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Radical demophilia

Reflections on Bulgarian populism

The first victory of populism in Bulgaria, argues Svetoslav Malinov, was the rejection of the conservative constitution by liberals shortly after independence in 1879. In the contemporary period, it has been the rhetoric of former tsar Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who became Bulgarian prime minister in 2001, that set the precedent for the rightwing populism currently purveyed by Volen Siderov, leader of the Ataka party. Despite Siderov, xenophobia is not a dominant feature of Bulgarian populism. Instead, populism in Bulgaria feeds off two phenomena: "a pure hatred of political parties" and the constant emphasis in the public discourse on an alleged contrast between ordinary people and the political elite. This goes so far as to make the elite subservient to the people, an attitude for which Malinov coins the term "radical demophilia".

The contemporary Bulgarian political debate seems obsessed with the subject of populism. In what follows, I will attempt to elucidate the phenomenon by means of the tools of political theory, rather than the more common approaches to populism from the perspective of sociology, comparative political studies, transition studies, and so on.

Yet even such a modest goal encounters serious difficulties. Analysts in Bulgaria were very slow to address the issue and did so only after populism broke into the public sphere via national elections, often taking extreme forms. Yet even back in 2001, when the Simeon II National Movement (SSNM)¹ won the parliamentary elections, there were voices warning that the SSNM was opening the door to populism in Bulgarian politics for years to come.

As one of the proponents of this thesis from the very beginning, I have never had the illusion that after such a rupture any party system could quickly recover its previous "pre-populism stability". What is certain, however, is that the debate on the issue will continue long enough to enable the Bulgarian political community to understand and describe its first mass post-communist encounter with populism. So that we can be better prepared next time.

The problematic nature of the term

We still lack a comprehensive scientific study of Bulgarian populism. Such a study would have introduced us to the tradition of populist rhetoric in Bulgaria, described the populist moments and identified the populist leaders in Bulgarian history. In principle, the term "populism" still lacks the stability and clarity of meaning typical of political science terms. If we compare it with "totalitarianism" for example, we will immediately see its deficiencies.² Scholars of totalitarianism have a clear and well-ordered field of study, and there is a more or less commonly accepted definition with clear supporters and

opponents.

All this is absent in the case of populism. Although we can find some history of the term in scientific literature, it is quite heterogeneous. If we look at the history of the term "people" (*populus*) it will take us back to Ancient Rome, where we will find impressive usages but almost nothing that can help us analyze modern politics. We will not find any early–modern or modern political thinkers who have dealt with the subject and can give us some points of reference.³ There are no seminal twentieth–century texts on populism that formulate concepts that are universally accepted and serve as a common frame of reference for all studies on the phenomenon.⁴ Thus, scholars of populism are faced with the unrewarding task of reconstructing the term and its history, of setting the criteria for its presence in real politics, and only then of analyzing concrete political processes.

Populisms

The history of populism shows that the term did not always have negative connotations and that its earliest manifestations were quite different from the present ones. Among the different classifications of the phenomenon of populism I will focus on the following two categories: "agrarian populism" and "political populism".⁵

Agrarian populism

"Agrarian populism" designates a group of radical movements and socioeconomic doctrines defending the interests of peasants and small farmers. The term "populism" was first used in the context of the Narodnik movement (*Narodnichestvo*) in the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century.⁶ The Narodniki were part of the Russian revolutionary movement in the nineteenth century, in which part of the radically inclined Russian intelligentsia romanticized peasants and hoped to build a new socialist society on the basis of the surviving traditions of communal farming in rural Russia. Influenced by the works of Aleksandr Herzen in the 1870s, many young intellectuals went "to the people" in rural areas to preach the gospel of agrarian socialism. When it became obvious that the Russian peasantry would not respond to their propaganda, the Narodnik movement died out and part of its members turned to terrorism, trying to assassinate the tsar and so on. The Russian words *narodnichestvo* and *narodnik* (from *narod* or people) are translated into the main European languages as "populism" and "populist".

The American experience with populism is much more important for modern scholars. In 1892 in Omaha, Nebraska, thirteen hundred delegates from the whole country proclaimed the creation of a new party called the People's Party. It united a movement called "Populism" whose supporters proudly called themselves "Populists". The party's electorate consisted mostly of farmers, and especially small farmers lacking long–term economic security: people without education who were engaged in manual labour and had access to limited and very unfavourable loans. The Populists ultimately failed to attract other voters. But many Democrats and Republicans included Populist ideas in their campaign platforms.

