Far Right In the Czech Republic

Alena Oaka

Goldsmiths University of London

PhD

Abstract

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Far-right or extreme right has been very much on the rise in recent years, having an impact on the political scene in much of the western world, whether by giving the direction to the public discourse or entering politics directly. This has led to wide-spread concern within the political establishment as well as in the mass media. In the Czech Republic the far right is on the fringe of the political scene, nonetheless its discourse has also made big inroads into the public discourse. This thesis takes into account broader historical circumstances in order to find an explanation for a seeming paradox of contemporary Czech nationalism, namely its association with, incorporation of and admiration of the German element, something Czech nationalists traditionally defined themselves against. Through interviews with members and sympathisers of the Workers Party for Social Justice, an analysis of their website as well as that of various underground entities, through examination of the responses to the far right from the state, but above all through participant observation I argue that whilst the far right is villified by the media and the general population alike, its discourse as well as lifestyle of its members is widespread, albeit in a more nuanced or disguised form. Members and sympathisers of the Czech far right are well integrated into the society, rather than being the pathological element the rest of the population wishes them to be. I also demonstrate that the hybrid form of Czech nationalism, incorporating, even privileging, the German element within 'Czechness' is an attempt to forge a new, updated form of nationalism that fits new political realities. Rather than approaching the far right as pathology, something separate from the rest of the society, I urge a dispassionate approach based on direct contact with the people studied. By interrogating and re-thinking current basic assumptions, the thesis aims to arrive at a more meaningful understanding of the widespread and disturbing phenomemon the new right represents.

PREFACE

Thugs. Simpletons. Nazis. These are some of the most common labels given by the general public to the people among whom I conducted my research in 2012. These labels are strong, unflattering and emotionally charged.

Fascinatingly enough, I have also experienced a level of discomfort from among many of my fellow research students, as well as some seasoned academics. Some genuinely feared for my safety. Others felt uncomfortable with my research per se, waiting for me to confirm I disagreed with the views of the people I had set out to study. Indigenous scholars researching and working with groups opposed to the far right did not respond to my suggestions to meet up and have a scholarly discussion. Once I have even encountered someone who, upon learning I was researching far right, saw in my 1980s-inspired studded top that I was wearing at the time a fascist uniform. It seems that far right as a research topic that carries with it a stigma, a stigma of working with the 'tainted', the 'abhorrent'. It is so toxic that one is made feel guilty by association (Pilkington 2016).

Who were the people I decided to research, people who bring about such strong reactions from general members of public and academics alike? My research was centred on the members of the *Workers' Party of Social Justice*, the party variously labelled by the Czech media as radical, extremist or far right, and their sympathisers and their friends. As with any PhD thesis, I guess, the main takeaway point here is – 'things are not what they seem'. My fieldwork has shown that casting these people as inherently bad or as extreme is highly problematic. The situation on the ground is ambiguous – and in some sense that makes it more unsettling.

But then it could be argued that the (western) world has recently become more unsettling. Although the time lapse between my fieldwork and writing up this thesis is a mere six, seven years, it seems now that 2012 and 2019 are very different worlds. Views that were labelled extreme and were given virtually no

space in public discourse in 2012 have in 2018 become to a large extent mainstream. What was branded as racist or simplistic back then have now become 'areas of genuine concern'. The far right has become or is on the way to becoming the new normal, it seems. This move to the right was brought into a sharper focus during a number of election campaigns throughout the western world in 2015 and 1916. In these elections (and the Brexit referendum in the UK) candidates or parties considered far right or populist were prominent. They largely determined the form and language of pre-election debates as well as discussions in the aftermaths of these elections. These candidates won or lost by very narrow margins. The victory of Donald Trump and of the Leave camp in the Brexit referendum in the UK are good examples of this. In the Austrian presidential election in 2016 Norbert Hoffer actually won the first round and narrowly lost in the second round. Geert Wilders's PVV came second in the Dutch general election in 2017 and Marine Le Pain came second in the first round of the French presidential election in 2017, not too far behind the winner of the first round. Le Pain also managed to get through into the second round. In the Czech Republic itself the above development is best exemplified on the Vandas – Zeman example. When Tomáš Vandas, the leader of the Workers' Party referred to immigrants as the devastating immigration tsunami (ničivá imigrační vlna tsunami) in 2009, he was taken to court. In 2015 the Czech president Miloš Zeman, one of the most prominent politicians of the left in the post 1989 years, used in relation to immigrants virtually identical language. Although these words from the mouth of the president indeed raised a few eyebrows, the point here is that what was fringe and punishable in 2009 five, six years down the line started coming from within the establishment itself and did not generate any consequences.

Thus, I want to stress that my fieldwork took place not only in a particular place but also at a particular time. This particular time is still relatively recent and yet already distant. We all have now become more sensitised, I think, to events and to language that during my time in the field would have seemed rather disquieting. Therefore, more explicit historical contextualisation will permeate this specific thesis than is perhaps usual.

The purpose of this section is to provide an account of two contrasting encounters with my informants. In the first encounter I am a mere observer, having had no personal exposure to my future informants at that time. In the second encounter I am in the middle of my fieldwork and interacting with my informants 'in their natural setting'. This way I wish start introducing the reader to some of the major themes recurring throughout the thesis.

The First Encounter

It is the 17th of November 2011 and I am walking through the streets of central Prague. It is a fairly standard November day, the weather is not extreme and the place is full of people, some rushing around, some moving at a more leisurely pace. I feel excitement and anxiety simultaneously for this is going to be my very first time observing up close and personal people I had embarked on studying over a year earlier. The year of intensive preparation consisting of training in methodology and reading up on the subject – both academic literature and pieces written by journalists – has passed, and I finally have the chance to have an encounter unmediated by the media or the hearsay of the general public.

It was nearly 3 o'clock so I headed to Jungmannovo Square, the gathering place of the demonstrators according to the Workers' Party website. As I walked into the street leading up to the square I was taken aback by the heavy police presence. Police patrol cars, vans, minivans and riot control vehicles were lining up the whole street. I saw a variety of police uniforms, the most striking and numerous being the uniforms of the riot police. There were also some police officers on horses and others with dogs. A feeling of uneasiness swept over me. I

passed the riot police, so obviously selected for their height and overall physique, and continued into the square itself.

In Jungmannovo Square the police presence was very light. Standing at the entrance points into the square there were a few non-menacing looking municipal police officers. A bit closer to the demonstrators were members of the anti-conflict team, giving off almost a cheerful vibe in their bright yellow vests. I rested my eyes on the demonstrators themselves, congregated in the centre of the square. The first thought that entered my head was that the confrontational theme, embodied in the riot police uniforms I saw a few minutes earlier, somewhat carried over into the gathering of the demonstrators themselves, albeit in a more watered-down form. Not that everyone there was dressed like a skinhead from the 1990s. But, I guess, I managed to notice enough combat trousers, enough heavy boots, enough bomber jackets, enough shaved heads and enough black baseball caps to make this instant association. In any case, in their look the *Workers* resembled the riot police a great deal more than they resembeld the regular inhabitants of Prague.

I had to admit to myself that being there was not a very nice feeling. I found the *Workers* scary, felt uneasy and avoided eye contact with them. At last, after about ten of fifteen minutes I acclimatised myself to the situation and tried to behave like an anthropologist. I started walking around, taking in the 'picture'. It seemed that most demonstrators were young men in their early 20s. The second most numerous demographic was men in their late 20s or early 30s. There were very few middle aged or older demonstrators and I estimated that only about every 15th person was a woman. Some girls were rather obviously accompanying their boyfriends while others appeared to be there with their female friends.

I tried to pin down what it was about their appearance I found so unsavoury. Prior to this encounter I had seen countless pictures of my future informants on the internet and therefore should have been rather desensitized to their 'macho' image. And yet, when seeing them in person, about three hundred of them gathered together, I could not help but feel affected. Even

catching sight of the logos such as *Everlast* or *Bohemia* on people's clothing, logos in fact neutral in the message itself, already made me feel ill at ease. It is not suprising then that the other two logos I registered fairly frequently on the *Workers'* clothing - namely *Hooligan* and *Björkvin* - left me feeling even more uncomfortable. The first sounded to me somewhat subversive and the second one in the context of a far-right demonstration simply 'suspiciously Germanic'. However, it was the *HH* logo on some of the people's trainers and clothes that I found truly sinister. Much later on I found out that the said logo belonged to the mainstream Norwegian outdoor wear and sportswear company called *Helly Hansen,* a company with no connection to neo-Nazism whatsoever. However, seeing the *HH* logo in that particular setting had a disturbing effect on me.

I shifted my focus to the flags and banners. There were flags bearing the *DSSS* logo (the logo of the Workers' Party), sometimes simultaneously displaying the name of a particular region or a place name. I saw Czech national flags as well as flags proclaiming regional patriotism – specifically Moravian flags or flags referencing the region of southern Bohemia. But there were also banners declaring political messages. '*Away with the government, politicians, mafia and parasites – no to the EU*', said one of the banners. '*Freedom. Against the totalitarian practices of the corrupt regime*', said another. '*Youth forward*!', urged another banner, this one accompanied by a pictorial representation of demonstrating youth, a rendering somewhat resembling the art of the Third Reich, I thought to myself.

Finally, after a fair amount of just standing around I detected the first sign of activity when several of the young women started distributing leaflets. However, their action seemed to lack confidence, and one could be even forgiven for thinking that it also lacked conviction. After all, the girls were handing out the leaflets only among the protesters themselves and to the first circle of observers (or were they perhaps sympathisers?), as if they knew that they were not likely to to gain any more recruits through this. By that point I was standing close enough to be offered one of the leaflets, too.

And it was probably at around this moment that my initial feeling of apprehension started giving way to another feeling, a feeling I found quite hard to specify. For the whole picture seemed somehow 'awkward', incongruous, somehow 'wrong'. On the one hand, there was this tough look sported by the *Workers* – suggesting readiness to fight, the promise of a conflict.The considerable police presence also intimated that the situation might escalate and the public needed to be protected from this dangerous societal element. But this did not tally with other things I observed in that square on that day. For example, the demonstrators' macho appearance was not borne out by their behaviour. In fact, more than anything else, they came across as rather unsure of themselves. They were certainly not 'owning the space'. 'Being out of place' would be a more apt metaphor in here. This was all the more surprising given that the headlines of their banners were saying something that many Czech people would have readily agreed with – at least according to a number of political and social attitudes surveys I had studied prior to entering the field. However, the reaction from the public implied anything but engagement and support. Most passers-by were indifferent to the event in Jungmannovo Square. A quick glance in the direction of the protesters and carrying on walking - that was the most common response. A number of people passing by looked slightly amused. But there were also signs of hostility. '*Náckové*' (the Nazis), I overheard a couple of people muttering. 'They tend to be dangerous. They are villains', explained a concerned father to his ten year old son as they were making their way through the square. One person even screamed out loud 'Yuk, the Nazis!' But, for the most part, people were unconcerned.

At last, the speeches began. The first speaker was a girl of about twenty years of age. She spoke extremely softly and timidly. So much so that I really struggled to make out what she was saying and soon lost my interst as a consequence. At one point I could hear the words 'contraceptive pills'. But whether her talk was exclusively on this topic, or what her take on the matter was – I just could not tell.

Next was the turn of the party's chairman Tomáš Vandas. In stark contrast to the previous speaker Vandas had a strong presence. He delivered his speech extempore, loudly, clearly, eloquently, with slight anger in his tone. Obviously a seasoned speaker, Vandas effectively employed a number of rhetorical devices such as humour, pausing for effect, etc. In his 45 minute long speech he covered a range of topics – communists 'turning their coats' in 1989 and remaining in power, corruption and totalitarianism in the Czech Republic, the 'un-adaptables' (effectively a code name for the Roma), the Vietnamese selling marihuana. I recall him mentioning the words 'identity' and 'mosques' together in one of his sentences. I also remember him expressing his frustration with the (Czech) people who 'watch *Scheherezade* instead of doing something more worthwile, such as coming to protest against the corrupted regime they otherwise so readily complain about.' (*Scheherezade* was a popular Turkish soap at that time running on one of the Slovak TV channels.) But, on the whole, I did not pay very close attention to the themes themselves as I was becoming familiar with them from the *Workers'* website, but also knowing that the transcript of his speech would appear on the website later on. This was the first time, however, that I could observe Vandas and his audience live. And while the *Workers* and their supporters were very much engrossed, the rest of the public was left cold. I did not notice anyone stopping for any legth of time and listening. Despite all this passion, good oratory skills and I daresay Vandas's charisma, the inhabitants of Prague just went on about their business, unmoved.

The third and final person to speak was a guest speaker who was introduced to the crowd as a 'released political prisoner'. I was immediately struck by the deliberately provocative introduction, as imprisonment for political reasons has been emphasised by the current political establishment as one of the key features of the pre-1989 political regime. The contemporary mainstream politicians, by contrast, brandish freedom and democracy as their core values – and as principles underlying their practice. Anyhow, having listened to the 'released political prisoner', I had to admit that he was quite well-spoken, too. His talk also revolved around 'corruption and totalitarianism of the presend-day

regime'. As with Vandas's speech, the gathered crowd responded by nodding and clapping. And, just like with Vandas, the outsiders were unisinterested.

I was becoming slightly bored at this point and was quite relieved when the speeches ended. What took place next happened so quickly, however, that I almost missed how it actually happened. One minute there was a gathering of demonstrators in the square, the next minute I saw something strongly resembling a platoon being aligned into a line formation. There were six lines – four lines of demonstrators in the middle – and these were enclosed on each side by a line of the riot police. The riot poice also inclosed the demonstrators from the front as well as from the back. It was all done very quickly, efficiently, almost elegantly. One was given the impression that not only were both sides, the protestors and the police, given precise instructions as to what to do and how, but that they must have done it numerous times before.

Before long the march started moving. As the marchers walked out of the square, they joined the long convoy of police vehicles already waiting for them with their lights flashing. I moved closer to the 'platoon' and positioned myself directly behind the wall of the riot police. And as I was moving along together with this body of people, by which I mean both the protestors and the police, the feeling of intimidation that I had felt so strongly at the very beginning, upon entering Jungmannovo Square, revisited me. And when the protersters started shouting out their slogans, this feeling of menace intensified further. There was one person calling out slogans from a loud-speaker and the rest of the crowd always repeated each slogan several times. '*Chcete pravdu znát? – Policejní stát!*' (Do you want the know the truth? – The police state!) was the very first slogan. '*Multi-kulti nechceme – ne, ne, ne!*' (We don't want multi-culturalism – no, no, no!', was another one. '*Čechy čechům!*' (Czech lands to the Czechs!), chanted the protesters, as they were marching through the streets of Prague. '*Češi pojd´te s náma!*' (Czechs, join us!), was yet another slogan that reverberated through the streets.

