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Author(s): Juraj Buzalka
Source: *Europe-Asia Studies,* Vol. 60, No. 5 (Jul., 2008), pp. 757-771
Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451546
Accessed: 26-10-2017 08:54 UTC

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Europeanisation and Post-Peasant Populism in Eastern Europe

JURAJ BUZALKA

Abstract

On the basis of an examination of rural social structure, traditionalist narratives and an agrarian imaginary resulting from uneven development, this article investigates the forms of political mobilisation which materialise in East European politics as 'post-peasant populism'. Focusing on grassroots mobilisation, an analysis of the annual *Corpus Christi* ritual in the city of Przemyśl, south-east Poland, serves as the basis for an exploration of the theme of socially sensitive post-peasant populism as an alternative to post-socialist capitalism. This populism relies on the politicisation of the rural past and is currently influenced by 'Europeanisation'.

ON 1 MAY 2004, THE THIRD POLISH REPUBLIC (*TRZECIA RZECZPOSPOLITA*), as Poland after 1989 was also known, became one of eight former socialist countries to join the European Union (EU). After elections held in the autumn of 2005, representatives of the new coalition consisting of Catholic-conservative *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice) and two nationalist-populist parties, *Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Self-defence of the Polish Republic) and *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (League of Polish Families), announced the Fourth Polish Republic. The newly elected president and the new prime minister of Poland expressed their thanks for the support of the Catholic, nationalist and xenophobic *Radio Maryja*. In a country where more than 90% of inhabitants declare themselves to belong to the Roman Catholic Church, the new government announced a programme of reforms in moral terms, called for historical and social justice, invoked patriotism and proclaimed the moral recovery of Polish society.

Besides drawing on the past, the conservatives' political rhetoric showed a strong religious commitment. Catholicism legitimated their modernisation programme, most importantly through its appeal to continuity with moral times in the past, the safeguarding of an essentially Christian national tradition, and its support for socially sensitive policies. In the eyes of politicians as well as many ordinary Poles, Poland

throughout the centuries had remained faithful to Latin Christianity, and Polish politics should count on this heritage. In December 2006, for example, 46 members of the Polish parliament—10% of the lower house—submitted a bill seeking to proclaim Jesus Christ King of Poland, and pledging to follow the path of the Virgin Mary, who was declared honorary Queen of Poland in 1656.

Early parliamentary elections in October 2007 brought the defeat of the populist–conservative coalition. In spite of the relative success of the Law and Justice party, the conservative-liberal *Platforma Obywatelska* (Civic Platform) gained the highest number of votes (almost 42% in comparison to 32% for Law and Justice) and formed the government with *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* (Polish People's Party) that has a strong agrarian basis and deep roots in south-east Poland. The elections showed the ongoing crisis of the political left in Poland when the left coalition *Lewica i Demokraci* (Left and Democrats) won only 13% of the votes. In spite of the moderate victory of the liberal-conservative party and some changes in parts of the electorate, the social basis of populist politics has not changed dramatically in Poland.[1]

Basing my arguments on ethnographic material from south-east Poland, in this article I offer an analysis of the interplay between religion, politics and populism in the context of post-socialist transformations.[2] This interplay has implications for what I call post-peasant populism in Eastern Europe, a type of modern populist political culture influenced by religion and based on rural social structures, ideologies and narratives. I believe the analysis of Polish populism should begin with the social and political history of Galicia, or Little Poland. Because of its economic under-development and the political importance of its organised peasantry, south-east Poland became the cradle of one of the strongest populist movements in Eastern Europe (Narkiewicz 1976). Even though the rest of Poland was structurally different—with, for instance, impartible inheritance and industrialisation in the Russian partition and larger, more modern farms and infrastructure in the Prussian partition—the political expression of populism in Poland derives from Galicia and its peasantry. Also nowadays in south-east Poland people predominantly support the conservative right, owing to the traditional religiosity of the local population and the fact that peasant parties have deep traditions in the region (Zarycki 2000, p. 865). Although Przemyśl, the city where the field research was carried out, has a strong urban heritage going back to historic Galicia, many of its inhabitants came from the countryside during socialism. The city is surrounded by purely agricultural settlements with a prevalence of small landholdings. Przemyśl and south-east Poland are a historically marginalised, underdeveloped part of Poland and of Eastern Europe, and the institutions of the Catholic Church are exceptionally strong there.

