a clear understanding of its political message.' It became anachronistic 'much sooner than expected' (Szaczkowski, 1995: 81). The rejection of anti-politics as a strategy was due in part to the criticism voiced by theoreticians of liberal democracy, who blamed anti-politics for the failures of new democracies. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, for instance, wrote about the anti-political style of the dissident movement, which, in their view, became a serious obstacle to the foundation of democratic institutions and attitudes (Linz and Stepan, 1996), while Gale Stokes spoke of 'the negative political price Poland paid in the early 1990s for the positive virtues of the Solidarity movement of the 1980s' (Stokes, 1993: 214; cf. Glenn, 2001: 204-5; Renwick, 2006).

Other sound arguments against the uncritical adoption of the anti-politics concept as a defining feature of the dissident movement as a whole spring from differences between East-Central European nations. The term 'anti-politics,' coined in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, has been seldom used in Poland. Poles spoke instead about 'new evolutionism' (Michnik, 1976), the self-limiting revolution, self-government, and solidarity, and the term 'anti-politics' would be applied to their efforts only *post factum*, as was the case with David Ost (1990). The dissident philosophy of Havel and Konrád was more about one's personal attitude towards the authoritarian state and its institutions rather than action, whereas Poles generally emphasized the need for community organizing and reform. In this sense, and in greatly simplified terms, the Hungarian and Czech dissidents were rather individualistic and elitist with regards to their numbers, whereas the Poles were not quite as exclusive. Yet, on the other hand, as Renwick rightly puts it, the behavior of the Polish dissidents was often different than the ideas they proclaimed, and as such could be regarded as anti-political (Renwick, 2006: 305-313).

Highlighting national differences, e.g., the elitist character of the Hungarian or Czech dissident movements - in terms of their limited size and background, not their views on social equality - and contrasting them with the large numbers of Polish opposition circles, might create an impression that their ideas were not widely known and thus were not very influential. There is, however, some truth to that: their essays were first read by narrow circles of friends, even though the authors were already public figures, and the people who first read them in Poland would go on to become the future leaders of Solidarity. Sociologically speaking, in the Polish case, even if the term 'anti-politics' was not used by social movement activists themselves, there are numerous reasons why their actions and thinking could not only be examined from an 'anti-politics' perspective, but could actually be considered to constitute 'anti-politics,' something we will focus on and explain later in the article. In social reality, ideas do not easily disappear and often have unintended and unexpected consequences. Dissident thought became a reference point for the critique of new democracies, and this is an issue that begs further examination, particularly with regard to the extent to which anti-political ideas have informed the practices of East-Central European NGOs, grassroots organizations and protest movements, as well as their understanding of politics and civil activism.

*Constructing the meaning of anti-politics**Jacek Kuroń*

The choice of Jacek Kuroń as a representative of the Polish case warrants further explanation. There were many talented leaders who acted within an extensive and dense network of social movements and social initiatives. Standing in favor of him is the fact that he was an active figure, along with Adam Michnik, in the circles that kept in close touch with Vaclav Havel and Charter 77, and was not only an intellectual and politician (after 1989 he was four times elected a Member of Parliament and twice a Minister of Labour and Social Policy) but also, until his death, a social activist; although at the time he was not as well known abroad as Adam Michnik, he was very well known in Poland, and it was he who proposed the idiolect of Polish dissidence, the language that described its experience, hope and strategy (Gawin, 2013: 334). Compared to the writings of Havel and Konrád, Kuroń's views stand out as radical.

In 1966 Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski coauthored the famous *Open Letter to the Party*, subsequently translated into English, French, German, and Italian, wherein they decried the Polish authoritarian party-state system from the perspective of far-left politics, and foretold the approaching social revolution. The publication of the *Letter* resulted in the arrest of its authors. After the events of 1970, new tendencies emerged in Kuroń's political thinking. He adopted a more moderate attitude towards the potential revolution and the means of implementing change. Kuroń's famous adage from that period, 'Don't burn committees: set up your own', a call to abandon violent struggle against the offices and seats of Party power and embrace self-organization instead, also signified that any independent movement, any form of independent culture, any efforts to build free associations could be considered political opposition in and of themselves, and could expand public space and lead to a democracy more genuine than the one presided over by the Party (cf.: Ost, 1990: 64; Falk, 2003; Gawin, 2013). His words also meant that Kuroń expected more from society and its citizens, and valued it more than the state and the parties. He certainly had more confidence that social forces, rather than political or economic ones, would bring about the most desirable changes. He proposed the same strategy in 1980s, after the rise of Solidarity and the introduction of martial law. Influenced by his encounters with members of the Club of Catholic Intellectuals, he considered converting to Christianity, but ultimately settled on accepting certain tenets of Christianity as his personal philosophy. In 1982, he described himself as an adherent of 'radical politics and moderate aims' (Kuroń, 1984: 218) and remained faithful to that declaration, as well to the ideas of the left, until his death.