I did my best to switch into anthropological mode. First, I tried to work out why I felt the way I did. To begin with, it may have been the rhythm of the

march itself. Not that the people walked in unison, but somehow the sound of so many feet stomping the ground was quite powerful. No doubt, the heavy boots and the rest of the 'macho gear' worn by both the activists and the riot police contributed to my feeling of unease. They both looked equally menacing to me. But gradually I came to realise that it was the flashing lights of various police vehicles, the presence of mounted police officers, and, perhaps most of all, the incessant barking of the police dogs that so strongly contributed to the threatening atmosphere. On the other hand, I also observed that this part of the demonstration, too, seemed to have been well planned ahead and rehearsed. I had to concede that it was very orderly. Finally, I was able to switch my attention from the march itself and my own feelings to the reactions of the passers-by. I could clearly see that the inviting slogans notwithstanding (e.g. 'Czechs, join us!'), the people of Prague were in no hurry to join in. Unlike during the speeches in Jungmannovo Square, the people now actually stopped and watched, looking quite interested. But if I could detect any signs of emotion in their faces – more than anything else it was amusement. Only the east Asians who came out on the doorsteps of their businesses looked concerened.

The march continued. At last I managed to shake off the feeling of apprehension and now the anthropologist in me quite successfully took over. I started to analyse the route itself. The event began in Jungmannovo Square, so named after one of the leading figures of the Czech nationalist movement of the 19th century known as the National Awakening. Next, the demonstrators marched through *Národní třída* – translated into English as National Boulevard. The name of this boulevard also refers to the said National Awakening. And as the procession was nearing the end of the boulevard, in the distance I could already recognise the protruding side of one of the best known buildings of Prague, a building also pivotal to the Czech National Awakening - the National Theatre. I started wondering to what extent the route could have been strategically chosen by the organisers of the march. After all, what could be a better route for a march of self-proclaimed Czech nationalists than the route covering the major sites and symbols of the Czech nationalism? Or was I just trying to see too much in it? Was it simply just a coincidence? After all, I had

come to realise that in terms of place names, statues, etc. central Prague was rather peppered with reminders of the Czech National Awakening and reminders of the Czech history as seen through the prism of this movement. And to what degree was the route even the choice of the Workers themselves? Perhaps the Municipal Office for this part of Prague had some decisive say in it.

I was thinking these thoughts when the march came to a sudden halt. The front of the procession was outside the New Scene, a building adjacent to the National Theatre. At that point I happened to be quite near the front of the procession, too, but I could not fathom why we had stopped. There was no fight, no conflict, no counterprotestors anywhere. No obstacle of any kind. What is more, a few moments later to my astonishment the police force detached itself from the demontrators, turned right and disappeared. And to my even greater astonishment the protestors dispersed soon afterwads. Now I was just standing in the same spot, alone and perplexed. Only a group of about four or five protesters were still lingering there, about ten metres away from me, nonchalantly smoking cigarettes and chatting. What an anticlimax! I was not sure what I had actually expected to happen at the end of the demonstration – but certainly not this.

Realising that 'this really was it for the day', I started roaming the streets of Prague, desperately trying make sense of what I have just witnessed that afternoon. Whichever way I looked at it, it just all seemed rather odd. Things just did not add up. For once, there was the discrepancy between my future informants' appearance and behaviour. Visually, the demonstrators looked so confident, so combat-ready, their banners and their slogans quite bold. And yet in their demeanor they appeared rather timid. The very end of the demonstration where the police 'left the scene', leaving the demonstrators to their own devices, was particularly bizarre. Having recalled how the far right generally and the Workers' Party demonstrations specifically have been covered by journalists, and having recalled how much space the far right entities and the Workers Party were given in the anual reports of the Security Information Service (an intelligence service known as BIS), being classified as a threat to the

national security, it is unsurprising I envisaged something dramatic and expected it to happen. Perhaps the demonstrators provoking the police, perhaps even a bit of violence. But what I certainly did not expect this demonstration to be was characterised by order and routine. Besides, the large police presence throughout the demonstration also implied imminent danger, and therefore the need to protect the public. Its sudden demise before the actual end of the demonstration therefore baffled me greatly. Either the demostrators posed a danger to the society, in which case the heavy presence of the police forces was justified, but then the police should have waited longer after the demonstration, monitoring the situation. Or the demonstrators posed no such threat. In which instance the heavy police presence was totally disproportionate. After all, only helicopters and tanks were missing during this operation. Why, then, all that palaver? Finally, the self-presentation of the Workers as the voice of the people was also not substantiated by this demonstration. A couple of people looked entertained, a couple expressed their disapproval, but, for the most part, the people of Prague took no interest. Could the demonstrators actually see that the public was rather unsympathetic on that day? If so, how did they rationalise it? All this also begged more general questions, such as what role the Workers, and far right more broadly, actually played in the Czech society. And where does the state, here represented by the police, come into it? All these questions incited my curiosity. I was eager to find answers to them.

In the Field

I was nine months into my fieldwork and eight months had passed since I met in person my very first informant. Now, I was walking through the streets of Hradiště with Roman, one of my two key informants, and was doing something very typical of my fieldwork – going to a pub. The pub we were heading to, known among the locals as 'On the Corner', was one of the favourite pubs

among the circle of the people from the far right scene that Roman belonged to. And it was simultaneously very typical of the pubs my informants frequented.

In its decor, clientele and atmosphere 'On the Corner' harked back to the type of establishment known as *čtyřka* or 'four'. Before 1989 catering and hospitality facilities were classified into four categories. The establishments of the lowest, that is the fourth, category, commonly referred to as *čtyřka*, were mainly, though no solely, patronised by working-class men. With its wooden panelling, net curtains and dark green table cloths, with the decoration consisting of pictures and stickers adverstising the local beer and local sports clubs, with the choice of beverages and snacks more or less restricted to local beers, hard liquor and sausages, with customers being working men in casual clothing and enveloped in clouds of cigarette smoke, with the toilet facilities leaving a lot to be desired – the roots of this pub in the so called *čtyřka* were unmistakeably visible. It was upgraded and prettied up somewhat, but it was still a good old *čtyřka*.

'So, who is going to be there tonight?', I asked Roman, partly just to say something, partly to prepare myself for what was to come. 'Hans and Jarouš are going to be there for sure. And some normal people,' replied Roman. 'Normal people' or 'ordinary people' (*normální lidi, obyčejný lidi*) in the parlance of my informants had one of the two following meanings. Either the term was reserved for people who were not members of the elites, who were not wealthy, perhaps not members of the intelligentsia. In this sense the term was inclusive of the people belonging to the far right. In certain contexts, though, some of my informants utilised the term simply to denote anyone and everyone outside the far-right scene as such. In this instance, however, it was evident to me that 'some normal people' stood for men from the same socio-economic background as my informants, men sharing many of their views, but not actively involved in politics.

Thus, there I was, walking through Hradiště, about to engage in a typical activity in a typical place, with typical people. And typical were also the thoughts that were at that time going through my mind. To prepare their research

students for fieldwork my university devised and delivered a course on research methods where advantages and pitfalls of various methods were carefully weighed up, with particular attention being given to participant observation. Just as well for, as with most prospective anthropologists, I also expected the method to be central in my research and aimed at this. I therefore earnestly tried to anticipate potential problems that might manifest themselves once I were in the field, to be better prepared and able to react appropriately when running into them. Problems with access, with personal safety or even worries over my personal integrity were at the top of the numerous difficulties I had imagined. However, now, in the middle of my fieldwork, I could see that all these were marginal or even irrelevant. In fact, the biggest methodological hurdle that plagued me throughout my stay in the field was something I had not envisaged at all before meeting my informants. I never ever saw it addressed in any theoretically orientated literature on field research. I never came upon it in any of the ethnographies I exposed myself to, including those of the more confessional type. The biggest issue in the field, methodologically speaking, was my inability to hold my drink.

Contrary to what I had expected, I, a woman, was required to drink no less alcohol than my informants. And that was, certainly by my standards, an incredible amount. When I drank as much as they deemed sufficient, I felt I was really forming a good rapport with my informants. The atmosphere was warm and friendly and my informants interacted with me almost as if I was one of them. I became a fellow Czech rather than a research student. From the data collecting perspective, these were particularly successful days. The problem occurred, however, the very next day when I sat down to transfer my numerous observations from the previous night into notes. Whilst my notes from the first half or two thirds of the interaction with my research participants were quite extensive and thorough, the way I imagined it should have been, the notes from the last third became a lot patchier. Thus, in my particular case the relationship between participation and quantity and quality of fieldwork notes was, not perhaps that of inverse proportion, but certainly not straightforward. I wanted to find a reasonable equilibrium. First, I tried to avoid drinking alcohol

completely. I offered various medical reasons, but I learnt that health concerns did not feature high on the list of my informants' priorities. I even resorted to the 'lack of enzymes breaking down alcohol' explanation. But my companions were equally unsympathetic. So, I switched to consuming a lot of beverages but with smaller alcoholic content or I drank what my informants did, but paced myself throughout the evening. To no avail. These tactics were noticed immediately, commented upon and created some distance between me and them. Yes, my fieldnotes afterwards were particularly detailed. Nonetheless, I was aware that in my notes I was capturing my informants in their more cautious mode. Thus, that day on the way to the said pub I was, as always, pondering what strategy to employ in order to appear drinking loads whilst in actual fact drinking as little as possible. And, as always, I came up with nothing.

Finally, we reached our destination – an inconspicuous building in a quiet residential area. It was still late afternoon and the pub was at that point half-empty, with no tumult and with very decent visibility. We walked through it and located the table where Hans and Jarouš were sitting, together with a rather non-descript couple. I had never seen the couple before and therefore concluded that they were not part of the scene, that they must have been the 'normal people'. I had scarcely managed to give them a nod of acknowledgement when Hans turned towards me and excitedly asked whether I remembered how he had come to an injury in the Panama Club the last time we were there. Whilst I certainly had been there, I could not recall any such thing. I must have been heavily drunk at that time. However, I nodded that I did. 'Can you see the injury on my head?' he continued. I inspected the place on his skull where he pointed, just next to his *Blut und Ehre* tattoo, but detected nothing. But I assured him that I could still see something there as I understood by then that scars and other signs of injuries incurred in fights or whilst 'mucking about' were worn like badges of pride. Next, Hans asked whether I remembered how he was jumping and walking on the tables. I lied that I did, but truthfully, I had only a very hazy recollection of his antics at the club on that night. In any case, Hans seemed pleased with my answers.

We were now all seated and stayed on the topic of our last visit to Panama. We went through who had been there, who had been totally wasted and finally we got to the commotion that had occurred at the end of that night. The commotion that even culminated in the arrival of the police or '*benga*', as my informants said. (The word *bengo* (singular - *bengo*, plural – *benga*) is one of the numerous slang expressions in the Czech Republic for the police officer. This word entered Czech from the Romani language and my informants from around Hradiště used this term constantly, together with many other slang words with their origin in Romani.) My companions set to debate what had actually happened. Roman offered an explanation along the lines of some German man turning up in an SS uniform, with a gun and showing it off. Apparently, Alexandro the bouncer asked the German to go outside and that was where and how the fight started. Jarouš and Hans, however, completely dismissed Roman's version. In their view the brawl was started over a girl known as Bibi. There was some discussion around the precise reasons, but at the end there was wide agreement that the matter had something to do with Bibi 'sleeping with *plešky*'. (*Plešky*, in English literally bald heads, was a term my informants used to designate skinheads.) From the way my drinking mates spoke it was obvious they held a very negative opinion of both Bibi and *plešky*. In fact, their highly unflattering view of Bibi stemmed at least in part from her intimate association with *plešky*. She is a pathetic tart, a tragic figure,' were their final dismissive words.

When reading up on the Czech far right before my fieldwork I came across a rather detailed typology of far-right groups in the literature. Nonetheless, after spending some time with these people I found the typology, probably arrived at primarily through an analysis of various far-right websites, of little or no relevance. Instead, I actually picked up on something never mentioned in this literature – and that was the existence of a hierarchy of sorts. With some informants I observed a two tier hierarchy, with others a three tier one. Most of my informants were members of the Workers' Party or its youth organisation Workers' Youth. Their aim was to enter the Czech political arena and change society through political means. A respectable image and conduct were

something they were aiming for. However, some of my younger informants looked up to the people associated with National Resistance (*Národní odpor*), an underground far right entity. Whenever I heard them mentioning the National Resistance people (*odporáři*) they always used a deferential tone of voice. For them the *odporáři* would then be the top tier. On the other hand, the lowest tier was without a doubt occupied by *plešky*. Every single one of my informants looked down on them. Personally, I found this genuinely expressed massive disdain for *plešky* ironic and amusing in equal measure for not only in real life did I often find my informants seamlessly interacting with them, some of my informants actually looked and acted in ways totally indistinguishable from those of *plešky*. This was just one of a number of paradoxes I encountered in the field and felt the urge to explore and understand.

Having covered the events at Panama from the other night in quite some details, my informants initiated another topic – defecation. By this time the couple had gone and there was another 'normal' person that sat down at our table – a man in his mid to late thirties wearing orange overalls. To the exuberant merriment of his companions Hans started narrating a tale of how he was once at home and shat himself while sitting down on a chair. The shit was hard, apparently. This sparked some interest. Jarouš especially could not comprehend how something like that would be feasible. All the men laughed and then one by one they contributed similar stories of their own.

I disappeared into the toilet hoping that by the time I returned they would have moved to another topic. And luckily, they had. When I came back, I walked into the middle of a discussion between Jarouš and Hans as to whether we, that is the Czechs, were Germans or Slavs. Hans claimed that we were Germans. Jarouš was adamant we were Slavs. Jarouš was the more vocal of the two and seemed to have been winning the argument. 'Yes, there were the Markomanni,' conceded Jarouš, referring to a group of early Germanic people who had lived in parts of the present day Czech Republic at the beginning of the first millennium. 'And it is for sure that the first ruler in our land was Maroboduus. But then we replaced them,' he added. Hans did not counter that and Jarouš went on:

'Anyway, Slavs have the greatest potential. They make up half of Europe,' he said and started listing all the Slavic nations, including the Bulgarians and Hungarians among them. 'The Swedes, Danes, the English – they are all degenerate', he continued. 'Look at the English and Americans, they build their houses out of chipboard,' Jarouš said to the laughter and nodding of all his mates. 'We are Slavs,' Jarouš tried to conclude. 'Germans,' opposed Hans. 'Slavs,' Jarouš maintained with a smile playing on his lips. 'Germans,' said Hans with an amused twinkle in his eyes and grinning. 'Slavs!' 'Germans!' 'Slavs!' 'Germans!' We all burst out laughing.