The first part of the article offers a brief historical account on the social transformations in south-east Poland and Eastern Europe and operationalises the concept of post-peasant populism. The second presents the empirical material providing evidence of the interplay between religion, politics and populism and it attempts to specify the role of Catholicism in post-peasant populism in Poland and

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[1]Source: http://wybory2007.pkw.gov.pl/SJM/PL/WYN/W/index.htm, accessed 8 March 2008.
[2]I undertook fieldwork in Przemyśl and south-east Poland between the summers of 2003 and 2004. The results of my research were published in Buzalka (2007).

Eastern Europe. The third part of the article explores what kind of relationships are developing between post-peasant populism and 'Europeanisation'.

From agrarian world to post-socialism

As remarked by Tom Nairn (1998, p. 121), 'the curse of rurality' frequently accompanies the rapid transformations of peasants into national citizens. Moreover, this process usually requires the substantial assistance of intellectuals who seek to 'mobilise' the psychology of the lost-world in order to build a new world of the modern nation-state (Nairn 1998, p. 108). In most of Eastern Europe, peasants became Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Slovaks, and so on under predominantly agrarian nation-states, thanks to agents of the national idea recruited from among the rural intelligentsia, such as priests and teachers. For the awakening intellectuals the peasantry represented the core of the national collective (Brock 1992). However, when researchers take a 'modernist' approach to the study of nationalism (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990), the selective maintenance of peasant features in national constructions remains substantially underestimated. 'Modernist' accounts of the rise of nationalism also largely fail to explain the importance of religion in nation building. The strength of religion during nationalisation is demonstrated by the fact that the main people successfully able to mobilise peasant societies—not least because they spoke in the vernacular—were church employees. As Norman Davis pointed out, the Roman Catholic Church was one of the few threads of continuity in Poland's past and it was always part of the world of Polish politics (Davies 2005, p. 152). It is the Catholic narrative of Polish history rather than the demography of contemporary Polish society that makes the exclusivist identity *Polak-katolik* so powerful today (Porter 2001).

After the Habsburg monarchy fell apart, Poland and other newly independent countries of Eastern Europe promoted state-based, nation promoting, post-independence nationalism (Brubaker 1996), an endeavour that in the Polish case included a more or less salient form of Roman Catholic ideology. After waves of ethnic cleansing and forced migrations during and after World War II, the communists, in order to continue the link with the 'peasant' past, invented a new and seemingly internationalist ideology based on an alliance between workers and farmers. Through this alliance they strengthened the peasant imaginary, despite booming urbanisation and a modernist, secular ideology. Today, this is all incorporated into the tourist industry, and folklore serves as a reminder of people's closeness to their peasant past. In contrast to the other socialist states, with the exception of Yugoslavia, in Poland collectivisation was unsuccessful, and the subculture that nurtured images of a rural nation and peasant practices survived even more strongly outside the communist state. It survived among the peasants and within the independent Roman Catholic Church, which was the main institution opposing the communist power holders before 1989, and which significantly influenced the new moral order thereafter.

As classic studies reveal (Thomas & Znaniecki 1927; Galeski 1972), peasant society and economy were characterised by the central importance of the family farm as the basic unit of social organisation (Shanin 1966, 1971; Wolf 1966). The main source of

livelihood, directly providing the major part of people's consumption needs, was a plot of land. A specific 'traditional' culture was related to the way of life of the small communities. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, anti-peasant policies were applied in Poland in the 1950s (Buchowski 2003, p. 48; Narkiewicz 1976, pp. 249–54). Peasants were considered relics of an agrarian age who did not fit into the modernist discourse of socialism (Wieruszewska 1994, p. 158). Frequently resisting collectivisation, private farmers were in a disadvantageous position relative to those on state farms or to urban folk. The majority of farms remained small, based on family labour and used archaic technology (Hann 1985; Nagengast 1991; Pine 1995). Towards the end of socialism in Poland, a quarter of the inhabitants (some two million families) were still related to the peasantry (Turowski 1994, p. 151), although 75% of these earned livelihoods from factory work, state employment and private business in addition to peasant farming (Turowski 1994, p. 152). After 1989, a huge economic decline of the countryside accompanied post-socialist changes and brought social degradation to rural people (Hann 2002; Turowski 1994), especially peasants, who had widely resisted the socialist state and therefore contributed to its fall.

