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The current situation in the field of extremist movements in the Czech Republic with an emphasis on their potential support among young people and the spread of extremist ideological content over the Internet.

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Summary

In 1989, in the Czech Republic as well as in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, a fundamental change in the political system occurred. In the new situation political entities began to appear and assert that benefited from the frustration of some parts of the population and populistically abused in particular the issue of the Roma ethnic minority in the Czech Republic. New subcultures appeared quickly – in addition to punkers, who have already existed here in the communist era, mainly numbers of skinheads grew rapidly - they mostly took extreme right-wing positions and began to attack primarily against punkers, Roma and other visually distinct minorities. Some of these attacks ended in serious injuries or even death of a victim. As a counterweight groups of militant anarchists began to form and the middle of the 1990's was marked by frequent clashes of these groups. Mainly belonging to the skinheads became almost a fashion phenomenon in certain strata of youth and the increase in the number of "bare skulls" has on the other hand encouraged their confidence and aggressiveness.

In this situation, in 1995, the Institute for Criminology and Social Prevention in Prague started an extensive research project mapping the newly created scene, which began to be called extremist (this term was later considerably downgraded). The research carried out by two-man team used a variety of research methods. They conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of radical groups (from both sides of the opinion spectrum), participant observations at street demonstrations, marches and rallies, printed matters published by sympathizers of radical subcultures were collected and later analyzed. Also members of the police of the newly established specialized units to combat extremism were contacted and expert investigations were conducted among them.

However, a representative survey of youth aged around 16-17 was the main pillar of the whole event. Mainly such views, which could imply support of some of the extreme political movements, were investigated; also the awareness of such movements and how these movements are evaluated by the youth were investigated. In other words, how strong the group of supporters and potential members is. The results of research actions, including the questionnaire survey, became the basis for the publication *Youth Extremism in the Czech Republic* (IKSP edition, published in 1996), which was probably the first professional work on

this topic in the Czech Republic. The research findings were subsequently used in the creation of the first educational materials for teachers, social workers, police and the judiciary. Members of the research team got also deeply involved in the training of specialists for the treatment of young political extremists.

The research project, the results of which are summarized in this report, of course was not and could not be the automatic replication of fifteen-year-old event. We have tried to maintain especially crucial element: exploring views of high school students. Of course, the original questionnaire had to be modified, however we have tried to maintain major questions so that a comparison with the original research could be made. In comparison with the first research we have improved the structure of the sample. The target group was divided into two subgroups: 1 / high-school students (3,000 respondents) and 2 / non-students - i.e. young people who do not attend any school (300 respondents). Both groups answered the same questions. Lists of schools were designed to take into account the proportional distribution of students from different types of schools (grammar schools, vocational schools, technical schools) within each region. Also the various age groups are evenly represented in the set (26% young people aged 16, 36% at the age of 17 years and 38% aged 18). The file of non-students was created by purposive sampling of the snowball system.

Other methods have been included in the project such as expert survey among members of the Police of the Czech Republic, who are professionally engaged in the issue of extremism. We believe that these specialists are among the most competent persons who can comment on issues of criminal matters of peripheral political currents. Thanks to the coordination of ÚOOZ staff of the Police of the Czech Republic, we managed to gather a massive sample of 67 specialists, who are professionally engaged in the investigation of crime associated with extremist attitudes. Due to the workload of the respondents, we chose a relatively short questionnaire with closed items, which ensured the mentioned high number of returned sheets. With some issues, of course, there was an opportunity to comment on the specific issue at length in free form,

The third component analysis that took place within the project was a comprehensive description of Czech-language websites with extreme-right and extreme-left focus. The time of printed fanzines is long gone and all of their indoctrination, mobilization, and other functions have been fully taken over by the Internet. Therefore, we found it important to determine what types of information and in what form are currently distributed by extreme political entities.

In the first part of the questionnaire for youth, we tried to map the sample in terms of basic satisfaction with the social situation. This then gave us the opportunity to further classify the respondents to generally satisfied and dissatisfied. The comparison with the year

1995 is marked by profound differences: whereas at that time three-quarters of young people were satisfied (albeit with reservations, of course), at present, there is only approximately one half of "satisfied". Therefore, if the society is perceived so critically, it is necessary to ask what problems are considered most important (respondents chose three variants from the submitted list). Also here interesting differences become obvious; it should be noted that the current research was completed with the item called "injustice – people are not measured by the same standards" as this reservation has in recent years frequently appeared in researches. The fact that it was included rightly is proven by its high preference – it appears in third place. Criticism of politicians dominates – six of ten people feel irritated by their moral character. It is interesting that in the years shortly after the "velvet revolution" people were generally more optimistic towards a new political class. But both then and today, almost half of the respondents emphasized the presence of "dirty money". In 1995, it was the money of unknown origin, used in the privatization of state assets, the establishment of financial institutions and the like, whereas in recent years the entire political hierarchy has been under the strong suspicion of massive corruption in public procurement.

Another set of questions, by which we tested the tolerance of the respondents were personal sympathy or antipathy to various social, ethnic and sex groups in our society. It can be considered proven that intolerance is a fundamental characteristic of a number of fundamentalist and anti-democratic movements. Respondents were to classify the following groups by marks as at school: i.e. one means a very positive relationship expressed verbally as "I like them," whereas five on the other hand, could be characterized by the words "I hate them." In addition to minorities traditionally tracted as "controversial", quite "mainstream" groups were intentionally included in the survey. The aim was to identify among the respondents the fundamental critics of contemporary social organization, including its main representatives.