The programme of the Populists (known as the Omaha Platform) was first announced at the party's first national convention in Omaha in 1892. It insisted that the Administration create a network of warehouses where the farmers could store their crop. Using the crop as security, farmers demanded access to

low-interest government loans that would allow them to wait until they could sell their produce at a higher profit. The Populists called for a ban on national banks which, in their view, were dangerous institutions that had too much power. They protested against landowners who refused to cultivate their land. They called for government ownership of railroads, the telegraph, and the telephone system. They demanded the establishment of government-owned postal saving banks, the introduction of a graduated income tax, and inflation of the national currency.

In American historiography,⁷ populism is described as the last stage of a long and doomed battle: that of saving rural America from industrial America, born of the clash between the ideas of Jefferson and Hamilton. Populism was an attempt to preserve the fading image of an America of farmers, who were the main losers from the economic development and economic crises at the end of the nineteenth century. The Populists opposed the threat posed to their world by the new dynamic market order to which they did not belong and from which they could have no gain.

The typical voters for the first mass populist party in the history of democracy were people excluded from the modern economy of capitalism, who lived mainly in underdeveloped regions, who were socially marginalized and often geographically isolated. We can establish a connection between "agrarian" and "political" populism by means of the following excerpt from the 1892 Platform of the People's Party in the US:

[W]e meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized [...] The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrated in the hands of capitalists [...] The fruits of the toil of millions are badly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the Republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes — tramps and millionaires [...] A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism.⁸

This text is a pure concentrate of populist rhetoric. With slight changes (Parliament instead of Congress, Homeland instead of Republic, etc.), it could be transposed to a variety of political and national contexts, including in Bulgaria. Even though it was born of the protest of American farmers at the end of the nineteenth century, its meanings and symbols have remained valid to the present day; this fact allows us to try to pass on to a higher level of generalization.

Political populism

The examples of the earliest versions of agrarian populism in the nineteenth century, especially that in democratic America, are a starting point for any

analysis of populism. There is no doubt that, historically, populism has "agrarian" origins, being connected with a wide range of movements and theories born to address the problems of small farmers who failed to adapt to the capitalist modernization of national economies. While a broad consensus exists as to the origins of populism, interpretations of its more recent forms are highly conflicting. Their diversity creates a problem for any analyst and I will first identify several negative points of reference.

Populism is not a political phenomenon whose manifestations must be sought outside the Modern Age. We can find interpretations in academic literature according to which various Ancient Greek sophists, Roman emperors, Spartacus himself or the Florentine preacher Savonarola (1452–1498) were populists. To be meaningful, however, the term "political populism" must be used only in the context of the modern democratic state. Otherwise we risk blurring the boundaries between the different historical ages and making only superficial comparisons between different historical figures instead of achieving theoretical clarity.

– *Populism is not an ideology.* Compared with classical ideologies (such as socialism, liberalism, or fascism), populism stands out for its eclecticism and inconsistency. Various political leaders who practically have opposite ideas and values have been defined as populists. As it is impossible to look for ideological unity between sometimes extreme positions, we cannot identify a minimal common conceptual premise that will allow us to speak of common ideological identity.

– *Populism is neither leftwing nor rightwing.* The facts speak for themselves: populists come from all across the ideological spectrum, from Jean-Marie Le Pen to Hugo Chavez. One can argue whether populism in some countries (or even on some continents) tends to be left or right as a rule; one can claim that in some historical periods populism in a particular country was predominantly leftwing or rightwing.⁹ We must admit, however, that a careful look at the actual manifestations of populism will often reveal the presence both of classical leftwing and rightwing theses.

– *Populism is not a sign of political immaturity.* Many undesirable characteristics of democracies (and especially of young democracies) have been declared to be temporary and surmountable. In this view, particular flaws of the democratic political process are something like "child diseases of democracy" that are cured by experience. But it is precisely experience that shows that populist "outbursts" are possible both in new and in old democracies. It is obvious that the roots of populism are deeper.

Considering that political populism is so heterogeneous, it is hardly appropriate to try to capture the main ideas of the various populist parties and politicians in a single definition. The best approach would be to ignore the specific "content" of the different populisms and try to outline a most general form of that which accommodates the variety of specific manifestations. That is why I think that it would be most appropriate to define political populism as a form of political thinking and rhetoric, a set of rhetorical figures and techniques with a single common characteristic: permanent appeal and reference to the collective image of the "people".