Jarouš then turned his focus to Moravia, the region he and the other people around the table were from. 'In Moravia there was only the Great Moravian Empire,' he said in a rather deflated tone of voice. 'Beside that there has been nothing significant. Yes, later there was the Margraviate of Moravia. And Charles IV was also the margrave of Moravia, later becoming a Holy Roman Emperor. But anyway, that was only an honorary title,' said Jarouš, sounding more and more dispirited. The atmosphere became gloomy and my drinking companions started to speak ill of Czechs. This went on for a little while and at the end one of them declared: 'Anyway, we are and have always been the nation of cunts.' They all readily agreed.

It was Roman now who took over and he directed the talk to the 'vůdce' heading to Brno, Brno being the present-day Moravian metropolis and *vůdce* being the Czech translation of the German Führer. Jarouš chipped in and elaborated that the *vůdce* should have originally gone to Iglau first where a welcome had been prepared for him. Apparently, it was discovered that a bomb had been planted in a street sewer in Iglau and the *vůdce* thus bypassed Iglau and went directly to Brno. And here my companions, for some, to me, inexplicable reason, started imitating lines given to actors playing Germans in the Czech film Assassination. The film was made in 1964 and depicted the assassination of the Reich-Protector Reinhard Heydrich by Czech and Slovak soldiers in 1942. The lines my informants mockingly imitated, the film's catchphrases one might say, were in particular from the scene where the

assassins' whereabouts were discovered and the Waffen SS troupes were trying to get them out of their hiding place, giving them orders in Czech. However, rather than poking fun at the Germans, my drinking companions were ridiculing the heavy German accent the Czech actors playing the Waffen SS put on when their German characters spoke Czech. Especially the man in the orange overalls was quite upset by it. 'The Sudeten Germans never spoke like this!' he exclaimed rather angrily. 'They spoke perfect, clear Czech!' Once again, there was a consensus on that from all those around.

'Are you still into ice hockey?' Roman all of a sudden shouted out to a young man who was just passing our table. I gave the guy a quick look and assigned him to the 'hooligans' category. 'Nah, I am no longer into that. It bores me,' responded the man with a smile. Roman stood up, walked closer to the man and started chatting to him. In the meantime Jarouš turned towards me and told me: 'You know, I am a pagan. I revere nature.' And he proceeded to tell me more about his paganism. What he was saying might have been truly interesting, but by that point I started to feel the effects of alcohol I had consumed throughout the evening and my processing speed slowed considerably. I desperately tried to concentrate on what Jarouš was saying to me, but at the same time I was still struggling to digest the content of the previous conversation. There were simply too many question marks. OK, the said film was quite well known, I saw it once and my informants must have seen it more than once to be so familiar with those lines. But why did they find the portrayal of the Sudeten Germans so infuriating, particularly the 'normal man' in the orange overalls? Why did Jarouš, the self-proclaimed Slav (or pan-Slav even?), find it as irritating as the other men? And why did Jarouš refer to Hitler by employing the respectful-sounding term *vůdce*? Simple Hitler would do. The Czech word *vůdce* sounded horrifying to my ears. And how did he come to be so familiar with Hitler's itinerary? Why did he call the town of Jihlava by its German name Iglau? Even many of the younger inhabitants of present-day Jihlava would not necessarily know the German version of their town's name. But Jarouš, albeit being from a different part of the Czech Republic, did know.

I was trying to work out whether it would be feasible to somehow diplomatically address at least some of these questions on the spot. I was slow to arrive at a decision and at the end I lost the chance. Roman rejoined our table, Jarouš stopped talking to me exclusively and a new topic came into being - sex. Or could it have been classified as relationships? Anyway, Jarouš seemed to have been dominating this topic, too. In fact, it was a monologue. He started telling everyone about a Columbian girl from his workplace. Apart from briefly mentioning that the girl spoke little Czech and that she did some work in an office he focused exclusively on her physical attributes. It was obvious he was attracted to her immensely. 'Picture fucking that!' he said at the end dreamily. And then he moved onto another object of his desire, this time a young gypsy girl. From what Jarouš was saying I understood that he had known this girl personally and liked her a great deal. But then he started making disapproving remarks about her 'values and lifestyle', without offering us any concrete examples. 'It is all in the genes. Nothing can be done about that,' he said confidently and then, sounding really dejected, he continued: 'Now she lives with her gypsy man in their gypsy way.' His drinking mates did not verbally comment this but nodded their heads in agreement and sympathy.

Fancying the 'other', fancying the 'other' and being open about it, and fancying the 'other', being open about it and not attracting any criticism from their fellow far right mates – to me this was something I found at that stage of my fieldwork highly paradoxical. Especially so since I encountered this 'paradox' a number of times in the field. At the same time I came to realise that any inconsistencies I identified, be they inconsistencies in my informants' talk, inconsistencies in their behaviour, or inconsistencies between their talk and their behaviour, sometimes could be successfully explored further. However, the only setting suitable for this purpose were one-to-one interviews. But there was a stumbling block. There were informants who had absolutely no problems with my presence, but for some reason did not feel comfortable with the interview set up and would not grant me one. Then there were those who willingly afforded me an interview but did not particularly want me in their midst. And then there was an ideal type – informants who were equally happy to have me

'hang around' with them and to be interviewed. Unfortunately for me, Jarouš belonged to the first group. I would have loved to hear how Jarouš squared his sexual attraction to a Roma and a Colombian woman – both 'other'- more generally with his emphasis on the importance of nationalism and on Slavic identity. But it was not to be. And I had to accept that.

Anyhow, the discussion now shifted to politics and economics. Even though I was more and more inebriated I could still take in the most general outline of the discussion, as well as its essence. And that more or less boiled down to the following: people in the Czech Republic earn very low wages. At the same time everything is very expensive. This means that people can't buy and therefore don't buy. This leads to an economic disaster. The Czech government tries to deal with it by constantly raising the VAT rate. Even though sometimes the political opposition disagrees with increasing the VAT, in the end they go along with it, otherwise the government would collapse and they, that is the opposition, would also 'lose access to the troughs'. Although Jarouš somewhat monopolised this discussion, too, everyone around the table, whether having the hallmark of being far right or a 'normal person', unanimously agreed with this take on politics and economics.

The last topic I had a recollection of was beer drinking. Politics/economic, sex and expressing adoration for alcohol, beer in particular – these three topics were integral to any pub 'session'. Covering all three was a sign of a fully fledged evening. This time, though, rather than the usual 'chanting of odes to beer' the handling of the topic was different. There was a tinge of criticism, of self-reflection. This subject matter, too, was initiated by Jarouš (it seemed to have been his evening, really). I remember him sitting over his umpteenth beer mug, shaking his head and wondering how people could drink so much. Once a week is OK, but every day? He did not understand the point of it. He insisted he did not drink every day. That as a matter of principle he never drank at work. How can people drink at work?, he wondered. At least that much I still retained the following day. But what the others said to that or what else my companions for that night discussed I was no longer able to follow. I probably just sat there, my

hands supporting my heavy head. My senses would have been dulled, my reasoning capacity shrunk. It could be said that at that point I still participated, but I no longer effectively observed. As an anthropologist, that was it for me for that evening.

This section of the thesis will set my research into the wider context. I shall introduce the subject matter and present my original research questions as well as the hypotheses I formed prior to entering the field. Next, I shall give an overview of the relevant literature and present the methodology, indicating in places my own stance.

Context

Roots of the extreme right youth subculture go back to skinheadism of the mid to late 1960s working class London - the time and place of huge changes affecting all spheres of the working-class life. Skinheadism, a (over)performance of a conservative working-class masculinity was a response to this upheaval (2002c). In the 1980s the subculture started becoming prominent in parts of western Europe, too. It also found its way into the USA, where it started 'living' alongside and to an extend even merged with the indigenous form of the extreme right, the Ku Klux Klan tradition, and it appeared in other parts of the white diaspora, too (Back, 2002b). From around 1989, just before or shortly after the fall of the communist regimes, an extreme racist subculture also began to surface in eastern and central Europe (Kürti 1998, Mareš 2003).

The integration of the ex-socialist European countries into the global economy was quickly followed by the widening of the gap between rich and poor, marginalisation and fragmentation of the working classes through unemployment, the contraction of the welfare state, volatility of labour market and, related to this upheaval, an intensification in male youth violence (e.g. see Bridger and Pine 1998, Hann 2002, Pilkington 2010, Kalb 2009, Kurti 1998). These rapid and disconcerting changes brought about an array of negative emotions such as anger, bitterness and disenchantment and, simultaneously, feelings and emotions repressed under the previous regime could now be

manifested openly (Svašek 2006). During this time in Czechoslavakia (from 1993 the Czech Republic) the skinhead subculture unproblematically joined the mainstream culture and extreme right political parties became part of the political landscape. During the same period racial attacks also became very frequent. The first victims were Vietnamese workers and non-white foreign nationals (Mareš 2003), but later it was the Roma who were bearing the brunt of the racial hatred (Stewart 1997).

Interestingly, in the Czech context the very first people drawn to skinheadism were students and intellectuals (Mareš 2003). Nevertheless, soon it was mostly youth from the working class background who became attracted to this subculture (Mares 2003). From the very beginning the extreme right scene – both at the level of the subculture and at the level of political parties – has been very heterogeneous and characterised by persistent intra-group fighting, fission, but, ironically, by an equal amount of inter-group cooperation. In terms of the ideological orientation of the far right subculture, its various sections or groupings have ranged from Czech nationalism drawing on the Catholic or Hussite (i.e. indigenous protestant) tradition and sometimes incorporating elements of pan-Slavism, to pro-German 'Czech' nationalism characterised by pan-Germanism and identification with the plight of Sudeten Germans, to pan-Aryanism – preoccupied with the European culture, preparations for the Racial Holy War (RAHOWA) and marked by strong anti-Semitism, to emulations of the American Ku Klux Klan tradition (Mares 2003). Nonetheless, all these various groups have always had a common denominator, namely an aversion to various transnational organisations and institutions, to the ultra-left and to various marginalised groups of people, the Roma in particular. Also, most of them have voiced the desire for the country to be 'governed by a firm hand' ('vláda pevné ruky'). Over the past ten years or so, however, a section of the far right typified by both close identification with Germans and pan-Aryanist aspirations more generally came to constitute the most visible and numerically strong part of the scene. These people, popularly known as 'neo-Nazis' but referring to themselves

as National Socialists, nowadays distance themselves from skinheadism. They have come to form a somewhat more elaborate and coherent ideology and also display political aspirations. Their main political platform is the *Workers' Party for Social Justice (Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti* – henceforth the DSSS), a far right political party founded in 2002.

Throughout the 1990s verbal and physical attacks on the Roma by racist youth met only with a lukewarm reaction from the Czech authorities. Their attitude changed considerably in connection with preparations towards joining the EU and upon becoming an actual member the Czech government has become fervently anti-extreme right. For example, year 2009 was a year of strong a crackdown on the Czech extreme right scene, resulting in arrests and imprisonments of many ultra-right activists, and in 2010 the Supreme Court dissolved the ultra-right *Workers' Party*. All these efforts from the establishment notwithstanding, the extreme right continues to exist both at the political level (the abolished *Workers' Party* re-formed only one month later under the name the *Workers' Party for Social Justice*) and at the level of non-political organisations, and racially motivated crimes, even though less frequent, still occur and show signs of premeditation and more meticulous planning.

Although far right movements, neo-Nazism including, exist in various countries, and are not even solely confined to the so called western world, the presence of neo-Nazism in the Czech Republic is somewhat puzzling. In contrast to most other eastern and central European countries it has had neither a strong indigenous fascist movement, nor one linking nationalism and the far right. What is more, the German occupation of the Czech lands during the Second World War, and the fierce anti-Slav sentiments and ideologies of German Fascism, still figure prominently in the Czech imagination and social memory. It is therefore perplexing that present-day Czech adherents of the far right eagerly identify themselves with the German neo-Nazis.

Up to now the extreme right has been mostly the domain of the political science, sociology and criminology. In my experience, literature produced by sociologists, political scientists and criminologists often gives us only a narrow and frequently normative perspective on the extreme right. Besides, it has been argued that the analysis of the phenomenon of the far right has often not moved very far beyond the simple condemnation of what is morally deplorable (Mouffe 2005). Whilst my thesis will not ignore insights from the aforementioned disciplines, it will be heavily informed by anthropological theory and methodology, and through this it will be able to offer a novel approach to the subject matter.

Anthropological approach can be effective on three counts. Firstly, the discipline has customarily specialised in understanding the cultural 'other', in finding rationality in the ostensibly irrational. Neo-Nazis with their xenophobic excesses and seemingly mindless hatred of difference are a good 'candidate' for such anthropological 'other'. Secondly, anthropology has been strongly attracted to the study of subalternity. A secondary literature review suggests to me that the present-day extreme right can also be seen as subaltern, a point I shall address in chapters VI and VIII. Thirdly, anthropology's dual perspective, that is - drawing insights from micro-perspectives informed by intense fieldwork, on the one hand, and macro-perspectives derived from comparativism and inductive reasoning, on the other (Banks & Gingrich 2006), is also an asset.

Terminology

Before I shall present my research questions, hypotheses and aims I would like to clarify what definitions of the terms 'subculture', 'movement', 'neo-Nazism' and 'race' I shall be working with in the thesis as some of these terms are highly politically charged.

Many scholars dealing with my informants and other far right groupings employ the term 'neo-Nazis'. This label implies that their ideology is a revised form of ideas and ideologies of National Socialism of the 1930s and 1940s. However, my informants never use this label, find it offensive and refer to themselves mostly as 'National Socialists' (see websites of *Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti* and *Národní odpor*). My subsequent chapters will indeed demonstrate that in relation to my informants the label itself is problematic. Throughout the theses I will refer to my informants mostly as far-right, although I am painfully aware that this label also has its shortcoming and I will explain these in due course.