Overall, the tolerance of young Czechs dropped in comparison to the mid-1990s. We can only speculate about the causes - whether the numbers from the 1990's were positively influenced by the "intoxication of freedom", after which sober had to come, or whether the current generation in their opinions reflect global disillusionment and anxiety. Homosexuals are the only group, to which the relationship is significantly more positive than before; their essentially trouble-less position in the Czech reality is expressed by the existence of a law on registered partnership.

A number of monitored social groups of completely different types have seen a significant drop in popularity. For example, currently more than two-thirds of the respondents dislike homeless and there has also been a decline in popularity of Jews. Also the popularity (which was low even in the past) of the Roma dropped: more than three-quarters young people strongly dislike this ethnic minority.

In the central part of the questionnaire young people were directly asked about their attitudes to listed radical movements from both sides of the political spectrum. Among other things, we logically wondered whether respondents sympathize with some of mentioned movements and which of them they find to be the best. For clarity they could only choose one option. Exactly one half of the respondents said that they do not like any of the submitted groups. Most respondents agree with radical environmentalists and every twelfth teenager sympathizes with the Workers' Party; adding supporters of right-wing skinheads, open neo-Nazis and "imaginary" Ku-Klux-Klan, we get the 16% support for the extreme right groups. Also the opposite camp - the anarchist / anti-fascist groups (including anti-racist skinheads) has around the same base of supporters (17%).

Half of the respondents do not sympathize with any of the listed movements and therefore are not involved in any street events, such as demonstrations or marches. However, more than a quarter of respondents have been considered a future participation, 15% rarely attended and small portion is really active (but remember again, that these are children mostly under 18 years of age).

When asked whether respondents are afraid of some of these movements, 62% of them gave a positive answer. Most of them fear neo-Nazi (17%, together with right-wing skins 25%). Anarchists + antifa placed next - 15% respondents fear them. 7% of respondents have the largest concerns of Young Communists. In summary, we can say that a high percentage of respondents who expressed their concerns, suggest that young people and relatively sensitive to the danger of political extremists and most young people can simultaneously estimate where the most serious danger come from.

The content analysis of extreme-right and extreme-left websites focused on defining various forms of publicity and propaganda of the current extreme-right and extreme-left websites, i.e., how those web sites communicate with their readers, potential supporters and members. Content analysis was directed at getting to know the attributes that give the importance to internal and external communication of extremist and radical groups. It was the case of following characteristics: mobilization issues, propaganda (internal, external), defining and shaping identity, including used instruments, methods of mobilization and recruitment. Furthermore, "categories of the enemy", own group, own identity" and "tools of propaganda and publicity" were specified.

Researched websites were in the Czech language, easily searchable through the common Internet search engines, i.e. easily accessible even to disinterested person or persons less familiar with the issue. The analysis covered the 7 websites of the extreme right and 9 websites of the extreme left. Sites were examined comprehensively, i.e. articles, news, reports, audiovisual material, links, tools of websites; on the whole 924 posts were analyzed. In terms of time these were the posts published in 2011 (The analysis included only those websites that were active in 2011)

As an additional probe we included a preview of the work of police experts in the field of extremism. Experts were asked about the constricted range of issues directly related to their activities in the field. There was no attempt to "force them" to the broader general speculations about the causes or social context of extremist crime, and on the other hand, we did not try to obtain information on specific cases.

We were mainly interested in their views on current danger of individual radical political movements, the development of their activities for the last three years and the expected trend for the next period, including the risk of possible transition to terrorist methods. For the purposes of this questionnaire, we recognized (in accordance with the present political science) openly neo-Nazi groups, ultranationalists, anarcho-autonomous and Marxist – communist groups. It appeared that the same share of experts - about 40% each, considered the right-wing extremism more dangerous or found them both identically dangerous. Only one fifth of respondents considered the extreme left more dangerous. At the same time two-thirds reported that the anti-extremist policy of the state focuses more on the right-wing extremism. According to most experts openly neo-Nazi activities have been stagnating or declined; on the other hand especially of extreme nationalists of anarcho-autonomous groups have been on rise. Estimates of future development are highly heterogeneous, but experts agree that the deteriorating economic conditions in the country will strengthen activities on both sides of the spectrum and will find larger number of potential supporters.

Experts agree on the existence of increasingly risky regions in terms of the growth of extremist activities. They are mainly in the high unemployment areas with a high proportion of the Roma minority. In the first place there is a danger of stirring up racial conflicts by the extreme right. Addressed policemen have been mostly facing in their practice verbal support and promotion of banned movements, along with defamation of nation, race and ethnicity. However, half of them in the last two years have also worked on cases of physical attacks against ethnic minorities or opinion opponents. Cooperation with the prosecution is most often (45% of votes) assessed as fluctuating depending on a particular person of a public prosecutor. Nevertheless, only 6% have more serious reservations to this collaboration. The most common objection to prosecutors (and judges) is that they are not always sufficiently aware of the issue of extremist movements and occasional disparagement to underestimation of this problem. Also inconsistencies in the assessment of individual wrongdoing with individual public prosecutors and judges have been mentioned. Criminal penalties, especially alternative sanctions are considered inadequate.

Translated by: Aspenna