Margaret Canovan describes populism in modern democracies as "an appeal to the 'people' against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society".¹⁰ She gives the following interpretation of the

use of the collective term "the people" in populist rhetoric:

- An appeal to the people understood as an organic monolithic entity against all organizations that represent it as internally heterogeneous. This use is directed mainly against the political establishment (usually political parties) and presupposes the existence of a charismatic leader, "father" and "unifier" of the nation.
- An appeal to the people understood as a linguistic–cultural, kinship community against an internal or external "alien" community. This use presupposes opposition to a specific community — the usual suspects being foreigners, immigrants, Jews — perceived as an obstacle to the people's wellbeing.
- An appeal to the people understood as a collective image of "ordinary people", of the "underdogs". This use presupposes the classical Marxist opposition of the "oppressed and exploited" against their exploiters.

Populism is by definition against all elites — economic, political, and cultural. It is precisely this anti–elitism that precludes a substantive definition of the term: if the main characteristic of a particular way of political thinking is the attack against the established structure of power, then its concrete messages are conjunctural and depend on the existing status quo. However, if we know the political context in a given country, we can analyze its present and construct its future populisms very plausibly.

Bulgarian populism

I will start my reflections on Bulgarian populism with an attempt to formulate a Bulgarian answer to the question: *What is politics?* The abstract nature of this question should not mislead us into underrating the enormous practical importance of the answer — after all, the way in which politics is defined determines the conclusions, forecasts, and prescriptive elements of any analysis. Here I will quote Almond and Verba's definition of political culture as a pattern of "cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations toward the political system in general, its input and output aspects, and the self as political actor".¹¹ In other words, political culture is the specific knowledge, feelings, and values connected with the political system and the conditions in which it functions and responds to the needs of its members.

No one has dared question the link between populism and political culture. The latter's characteristics largely determine people's evaluative orientations, expectations, motivations, and, ultimately, their political behaviour. In sum: we cannot properly analyze populism in a particular political community unless we construct the concept that its members, or at least the majority of them, have of the political.

The Bulgarian concept of the political

Reflection on the question "what is politics?" is fundamental for the tradition of political theorization. It is so rich that it looks entirely self–sufficient and can be expounded entirely on the basis of classical texts and their languages.¹²

Our purpose, however, lies in the opposite direction: we must identify not the past but the present–day "common sense" understanding of politics. I have no hesitations on this issue. The dominant understanding of the essence of politics

in Bulgaria today can be formulated as a struggle for power; politics is understood as a process of imposing private interests on the public.

In Marxism, we find a wide-scale, detailed, and historically all-embracing understanding of politics as a struggle for power. I will not dwell on all Marxist arguments why politics is an activity whose forms cannot be understood without analyzing the relevant mode of production, productive forces, classes, etc. The classics are eloquent and familiar enough to allow us to understand clearly what the following words, for example, mean:

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.¹³

Lenin clearly states the Marxist concept of the political through his definition of politics as "participation in the affairs of state, direction of the state, definition of the forms, tasks and content of state activity".¹⁴ For Engels, the emergence of the state is an admission that society "has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel".¹⁵

Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.¹⁶

For Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another. The state is a "special coercive force" according to Engels — a definition which Lenin describes as "splendid and extremely profound".¹⁷ What, then, will the content of politics be? How can a conscious class economic interest be imposed on all of society? Doesn't the very existence of the state mean that the economic interests cannot be reconciled, that their carriers — the classes — are entangled in objectively irreconcilable antagonisms? That is why politics is a constant struggle in which the oppressed class must be capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the oppressor class in order to seize power which it must not share with anybody.¹⁸ Because the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which cannot be reconciled with its antipode,¹⁹ the death of the ruling class is always a violent death and the question of who will bring it about, how, and when, leads to the subject of social revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and many other subjects beloved of radicals throughout the world.

Today very few people believe in the communist utopia. But the renunciation of this final phase of the Marxist concept of the political certainly does not invalidate that concept. The fact that a political community has rejected the utopian project of communism and introduced the institutions of democracy does not mean that the Marxist concept of the political has disappeared. In practice, it is fully effective in the context of Bulgarian democracy, setting the criteria for analysis and describing political behaviour, and there is no reason

to expect it to disappear. It is critically important to understand that the historical rejection of an alternative political and economic structure of society has not weakened in any way the destructive attacks against the fundamental elements of the democratic political process. One does not necessarily have to believe in communism and "the withering away of the state" (just to remind readers of the famous phrase by Engels) to be extremely cynical about representative democracy and disgusted with politicians, political parties and everybody in power. There is no inherent contradiction in conceptualizing everyday political life through the prism of the renunciation of an understanding of politics that has failed dismally in the realization of its positive project. The gap between permanent criticism "of everyone and everything" (Lenin) and the impossibility of an overall radical change (the word used once was "revolution") is being filled by the various versions of political populism.