Following from Mareš (2003), I shall distinguish between subculture and social movement in the subsequent way: A subculture attracts the youth and places an emphasis on a specific style of clothing, mode of behaviour and a rejection of certain norms. Subcultures tend to present themselves as rebellious, non-official and nowadays they are usually transnational. In contrast to a subculture, a social movement is less concerned with style, is typified by a more elaborate and consistent ideology and need not attract the young only. Given the development of the far right scene in the Czech Republic, when referring to the far right of the 1990s I shall speak of a subculture and/or skinheadism and when speaking of the far right from around 2000 till present I shall employ the term movement. This terminology reflects the shift within the Czech far right from an accentuation of a lifestyle revolving around beer drinking, camaraderie, fights and spontaneous violent attacks (usually racially motivated) to a more organised movement with a stronger emphasis on ideology, efforts to enter the official political scene and less frequent but more organised attacks on their objects of hatred. Whilst I shall be using the terms 'race', 'racism' and 'racial hatred' throughout the dissertation in connection with the Czech extreme right, in chapters 4 and 5 I I shall outline some pitfalls of the usage of these analytic concepts in central Europe.

Research questions

My research sought to answer the following three sets of questions:

1. **How do Czech neo-Nazis reconcile their nationalist identity with their strong identification with German neo-Nazis and Nazi Germany's legacy?** This question probes the paradoxical relationship between national pride and admiration for a historical adversary. Does the influence of post-1989 globalization on Czech self-perception and identity shift towards German identity to escape communist affiliations?

2. **What role does the far right play in shaping new working-class identities in the Czech Republic?** What are the socio-economic motivations behind the far right's appeal to the working class? Through the exploration of this question, I will look into how the Workers' Party's emphasis on security, nationalisation, and the valorisation of manual labour resonates with workers, in contrast to the neoliberal tendencies in Western European right-wing populism.

3. **Why did skinheadism in the Czech Republic evolve into a more ideologically driven neo-Nazism?** Why was there a transition from a largely ideology-free youth subculture to a movement with a structured ideological framework?

Hypotheses

Below are hypotheses I formed prior to entering the field itself. In the conclusion these hypotheses will be attended to once more.

1) Given the history of the region, the neo-Nazi orientation of the Czech far right is rather paradoxical. Czech neo-Nazis refer to themselves as nationalists and most of their organisations have the word *national* (*národní*) in their names. Yet they strongly identify themselves with the legacy of Nazi Germany as well as with present-day German neo-Nazis - as can be seen from the slogans and symbols they use. I suggest that after 1989, with the greater traffic of goods, people and information across borders, many Czechs have started perceiving themselves as inferior, marginal and backward vis-à-vis the western world. Some young people have tried to alter this unflattering self-image through identification with Germans – an eminent neighbour particularly mighty during the WWII - whose people had also lived on the territory of what is now the Czech Republic alongside the Czechs up until 1945. I hypothesise that the switch from the Slavic to the German identity could also be thought about as an effort to dissociate oneself from the shameful communist past – as all Slavs were under the communist rule until 1989.

2) I hypothesise that in the Czech Republic being part of the far right scene also amounts to a search for a new, untainted (masculine) working-class identity and, in fact, to efforts to reassert the working-class pride. Unlike radical right-wing populist parties who in much of western Europe tend to advocate individual achievement, free market and curtailment of the role of the state (Betz 2006), in addition to classic populist appeals to 'honest hard-working citizens', the *Workers' Party for Social Justice (the DSSS)* also advocates nationalisation, protectionism and centralisation of services. The party mostly tries to appeal to workers, promising security and even the restoration of the prestige of manual work. I hypothesise that adherents of the far right find the promise of security and appeals to the 'honour of labour' enticing for these have been otherwise completely absent in the public discourse ever since the fall of the communist government.

3) I propose that skinheadism metamorphosed into neo-Nazism because those holding – by the standards of the wider society - extreme views

have with time started to feel the need to explain and legitimise their views and actions to themselves, and perhaps even to other people. Skinheadism, virtually ideology-free, could not satisfy this need. By contrast, Neo-Nazism, drawing heavily, albeit selectively, on a relatively elaborate and 'historically established' ideology of Nazi Germany, ideology characterised by racial and other forms of hatred, could fulfil such need quite well. However, the fit is not perfect and I hypothesise that the constant fission within the far right, habitually explained away as a result of intra-group fighting over leadership or direction of the group (Bjørgo 1998), might also be due to the members' awareness of weak points or contradictions within their ideologies and values they try to uphold. Thus, joining or even setting up a new group could be seen as a search for the perfect version of the ideology, the version that matches their life experience and can effectively answer their questions.

Psychological literature

The extreme right has been scientifically approached from two rather different points of departure. One approach seeks to understand it primarily in terms of the personality traits of individuals, the other approach considers social structure, inequalities and/or societal changes as a starting point. The first approach is typical of psychology, and features also prominently in criminology, while the second approach is more characteristic of sociology, anthropology, political science and history. Whilst it cannot be said that the first approach pays no attention to the sociodemographic background of research participants or that sociologists, political scientists or anthropologists do not consider the microstructural conditions, the two approaches remain rather distinct.

One of the first attempts within the field of psychology to account for fascism was Ross Stagner's study from 1936, *Fascist Attitudes: An Exploratory Study*. In this study Stagner administered to a sample of college students a scale containing a number of statements that were to measure their political

attitudes. This he matched to their socioeconomic status and concluded that the upper class and largely conservative university sample had a significantly higher 'Fascism' score than other socioeconomic groups. For Stagner, Fascism came into being as an attempt to prevent working-class revolutions and at the same time to afford the middle-class a degree of protection from monopoly capital. Therefore, it would be the upper class that would exhibit fascist attitudes.

However, it was *The Authoritarian Personality* by Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson and Nevitt Sanford, published in 1950, that has been the most influential book that explicitly linked particular personality traits and fascist leanings. This book was part of a series of works chat set to examine prejudice. The aim of the research was to identify traits regarding anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism, politico-economic conservatism and broader andi-democratic disposition. The team administered their research participants questionnaires that contained factual questions (e.g. socio-economic background), opinion-attitude scales and projective questions. Clinical-style interviews were also conducted. The main assertion of the book was that people with an authoritarian personality are drawn to right-wing ideologies such as fascism. People with an authoritarian personality, the authors argue, have experienced very harsh and punitive parenting. Constant fear of their parents, whom they never confront openly, results in two things. Firstly, their anger towards their parents is redirected in the direction of others, such as minorities, and secondly, such people tend to identify with and venerate authority figures.

The book has been criticised on both methodological and ideological grounds. For instance, some argued that authoritarianism is as much the preserve of the right as it is of the left (for an overview of the debate see Norris 2005). The in-group – out-group theories came about also as a result of engagement with the assertions in *The Authoritarian Personality* (Norris 2005). More politically neutral, they turned their focus to inter-group dynamics rather than the individual. They are perhaps the best known and accepted theories to date, influenced by the work of Adorno et. al. It seems that anyone in

psychology who has carried out research into far right and/or prejudice refers to *The Authoritarian Personality* one way or another.

I would argue that the postulates and argumentation of the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* have holes – both with regards to past Fascist regimes and to the contemporary far right. For example, it is unclear why Fascism took hold in some parts of Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, but not in others. Moreover, the book offers no suggestions as to how prejudice can permeate through entire societies, as was the case of Nazi Germany. Or, why Nazi Germany would be so virulently anti-Semitic, whereas attitudes to Jews in Italian Fascism, especially in its early stages, were by no means straightforwardly negative.

When applied to the contemporary far right, some of the key assertions of the book do not reflect the situation on the ground, or only to a limited extend. For me the most striking discrepancy was between the expectation of the existence of a charismatic leader and obedient followers – and the reality. Not only has there never been such a leader on the Czech far right 'scene', my informants were not yearning for such a figure. There was no hierarchical ordering among them and, what is more, nor did I find that my informants would conceptualise the world around them in terms of hierarchy and/or simple binary oppositions. This is probably not something peculiar to the Czech extreme right. Katherine Fangen, who conducted fieldwork among right-wing skinheads in Norway in the 1990s, also observed that her informants were staunchly anti-authoritarian (1998b). However, the idea of the centrality of a strong leader among the far right persists. In the Czech Republic it is for example dutifully reproduced in every BA thesis discussing the Czech far right available on the Internet, no matter who the supervisor is.

Strong conformism to rules and law, a typical characteristic of the authoritarian personality according to the authors cited above, has also not been quite borne out by my own field research. Minimally, there was a rather large discrepancy between what my informants said should be done (that is follow the rule of law) and what they actually did. The choice of scientific

methods, in the case of *The Authoritarian Personality* not employing observation but relying solely on the use of self-report questionnaires and interviews, can probably explain this difference between my findings and those of Adorno and his colleagues. Similarly, I was doubtful I could straightforwardly attribute low moral competence to my informants, low moral competence being another typical feature of the authoritarian personality.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the argument, and the most detrimental in terms of its credibility, is the actual focus on personality as the chief explanation of the existence of the far right. Whether the 'right-wing personality' is thought of as something innate or acquired in childhood, it still implies pathology, and (correct) education or re-education is usually advocated by way of remedy. However, as Victoria Pitts argues, ,Claims of mental pathology have been an all-too-common way to discredit behaviours, bodies, and subjects that we may find disturbing or challenging' (Pitts 2003: 17,18,19). '(P)athologisation is never politically neutral', she adds (Pitts 2003: 17/18/19). Although Pitts wrote those words not in connection with the research into the far right but research into body modifications, her point is, I think, pertinent to a variety of research settings.

Now I would like to turn to the second major approach to the study of far right – the one that tries to account for the phenomenon through the examination of broader social forces. Every social phenomenon can be interpreted in a multitude of different ways, depending on one's perspective. Far right (also ultra right, extreme right, new right) is one way of framing it. Nationalism, racism, populism, welfare chauvinism and globalisation are other possible ways. It can be also looked at through the prism of class. In the next section I will present an overview of some key literature on the subject from these various perspectives. However, I start with the regional literature to provide some context.

Regional literature

Ethnicity, nationalism, peasantry and underdevelopment – these are the main subject areas through which the regions of central and eastern Europe have entered the anthropological literature (Hann 1996). Ever since 1989 anthropologists have been interested in the transition from state socialism to a globalised market economy and a number of ethnographically rich studies have appeared, typically critiquing 'transitological' models offered by other academic disciplines (Bridger and Pine 1998, Hann 2002). Whilst my research will address all the aforementioned theoretical areas, especially those of nationalism and ethnicity, there will be one crucial difference. Historically marginal, minority or oppressed groups have been the focal point of much of anthropological literature of central and eastern Europe (e.g. see Pine 1998 and Pine 2002 on the Gorale or Stewart 1997 and Grill – forthcoming on the Roma). By giving attention to emerging ideologies from within the dominant social group, I shall deviate from this established tradition, even though it could be plausibly argued that those attracted to the extreme right belong to newly disenfranchised groups, a point I shall develop later.

Essentially, I am in agreement with Bridger & Pine (1998) who observed that one of the consequences of the 'absence of the levelling function of the socialist state' in eastern Europe was a rise in nationalist sentiments and an emphasis on ethnic identity. In fact, over the past hundred and sixty years or so a great deal of political struggles in the region has revolved around nationalist ideologies and sentiments. In the European context theorists of nationalism by and large differentiated between Eastern and Western nationalism, and they usually only differed on what constituted the main difference between the two models and where exactly the border between the East and the West laid.

Gellner (1983) attributed the main difference between the two regions in the 19th century to development of high culture. Building heavily on the work of John Plamenatz, Gellner argued that the Western type, exemplified by the Italian and German nationalisms, was nationalism with an already well-

established high culture, typified by the existence of a standardised literary language and a relatively high level of education amongst the population. Western nationalism was essentially about political unification where all that was needed were slight changes to the existing international boundaries and the development of political institutions within them. By contrast, Eastern nationalism, illustrated well by the situation in the Habsburg monarchy, had high cultures still in its infancy and the 'ethnic map' of the region was rather messy – with populations still enmeshed in complicated and multiple loyalties of kinship, religion and territory. Here the creation of nation-states would be more complicated and brutal.

Distinction along the civic and ethnic lines has been very influential and Brubaker's (1992) model has become particularly well known. Brubaker chose two countries to demonstrate his argument – France and Germany. Civic nationalism, to be found in France, is based on the territorial conception of belonging and has led to a civic policy whereby immigrants can become naturalised if resident in the country for a sufficient period of time. Germany provides a good example of the ethnic type. This type gave rise to a genealogical policy which excludes non-German immigrants from full citizenship, disregarding their long residence in Germany, but automatically includes ethnic Germans who have never set foot on Germany soil.

Focusing on the Czech nationalism, Holy (1996) stressed that both civic and ethnic nationalisms have existed simultaneously in the Czech lands. Nevertheless, whenever Czechs have felt under threat, civic nationalism was pushed into the background and ethnic nationalism took the centre stage. It is also significant that nationalism was very much present in central and eastern Europe during the times of socialism, in spite of the ostensible universalism of the communist ideology (Holy 1996, Verdery 1991). This was generally linked to the perception of the Soviet Union as a foreign oppressor (Holy 1996, Verdery 1991). In fact, building of a national identity in opposition to another nation,

usually seen as an enemy, or to some 'foreign' internal element seems to be at the crux of the process (Baumann 2000, Eriksen 2002). In the case of the Czech nationalism, historically the Czech identity has been constructed in opposition to Germans (Holy 1996). Germans were neighbours of the Czech Kingdom, but from the 13th century onwards they have been also coming to the Czech lands and settling alongside Czechs. Apropos, from the second half of the 19th century to early 20th century the Czech nationalism often went 'hand in hand' with the idea of pan-Slavism. Taken all this into consideration – the dramatic and conscious switch of an increasing number of members of the Czech far right from Czech/Slavic to German identity is rather perplexing. In my research I shall explore what specific processes or events led to this switch and in the course of doing so I also hope to contribute some thoughts on identity formation in general.