Unlike Havel and Konrád, the main idea permeating his writings from the period preceding the emergence of the Polish Solidarity movement in 1980 and few years after it was not anti-politics, but self-government and the promotion of an active citizenship. Therefore, the main argument of this subchapter will be based on his essays collected in *Polityka i odpowiedzialność (Politics and Responsibility)*, published in London in 1984, in which he developed this concept. Kuroń's writings, in contrast to Havel and Konrád's, were the most concrete and laid down a complete program of

action along with recommended tactics. According to Kuroń, Polish dissidents had two goals: democracy and national independence. Kuroń did not use the term 'anti-politics' in his writing, but instead employed other concepts present in East-Central European political thought: living in dignity, living in truth, solidarity, self-government, true democracy, non-violence, etc. He is mentioned here, because his ideas and experience to some extent prepared the ground for the dissident and anti-political attitudes to emerge.

Self-organization, advocated so fiercely by Kuroń, translates into the establishment of social ties. He considered the fact that Poles were deprived of the normal political life implicit in a parliamentary democracy to be both a curse and a blessing. A curse for obvious reasons, and a blessing because the people could strengthen spontaneous interpersonal relationships, learn what true political engagement was about, and attach themselves to democratic ideals, which, paradoxically, was not that common in well-established Western democracies. Self-organization was considered a true weapon against the totalitarian state. The left wing of the Polish opposition would then stress the anti-totalitarian, rather than anti-Communist, character of their activities. In their thinking, democracy was opposed to totalitarianism, society to power, and self-organization to the state. In this context, the term 'democracy' denotes a system of values and self-government rather than a constitutional arrangement and a given political regime. The ambiguity of its use is further strengthened by the distance the Polish leftist dissidents maintained from representative and liberal democracy, seeing them as 'Western' (Gawin, 2013: 336). Kuroń's thinking was rooted in Marxist ideas of praxis and was in dialog with the writing of Adam Michnik. The commentators also compare this call to Masaryk's idea of 'public work' and to de Tocqueville's idea of free institutions mediating between political and local levels of government (Falk, 2003: 187-8). Neither the attitude espoused by Kuroń nor the stance of the Solidarity movement can be described as anti-political in the sense of their refraining from formulating political programs, as they not only formulated such programs, but even encouraged citizens to act within the boundaries of existing law. However, these attitudes can be described as anti-political in the weaker, less radical sense: the goal, after all, was to provoke action on the part of society and to build institutions that were independent of the state, not to seize power (cf. Renwick, 2006: 311).

Vaclav Havel

'Without exaggeration,' writes Barbara Falk, 'Havel's essay «The Power of the Powerless» was the single most important theorization of the dissident movements in East-Central Europe prior to 1989' (Falk, 2003:215). She quotes one of the Polish dissidents, Zbigniew Bujak, who said: 'Reading it gave us theoretical underpinnings for our activity. It maintained our spirits (...). When I look at the victories of Solidarity and Charter 77, I see in them an astonishing fulfillment of the prophecies and knowledge contained in Havel's essay' (Falk, 2003: 215). When the future Czech president wrote his famous essay – at the behest of Adam Michnik, whose role as a Polish dissident began in March 1968 and who went on to become editor in chief of

the country's largest and most influential independent newspaper – he was already well-known internationally as a writer and opposition activist. He rose to fame with his letter to Alexander Dubček on the anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the letter, Havel called for the defense of the ideals of the Prague Spring and the concept of socialism with a human face. He was imprisoned numerous times.