A possible description of the Bulgarian situation today would be: A new European Union member state with a functioning market economy, low living standards, democratic institutions and a political culture dominated by the Marxist understanding of the essence of politics. To understand its possible populisms, we can turn to another political thinker, Carl Schmitt, "the Thomas Hobbes of the twentieth century". Without harbouring any sympathy for Marxism, he provides a logical completion of the Marxist concept of the political that is entirely free of utopianism.

For Schmitt the essence of the political is conflict or struggle. The *differentia specifica* of the political, which separates it from other spheres and activities of social life, such as religion or economics, is friend–enemy relations. The political comes into being when social groups are placed in a relation of enmity, where each comes to perceive the other as an irreconcilable adversary to be fought and, if possible, defeated. Such relations are specifically political and exhibit an existential logic which overrides the motives which may have brought groups to this point. Each group now faces an opponent, and must take account of that fact: "Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms itself into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friends and enemies."²⁰ The political consists not in war or armed conflict as such, but precisely in the relation of enmity: not competition but confrontation.

Politics is bound by no law: it precedes law. For Schmitt "the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political".²¹ States arise as a means of continuing, organizing and channelling political struggle. It is political struggle which gives rise to political order; any entity involved in friend–enemy relations is by definition political, whatever its origin or the origin of the differences leading to enmity. "A religious community which wages wars against members of others religious communities or engages in other wars is already more than a religious community; it is a political entity."²²

Friend–enemy relations give purpose to life. Without the possibility of confronting a mortal enemy, life cannot be serious, is devoid of sense. The existential choice between "them" and "us" gives the political its radiance, inspires the carriers of the political spirit and thought, and permits the politically engaged to soar above the frivolity of everyday life. This is what we read in the classical text of Carl Schmitt, a Nazi sympathizer, *Der Begriff des Politischen* ("The Concept of the Political", 1932).

Those who think that the fundamental populist opposition between "the people" and "elites" does not merit inclusion in the political because it does not produce concrete reasonable and pragmatic government policies are wrong. Those who think that populism is a political pathology or a non-political phenomenon are even more wrong. We must not forget that anti-elitism is the only characteristic of populist practices that can claim to be universal. Viewed from Schmitt's perspective, populism can be seen as the most intensive form of the political, as the triumphant return of political passion in a public sphere paralyzed by political correctness, as a long-expected revenge of politics against its wretched and insidious substitutes and limitations. Behind the shallow and vulgar rhetoric of populists we must see a fundamental contradiction that gives rise to a deep undercurrent with unsuspected force: the elementary opposition between "Us" and "Them".

An historical excursus

Having tried the reader's patience by taking her along the circuitous path of political theory, I believe I owe her some clarity and precision. To make my views clear and to shorten the distance between the theoretical concept and the facts it is meant to explain, I will say that, in my opinion, the birth of Bulgarian populism can be dated to March 1879, when the conservative draft of the Constitution of the newly liberated Principality of Bulgaria was voted down after a brief debate in the Constituent Assembly. The speech, delivered by Petko Slaveykov (1827–1895), a vehement opponent of the draft, is worth quoting in some detail:

What has the commission produced? What's all this nonsense? [Applause] The argument all our foes have used against us for years is that we aren't ripe for freedom. Then suddenly a commission from the National Assembly confirms their claims, saying and declaring in writing that we aren't yet ready for full freedom, even though our brotherly Russian people shed so much precious blood and our people sacrificed so many dear lives in the name of freedom. [Applause] The commission wants to give us freedom in portions — as if we are sick — bit by bit, because we presumably have a weak stomach; just like someone who's been locked up for a long time and mustn't suddenly be let out but must first be placed in a coffee room to get used to it. A monarchy to rule our new and inexperienced people I can understand but a conservative constitution I cannot; that's like someone who calls kebab "lentils". They want a constitution in which there's something hollow-windy; in other words, they want a windy-hollow constitution. [Applause] You want a free people yet you take away its freedom; you want a strong and stable government yet you take away its strength; you're afraid of contacts between the government and the people so you place a barrier between them. I suggest we go back straight to the draft of the statutes because the constitution proposed to us by the commission is worse even than the Turkish one.²³

The debate between liberals and conservatives in the Constituent Assembly can be described in brief as "the birth and first victory of Bulgarian populism". By these criteria, populism has been part of Bulgarian political life ever since the establishment of an independent state. In pre-communist Bulgaria, the populist trend reached its logical culmination in the agrarian idea personified

by the strongest populist leader in Bulgarian history, Alexander Stamboliiski (1879–1923).