Many anthropologists who worked in the region during the years of postsocialism observed that with the established ways of relating quickly falling apart, feelings of uncertainty and insecurity ensued and, eventually, people were forced to re-create their personal as well as collective identities (e.g. Pine, Kaneff & Haukanes 2004, Hann 2002), including their national identities (Skrbiš 2006). In my view, each identity, personal and collective alike, encompasses past events and experiences, present situation and it also reflects ambitions for the future. Skrbiš's (2006) analysis of the Venetological theory is worth mentioning here for it is particularly useful to my own work. Venetology found adherents from amongst Slovenian expatriates and some right-wingers. It asserts that Venets (Slovenes) are not only the very first Europeans, they are also completely culturally different from (and superior to) the ethnic groups that surround them. Skrbiš theorised that Venetologists adopted this rather bizzare ideology with its roots in the 19th century because it enabled them to dissociate themselves from other Slavs of Yugoslavia and - since all Slavs had lived under communist governments before 1989 – this way they could also make a clean break from the discredited communist legacy. I see certain corresponding features between

Slovenian Venets and Czech neo-Nazis. It seems to me that some Czechs perceive themselves as coming from a small, insignificant, technologically backward nation contaminated by its communist legacy. Declaring themselves semi-Germans could be an effort on their part to formulate a new authentic identity for themselves, an identity with guaranteed past accomplishments and therefore a viable future (Pine, Kaneff & Haukanes 2004).

Regional literature on the 'real losers' of the post-1989 development is of particular relevance to my work. It revealed that those that were integrated the most fully into the state-run economy under socialism and were revered the most in the official communist rhetoric were amongst those most negatively affected by the switch to a market economy and neoliberal values. This comes through strongly, for example, in the work of Pine (1998) who examined the effects of the changes after 1989 on two different places in Poland. Although her main focus were women, I think that her findings can be generalised to men, too. Pine demonstrated that the mountain Gorale, who always managed to retain a degree of autonomy from the Polish socialist state and supplemented their income through private entrepreneurial activities, were better prepared to make the transition to the post-1989 conditions, both in economic and cultural terms, than textile factory workers of the city of Łódż who suffered considerably more not only financially, but their ways of making relatedness and their sense of identity have also been profoundly altered.

Kalb (2009) and Kideckel (2002) explicitly argued that it was especially workers who fell on hard times following the collapse of the communist regimes. In addition to huge unemployment that befell this socio-economic class, their class identity has been polluted by the previous regime which claimed to represent first and foremost the workers and which put the 'heroism' of workers at the centre stage of their propaganda (Kideckel 2002). Still, recently there have been indications that in parts of eastern Europe working-class consciousness is making a comeback (Kalb 2009), something my own research

has also born out. In my thesis I will therefore explore the idea that some young working class people are attracted to National Socialism, of which they have no living memory, precisely because German National Socialists of the 1930s frequently employed work-symbols (Lüdke 2000). This alleged workerism of National Socialism then offers a framework for workers' consciousness alternative to the one previously provided by communists – now brought into disrepute.

But there are other factors that affect identity formation, intergenerational relationships being one of them. In the 1980s the overwhelming majority of young people in eastern Europe were resolutely anticommunist (Kürti 1998). Writing of the fall of the communist government in Czechoslovakia and of the years that followed, Holy (1996) stressed the principal role of students in the 1989 demonstrations against the regime and suggested that through these demonstrations young people expressed contempt for their parents, who were in their eyes implicated in the communist regime. Vitebski (2002), conducting research in northern Siberia during the distressing postsocialist times, focused on survival strategies at an individual level. He also observed people's attempts to take up new identities during these times of upheaval. Nonetheless, different people pursued very different identities and their 'choice' was connected with the type of relationship their parents had had with the Soviet state. The intergenerational relationships will be also one of the foci of this work and I will explore what bearing intergenerational relationships had had on my informants' decision to assume a new hybrid Czech-German identity.

A significant part of my thesis will be centred around the exploration of the Czech – Roma relationship as the Roma people constitute the main target of the extreme right in the Czech Republic, as well as in many other parts of eastern Europe. Stewart (1997) in his work on Hungarian Gypsies linked the negative attitudes to this minority from the larger society to the idea of 'honest

labour', a highly esteemed value amongst peasant populations in the region before as well as during the communist era, when labour, in fact, was the only legitimate source of value. Gypsies, by contrast, have historically been associated with the less moral commercial activities and/or unproductive and immoral begging. As a result, Stewart argued, after 1989, when people were finally allowed to ventilate their anger in public space, unsuccessful Gypsies dependent on benefits and successful Gypsy businessmen have both been openly hated.

The centrality of the 'honour of labour' in the Czech context was already born out by my preliminary online research. Therefore, in my exploration into how the Czech far right comes to locate and define their targets of hate I decided to focus on this line of enquiry. However, there are other dimensions I need to consider such as the role of mimesis. Many, and possibly most, Czech far right groupings copy the style and rhetoric of western extreme right groups (in the Czech context 'western' denotes mostly Anglo-American and German). This means that a sort of 'franchise' organisation, bearing the name and features of an already existing extreme right organisation originating somewhere in the USA, England or Germany, is set up by a group of Czech adherents of the extreme right, and only at a later date these extremists try to establish a contact with the original organisation (see Mareš 2003 for examples of this development between 1989 and 2002).

Literature on the far right

Literature on the extreme right published in English tends to be limited to western Europe and north America. In their treatment of the topic most English-writing authors see the extreme right as a sort of protest movement - but in cultural terms. Therefore, it is common for many authors to discuss the

extreme right as a subculture, one of many youth subcultures that have been 'cropping up' in a succession from the 1950s till present (Hamm 1993). In any case, it is no longer believed that class has much significance as a basis for social protest. Instead, in the age of post-Fordism most protest is centred around race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation (Buchler 2000). This 'culturist' explanation is to an extent applicable to the Czech far right of the 1990s when skinheadism with its emphasis on style and little concern for the official politics was the main face of the extreme right. However, over the last decade or so skinheadism has virtually disappeared and the contemporary extreme right is eager to join the political scene. My examination of the *DSSS* website and websites of various extreme right organisations, such as *Národní odpor, Women Aryan Unity*, etc., suggests that, on the one hand, the extreme right could be seen as a form of reactive movement - in the sense that it is anti-Roma, anti-communist, anti-globalisation, anti-liberalism, anti-multiculturalism, etc. On the other hand, it has very definitely adopted a workerist identity, employing workerist symbolism and frequently referencing 'workers' rights' when articulating its demands. My subsequent chapters will address this potential connection between the extreme right and the re-emerging working class consciousness - something that might be found exclusively amongst the Czech far right, or perhaps only within the far right in the postsocialist world. In the course of doing so, I shall digress from the exclusively culturalist paradigm and I shall take into account the political landscape of the Czech Republic and the socio-economic position of my informants vis-à-vis other strata of the society.

Specialists on the far right often examine the phenomenon from the psychological angle. *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno et al. (1950) has been a tremendously influential piece of work and many scholars of the new right still draw on it forty or fifty years later (e.g. Ezekiel 1995, Hamm 1993). However, there are scholars who have deviated from this position. Kuhnel (1998), for instance, made a case that every individual and every social group is capable of extremist expression - given the right set of circumstances. Further to

that, Back (2002a) emphasised that if we, as scholars, want to arrive at an understanding of these people, we need to move beyond simple condemnation of their views and behaviour and beyond caricaturing them. Whilst not disregarding the insights of psychologists and criminologists, I have found the approach advocated by Back and the argument made by Kuhnel more interesting and I made them a starting point of my own research.

Over the years several major themes or debates have crystallised in relation to the extreme right. For example, a rather heated debate has occurred within the German academia. According to one group of scholars skinheads and other racist groups of the 1990s can be viewed as a non-parliamentary opposition analogous to the one of the 1960s (see Mareš 2003 for an overview of the debate). Thus, the young members or supporters of the extreme right in the 1990s in actual fact revolted against their 'red' teachers who were propagating the thoughts of various social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Academics holding this position also draw parallels between the violence committed by the extreme left in the 1960s and the violence committed by the racist youths in the 1990s. Others vehemently opposed this view, emphasising that, unlike the leftist violence of the 1960s, the far right of the 1990s does not direct its attacks on government representatives or the existing social system, but tries to 'protect' the existing society through elimination of 'disruptive elements' such as immigrants (Mareš 2003). However, the Czech far right of the 2000s very much aims its verbal criticism at the 'System' and its representatives and it decries the state of the contemporary society. This may signal a shift in tactics and thinking of the far right extremists about their objects of hatred, due to the movement's maturation perhaps, and it is something I shall attend to in the thesis.

Another relevant academic discussion has taken place within the Czech Republic itself. There several analysts have debated whether the difference between the extreme right in central/eastern Europe and that in western

countries is a difference in degree or kind. Dvořáková (1997), for instance, sees a strong congruence between the development in the western societies and in the post-communist states. In both types of societies, she argues, we witness social mobility and with this connected weak class identification, atomisation of the society, promotion of the ideology of individualism, loss or big changes to the traditional social ties, rise in criminality and an influx of previously criminalised or suppressed mass media products such as pornography, violent thrillers, etc. This development leads some people to demand law and order, instalment of some sort of moral norms and sometimes even censorship. The implicit idea here is that these changes have been simply quicker and the backlash against them more intense in the formerly communist countries over the past twenty two years. Mareš (2003), by contrast, understands the post-communist societies as diametrically different from those without the communist experience. He pointed out the 'insufficiently developed' political culture, high fluctuation of voters and chauvinistic and nationalistic rhetoric of transformed communist parties as characteristic of the region. He also decried the 'psychological devastation' of the Czech population - a consequence of the decades of the communist rule. The far right, according to him, attracts voters for it promises to compensate for the psychological and economic deprivation. Whilst I have reservations about Mareš's normative analysis of the socialist era and its aftermath, I share his assertion that the four decades of socialism and the abrupt shift to the market economy and parliamentary democracy have in many respects somewhat rendered eastern European societies qualitatively different from their western counterparts and this needs to be taken into account when analysing various societal phenomena in the region, such as the extreme right.

The final debate I wish to mention here focuses on the international dimension of the far right. Some academics interpret transnational contacts between extreme right groups as a sign of convergence of European and American far right ideologies (e.g. Weinberg 1998, Kaplan 1998). Others are more cautious in their construal of connections across borders and argue that

the far right remains mostly nationalist, above all in countries formerly occupied by Hitler (e.g. Fangen 1998, Kuhnel 1998). Ironically, the German occupation of the Czech lands during the WWII notwithstanding, pro-German neo-Nazis have come to form the most numerous and the most influential section of the Czech extreme right according to the reports of the Czech scholars specialising in the far right. My dissertation based on fieldwork will, however, paint a more complicated picture.

Authors that explored extreme right in eastern Europe often accounted for it in terms of mimicry (e.g. Kürti 1998). Indeed, more often than not, new far right organisations or associations in the Czech Republic have often born names and employed symbolism of already existing - usually north American, English or, less frequently, German – organisations and only some time after founding these organisations in the Czech Republic would they contact the original organisations directly (Mareš 2003). Taussing, drawing on Frazer's notion of sympathetic magic, asserted that the point of mimesis lies in 'the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power' (Taussig 1993: xiii). In the Czech imagination the West has represented everything good and progressive, at least ever since Czechoslovakia became a Soviet satellite state. This goes well beyond 'a matter of fact' comparison of levels of wealth and technological development between the Czech Republic and some specific western countries. Instead, the 'West' – contrasted with 'us', i.e. the Czech Republic - is more akin to the concept of paradise, a place 'we' adore and try to emulate to get closer to it, to become like it. It may be that young neo-Nazis hope to obtain some of the 'magical power' of the 'West' through copying the 'Western', that is, Anglo-American and German far right. Furthermore, higher technological development of the so called western world in comparison to eastern Europe is also a very important part of the equation. Back (2002b) indicated that the dominance of the US racist subculture in the dissemination of racist ideas is an outcome of the US dominance in the development and use of digital technology. Therefore, I suggest that the most common route through which ideas of the ultra-right travel is the 'west to east' route. It is ultimately

also the direction in which mainstream ideas and values travel. However, once these ideas and values - orthodox or unorthodox - reach the East, they undergo the process of modification to fit local conditions.

Finally, the relationship between ideas of the ultra-right and what we consider mainstream ideas – that is, ideas with their origin in the Enlightenment philosophy - will also be of interest to me. There is no doubt that nowadays the far right is able to present itself to the public in relatively agreeable ways. Their argumentation and style in their TV and other media appearances as well as in articles on their websites has become so sophisticated that the extreme right intelligentsia can air out their prejudices without digressing significantly from the framework of the Enlightenment thought. On the one hand, I propose to view this development as a sign that the subculture has come of age – that it has turned into a social movement. But perhaps more interestingly, I shall contemplate whether the ultra-right is simply reactionary and conservative, a left-over from the times past, or whether it builds on the Enlightenment body of thought as everyone else, but skilfully making use of ambiguities, dilemmas or inconsistencies with which the Enlightenment philosophy is infused (Billing, 1988, 1991).

Last, but certainly not least, Hilary Pilkington's book published in 2016 Loud and Proud: Passion and Politics in the English Defence League has to be mentioned here. Conducting her fieldwork among the EDL members only a few years after my own research, amongst people that in some important ways resemble my own informants, and publishing it before the write-up of my thesis – it is nearly impossible for my own work not to be in a way a form of a dialogue with Pilkington. Although I will, of course, strive to make my thesis to be more than just a reaction to this Pilkington's seminal work. Nevertheless, despite the number of similarities – both in terms of field findings and theoretical conclusions – there were also some crucial differences between Pilgington's

position and my own. Therefore, relatively frequent references to her work will be unavoidable.

Literature on nationalism, ethnicity, racism, gender and populism

Czech neo-Nazism seems to exhibit far too many complexities and paradoxes to be meaningfully examined by using only one or two analytical frameworks. For example, it can be regarded as an international subculture later transmuting into a social movement. Incidentally, most authors mentioned in the previous chapter explored the far right phenomenon in this way. But on another level, it can be also thought of as a form of nationalism. After all, despite being very much concerned with pan-Aryanism and mimicking and cooperating with extreme right groups or individuals from abroad, the Czech extreme right still refers to itself as 'national' or 'pro-national' (*pronárodní*) and is also very much concerned with developments in the Czech Republic itself.