In 'Politics and Conscience' Havel wrote:

'I favour «anti-politics», that is, politics not as the technology of power and manipulation, of cybernetic rule over humans or as the art of the useful, but politics as one of the ways of seeking and achieving meaningful lives, of protecting them and serving them. I favour politics as practical morality, as service to the truth, as essentially human and humanly measured care for our fellow humans. It is, I presume, an approach which, in this world, is extremely impractical and difficult to apply in daily life. Still, I know no better alternative' (Havel, 1987b: 155). 'Yes, «anti-political politics» is possible. Politics «from below». Politics of man, not of the apparatus. Politics growing from the heart, not from thesis.' (Havel, 1987b: 157).

The passages quoted above could be read as an echo of Aristotle's understanding of politics as practical morality, and as moral virtue in action (see: Falk, 2003: 229). For some commentators, like Stanislava Gazurová, they also show a degree of affinity with Christian ethics (Gazurová, 2011). Havel's understanding of anti-politics, discussed here in reference to his two famous essays: '*The Power of the Powerless*,' published in 1978, and '*Politics and Conscience*,' published in 1984, is embedded in the rejection of the ideological power of the post-totalitarian state.

Ideology, 'a kind of bridge between the regime and the people' (Havel, 1987a: 43), a lie that 'runs through each person, though to varying degree' (Falk, 2003:219), makes all citizens both victims and supporters of the system, because each of them, no matter how bitter it may sound, is capable of living within the lie. It misleads people into thinking that 'the system is in harmony with the human order and the order of the universe' (Havel, 1987a: 43). Ideology also makes the escape from personal responsibility possible and provides a convenient excuse for personal passivity.

If politics is about lying, then anti-politics is about living in truth. It is the true power of the powerless. Living in truth is 'a non-violent attempt by people to negate the system within themselves and to establish their lives on a new basis, that of their own proper identity' (Havel, 1987a: 102). Living in truth is thus at the same time a call to civil disobedience and an 'existential revolution'. Havel rejected the idea of the 'political revolution' not because it was too radical, but it was not radical enough, and thus completely inadequate. Issues more important than just political reconstruction were at stake. The change would have to 'derive from human existence, from the fundamental reconstruction of the position of people in the world, their relationships to themselves and to each other, and to the universe' (Havel, 1985: 52). Anti-politics entailed involvement in pre-political activity. That, in turn, meant personal responsibility and the interpenetration of independent, underground society with the

official society of that time. The consequences of such an arrangement, as Havel believed, were unpredictable.

Just like any other motivating idea, anti-politics created a vision of a new society that would be built on its precepts. The new society borne out of living in truth would be characterized by plurality, diversity, self-organization, independent civic initiatives, and small-scale work (in Masaryk's understanding). It would be something more than Vaclav Benda's 'parallel polis' and Ivan Jirous' 'second culture,' which, in Havel's view, threatened to shut upstanding citizens in a ghetto. Living in truth must not lead to isolation. The new society would be open to everyone, it would be non-sectarian, and would of course not be based on ideology. An independent society has value in and of itself. The very fact that such an undertaking was occurring would already be meaningful. 'After all, the parallel structures do not grow *a priori* out of a theoretical vision of systemic changes (there are no political sects involved), but from the aims of life and the authentic needs of real people' (Havel, 1987a: 102).

One last thing worth noticing is Havel's understanding of the relationship between the West and the East. He thought that both East and West were experiencing the same deep crisis of humanity. He wrote: 'The post-totalitarian system is only one aspect (...) of this general inability of modern humanity to be the master of its own situation. The automatism of the post-totalitarian system is merely an extreme version of the global automatism of technological civilization' (Havel, 1986: 115). The only difference between East and West lies in the social and political forms that the crisis takes. Havel continued: 'There is no real evidence that Western democracy, that is, democracy of the traditional parliamentary type, can offer solutions that are any more profound. It may even be said that the more room there is in the Western democracies (compared to our world) for the genuine aims of life, the better the crisis is hidden from people and the more deeply do they become immersed in it' (Havel, 1986: 115-116). Havel thought that no Western democratic mechanisms 'could make society proof against some new form of violence' (Havel, 1986: 117).