As there was no democratic political process during the communist dictatorship, this period cannot be included in our analysis. After 1989, one politician that may be defined as a populist leader is George Ganchev. Until 2001 populism was part of the political rhetoric of many parties and many leaders but none of them became truly populist. It was Simeon Saxe–Coburg–Gotha who, in 2001, consciously appealed to the people by taking the role, inaccessible for others, of populist–unifier of the nation. Although they have a different content and style, today Volen Siderov and his party Ataka and the political leader Boyko Borissov entirely fit into the populist framework. A precise analysis will find populist elements in the messages of almost all Bulgarian parties and politicians. Those named above, however, rely exclusively on populist rhetoric.

Conclusions

The preceding discussion allows us to formulate a number of conclusions and hypotheses on populism that are directly relevant to Bulgaria.

Populism is an instinctive reaction against radical changes in the traditional way of life and especially in economic relations and activity. Populist thinking mythologizes the reasons for these changes, representing them as omnipotent and unfathomable forces driven by central power in the capital city, or even worse, by foreign power–holders. Populism is also inclined to see conspiracies and manipulations which are associated with such groups and directed against the people, a trend that is strongly intensified by ethnic hostility.

Populism is invariably concerned about the ordinary people, the common folk, and speaks on their behalf. This idealization is parallel with a demonisation of the elites, which are represented as anonymous and greedy, but invariably merciless towards the selfsame common folk. Capitalist–exploiters, bankers and international financiers, especially if they are Jewish, corrupt politicians, venal bureaucrats — these are the main character types, the main inhabitants of the cities of the elites, acquiring the features of a generalized image of the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah and, incidentally, deserving the same fate.

Populism combines modernist with anti–modernist sentiments. Its outbursts are typical of the intermediate phase between the decline of the old elites and the birth and stabilization of the new ones. Populism arises when there is an ideology of popular resentment against the social order imposed on society by an established ruling class thought to have monopoly on power, property, education and culture.

Populism equates the will of the people with morality and justice, placing this "will" above all other standards and mechanisms and insisting on a direct relationship between the people and power. It is usually accompanied also by a simple belief in the virtues of the people, contrasted with the corrupt character of the degenerate ruling class or any other group that is hated because of its dominant political or economic position or social status.

Every populist tradition has specific accents that it exploits most intensely. It is obvious that anti–Semitism or racism are not dominant in the Bulgarian national tradition. I find it somewhat difficult to decide between two issues that are. The first is an authentic and pure hatred of political parties that seems to

go right back to the restoration of the Bulgarian state in the nineteenth century. It seems that the anti-party flame has never gone out in the heart of Bulgarian democracy — and that there has always been someone to fan it.

While the second issue is not easy to formulate, I believe it is the more important one. It involves a radical home-grown interpretation of the Latin proverb *vox populi, vox Dei* — the constant reference to the opinion, feelings, and thoughts of "the people", and not only in politics either. Public discourse constantly contrasts ordinary people with some imaginary elite (constructed according to the circumstances), which is often urged to reckon with or even kneel before the people. When the elite in question is political, the rhetorical figures transgress all limits. It is not enough to say that the elite is not worthy to direct and rule: the elite does not even have the right to think itself equal to the people. Moreover, the elite is inferior to the people which, on its part, is more moral and in a mysterious way more competent than its elite. The final stage in this line of reasoning is difficult to articulate but I will nevertheless try to: in fact, the people is the true elite. Such anti-anti-egalitarianism indeed tests the limits of language, but at this stage this is the only way I can describe this populist issue, which I will call *radical demophilia*.