'Classic' literature on nationalism exemplified by works of the modernists Hobsbawm, Gellner and Anderson is still relevant here, albeit these authors were more concerned with the origins of nationalism in Europe. Hobsbawm's (1983) notion of the invention of tradition as a crucial element in the building of national consciousness is as pertinent today as it was between 1870 and 1914, the period he studied in greater detail. (For Gellner (1983) invention also played a major role in the formation of national consciousness in Europe, although he was inclined to view the process almost in terms of fabrication and falsity.) Hobsbaum linked the necessity to create a new – national - identity to the profound changes transforming the 19th century Europe and highlighted that historians very much participated in the forging of these new national identities. It seems to me that there are certain parallels between the period scrutinised by Hobsbawm and what was happening in

eastern Europe following the fall of the communist rule. However, one crucial difference is that most Czech historians immediately after 1989 started emphasising democratic tradition of the Czech lands and its supposed high level of the capitalist development between the two World Wars, this way facilitating the creation of a very different national identity to the one propagated by the previous regime, whereas the Czech extreme right found this new take on the Czech history irrelevant and has simply replaced the big Soviet brother and protector with the German one - to the point that an identical language of ingratiation and gratitude is used with reference to both 'brotherly nations' (e.g see websites of the *DSSS, Národní odpor* and *Women Aryan Unity*).

One of Anderson's (1983) contributions to the topic of nationalism lies in the role he attributed to the print capitalism. Thanks to print capitalism, he maintained, people were able to imagine themselves as members of a nation – bounded and sovereign, and they pictured the relationship between the nation's members as horizontal. This observation might still apply to the present-day 'nationalism'. I shall explore how the use of the internet and other digital technology contributes to the formation of 'pan-Aryan' or 'pan-racial' consciousness whereby adherents of the extreme right are able to imagine themselves as members of the White/Aryan race – similarly bounded and with similarly horizontal relationship between individual 'Aryans' as well as 'Aryan nations'. I also wish to engage with Anderson's recommendation to regard nationalism in terms of kinship and religion. This approach could prove fruitful, particularly when applied to the veneration of important Nazi and neo-Nazi figures such as Rudolf Hesse, Hitler's deputy in the NSDAP, to whom neo-Nazis attribute efforts to restore peace throughout Europe during the WWII and whom they subsequently consider an originator of the idea of brotherly European/Aryan nations.

And yet, analysing Czech neo-Nazis as straightforward nationalists, despite their self-ascribed nationalist label, is not without problems as certain

rather typical markers of nationalism are missing. First of all, there is the virtual absence of kinship terminology. To express the horizontal relationship between members, neo-Nazis do not employ the terminology of kinship, but that of friendship – i.e. *kamarádi* - literally 'friends'. Also, whilst an equivalent term to the English word 'motherland' exists in Czech (*matka Země* - literally 'Mother Earth'), neo-Nazis, or for that matter any other Czech far right group, never use it. When speaking of their country, they use the term *země. Země* can mean 'land', 'earth' or 'country', depending on the context, but their usage usually denotes 'country'. Secondly, rather than laying an emphasis on purity and exclusiveness of Czechs, Czech neo-Nazis accentuate the hybrid Czech-German identity, i.e. the genetic intermixture of the two nations and their cultural closeness.

Thirdly, particularly challenging is also positioning of the new Czech right in relation to the nationalism versus universalism dichotomy. It is widely held that various universal movements tend to promote international peace and cooperation, whereas nationalistic movements do not and often take the form of an armed struggle (Walby 1996). In fact, the Czech far right scene – defined in the broadest sense as encompassing both official political parties and various formally non-political organisations - simultaneously exhibits features of both nationalism and universalism. Thus, the skinhead subculture and its descendants –various neo-Nazi groupings - have been concerned with the 'White race', Europe or European culture as well as their nation. The DSSS mostly emphasises the nation, but at times also Europe or European culture. This intertwinement of the national and the universal, or at least the trans-national, also exists on the ground. The non-political entities of the far right closely cooperate with their German and Slovak counterparts, the far right members from the three countries often visiting each other and attending each other's meetings, demonstrations and concerts. Similarly, on the political scene itself the DSSS closely and officially collaborates with the German NPD (Mareš & Vejvodová 2006). However, there seems to be something more interesting and less

symmetrical at play than simply a situational fusion of smaller segments into bigger ones to fend off a common enemy and, with the danger averted, a fission back into smaller and antagonistic segments along the lines of the Nuer segmentary lineage system (Evans-Pritchard 1940). Here we can see that, on the one hand, we have expressions of ethnic nationalism amongst Czech, Slovak and German adherents of the far right, but that this ethnic nationalism also coexists with, what seems like, efforts, at least on some level, to revive or reinstall actual historical ties stemming from having shared a common territory in the past (Czechs had lived in a common state with Slovaks until 1992 and they had shared geographical space with Germans up until 1945 - be it under the Third Reich, Czechoslovakia of the interwar years before that or the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918). I believe it is significant that Czech neo-Nazis do not, for example, have equally strong ties with their Polish counterparts - despite the geographic proximity, or, for instance, that Slovak neo-Nazis do not seem to have the same intense relations with their neighbouring Polish or Ukrainian 'colleagues'.

If we wish to employ a global perspective in relation to the extreme right, there are several theoretical models worth pursuing – such as one offered by Gerd Baumann (1999). According to Baumann, there are currently three levels of transnational or globalising processes: cross-diasporic exchange, long-distance familism and political and religious transnationalism. In my view, the far right, if thought of as the 'White Diaspora', fits the cross-diasporic exchange rather well. Thus, as with other diasporas, ultra-right groups follow the development they deem relevant in other countries, compare it with the situations in their own countries and communicate and cooperate with ultra-right groups abroad. A model proposed by Robertson and Friedman (1995) could also be applicable here. Even though neo-Nazi groups dominate the Czech far right scene, there are also many groups that are nationalist in the conventional sense, that is, they focus exclusively on the 'Czechness', are often anti-German and some of them even adhere to the idea of pan-Slavism. If I applied their

model for understanding present-day social movements to the Czech extreme right, I would argue that Czech neo-Nazis are an expression of 'particularisation of universalism' and the nationalist formations of 'universalisation of particularism' – with both 'set-ups' existing side by side. Nonetheless, the neo-Nazis and the nationalists, despite their respective ideologies being often at odds, not only live side by side, they also cooperate in many ways and their respective 'personnel' often 'crosses the border' into the other camp. This seems rather paradoxical and will be therefore addressed in my thesis.

However, one broad commonality between nationalist and neo-Nazi groupings is their hatred of an 'other'. I hope that my exploration of the Czech extreme right will offer a more nuanced analysis than simply applying the label of cultural racism to this form of hatred (e.g. Fangen 1998a) and it will seek to explain attacks on the targets of hate in more ways than 'scapegoating' (Bauman 2000). In fact, a significant part of my thesis will be devoted to the examination of the very notions of 'race', 'racial prejudice' and 'racial hatred' when applied to the central/eastern European context.

In the Czech Republic the extreme right, whether in its political or non-political form, is first and foremost fixated on two ethnic groups - the sizeable Roma minority and Jews. Should we choose to regard the far right as a nationalistic movement – here we have one of the classic ingredients of nationalism – the 'enemy/enemies within' (Baumann 2000, Eriksen 2002).

Jews are very nearly absent in the Czech Republic. Therefore, their central position in the 'body of thought' of Czech neo-Nazis was of a considerable interest to me. A number of explanations have been forwarded to account for the 'anti-Semitism without Jews' phenomenon. Martin (Martin in Bauman 2000) developed the idea of cultural sedimentation – i.e. unflattering human characteristics maintain their Jewish label, despite Jews being long gone. The

concept of cultural diffusion was put forward by Baumann (2000) and Kuhnel (1998). These authors maintained that through cultural diffusion anti-Semitic ideas traverse national borders, but on their travels, they usually undergo a process of transformation to correspond to the needs of the new setting. An interesting angle has also been offered by Barkun (1998, 2003) who examined the belief in the 'evil of international Jewry' in terms of conspiracy theories. Jewish conspiracy should be thus seen as one of many conspiracy theories, theories that offer the believer an uncomplicated and unambiguous understanding of the complex and confusing world. To this I would add that such an understanding of the world helps one deal with feelings of one's own powerlessness.

The Rom, however, is by far the most important 'internal enemy'. Regarding the Czech-Roma or gadzo-Roma relationship (*gadzo* means non-Roma) the question arises whether we should analyse it as an inter-ethnic conflict, race relations or whether we should focus on the class dimension. There are reasons to see the anti-Roma antagonism in terms of inter-ethnic rather than race relations. Writing on the gadzo-Roma relationships in Hungary, Stewart (2002) forcefully argued that an import of analytical models and solutions into Hungary from the 'West' has a potential to create racism where it does not exist (Stewart 2002). Stewart as well as Czech specialists on the Roma (e.g. see Říčan 1998) emphasise that assimilationist tendencies towards the Roma minority have been taking place in the region throughout centuries and they highlight the permeability (in both directions) of the gadzo-Roma boundary (Stewart 2002, Stewart 1997, Říčan 1998). It might therefore seem more meaningful to view the gadzo-Roma relationship in terms of an interethnic interaction as defined by Barth (1969) - that is, in terms of binary opposites attributable to two ethnic groups where the interethnic boundary is maintained throughout ages, the osmosis notwithstanding, than to analyse it in terms of race relations, as we understand them from societies with the history of colonialism and slavery. These societies were characterised by 'one drop rule'

and strictly guarded boundaries between 'races' – furthermore, boundaries enshrined in law (Stewart 2002, Frankenberg 1993). Thus, my research into the relations between ethnic Czechs and other ethnic groups, such as the Roma, was conducted in view of specific historical, social and cultural features of the region. Apart from the aforementioned assimilationism, characteristic of the Habsburg monarchy more generally, 'ethnic' nationalism of Czechs, typified by the values of homogeneity and conformity (Holy 1996), could be considered one such feature. A prominence given to the value derived from work (Holy 1996, Steward 1997) could be another.

And yet, in addition to the literature on ethnicity I shall still engage with the literature on race. One of my principal research questions is how neo-Nazis come to define their targets of hate and I cannot therefore ignore the fact that on Czech neo-Nazi websites their contributors use the terminology such as 'race' or 'racial difference' and that they do imply the existence of racial hierarchy in articles posted on their websites, in discussions in chat rooms, etc. Furthermore, in parallel to the developments in Hungary (Stewart 2002), I have observed that the view of the ethnic interaction between the Roma and the rest of the Czech population has been increasingly racialised by regional academics and policy makers who, having adopted theories and policy practices developed in north America and western Europe, also increasingly speak of the gadzo–Roma contact in terms of 'racial prejudice' or 'racial discrimination'. Since their views are aired in the media and find their way into textbooks, they increasingly inform the views of the population at large. Ethnic Czechs are thus beginning to see the Roma in relation to themselves not just in terms of binary oppositions between 'them' and 'us' centred around an attitude to work (Stewart 1997), but also as cultural outsiders with origins in India. Interestingly, reflecting on the contemporary Britain, Gilroy (1987, 1992) observed that the anti-racist left and the racist far right have paradoxically a great deal in common. The racists equate culture with race and the leftists with ethnicity, but they both view it as something inherent and thus as the most important determinant of people's

values and behaviour. It seems to me that this replacement of ethnicity with race or at least the collapsing of the two terms is what we witness in the present-day Czech Republic, too. Moreover, as in Britain, this is beginning to take place amongst people across the political spectrum and permeate all levels of the society – from intellectuals to people with the most basic level of education.

Ultimately, understanding of inter-group relationships, perception of difference between groups and, following from this, the groups' categorisation has been changing through ages. For example, in the 19th century Jews were becoming conceived of as a race, the categories of 'race' and 'language' were often used as synonyms and 'nation' started being replaced with 'race', or they were used interchangeably (Hobsbawm 1990). Likewise, the distinction between the categories 'nation' and 'ethnicity' in more recent times is not, in my view, completely straightforward. Gellner (1983) influentially argued that 'nation' exists only inasmuch as it has its own state. Yet, we simultaneously have 'the first nations' in the USA and Canada – indigenous populations of north America with no states of their own. Therefore, there is a potential for all these categories – 'nation', 'race' and 'ethnicity' to metamorphose into each other depending on the changing wider political, social and cultural trends and developments. In my own work I shall therefore try to establish whether what we are witnessing nowadays in the Czech Republic with regards to the Roma is racialisation of ethnicity and - to an extent - also of class.

The gender dimension will be also addressed in my research as ideas about gender are always intertwined with those about race and class (Ware 1992). Even though I propose to see the Czech far right, amongst other things, as an attempt to reassert a masculine identity, I do not share the widely held view that extreme right is more of a masculine province than other areas of public life. Whilst in its rhetoric it indeed displays a strong anti-feminist stance and gender conservatism (Smiggels Kavková 2006, also see the website of

Resistance Women Unity), my examination of the female membership in other political parties across the Czech political spectrum (see websites of *Česká strana sociálně demokratická, Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti, Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* and *Občanská demokratická strana*) - namely, the number of top positions taken in them by women, and the number of women being involved in more universalist organisations such as Antifa or the Union of the Communist Youth (see websites of *Antifa* and *Komunistický svaz mládeže*) revealed that women are underrepresented in all areas of public life and that it is misleading to simply conclude that there is differential integration of men and women into a national project (Walby 1996) or a racist subculture. Instead, we might have to be prepared to concede that there is still differential integration of men and women into public life per se.

Also, in my approach to the gender aspect of the Czech far right I wish to steer clear from preconceptions that women are less racially prejudiced then men on account of their own historical and personal experience of being marginalised. Equally, I am not convinced by psychologising explanations of the racism of right-wing women as hatred towards and contempt for their men projected onto the 'other' and, simultaneously, as conformity to boyfriends, husbands or male relatives (Dworkin 1983). Such views deny women agency and potentially lead to their essentialisation. My research was instead informed by the work of Ware (1996) who had demonstrated in her material from the London's East End that racism, rather than being somehow connected with males mainly, is enacted in gendered ways and that the female racism is less visible but no less venomous.

The final angle on the Czech far right I shall explore here is the far right as a form of populism. Unlike the Czech skinheadism of the 1990s the contemporary extreme right most definitely tries to officially enter the political

scene. What is characteristic for various neo-Nazi organisations as well as for the *DSSS* party is their constant appeal to the 'people', to the 'normal working citizens', and their condemnation of the 'System', that is – of the established structure of power. They also criticise values that have come to dominate the society or are promoted by mainstream politicians. These are rather typical attributes of populism (Panizza 2005) and I can therefore think of the Czech extreme right also in these terms. Moreover, since workers can be considered as the newly disenfranchised (Kideckel 2002), they are one of the groups particularly attracted or susceptible to a populist rhetoric (Panizza 2005).