The common view of peasants concentrates on their opposition to urban life (Shanin 1971; Wolf 1966). My approach to post-peasantism moves from the peasant family as an economic and social-structural unit in the countryside towards the 'rural' morality, imagery, and ideology that is ingrained in memories and expressed in narratives, rituals and symbols, not necessarily in the context of towns, villages, and hamlets, but also in cities including East European capitals. Because all socialist countries saw massive influxes of rural people into urban centres, any analysis of the urban sphere today must start with the remnants of village folk in the cities. When villagers were resettled from their hamlets, they did not straightforwardly become urbanites. Whether workers, medical doctors, or university professors, they stayed closely in touch with the countryside, keeping their backyards, folk artefacts and village identities.

Drawing on her observations of late socialist Poland, Pine (1993) described how peasant relations and practices such as gender relations were extended into the larger social world outside the household, reaching into the second economy and entrepreneurship. Although the socialist state succeeded in relativising urban–rural divisions and changing the material nature of inequality in both the countryside and the towns, it was far less effective in transforming ideology (Pine 2002, p. 162), not least when it was linked to old agrarian ways of life. Even inheritance ideologies, expressed through kinship, show that although the economic importance of land decreased in the countryside during the post-socialist years, the emotional, aesthetic and social value of land persisted, and was passed across generations through family memories. For Pine (2003, p. 293), the land was 'a powerful metaphor of kinship'.

Andre Czegledy (2002) also analysed 'urban peasants', in this case in Hungary. Despite living in cities such as Budapest and holding important managerial posts, many people retained their rural practices, identities, and memories through their leisure activities and through sociality around their hobby plot or allotment. The examples offered by Czegledy and Pine show that boundaries between the rural and the urban have remained porous in Eastern Europe, as they were under state socialism. Memories of the peasant past are transmitted across generations, from peasant

grandparents to their grandchildren, some of them university educated. This type of memory is observable in everyday life, in people's worldviews as expressed in narratives that nourish a kind of peasant nostalgia. It is symbolised in notions of homeland and kinship and is embodied in religious buildings and objects dispersed across south-east Poland. The more direct links these memories have to religious and national narratives of suffering and sacrifice and to the role of church, state and intellectuals in nurturing them, the more the peasant world is important for political mobilisation. In this way it is less important whether the receivers of political messages in Eastern Europe are actual peasants or post-peasants living in the city blocks. This 'rurality' is, therefore, expressed in politics and, together with structurally positioned power relations in the post-peasant setting, it is one of the driving forces of populism.

Populism in Eastern Europe

Inspired by Herderian romantic nationalism and aiming to modernise underdeveloped societies, East European populisms began to grow in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century populism came to be embodied in ideologies of peasantism, which emerged intellectually as reactions to both Russian populism and Western socialism (Ionescu & Gellner 1969; Kitching 1989). Peasantism, first, took the peasant explicitly as its social prototype and proposed moulding the society and its state according to the peasants' conceptions of work, property, and administration. Second, peasantism blended its social-economic doctrines with a strong nationalistic concern for the emancipation of the 'people' from foreign domination. Third, it claimed that the peasantry was entitled, as a class, to the leadership of political society, 'not only on account of its electoral preponderance but also because of its innate spiritual and national values' (Ionescu 1969, p. 99). More a movement than a party-like organised collective, populists struggled against rootlessness—against the feeling ascribed to modernity. Stressing order, morality, and justice, they claimed not a tribal community but an agrarian *Gemeinschaft* (MacRae 1969).

A comparative framework on populism highlights some universal features of populist mobilisation and its links with religion. *Narodniki* in tsarist Russia, for example, widely used religious rhetoric, and populists in the Canadian province of Alberta in the 1930s even used the imagery of religious conversion. Charismatic leadership—so well exploited by populist politicians—has been generally explained as a kind of religious leadership, and the loyalty of followers to populist leaders has been explained as devotion based on faith (Taggart 2000, p. 101). Many populisms share with dogmatic religion a certain moral fundamentalism, including simple concepts of good and bad, right and wrong (Stavrakakis 2002).