György Konrád

In Hungary, the intellectual opposition was formed mostly by economists and social scientists, among whom the best known outside Hungary was probably the writer and urban sociologist György Konrád. The most striking thing about his writing is his elitist and solitary view of the dissidents' role, which appears to have stemmed not from personal beliefs as much as his ascertainment of his own condition and external circumstances. Through his friendship and collaboration with the sociologist Iván Szelényi, with whom he published 'The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power' in 1974, Konrád learned of the ideas of the Budapest School. He was also friends with Miklós Haraszti. Banned from publishing in Hungary, Konrád spent the 1980s traveling through America, Australia, and Western Europe.

Unsurprisingly, according to Konrád, politics was all about power and only about power. 'Any approach to politics is bound to fail if it strays far from the standpoint of that political genius Machiavelli, who explained power by saying that power wills itself and that the prince wants not only to gain power but also to keep and

enlarge it' Konrád wrote in 1982 (Konrád, 1987: 93), and then explained: 'for the rest of us who are not politicians, the less power a politician has, the better – the less we have to fear from him' (Konrád, 1987: 94), because 'there lives in every politician more or less of the delirium that was Hitler's demon' (Konrád, 1987: 95). Politics means fraud, bureaucracy, unnecessary regulations, war, and the absence of democracy. Politics is what happens in a nation-state. Politics inevitably invokes ideology, which means living within a lie. Konrád's idea of politics was clearly rooted in his experience of the authoritarian state, Communism, and the Cold War, but it could, at least to some extent, be applied to any set of circumstances. The remedy against politics perceived in this particular way was obviously anti-politics.

Konrád's perception of anti-politics was congruous with Havel's to a significant degree. For Konrád, as Falk observes, 'antipolitics is both noun and verb, vision and action, moral force and political strategy' (Falk, 2003: 301), 'both means and end' (Falk, 2003: 303); 'primacy of local over central, individual over collective (...), democracy over its alternatives, and politics over economics' (Falk, 2003: 306). What separates him from Havel, however, is the concept of civil society that appears in his essay. He wrote:

'... antipolitics is the ethos of civil society, and civil society is the antithesis of military society. There are more or less militarized societies – societies under the sway of nation states whose officials consider total war one of the possible moves in the game. Thus military society is the reality, civil society is a utopia' (Konrád, 1987: 92).

Konrád was deeply concerned with the realities of the Cold War and the bipolar model of the world. According to him, 'only antipolitics offers a radical alternative to the philosophy of a nuclear *ultima ratio*' (Konrád, 1987: 92). Reading it from this perspective, Falk is right when she states that 'Konrád's notion of anti-politics can be compared with the social movement activism of the New Left, as well as postmodern decentralized political action, reliant upon overlapping and multiple identities and bases of resistance' (Falk, 2003: 302). Yet in his famous essay, Konrád distanced himself from social activism. He wrote: 'thinking people are needed. We are peacemakers, not revolutionaries' (Konrád, 1987: 113). 'I do not believe that a new Central European identity will arise on the wings of emotionally charged movements, even mass movements, with the stormy popular tribunes and revolutionary personalities that typically go with them,' he explained (Konrád, 1987: 114) and added: 'No thinking person should want to drive others from positions of political power in order to occupy them himself.' (Konrád, 1987: 120). His main audience at the time were intellectuals like himself.

Konrád's understanding of ideology is parallel with Havel's and will not be discussed here at length. Much more interesting are his ideas about the possible future society. Konrád advocated for a specific kind of liberal democracy. The democracy he proposed would be based on self-organization and self-government. 'Self-management is the question of questions', he wrote (Konrád, 1987: 143), describing it as a core Central European characteristic: 'the demand for self-government is the organizing focus of the new Central European ideology' (Konrád, 1987: 196). He postulated a