As mentioned in my hypothesis number two, demands of the far right closely resemble the rhetoric of the communist Czechoslovak governments of the pre-1989 years. Laclau's (2005) work on populism can particularly well illuminate this seeming paradox. He argued that populism is not characterised by any particular ideology or theme but by a way an ideology or theme is communicated. Seen in this way, it is not unusual that the Czech extreme right shares many of its enemies, such as various transnational organisations, the police, etc., with anarchists and 'young communists', and that all these three groups claim certain holidays (e.g. the May Day celebrations) and public spaces as their own.

Chantal Mouffe's (2005) analysis of the contemporary political landscape in the western world also sets a useful background against which I can consider the grievances of the Czech far right and their efforts to establish themselves on the political scene. Mouffe asserted that ever since the 19th century two democratic traditions - the liberal traditions stressing individual liberty and the democratic tradition emphasising popular sovereignty – competed for supremacy. Over the past several decades, she argued, the idea of popular sovereignty has been completely pushed out from the political discourse and the liberal tradition focusing solely on the protection of the free market and human rights has been promoted as the only possible form of a

democratic system. It is precisely in this environment, devoid of political antagonism and where alternative political ideas are not only not voiced in traditional political parties but simply morally condemned by them, that populist politics thrive. Consequently, the mainstream politicians and thinkers pitch their discourse around the 'good democrats' versus 'evil racists' dichotomy and the far right employs equally moralising framework - 'honest hardworking people' versus the 'evil system'. Mouffe's description fits well the situation in the Czech Republic, except that here the mainstream political parties and various governmental bodies go over and above the moral condemnation of their adversaries to their removal from the political scene. Thus, in 2010 the Supreme Court outlawed the *DSSS's* predecessor the *Workers' Party* (*Dělnická strana*) and currently there are also calls from within the political establishment to outlaw the relatively popular *The Communist Party of Czech Lands and Moravia* (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*). My research has therefore taken into account the specificities of the Czech political culture (which some political scientists labelled 'militant democracy' (Mareš & Vejvodová 2006)) in order to understand better the environment in which the *DSSS* and with them informally affiliated neo-Nazis try to operate.

Methodology and Ethics: Tracing the Far Right

In this chapter I shall reveal what inspired me to explore this particular research topic. I shall go over some benefits that can be brought by the examination of far right through the anthropological lens. Next, I go on to list the methods I employed, providing the rationale for this particular choice, and discussing the kind of data I obtained.

Inspiration and Historical Context

My decision to dedicate myself to the study of far-right came into existence in 2009, that is eleven years prior to the final systematisation of my ethnographic material and writing this thesis. The time frame is important here.

While historical change is continual, the pace of that change or its direction is at times fairly steady and predictable, while at other times the rate of the change accelerates and the outcome is dramatic and unforeseen by most. Over the past twelve years the political and ideological landscapes have changed astonishingly. The place where Czech society (as well as many other parts of the world generally) was twelve years ago is rather different to where it is now. The boundaries of what is extreme, controversial, questionable and abominable – or of what is acceptable, relevant, reasonable and common sense - have shifted during this period, sometimes substantially. Many of the trends and patterns I am describing here have intensified and became more obvious. The ethnographic material, collected nine years ago, must be therefore be considered with these societal changes in mind.

Personal and Professional Motivations

The impetus to study far right came from two main sources. One was my actual workplace. Ten years ago I worked in London as an ESOL (English to speakers of other language) teacher. That meant that I was facilitating English learning to people from different parts of the world, people of various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. One of the things that I found fascinating in this sort of environment was the classroom dynamics. Whilst mostly peaceful, there were conflicts, too, conflicts sometimes more attributable to personal differences, sometimes to cultural dissimilarites, but usually to both. Why and how my students at times peacefully co-existed and even formed cross-cultural friendships, and why and how occasional tensions and even open conflicts surfaced – was something that aroused my interest. Especially so since my teaching practice took place when the policy of multiculturalism was being vigorously promoted in the British education system, as well as other areas of public life in the UK, and when it went practically unchallenged. It was equally thought-provoking for me to observe the interaction between ESOL teachers and their students. At the time of my teaching the following two important characteristics typified the ESOL sector. ESOL teaching was a profession with a relatively large section of non-native speakers and therefore immigrants. At the

same time, most teachers only worked through agencies on temporary contracts, with no holiday or sickness pay and for very low wages. These conditions and characteristics also had bearing on these people's attitudes and understanding of the world around them. Thus, working in the ESOL sector seemed to me like a juxtaposition of multiculturalism in practice - albeit in a specific and condensed form, and multiculturalism as an ideal and official policy. This juxtaposition very much fuelled my interest in multiculturalism, racism, immigration, ideology and other related matters.

A Pivotal Event

My workplace aside, there was also a single event that drew my attention to the far-right per se, and that was the appearance of Nick Griffin, the then chairman of the British National Party, on Question Time in 2009. Or, to be more precise, the attention his invitation to this topical debate programme had drawn and the huge controversy and passion this had sparked both prior and after the event. The furore in the wider British society (or minimally sections of the British society) brought about by a far-right politican being given a space in the mainstream media, observing multicultural encounters first hand at my workplace, my own personal experience of being, at different stages of my life, both a native and an immigrant – all these factors mingled and finally crystalised in my strong interest in the far-right. I became intrigued by its position as the ultimate evil in the society. I wanted to examine the role of the far right in contemporary western society, as well as to explore the aspects of society of which the far right were so critical. Multiculturalism, as an ideology, as a policy and as praxis, was definitely one such aspect. Thus, whilst bearing in mind, or in addition to, looking at the society from the viewpoint of the public discourse mediated by the mainstream media, I wanted to see the society through the eyes of the far right itself. I was curious what I might arrive at and I also felt that this was highly topical.

Anthropological Considerations

Having a background in anthropology, I could not help but to deliberate whether and how it could be beneficial to scrutinise the far right anthropologically. Could such an investigation have the potential to give us a fresh outlook on the phenomenon, or could it add something novel to the literature from other disciplines? And could taking on this non-traditional (for anthropology) subject matter have a positive effect on the discipline itself? Contemplating these questions, I turned my attention to the existing literature on the topic.

Literature Review and Methodological Choices

Prior to my field research the far right was mostly covered by political scientists. There were also books and articles by psychologists, criminologists, scholars working in sociology and geography departments, but little work by anthropologists. Each of these disciplines has different historical origins, a different focus, different concerns and different methodologies. I will now touch upon all these three types of difference.

Disclosure of Methodological Approaches

Not all authors who published material on the far right were explicit about their methodology. This was particularly the case with many shorter pieces of writing such as articles and chapters in edited books. Nonetheless, it was obvious that political scientists, psychologists and criminologists tended to rely mostly on quantitative methods and that sociologists were much more likely and in greater degree to obtain their data from interviews and participant observation as additional or even main methods. Some literature I consulted seemed to have utilised a single method. For example, Mark Hamm (1993) in his work on American skinheads obtained their data from questionnaires only, Šmiggels-Kafková (2006) studied far right websites and employed the frame analysis method to arrive at her conclusion about the position of women on the Czech far right scene and Vron Ware (1996) analysed journalistic accounts in her enquiry into the gendered dimension of racism of a particular white working class community in London. More often than not, however, the authors used a

combination of methods. For example, Adorno's seminal work Authoritarian Personality (Adorno et al 1950) made use not only of various questionnaires and tests, but also conducted clinical interviews with some of the respondents. Les Back (e.g. 2002a, 2002b, 2002c), in some of his published work on far right, scrutinised their usage of the Internet; elsewhere it was an interview with Nick Griffin that inspired his ruminations on the the far right. Mareš (2003, 2006), probably considered the biggest authority on the Czech far right, seemed to have based his argument on the analysis of far right fanzines, Internet websites, government data amassed on the Czech far right and on the collection of the demographic details of the far right voters taken from other sources. By contrast, Raphael Ezekiel (1995), although a psychologist, spent years attending rallies and conversing with and interviewing people. The data collected this way then formed the backbone of his perhaps most famous book on the topic - The Racist Mind: Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen. Nonetheless, long-term fieldwork in the anthropological sense with participant observation as the main method informed the work of Katrine Fangen (1998a, 1998b) on the Norwegian skinheads and Norwegian far right. Gillian Evans's work on white working class Britons, including white racist youths, also stemmed from participant observation (2006). Extensive surveys, semi-structured questionnaires, analysis of visual material, but above all, rigorous participant observation formed the basis of the book by Hilary Pilkington and her colleagues (2010) on Russian skinheads. I familiarised myself with this literature before my own fieldwork. Since my return from the field, more literature built on participant observation appeared. Hilary Pilkington's (2016) work with members of the English Defence League drew on a long-term and intensive participant observation, as did Arlie Hochschild's (2016) account of the Tea Party supporters from the Deep South from the same year. Agnieszka Pasieka's (e.g. 2017, 2018, 2019) insights into the (primarily) Polish far right also came about as a result of her long and committed participant observation. The overview of the findings of all this as well as other literature on the topic is in the literature review section and throughout this thesis I frequently enter into the dialogue with these authors. Nonetheless, what I would like to draw attention to here is that where

there is a disagreement between my account of the far right and that of other authors this can be at least in part attributed to the different methodological approach.

Focus on Interviews and Participant Observation

Now I would like to focus more on research into the far right centred around interviews and participant observation. In general, I find the literature where there is less reliance on questionnaires or Internet research as the main method and where there is more personal interaction with the subjects of study different on two accounts. First of all, such research gives us the opportunity to view the world somewhat more through the informants' eyes. This is not the primary aim of every researcher, but it was very much one of my aims. Furthermore, and in part precisely because of the knowledge of informants' experience and perspectives, the method of participant observation helps to humanise the subjects. All literature on the far right based on participant observation I am acquainted with portrayed the members and sympathisers of the far right as human beings, and multidimensional human beings at that (Hochschild 2016, Pasieka 2017, Pasieka 2018, Pilkington, Omelchenko, Garifzianova 2010, Pilkington 2016). It should not seem then as too astonishing that these authors found some of their research participants even quite likeable. However, the ability to see the far right as people, rather than as the embodiment of evil, is what a lot of research into the far right that does not employ participant observation lacks. These dehumanising undercurrents, I would argue, decrease the quality of the academic analysis produced for it becomes less scholarly and more moralising.

Deductive versus Empirical Research Outcomes

Secondly, because participant observation starts from empirical reality, it should come as no surprise that the outcome of such research can differ from the research that is based on deduction. I have certainly noticed that, apart from the above mentioned depathologising of research subjects, certain themes or concepts that appear in the work of researchers who draw on questionnaires

are absent in those built upon participant observation. The most conspicuous of these is the authoritarian personality. In the literature based on participant observation the authoritarian personality or related concepts do not appear. This would suggest that the situation on the ground does not bear out the prevalence of this personality type among the far right. The only researcher who conducted fieldwork among the far right and actually addressed the authoritarian personality was Katherine Fangen (1998b). However, she refuted its presence among her informants on the Norwegian far right, and although her informants claimed to value the obedience of Nazi soldiers, she observed that in actual life they were were staunchly anti-authoritarian. By contrast, what comes through quite strongly in the literature based on a lengthy personal contact with the far right is their ordinariness. This is significant and needs to be given due attention.

The Importance of Participant Observation

I, therefore, felt that participant observation, in tandem with other methods (interviews, analysis of far right websites, archival research, quantitative data, engagement with reports published by the agents of state as well with works of the local scholars specialising in the topic, etc.) is crucial if we are to understand people labelled far right, extreme right, neo-Nazis, neo-fascists, etc., if we want to look at them as human beings in their entirety, rather than as caricatures, if we want to know not only what they say should be done (that can be gleaned far right websites, their media appearances, demostrations or indirectly through voting preferences), not only what they say they do (e.g. in interviews), but also if we want to know what it is they actually do. That there is usually a disrepancy between the three, no matter what and where we study, has been widely acknowledged and the exploration of this inconsistency is always fruitful. In addition, once getting to know the people adhering to far right personally, we can establish in what ways and to what extent they differ from people outside of the far right spectrum. Having this data, we can set the far right into a wider context and the data serves as a springboard for further theorising.

Methodological Concerns and Opportunities

This is not to claim, however, that participant observation is unproblematic, let alone a superior method. It has been acknowledged that access is not always possible for a variety of reasons. And the critics of this method often cite problems with generalisability and subjectivity as its shortcomings. Nonetheless, as I discuss below, I would say that in the case of the far right access is usually possible, should the scholars be interested. Regarding the qualities of participant observation as a method, I would actually argue that reliability is inbuilt into this method, for only with prolonged contact with informants can we observe whether the statements and answers given in interviews and questionnaires are consistent over time. Also, only through long-term participant observation can we establish which behaviour tends to be repeated and therefore forms a pattern and which is rare or even 'one-off'. Through participant observation we can ascertain the relationship between people's ideas, self-reported behaviour and actual practice.

Generalizability versus Context

On the issue of generalisability, generalisability can only come at the expense of context and vice versa (Bhattacherjee 2012). In my research, however, I wanted to understand what led to the existence of the far right in the Czech Republic, particularly the neo-Nazi strands within it. Given the history of the country, I found the neo-Nazi presence rather perplexing. For my purposes the context was therefore paramount and the method of participant observation most fitting. Besides, it will become clear that a lot of my data could have been obtained only through the method of participant observation. As far as subjectivity is concerened, much ink has been spilled over the bearing the personal characteristics of the researcher may have on what and how much his/her informants will disclose to them, as well as how the researchers' diverse theoretical approaches and political predilections will increase the chance that different researchers, albeit studying the same event, will focus on and present its different apects (Bernard 2006). Whilst few would nowadays disagree that

this is indeed the case, I find it rather naive to think that methods used in quantitative research are somehow immune to subjectivity. After all, the identification or selection of variables that are held to be the key to a given phenomenon, and then their operationalisation, and even to an extent the final conclusion, will reflect the very same political preferences and theoretical approach of the quantitative researcher. Furthermore, through participant observation not only do we get new data, but also when confronted with the empirical reality, we have a chance to reframe the issue under investigation should we find out that our pre-fieldwork assumptions are wrong or are simply irrelevant to the situation on the ground. To sum this up, participant observation, combined with other methods, had an important place in my own research, and, I believe, is productive in the research of the far right anywhere.