Roughly three main social features link populism with Catholicism: the pre-eminence and defence of the patriarchal family and a rigid moral order, the complicated obsession with the nation, and beliefs about the role of 'the people' and their traditions. Holding universal aspirations, many churchmen like to address their appeals to 'the people'. 'Oppressed people' usually also represent the main source of populist legitimacy. The church often defines itself against the people who want to radically modernise society. For some clergymen, as for populists, modernisers are perceived as being isolated from everyday ways of life and make changes at the

expense of 'the people' (Stavrakakis 2002). In the time of crisis and insecurity, religious leaders and populists address their assistance predominantly to those who are in need, usually the 'losers' in economic transformations. Many religious leaders and populists share the safeguarding of tradition, for a fear arises from the loss of the traditional character of a people, their national identity, and their pre-industrial moral purity. Because the domain of tradition is, in many parts of Eastern Europe, heavily safeguarded by institutional religion, populism legitimates itself through an alliance with it, and many religious leaders support populists especially for their care of tradition. Religious leaders and populists both build strong senses of brotherhood—an organic solidarity and loyalty aiming to unite entities such as nations. Without directly implying that Roman Catholicism automatically supports populism, I suggest that the East European religious revival and the increasing success of populism have gone hand in hand since 1989.

Analysing the failure of the Polish state to collectivise the peasantry, Hann (1985, p. 169) registered a 'contradictory persistence of peasantry' and of a 'peasant ethos' in rural, socialist south-east Poland, as well as a 'late flowering of peasant populism'. He also noticed similarities between the Rural Solidarity movement of the 1980s and populist protests from before World War II. Hann noticed in his 'village without solidarity' that the only functioning community institution was the Roman Catholic Church. He wrote that 'certainly the ethos has survived and peasants are united in their profound suspicion of the authorities', and 'peasant religiosity remains at a high level, ensuring that the Catholic Church remains the major solidifying force in local communities and in the nation' (Hann 1985, p. 176).

Nagengast's (1991) description of the reproduction of class relations in Poland during the socialist years offers perhaps a more direct view of the reproduction of some elements of pre-war populism. Although she did not analyse the role of the Catholic Church in supporting populist politics, she anticipated the emergence of a new populism in post-socialist Poland. After the political left had been discredited, there was 'now the danger of right demagoguery, possibly in the form of right populism, the seeds of which [had] actually lain dormant for many years' (Nagengast 1991, p. 23). Unlike Hann and Nagengast, who did not primarily address the reproduction of narratives or consciousness and did not concentrate particularly on religion, I focus on both topics, chiefly with regard to people who are not peasants; they are post-peasant Catholics mobilised by populism.

The political mobilisation in south-east Poland is based on two constitutive elements: a traditional social structure and what might be seen as a combination of identity narratives, collective memories and rural ideologies. These two elements together with Catholicism are the driving force of what I call post-peasant populism. This populism is not about the peasantry; rather, it can be seen as a type of modern, populist political culture based on a non-urban social structure and imagined rurality.

Religion and post-peasant populism

Challenging the Durkheimian assumption about the social-integrative role of ritual, Steven Lukes (1975) argued that instead of social integration, ritual may actually exacerbate class-based social conflict. Although at first sight, the most significant

Catholic annual ceremony in Przemyśl—*Corpus Christi*, a festival of the Western Christian Church honouring the presence of the body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist—expresses political integration, a closer look also indicates social tensions. A movable feast, it is observed in May or June on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. The ritual literally brings God into the community when the Holy Eucharist is carried through public places, making a number of stops on its route. Through this symbolic action, the interplay between religion, politics and populism shows particular salience and reflects structural characteristics of the post-socialist society.

Studying political movements and their connections to class and national identities, Jeff Pratt (2003) distinguished three analytical levels. The first was the conceptualisation of movements in relation to major historical processes (also called social transformations). The second involved the form of organisation of the movement by which its political activities took place (cells, parties, unions, clubs and cultural circles). The third level, inseparable from the two, was that of the discourse that mobilised the movement by articulating who its members were and why the movement was formed (Pratt 2003, pp. 7–11). Looking at religion and politics in south-east Poland from a historical perspective, I believe that the Catholic Church and its various ecclesiastical and lay associations form the channels through which a political mobilisation develops.