return to the 'true' meaning of democracy as genuine citizen participation, perceiving democracy in substantive rather than procedural terms. He considered it 'more important and more basic than the reform of income and property relations' (Konrád, 1987: 189). The change that would bring about the ideological neutrality of the state, the multiparty system, and self-government would have to start from the bottom up. A social change would bring a political one into effect; ideological pluralism within society would result in the establishment of political pluralism. 'Self-management means that representative democracy spreads from the political sphere to the economic and cultural spheres as well. It means that democracy is the prevailing principle of legitimacy in the factory, in the research institute, in every institution - not Party rule or corporate rule' (Konrád, 1987: 139). This ideal of 'greater democratism' is consonant with Kuroń's self-organization (Falk, 2003: 303) and is certainly inspired by the Hungarian Workers' Councils of 1956. As in Havel's writing, Konrád's work also contains the idea of a 'third way' that would lead to a post-Communist and post-capitalist society (Konrád, 1987: 140; cf. Kuroń, 1984). Strongly advocating for many different direct democratic solutions, including self-governing factories and cities, Konrád turned to liberal democracy with the view that 'real reform is possible only in liberal democracies, where the majority, after hearing out the views of the minority, can act to change laws' (Konrád, 1987: 188).

Vaclav Havel and György Konrád coined the term 'anti-politics', while Jacek Kuroń and his friends paved the way to it. They certainly had one thing in common: a strong distaste for the politics of the authoritarian socialist state. Their critique stemmed from different sources and led to different conclusions. Their goal was to keep moral clarity, and in order to do so, they recommended either staying away from any form of politics (Konrád), living in truth and dedicating oneself to organic work (Havel), or engaging in community organizing and trying to influence politics from this angle. Moreover, they discovered that 'established patterns of political thinking from the past or borrowed from Western societies would not work in the conditions of real socialism,' as noted by Jerzy Szacki (1995: 78). They were looking for specific solutions to their specific problems, the problems of the East-Central Europeans, while acknowledging that the challenges they were facing were just different manifestations of the crisis afflicting the modern world (Havel, 1985). As stated above, Havel and Konrád refused to identify themselves with any traditional orientation within the political thought spectrum. In Szacki's opinion, their ideas cannot simply be reduced to

'just another version of the «organic work» program,' since it would ignore the original character of their concepts and would fail to 'appreciate its hidden radicalism and the fact that its architects were not seeking to withdraw from politics but rather to find a way of engaging in it that would be adequate to the situation of «post-totalitarian» society' (Szacki, 1995: 78).

Anti-politics as a frame

Having reconstructed the meaning of anti-politics to members of opposition movements at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, we should consider how it served as an interpretive frame, how it motivated members of social movements, and what strategies it provided them.

Anti-politics as a collective action frame contained all three components mentioned by Gamson and discussed in section 1 of this article. Injustice was defined by constant state surveillance, legal obstacles to civil activism and self-organization, unlawful actions perpetrated by the authorities, persecution of independent intellectuals and religious people, and, less importantly, by poor economic conditions. Yet the greatest injustice was that people were detached from themselves and forced to live within a lie about their human identity and potential. Since injustice was defined in these existential terms, agency had to be defined at this level as well, and it meant non-violent, moral revolution that would lead to self-organization, self-government and ideological pluralism, and in the future, to a democracy that would be direct rather than representative, a unique East-Central European achievement. Satisfying human needs (psychological, spiritual, cultural, and political ones, in this order) was found to be more important than satisfying economic necessities. Anti-politics as a frame also succeeded in creating strong identities. 'We' were people of good will: democratic, non-politicians, people who tried to live in truth, the representatives of society. 'They' were politicians and all those in power, ideologists, violent people (cf.: Payerhin and Zirkakzadeh, 2006)¹. The division between 'us' and 'them' should not, however, be understood in terms of simple populism, for at least several reasons. Firstly, the dissidents themselves made efforts to distance themselves from populist movements long before 1989, emphasizing their cosmopolitan values, as was the case in Hungary with the split between the népi and demokratikus ellenzék (Falk, 2003: 125-129). Secondly, the term 'we' did not refer to any specific social group: it applied neither to the workers nor the intellectuals, while the concept of the nation, which was important in such mass movements as Solidarity, was not particularly compelling to Havel or Konrád, much less to Kuroń. The 'we' had fluid boundaries: anyone could become a part of the group as long as they experienced an 'existential revolution', even a former member of the system. Finally, the goal was neither to seize power in the state nor to seek emotional revenge. 'We' very often meant simply 'society', 'society against the state'. The commentators of the Polish democratic opposition wrote that 'the agent or the subject of the transformation must be an independent or rather a self-organizing society aiming not at social revolution but a structural reform achieved as a result of organized pressure from below' (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 32). Michnik's 'new evolutionism' and Kuroń's 'self-limiting revolution' represented thus 'a strategic and normative break with the revolutionary tradition whose logic was understood to be undemocratic and inconsistent with the self-organization of society' (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 32).