An attempt at a forecast

In the context of democracy, where winning votes is a main task of political parties which want to take part in government, no one would voluntarily give up something that can help them achieve this goal. The electoral successes of populism in Bulgaria after 2001 are a guarantee that, far from subsiding, it will grow and spread among more and more parties and politicians. For a society such as the Bulgarian one, which has undergone painful reforms causing hardship, deprivation, loss of status of large groups of people, dramatic social mobility and a series of other processes foreign to the communist regime in the 1980s, populism seems unavoidable. The combination of weak democratic institutions and poor living standards gives rise to social discontent, which naturally fuels the need for populist rhetoric. The only thing that EU membership can guarantee is that it will not take extreme forms.

The realistic political goal of the opponents of this trend is, for the time being, to restrict it. Populist rhetoric against the status quo is always more attractive than the one that tries to offer a real alternative. And this is so not only at first but also at second, third or even fourth glance. But there is something against which there should be serious resistance in the Bulgarian context. This is the disrespect typical of populism for institutional procedures. It is thought that they only impede the direct expression of the popular will and place obstacles before those strong persons who have taken on the responsibility of being transmitters of the popular will. In such a context, all autonomous institutions are viewed with suspicion as the secret havens of the elites, whose actions are constantly described as part of a conspiracy that must be exposed and denounced by populist politicians tirelessly serving the people. If the journalistic and analytical community submits to the temptation of radical demophilia, then this will lead to even greater linguistic extremism; the alternative discourse, meanwhile, will look bizarre and isolated. To achieve normalization, it is critically important that more and more public figures and organizations (especially political parties) keep their integrity and personify the alternative. And uphold this alternative, unpopular as it might be. Otherwise Bulgaria's political scene seems set for a long, a very long, populist show.

- 1 The party of former tsar Simeon Saxe–Coburg–Gotha, who returned from Spanish exile to become Bulgarian prime minister in 2001 — ed.
- 2 "Totalitarianism" is a term with a clear history: we know who used it first (Giovanni Gentile, referring to the "total state" of fascism) as well as which are the classical works on the subject (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt, published in 1949, and *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl Friedrich, 1956).
- 3 While it is always helpful to reread Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* for their remarkable insights into the populist threat inherent in democracy, these texts do not concentrate on the still non-existent concept of populism and its first, barely noticeable manifestations at the time.
- 4 I am inclined to forecast that it is a matter of time before Margaret Canovan is recognized as the leading authority on populism. I am extremely impressed (and influenced) by her numerous publications in which she interprets populism from the perspective of political theory and its history (Canovan is one of the leading experts on Hannah Arendt). Although with some modifications, the reader will recognize in this text Canovan's concept of populism, expressed most concisely in her article 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy', *Political Studies*, March 1999. Also of exceptional quality are her books *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981) and *People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), as well as the articles 'Two Strategies for the Study of Populism', *Political Studies*, September 1982, and 'Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy' in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- 5 Canovan, M. 1981. *Populism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp. 13, 128–138.
- 6 See Hardy, D. 1987. *Land and Freedom: The Origins of Russian Terrorism, 1876–1879*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- 7 See Kazin, M. 1995. *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. New York: Basic Books.
- 8 'People's Party Platform'. *Omaha Morning World–Herald*, 5 July 1892. Quoted from Tindall, G. B. (ed.) 1966. *A Populist Reader, Selections from the Works of American Populist Leaders*. New York: Harper & Row, p. 91.
- 9 See Kazin op. cit.
- 10 Canovan, M. 1999. 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy', *Political Studies*, March 1999, p. 5.
- 11 Almond, G. and S. Verba. 1965. *The Civic Culture*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company (Inc.), p. 16.
- 12 A typical example of such high, self-contained reflection is given by Dolf Sternberger, who distinguishes three mutually exclusive "types of politics" — political, eschatological and demonological — personified in the history of thought by Aristotle, Saint Augustine and Machiavelli respectively. This effective typology proposed by the German political scientist is only one of many classifications found in academic literature. See: Sternberger, D., *Drei Wurzeln der Politik*. Frankfurt 1978.
- 13 Marx, K. and F. Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.
- 14 Lenin, V. I. 'Plan for an Article "On the Question of the Role of the State".'
- 15 Engels, F. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and State*.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Lenin, V. I. *The State and Revolution*.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Schmitt, C. 1963. *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, p. 37.
- 21 Ibid. p. 20.
- 22 Ibid. p. 37.
- 23 *Almanah na Bulgarskata konstitutsiya*. 1911. Plovdiv: Petur G. Bakalov & s–ie, Turgovska Pechatnitsa, p. 254.

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