According to the general rule, which applies to the Przemyśl *Corpus Christi* festival (*Boże Ciało*), or Ceremony of the Most Blessed Sacrament (*Uroczystość Przenajswietszego Sakramentu*) that I observed on 10 June 2004, the ritual should consist of a solemn mass followed by a procession.[3] It is the largest annual procession in town, attracting thousands of participants. People make preparations far in advance, buying dresses, training for the programme and preparing flags. In 2004, as police closed roads to traffic, the festival began in front of the Salesian church, where holy mass was celebrated. As at all the following stops on the route—the Holy Trinity church, the main square, and both Catholic cathedrals, Greek and Roman Catholic—daises covered festively in white-and-red cloths had been prepared for the ritual. In addition to 'uniformed' priests of various ranks standing around the altar, armed soldiers stood in a row in front of the dais. They later accompanied the Holy Sacrament in the procession. A trumpet band was on hand, as well as the cathedral choir and the Przemyśl children's choir. Several thousand people waited along the proposed procession route, but the main crowd followed the procession from beginning to end. The place offering everyone the best position to see was the main square (*rynek*), so the sermon was delivered there by the Archbishop of Przemyśl, Józef Michalik.[4]

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[3]Four major Christian processions take place in Przemyśl every year: the Greek Catholic Jordan ceremony (19 January), *Corpus Christi* (May or June), a procession in honour of the patron saint of the city, Saint Vincent (19 July), and the procession of the Virgin Mary from the Franciscan church (15 August).

[4]Like many other important religious ceremonies, the sermon and surrounding events were broadcast nation-wide over *Radijo Maryja*. *TV Trwam* was also present, and later in the day it reported the news from Przemyśl. The founder of the radio station, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, established *Radio Maryja* in 1991 and initiated the newspaper *Nasz Dziennik*. A few years later he brought the television station *Trwam* into existence, and thus formed the *Radijo Maryja* media network which has often been accused of broadcasting nationalist and xenophobic opinions. Most listeners of *Radio Maryja* come from among the pensioners, especially older women, and people living in the countryside.

To highlight the most important parts of his speech, after a general theological introduction about the presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist, the archbishop urged people 'to spend more time with Jesus'. He reminded them of the first visit Pope John Paul II made to his homeland in 1979, and of his predictions of the problems Poland faced now. The Pope made a huge appeal at that time when he prayed to God, 'Let your spirit come and refresh this land!'[5] He bade farewell to the Polish nation in Kraków by saying, 'You must be strong with the strength that faith gives you'.[6] The archbishop also mentioned the days of Solidarity, the 'spiritual movement' that attracted people because 'it tried to build the ideals of modesty, belief, and defiance against lies, injustice, the exploitation of one nation by another, the exploitation of the people by the party, and even of the small group within the party'. Then he analysed what had caused the decline since those highly moral times. The adoption of sin was the main explanation:

> Look at Sunday, the Lord's Day! How often we sell it for Judas' earnings... The big supermarkets, the big superstores, madly kill the Lord's day for money. By devastating the little people's shops, they take a big share of unfair profits. They taint the conscience!

Criticising some of the social consequences of capitalism has been common in Catholic teaching since the end of the nineteenth century; it dates to the appearance of encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) and *Centisimus Annus* (1991), which attempted to resolve the 'social question'.[7] The Pope's speech at his fifth homecoming, in 1997, for example, highlighted the harsh economic and social conditions in post-socialist Poland and urged those responsible to fight against unemployment and the 'exploitation' of human labour (Luxmoore 2001, p. 307). His pilgrimages also stressed the need for a 'profound new evangelisation' (Luxmoore 2001, p. 314) and confirmed the continuity of the church's stance towards capitalism.

As David Lane (2005) has explained, the post-socialist transformation in Eastern Europe has been characterised by winners and losers with clear class bases. The manual working class and the peasantry have lost the most (Lane 2005, p. 431). The church after socialism provided care to the people in need, it ran charity programmes and offered jobs in areas of high unemployment, such as in south-east Poland. The defence of 'the little people's shops', however, also indicates the importance of petty entrepreneurs and family-run businesses in the church's agenda. These little shop-keepers are now endangered by the proliferation of large-scale shopping.