¹ J.K. Glenn III also described civil society as a collective action frame using the three elements listed by Gamson (Glenn, 2001).

Why were these frames successful? First of all, because their architects, renowned public figures, managed to combine a respect for people's individual experiences and definitions of the problem with their own program for action. The opposition leaders were able to transform their previous narratives (like Jacek Kuroń, they succeeded in shedding their revisionist ideas and moved towards a universal language of dignity, truth, self-organization, and the fight against totalitarianism). The frames they offered resonated both with the audiences' prior beliefs, worldviews, and life experiences, as well as the existing cultures of the region (Williams, 2007). *Frame alignment* (the linkage or conjunction of individual and social movements organization interpretive frameworks', Snow et al., 1986: 467) took the form of *frame bridging* (the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem, Snow et al., 1986: 467; cf. also della Porta, 2006: 73-85). The leaders of the dissident movement took into account the other groups' interpretations of the situation that already existed within their societies. At first, these interpretations did not appeal to the dissidents, but they gradually came to see their utility. A good example of that process is the establishment of relationships with Christian organizations and the adaptation of their idiolect. Konrád wrote: 'The autonomy and solidarity of human beings are the two basic and mutually complementary values to which the democratic movement relates other values. To that extent, it stands close to the Judeo-Christian ethic' (Konrád, 1987: 124).

On the other hand, this universal, essayistic language, full of mobilizing ideas, that at once had been a source of the dissidents' strength and success, turned out to be their biggest weakness after 1989 due to the lack of a comprehensive program of action, not one that would put the nation on the road to the democracy but one for action within the democracy already in place. According to Szacki, the shunning of politics at the beginning of the 1980s was later viewed as a 'tactical necessity' (Szacki, 1995: 77) stemming from the fact that 'the opponents of communism had no real power at their command' (Szacki, 1995: 78). When it became clear that they actually had some influence on politics, the 'new evolutionism' and 'organic work' narrative was quickly replaced with that of the 'self-limiting revolution' (Szacki, 1995: 78). Certainly, anti-politics was much more than just a 'tactical necessity,' but the anti-political frame proved to be more suitable for mobilizing people than for directing their actions.

Adherents of the new liberal democracy, among whom there are many former dissidents, are another source of anti-politics critiques. They questioned its usefulness as a basis for a liberal democracy. Despite its anti-ideological aura, the idea was far from neutral in matters of politics (Szacki, 1995: 81). This observation has had at least two consequences. Firstly, 'anti-politics' lost its allure because of the vision of politics and a good life it entailed. This vision turned out to be not entirely compatible with the liberal public philosophy that refuses to take a stand on moral issues, and wants to appease conflicts rather than feed them. Secondly, the activism it supported (in the Polish case) was not well received by the new post-1989 elites who, for the sake of social and political stability, as well as economic reforms, preferred a technocratic government to the unpredictable nature of participatory democracy. These and many other voices demonstrate a certain anti-politics fatigue, given that it seems to have been

rejected by both average citizens and the elites. Is there, then, a need to breathe new life into this idea?

The historical anti-political frame and contemporary East-Central European civil society

An examination of anti-politics in its historical sense provides a stepping-stone for the adequate description and explanation of the dynamics at play in the local protests of today. It is true that new concepts and forms of politics, anti-politics, and post-politics have emerged since the early 1980s but the aim of this article is neither to enter into a dialog with them or with contemporary philosophy, nor to apply their categories in the analysis of contemporary social movements, much less to determine which of these concepts is correct and most desirable. The primary aim is to shed light on the fact that the ideas and interpretive frames of the past may prove crucial to the understanding of contemporary social movements in East-Central Europe, while also identifying the places where that legacy is most apparent today, and, finally, to initiate a discussion on the mechanisms behind that influence, which is much more interesting than the mere statement of fact regarding the popularity of former interpretive frames. In summary, when faced with a declared lack of interest in politics or when observing the trend towards the creation of extra-political enclaves, both the scholar of contemporary East Central-European NGOs and the researcher of social movements must ask herself to what extent the phenomenon at hand is an expression of contemporary global tendencies, and to what extent is it an expression of local patterns and values.