In spite of the sympathies toward the church's social criticism, many people criticise the institution of the Catholic Church and hold anti-clerical attitudes. Sociologists of religion have recorded the highest levels of religious practice and institutional loyalty to the Catholic Church in Poland among people in the country's south-east. They have also observed the behaviour summed up in the well-known saying, 'Poles love the

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[5] *Niech wstąpi duch twój i odnawi obliczej tej ziemi!*
[6] *Bądzcie mocni mocą wiary.*
[7] For more details on Catholic social doctrine see, for example, Hebblethwaite (1982). For a specific account of Catholic revolutionary radicalism in Latin America and Catholic social thought there, see de Kadt (1967).

pope, but they do not listen to him'.[8] As the sociologist Janusz Mariański (2004, p. 373) pointed out, 'an increasing number of Catholics...do not refer to religious interpretations of moral issues'. People in Przemyśl show a high level of social conformity in their religious belonging, but at the same time they criticise the church's representatives for their membership in the dominant social stratum, their alleged affluence, their 'immoral' behaviour, and their involvement in politics.

The anti-clericalism of the people confirms that ordinary believers are not powerless victims of church politics but critics of the church's position in the regional power structure. This ambivalent perception of Catholicism among the believers corresponds to the ambivalent political message the church carries—social sensitivity and egalitarianism, on the one hand, and loyalty to the existing power structures, on the other. The people's ambivalence towards the church leads me to larger issues of the relationship between religion and post-socialist social and economic development, for despite people's anti-clericalism, many of them respond enthusiastically to the clergy's criticism of capitalism.

According to the archbishop's sermon at *Corpus Christi* in 2004, 'workers are also pushed to accept the serf system of work'. Because of high unemployment, their job security is threatened. He also criticised the demands of employers on women who, because of fears that they would lose their jobs, were pressured to postpone pregnancy. The archbishop said, 'This is serfdom, barbaric serfdom, manipulation of people's conscience! It is actually the way of adopting evil, the sin and harm that can never bring benefit to any nation or society'. He also extolled the traditional family: 'This family is able to restore health to everybody, it strengthens the fallen ones, it welcomes each of its members—the lost daughter and the wandering son'. He urged legislators to promote the healthy family, consisting of father and mother, 'the family where there is always room for another child, the family that is not afraid of life, that does not prohibit the flowers of love'. He criticised a sociological survey of schoolchildren ordered by the Ministry of Education that, among other questions, had asked about children's sexual experiences. In the archbishop's opinion, the questionnaire had inflamed the children—'seduced them'—because it included questions promoting moral relativism. According to its editors, especially the professor responsible for the survey, whom the archbishop characterised as 'godless', it was a standard 'European' survey (that is, used in other European countries). The archbishop questioned this:

> In what sense do we want to catch up with Europe then? Certainly, we have to catch up to Europe in decency, in the fair achievement of material and technical development. But we certainly must avoid catching up with Europe for the price of selling the consciences of our children! We are not supposed to catch up to Europe's sewers and sinks! We need to restore our health, our families, our nation, and the Europe we live in. That is our healthy ambition!

The archbishop then pointed out what he saw as the absence of religious values in the media—the kind of dangerous and morally relativist mediocracy that in his eyes

[8] *Polacy kochają Papieża, ale go nie słuchają*

had accompanied the post-Solidarity years. He argued that Europe 'kills its own values, its own identity when it kills God; it is sentenced to a decline'. He declared:

> If God is not saved [by people in modern societies], man will not be saved either ... Although it [Europe] takes a modern form, the stronger ones will benefit from the weaker ones, the poor will become poorer, the rich richer ... In order to avoid this, faith is needed!

As an example of the result of belief overcoming sin, he used national forgiveness between Poles and Ukrainians.

On the question of Europe, he referred to a letter he had received from a parish priest in Bavaria who expressed surprise at the high attendance at his Sunday mass, which the priest attributed to the presence of Polish immigrant workers from parishes in the Przemyśl diocese. The archbishop explained that 'these people went for money... but they did not lose what was worth keeping'. In his eyes this valuable thing was faith received in Christ's church. 'We are the church', he said, 'and it is a living organism'. Referring to people who were pressured to work on Sundays, he criticised the exploitation of workers by the capitalist machine. He offered a message of solidarity with those who were pushed aside—the oppressed. Although he criticised the EU's alienation from Christianity, commenting on its refusal to mention God in its constitution, he did not oppose Poland's EU membership. Rather, Europe could serve as a moral reference point insofar as fair trade and the fair earning of money were concerned. Nevertheless, he offered a solution for Europe's 'dying' culture, which 'violated its Christian roots'. European Christians, especially Poles, he said, could help to build a new order.

In short, a certain egalitarian, morally activist, and socially sensitive alternative development project emerged in the archbishop's sermon. This project is observable not only at the discursive level. The Catholic Church in Przemyśl and elsewhere is providing social care for people in need, running charity programmes, and collecting money outside the formal channels of the state, which in Eastern Europe was until recently the exclusive provider of social services. Nevertheless, this programme is not entirely shared by the many members of the local intelligentsia which—as often in the past—aims to modernise the society in another way. Rather than using 'socialist' anti-clericalism as many members of this social stratum did in the late agrarian times, the local elite rather subscribes to a free-market ideology.

Building on recent re-interpretations of working-class lives and cultures, Alison Stenning (2005) called for alternative accounts of class after socialism, based particularly on ethnographic studies and discourse analyses.[9] From a sociological perspective, clear class boundaries have been recognised on the basis of inequalities between class groups, consciousness of class, and awareness of other classes in post-socialist Eastern Europe (Lane 2005). In the post-peasant parts of Eastern Europe, such as south-east Poland, these class relations and identities reveal the situation in the past when the movements carrying socially liberating messages of populism influenced politics and relied on Catholicism. Following Michael Mann (1986), John Gledhill (2000, pp. 52–53) emphasised, from a historical perspective, the contradictory nature

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[9]A nuanced account on class after socialism in rural central-western Poland has been offered by Buchowski (2003).

of Christianity in agrarian class relationships. As he described it, after the early church reached an accommodation with state power, its hierarchy dedicated itself to reproducing the ideology of the ruling class. Nevertheless, Christian doctrine continued to offer an alternative, classless ideology. Rich and poor, lord and peasant, stood equal on the day of judgement (Gledhill 2000, pp. 52–53).

As the archbishop's sermon made clear, the church has formulated its stance towards the major social transformations of the twentieth century, both socialist and capitalist. It has well-developed organisational structures in local communities and at higher levels through which it spreads its moral discourse. Through its organisation of committed activists—priests and churchgoers—it nurtures an identity discourse necessary for the creation and maintenance of a political movement. This does not mean that a mass political movement based on Catholic social doctrine—a new kind of 'liberation theology' movement—is flourishing in south-east Poland, but it does imply that Catholicism is worth studying from the perspective of power.[10]

The Roman Catholic Church is seen as a powerful political institution and the supervisor of society's moral discourse in south-east Poland. Poland is one of the countries of Europe in which a mass anti-clerical political movement has had a minimal chance of success and where the interpretations of the church's past has exceptionally strong political consequences. There is no politics in Poland without a religious agenda, and no religion without politics. A closer look, however, reveals that many people even in such statistically religious regions as south-east Poland hold critical opinions about the church. This finding illuminates the effects of broader post-socialist changes and the disillusionment they have brought. After the fall of state socialism, one of the few solid alternative development projects has been offered or inspired by the Catholic Church and its social thought. My point is that this project does not simply come from the Vatican; it grows from the ground as well. To put it simply: in the contemporary post-peasant setting of south-east Poland, a nascent anti-capitalist movement exists, but no organised political protest has yet come out of it. Instead, it is manifested in Catholics' increasing support for conservative and populist politics.

The post-peasant populism that I believe has emerged in the post-peasant context of post-socialist Poland, but also other parts of Eastern Europe, is built upon the pre-modern myths and rural imagery that help to create an enemy in the form of a wealthy capitalist society or a godless socialist society (and the coexistence of the two is possible). Many Catholics in Poland and Eastern Europe perceive EU integration as a Christian project. Their perception can be defined as ambivalence towards modernity—the EU symbolises affluence and stability even as it threatens 'traditional' morality. Following Jean and John Comaroff (1993), Jon Mitchell, who observed a similar ambivalence among Catholics in Malta (Mitchell 2002), explained in a work dedicated to popular belief (Mitchell 2001) that the feeling arises from the anxiety people feel about rapid social change. Mitchell stressed, however, that the ambivalence does not represent a rejection of modernity but 'encompasses a simultaneous fascination with and desire to be "modern" and deep anxiety about where society is heading' (Mitchell 2001, p. 5).

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[10]For more details on the 'liberation theology' movement, see Klaiber (1989).