The research quoted in this article demonstrates the presence of anti-political ideas and attitudes in East-Central Europe and indicates some possible niches where we could look for dissident legacies, always carefully examining their origins and character. These legacies encounter ambiguous comments and are perceived both as an asset of the region's societies and as their weakness. In this part and in the previous section of the article, we focus on the experience of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, though East-Central Europe has witnessed many protests in recent years. Their enumeration and discussion exceeds the scope and aim of this article.

In terms of ideas, the legacy of the dissident movement is difficult to trace, but there are fields where we could find its mark more readily than in others.

Firstly, we could take a look at some informal and formal initiatives that stemmed directly from the dissidence movement. Here, a good example of the informal initiatives might be some of the protests of the 1990s and 2000s lead either by the former Solidarity members or inspired by the Solidarity's eclectic social program. The protesters and their demands of the radical participatory democracy and workers' self-management of their factories were publicly condemned, and the majority of the former dissidents distanced themselves from the protesters. The protesters' demands were radical and indeed not very popular. On the other hand the supporters of these protests considered the public attitude as a betrayal of the dissidence ideals (cf. Ost, 2005; Górski, 2007).

Another example of this type, but more formal than the former one, is certainly the third sector, the network of NGOs and urban movements. This part of civil society has been formed, to some extent, by former dissidents and the new generation of activists, the latter often related to or molded by the older generation, and is playing an increasingly important role. Interestingly, some studies show that some NGOs demonstrate an ambiguous attitude towards official politics, and, naturally, the question arises whether this attitude is the effect of the general post-political mood or the legacy of the dissident movement. (e.g., Katarzyna Jeziarska's ongoing studies of the Polish NGOs). There are also attempts at building identities of movements using at least parts of the legacy of the dissidents as a foundation, as in the case of the new Polish leftist group, Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique) which has published the writings of Jacek Kuroń and organizes conferences dedicated to him and his work.

Another field where we could look for traces of anti-political legacy is the broadly understood public discourse and public debate. Some authors talk about the oversymbolization of politics, and symbolic overheating of the public debate (Kubik, 2015). When describing the legacy of the Polish Solidarity movement in the public discourse, Jack Bieleśiak noticed, for example, that 'the value discourse was evident in both the post-communist and the post-solidarity forms. (...) In both contexts, politics was largely framed in a language of morality, identity and value, infused with a mission mentality.' (Bieleśiak, 2015: 80-81; Brier, 2009: 75-78). Bieleśiak also argues that discourse structured in such a way made 'difficult [for Poland] the passage to «normal» politics based on interest representation and political compromise' (Bieleśiak, 2015: 91). At the macro level, the frame 'us' versus 'them,' still present in the first decade after 1989 and crucial to understanding the post-Communist divisions in Polish politics, has been gradually replaced with the frame 'us' versus 'us,' marking the post-Solidarity divide between those 'faithful' to anti-politics and those adapting to a more pragmatic vision of public life. When speaking about public discourse, we should mention the efforts to shape it in terms of civic republican ideas of the common good, civic associations, endorsements of self-rule and autonomy by some of the participants (Blokker, 2011; Dryzek, 2000; Cizewska, 2010). Republican dimensions of dissident ideas cannot be directly translated to anti-politics in Western terms, but can be related to the politics of anti-politics as practiced by East-Central Europeans.

The third field in which the dissident legacy can be observed is the critique of post-Communist politics and societies. In this case, not only does it provide 'a critique of the present, but also a political model of reshaping it' (O'Dwyer, 2014: 182). This critique has its own repertoire, which could also be discussed from an anti-political perspective. One example of such a critique will be described here at length.