Europeanisation and populism

Europeanisation is defined as a discursive strategy and a device of power which in particular, through administrative and institutional capacities of the EU, reorganises group identifications in relation to territory and 'peoplehood' (Borneman & Fowler 1997, p. 488). European multicultural policies and regional development fostering tourism together with growing transnational migration also give rise to a particular political mobilisation. As noticed by Boissevain (1992), the return or revaluation of tradition in Europe in recent decades is connected with the decentralisation of policy making and the increasing role of regionalism and cultural policies—a part of the 'People's Europe' model promoted by the European Union (Shore 1993). In politics this re-evaluation might have appeared as the mobilisation of 'tradition' and 'culture'. Drawing on Stolcke's 'cultural fundamentalism' and new racism based on the prominence of the boundedness of cultures, cultural difference and belonging in West European political rhetoric (Stolcke 1995), Ballinger (2004) speaks about the Croatian regionalist movement in Istria, which through the discourse of hybridity and purity re-inscribes the nationalist logic with an emphasis on autochthony, rootedness, and territory. This is close to what Rata—inspired by Friedman (1994) and Tourraine (1995)—indicated as biculturalism and neotraditionalism (Rata 2003, 2005). Douglas Holmes (2000) discussed this 'integralist' view, linking it to the European tradition of the counter-Enlightenment and explaining it as a reaction to neo-liberal capitalism and multiculturalism—the economic arrangement and ideology that threaten organic, bounded group identities. Referring to south-east Poland, Hann writes about the use of culture that relies on a conflation of culture, ethnicity, and identity and argues therefore, that it is very much linked to the nationalist project (Hann 2002). However, applying these findings to the eastern borderland of the EU, I argue that Europeanisation conceals rather than eliminates the nationalist logic based on a usage of culture.

Nevertheless, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that a specific populism grows only in Eastern Europe. Populism is also embedded in Europe's structural and narrative background. As profoundly remarked by Nairn, even EU institutional modernity 'remains deeply weighed down by the ball and chain of the Common Agricultural Policy … [the EU] remains deeply compromised by the very ruralist inheritance which has in the past so often nourished ethnic nationalism' (Nairn 1998, p. 124). Obviously, as emphasised by Pratt, rural inhabitants elsewhere in Europe have already experienced modernisation in the sense that a huge majority of them were employed in industry, lived in the city blocks, and received a wage (Pratt 2003, pp. 190–91). If they eventually returned to their villages, they simply would not return to the past (Pratt 2003). Applying Pratt's findings on populism, the problem is not that some peasant practices and relations are still alive, but it is the complex way rurality is invoked in political discourse, not least via political Catholicism, as well as how post-peasants themselves are incorporated into populist and national movements. The political mobilisation based on the traditional social structure underpinned by a combination of identity narratives, collective memories, rural ideologies and Catholicism still carries significant force in post-peasant Eastern Europe.

Conclusion

After 1989, the growth of populism in Eastern Europe was perceived by the analysts and liberal intellectuals as an intermediary stage from communism to liberal democracy. Like nationalism, populism and its typologisation has also become a catchword for both media and the scholarly community dealing with Eastern Europe, especially from 'macro' political actors' point of view (Mudde 2000, pp. 33–34). The various forms of populism, especially the ones linked to social reformism and promoted through socialist or religious discourses, were threaded with suspicion, especially within economic rationalism of neo-liberal reforms and secular–individualist ideology of civil society. The populist studies indirectly implied that if the problem with nationalism calms down, populism would be marginalised. Nevertheless, as I have argued, in the fast changing environment of twentieth century south-east Poland, the understanding of the nation and religion among populations seemed to be quite stable. This entails a set of practices and ideas hostile to some aspects of secular modernity. In this sense, pre-modern images, social practices, relations and narratives typical for the agrarian era survive in contemporary Poland, although the actual peasantry has been substantially reduced. Beyond these continuities, slightly different attitudes also emerge as a result of the 'uncertain transition' (Burawoy & Verdery 1999). People's insecurity fuels the nostalgic imagination of a similar nature. The combination of the two types of practices, identity narratives and memories related to the recent peasant past—determined by continuity and rupture—causes a particularly 'populist' way of doing and perceiving politics in south-east Poland and in other parts of Eastern Europe as well. A populism with a similar agenda that appeared some decades before World War II and survived socialism in some forms, is also most likely to survive, if not gain more prominence, under the ongoing European transformations.

Comenius University, Bratislava

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