Anti-politics appears in relation to the commemoration of the events of 1989 among civil society groups, mostly student organizations like Opona and Inventura demokracie in 2009. Parallel to the official celebrations, these nonprofit groups organized happenings that combined art and theater, marches, and educational seminars to present personal stories of those who had lived under Communism. They organized a traveling exhibition, meetings with politicians, and an international conference. Inventura demokracie issued an anti-political-style manifesto in which they demanded 'a proper reflection on our Communist past' because 'even today we have to expose new and stealthy forms of totalitarianism and react to them

appropriately.' This is crucial as the 'participation in the public sector becomes more and more distasteful' (see O'Dwyer, 2014: 184). Instead of withdrawal into the private sphere, the authors proposed political engagement and civic control over politicians, among whom only Vaclav Havel is ever considered a positive character. Their actions were dedicated to young people, 'the so-called first free generation.' Bernhard and Kubik observed that the students' commemoration of the fall of Communism organized in 2009 'did not invoke the «heroic» version of Czech history, but its Švejkian rendition, albeit combined with a public stance inspired by the Havelian spirit of «anti-politics»' (O'Dwyer, 2014: 287). This revival of anti-politics, according to Conor O'Dwyer (2014), invoked dissident ideas and tactics in order to form 'a moral critique of post-communist Czech democracy and, in particular, the political class, regardless of party affiliation. Czech politicians were, in this view, hypocritical, self-serving, and untruthful – in short, unworthy of the ideals of the revolution. In this way, these civil societal groups attempted to use the past as tool to change the political present' (O'Dwyer, 2014: 182-183). The anti-political attitude among Czech NGOs and other grassroots organizations did not falter with time. O'Dwyer recalls that during the Velvet Revolution, the Civic Forum, comprising different anti-Communist groups, refused to be labeled as a political party. When, in 1990, it 'did run as a party in the first free elections, its campaign was marked by self-mockery, irony, and willful amateurism.' As one observer wrote, 'Having long endured a politics imposed from above, full of insufferably wooden rhetoric, elaborate ceremony, and self-important men in cheap suits and slicked-back hair, they [Civic Forum] decided the only antidote was to make this campaign into a carnival' (Horn, 1990: 11). In 2009, carnival and mockery would again be deployed against the political class' (O'Dwyer, 2014: 182).

Lastly, we could investigate the presence of anti-political ideals in the contemporary civil activism that not refers directly to the former dissident movement. Ivancheva considers alter-globalist movements and new social movements that subvert the political process, parties, and state institutions to be just such a field (Ivancheva, 2007). In the case of Hungary, the legacy of opposition ideals can inform a reanalysis of the protests of the 1990s, described by András Bozóki (1996), as well as the protests that have occurred in recent years, such as the so-called Budapest Autumn of 2014, which did not display anti-systemic features, but involved the participation of a variety of social groups that did not represent any specific party and had gathered in the name of universal civic values (cf. Szabó and Mikecz, 2015). In the case of Poland one might reflect on the uses of anti-political rhetoric within anti-ACTA protests (Jurczyszyn et al., 2014).

Conclusions

Were dissident ideas meaningless, were the declarations of serious contributions to 'the culture of self-determination for individuals, for groups, for the nation, and for the continent as a whole' (Konrád, 1987: 124) mere boasts? Or maybe they were 'truly original conceptions' that 'not without reason (...) aroused a lot of interest, even enthusiasm, far beyond the confines of the region.' Does anti-politics really have 'all of

the makings to assume a lasting place in the history of political thought and emancipation strategies' (Szacki, 1995: 81)? Certainly, the other option is close to the reality and the specific character of East-Central European civil societies and the ideas that formed them must find a more important place in social movement studies. The anti-politics of the 1980s was a result of the situation in which East-Central European countries had found themselves and the subject of dialog between the East and West, but also a lesson that the East wanted to teach to the West, reminding the latter about the foundations of democracy. It was a Utopian project whose prospects for success were questionable from the very start. It disappeared as an interpretive frame along with the change in political circumstances, but since then it has served as a handy tool (cf. Swidler, 1986) and often unacknowledged point of reference for subsequent protests on matters both political and non-political. Thus looking back to it enables us to identify and appreciate characteristic regional discourses, repertoires, and forms of protest in historical and contemporary social movements. It also allows us perceive the continuity between them. Finally, it helps identify the mechanism behind the intermingling of historical and regional content, resources, discourses, and practices with contemporary content, discourses, and practices born in the region but frequently borrowed from outside. For these reasons, it is crucial that we account for anti-political legacy in the study of manifestations of contemporary civil society in East-Central Europe.

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