Anthropology, Colonialism, and Fieldwork

Although the view that the fieldwork based on participant observation is the thing that distinguishes anthropology from other disciplines is fairly widespread (e.g. see Gupta and Ferguson 1997), in my view, it would be perhaps more precise to say that fieldwork, particularly participant observation, provides us with the kind of data that lead to certain ideas and theories that can challenge those of other disciplines and can even serve as a corrective. This is by no means a unanimously held position, however. To what extent the work of anthropologists that was based on actual fieldwork disrupted the dominant assumptions about non-western people and European settlers/colonisers alike and, as a result, led to alteration, modification and refinement of the pre-conceived ideas, and to what extent anthropologists and their work were part and parcel of the colonial machinery in a sense of being useful and willing collaborators remains a contentious issue. Talal Asad's edited volume Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter (Asad 1974) is often thought of as being the first text that charged anthropology with being a colonial discipline, although critiques of anthropology's involvement in the colonial project did appear earlier (e.g. see Tilley 2011). This critical stance has particularly intensified since the mid 2010s and the recent calls for and move to decolonise

the curriculum in academic departments across the Anglosphere including those of anthropology are an outgrowth of this position.

Contesting the Colonial Legacy in Fieldwork

On the other hand, there have also been voices that countered these charges and role of fieldwork/participant observation featured highly in their argumentation. Michael Asch, for example, in Anthropology, Colonialism and the Reflexive Turn: Finding a Place to Stand (2015), reevaluated his own view from decades earlier. Back then he went along with accusing anthropologists of being complicit in the colonial project. By 2015, however, Asch was able to identify a sympathetic attitude of many past anthropologists in relation to indigenous people and, simultaneously, their anti-colonial stance. He particularly credited Franz Boas and structural functionalists with this stand. He argued that Boas through his extensive fieldwork among North American indigenous peoples obtained detailed and rich data that simply did not go together with the evolutionist theories of the time devised by armchair anthropologists, theories based on scant ethnographic accounts by amateurs and a great deal of speculation. Boas's work thus contested these evolutionist ideas and crude racism that characterised the period when he lived and worked. As for structural functionalists, Asch argued they made it evident in their detailed ethnographies that societies that were under the colonial rule had their own rules and ways of life and that these afforded their members a peaceful and stable existence. By implication their work therefore showed that natives could rule themselves and the colonial rule could not be justified.

Fieldwork and the Construction of Knowledge

The role of fieldwork in the construction of knowledge is directly addressed by Helen Tilley in her aptly titled book Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development and the Problems of Scientific Knowledge, 1870–1950 (2011). Focusing exclusively on Africa and especially on the interwar period, but scrutining not only anthropology but in an equal meaure agricultural science/ecology, medicine and racial science, Tilley makes a case that once the

scholars from these various disciplines arrived in Africa and encountered their subjects in the field, they were forced to contemplate their knowledge and assumption about the place and its people, as well as to consider the limits of the ways they sought knowledge. Rather than painting a one-dimensional picture of the relationship between the science and empire, Tilley argues that scientific knowledge gained by the British in Africa (Tilley does not examine other European colonial powers on the continent) aided the construction and running of the Empire, based on opression and exploitation of the local populations, but that this very same knowledge had simultaneously the subversive potential, destabilising the imperial rule.

Presentism versus Historicism in Anthropology

I believe that what kind of standpoint one adopts ultimately rests on whether one favours presentism or historicism in their approach to history (including history of anthropology). I find presentism misleading in terms of understanding the historical process and problematic on moral grounds (i.e. those before us did not think and act exactly like us and are therefore morally inferior to us), and I lean more towards historicism. Of course, from the present-day perspective the work of Boas and especially that of structural functionalist went nowhere near far enough in their critique the colonial period. Structural functionalists have been justly criticised for naive scientism, being ahistorical, looking for harmony in the societies studied, and above all for virtually ignoring the colonial setting in which they worked, not acknowledging how the colonial process influenced and often transformed the societies studied. Yet, all these shortcomings notwithstanding, there is still some value in reading ethnographies from this period as a record of social life of people under question- if we historicise them. The same cannot be said about the pre-fieldwork anthropological literature, that is literature based little on ethnographic evidence but all the more on speculation.

The Value of Traditional Anthropological Fieldwork

In addition, I believe that this traditional specialisation in the 'less developed' and 'less rational' other, i.e. the remote exotic non-western people, and the willingness to give them some consideration, i.e. spending a long period of time among them, listening to them and observing them, is precisely something that can be productively carried over into the study of the far right. After all, the members and supporters of far right are also deemed less rational and less developed, prejudice and lack of education being often pinpointed as their main characteristics. I reasoned that participant observation among the far right could therefore potentially reveal something interesting, as it indeed did when carried out among non-western people in the past. Only this time there is a a change in the setting - from non-western to western, and the change in scale, as now we are centering our attention on the 'less rational' and 'more primitive' element in the western society, not outside of it. We therefore also need to locate the 'more rational' and 'more developed' against which the far right is measured and consider their mutual relationship.

Anthropology as a Reflective and Subversive Discipline

Another argument for looking at far right through the prism of anthropology is that through examining the 'other' we can self-critically reflect on our own ways. What is more, the reflexivity can even have the subversive potential. In other words, the analysis of various institutions in other places gave us a novel angle on these in our own societies. We have gained enough distance to enable us to see things differently from the practitioner of some other disciplines that also have the study of society or culture in its purview, such as sociology, psychology, political science, etc. Differently and, hopefully, less ethnocentrically.

Anthropology and the Study of the Far Right

While so far I have been deliberating over what anthropology can bring to our understanding of far right, now I would like to consider what the study of far right can do for anthropology. Fifty years ago, in her influential essay Up the Anthropologist – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up, Laura Nader (1972)

asserted that who we research affects what kind of theories we come up with. Nader made this statement against the background of her main argument, an argument as well as a plea, that we should also study up, not only down. Anthropologists have always specialised in the marginal and never in the examination of elites. Yet, Nader stresses, elites are not only part of the society, they play a decisive role in it. Leaving them out of our analysis then is bound to skew our knowledge of the society's workings. Moreover, gathering the data on the powerless but not on the powerful is not only scientifically inadequate, it also has political repercussions. I would now somewhat extend her argument by adding that whilst looking into the powerful in addition to the powerless, we should also investigate the strange, the problematic, the 'pathological', the 'evil'. No societal phenomenon exists in isolation, everything is interconnected, everything has its cause, its history. All members of society are part of it. Focusing only on those we like, in other words studying ourselves, those that are similar to us and/or those we romanticise, cannot give us an accurate picture about what is happening in our society and in the wider world. The far right voters and activists are members of their societies – and they need to be taken seriously. But not only that. Adherents of the far right can, in fact, prove to be particularly valuable informants. In his Reserch Methods in Anthropology Russel Bernard (2006) argues that those informants who feel marginal in their own society and are sardonic about their culture, and I can testify that members of the Czech far right certainly see themselves in these terms, are actually quite keen-eyed and quite reflexive about their culture. Consequently, they can tell us something insightful about their own societies. Thus, venturing out of our familiar territory, which is usually non-westerner societies and ethnic minorities in the west, and entering the unfamiliar one, in this case scrutinising the unlikeable, the 'bad seeds', the people most anthropologist are probably not naturally drawn to, is good science. Working with these people closely forces us to ask questions we do not usually ask and potentially rethink and reframe our ideas.

Researcher Safety and Ethical Considerations

I became acutely aware of how provocative and unpalatable focusing on the far right is when I started revealing my plans to research precisely this category of people. Upon hearing this, many people in the academia, anthropologists very much including, expressed security concerns as their first reaction. But at the same time it was obvious to me that many felt uncomfortable with my interest per se, that they were worried about my allegiances and wanted me to declare that I disagreed with the views of the people I wanted to study. When already in the field I tried to reach out to a couple of Czech scholars who specialised in anarchism, as anarchists were deemed to be arch enemies of far right, as well as sharing with them, albeit unwittingly, some of their views. Neither of the academics responded to me. I can never know the for sure, but I suspect that the research topic itself was the reason rather than my low status in the world of academia. Whilst initially disappointed with the negative reaction of fellow academics, in a sense, it was also precisely this discomfort, this moral panic and suspicion that simultaneously motivated me even more to research the far right anthropologically.

The Challenges of Close-Up Research with the Far Right

My experience was certainly not unique. For example, Agnieszka Pasieka (2019) stated that during her work with the far right she had also met with suspicion regarding where she stood politically. She spoke of the tendency of fellow researchers to see the far right as extreme and abominable and in her writing the reader senses frustration with this attitude. The problem of this unhelpful stance Pasieka locates in the history of anthropology itself. For a long time, she argues, there has been in existence a presupposition that we must like the people we study, lest we cannot comprehend them. The experience of Hilary Pilkington (2016), who ethnographically researched the English Defence League, was in many respects identical to that of Pasieka, or mine for that matter. Pilkington detected the institutionalised aversion for close-up research with far right. Such a researcher is 'guilty by association', she argued, and the researcher who wishes to study the far right, in order to 'keep their hands clean' either has to use methods that keep the researcher physically distant from the researched,

such as questionnaires or analysis of secondary materials, or he/she has to make explicit statements about their disapproval of the views of their informants. Pilkington, too, deliberated the reasons for this unease. In doing so she, nonetheless, disagrees that the crux of the matter lies in the conflict between a positivist and a Verstehen methodology, as was suggested by her 'predecessor' Fielding in his examination of National Front (1981). Pilkington pointed out that over the last three decades other people with 'distasteful', marginalised ways of life, such as criminal gangs, substance users and sex workers have been researched extensively. Such close-up research, however, has not been extended to the far right.

The Inconsistency of Cultural Relativism in Anthropology

What does it mean? What does this tell us? Well, it tells us that, although often charged with cultural relativism, anthropologists are not cultural relativists, after all, let alone moral ones. Or, to be more precise, they are inconsistent. It seems that anthropologists tend to be greater cultural relativists at the intercultural level, but not at the level of their own societies. Studying the contemporary far right, and studying it seriously yet dispassionately, is difficult for so many scholars, I suspect, because the far right can become a political force in the way the criminal gangs, sex workers and other 'distasteful' groups probably cannot. And the consequences of various fascist regimes getting in the past into power are well known and still loom large in our consciousness. On a human level this unease with the close-up ethnographic research of far right is understandable and anthropologists are also still 'only human'. However, and for me this is crucial, anthropologists are also scientists. Whilst nothing can and should stop anthropologists from having their own political views and preferences, I feel strongly that when 'at work' we must switch into the 'science mode'. Unlike in physical science, that is the study of the inorganic world, where, at least at the level of data collection and measurements, it should be irrelevant who the researcher is as the results of measurements and experiments should be the same no matter who conducts them, in social science it is not like that. There, in addition to other differences, it is impossible

completely to separate oneself from the object of the study (Bhattacherjee 2012). Despite this, my own position is that aiming for objectivity is still an ideal worth striving for. I appreciate that I have offered no resolution to the larger and perennial issue of relativism versus universalism, an issue that has been quite paralysing. I have only put forward my own position that I see as reasonable, namely that if our goal is understanding what is happening around us, even if the topic is uncomfortable and unsettling, we have to subject it to the same treatment (methodologically as well as analytically) as the more comfortable and innocuous phenomena.

The Role of Activism in Anthropology

The question of relativism, cultural as well as moral, is also linked with another debate – likewise a long-standing and unresolved one – that of activism. Should we as anthropologists advocate a political position? For example, David Price (2019) in his article Counter-lineages within the history of anthropology: On disciplinary ancestors' activism, feels very strongly that we should. I will use this particular article to help me think through the issue as it is not only quite recent, reacting to the current political climate, but also addresses my actual area of interest – the far right. Troubled by developments that 'living in the era of Trump' brings, Price urges anthropologists to bear in mind anti-racist struggles and strong anti-fascist ties that are so inextricably linked with anthropology. He also lists anthropological ancestors that were marginalised for their political beliefs, harrassed by the agents of the state and pushed out of the world of academia, focusing particularly on the McCarthy era. Price concludes his article with the following words:

> While a focus on ethics offers one useful dimension regarding
>
> our professional practice, anthropologists cannot afford to
>
> refuse to engage with the broader political dimensions
>
> within which we operate as citizens of our countries, as
>
> citizens of the world and as human beings. Following best

ethical practices is vital but not sufficient, and as we find

ourselves living in dangerous times with the rise of white

power movements and increasing threats to refugees

and other minority populations, the need for our more

decisive and active involvement grows.

(Price, 2019: 13)

Price does not go into detail as to how anthropologists should go about, to use his phrase, 'not shying away from taking positions against fascism' (2019: 14). After all, his article was relatively short. Nonetheless it is important to think of the implications of different levels of political advocacy or involvement. Should anthropologists become members of particular political groups or parties even? Should they make an effort to appear in mass media and there voice their anti-fascist stance? Should they make explicit statements about their anti-fascist position in their academic writing? Should they demonstrate it through what, whom and how they choose to research? (Apropos, this is all reminiscent of arguments about detachment versus engagement in fieldwork and writing that dominated Anthropology in the early 1970s (e.g. see the influential volume edited by Dell Hymes Reinventing Anthropology from 1974)

Clarifying the Role of Activism in Anthropological Practice

What Price means by 'not shying away from taking positions against fascism' is not therefore clear. But I would like to state here my preference for not making it explicit, let alone mandatory, in the academic work per se. Let us consider why. First, there is the question of terminology. Terms such as far right, extreme right, (neo)fascist or neo-Nazis can be descriptive, but they can and often are used as a political tool to discredit one's political opponents or critics, as is well known. Pasieka (2017), for example, advises us against the overuse of labels such as fascist or neo-fascist when writing about the far right phenomena and advocates paying attention to the vocabulary employed by the informants themselves. Personally, I also discarded the term neo-Nazis, the label I had

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employed prior to meeting my future informants. Once in the field I simply found the label misleading and opted for the more general far right, although, as will be seen, this label is rather wanting, too. Thus, we should proceed with caution at the level of terminology. Connected with applying particular labels to categories of people is the decision as to which groups are deserving of our sympathy and whose interests we should advocate and against which we should take a firm stance. This is likely to be a thorny and contentious issues, too. Perhaps personal taste plays some role here. Some scholars might find it relatively straightforward to identify the bad and the good, the enemies and the victims. And in some contexts this might be indeed quite unproblematic. In other contexts, on the other hand, it is impossible to read the situation on the ground in quite so clear-cut terms. This was my case, and in fact the embeddedness of my informants in their society, their 'mainstreamness', the public perception of them notwithstanding, is a running theme of my thesis. Furthermore, if we, as anthropologists, subscribe to taking a collective political position, with a broad understanding that this position would build on the anti-racism and anti-fascism legacy of the discipline, who will decide or how will it be decided whose rights exactly to champion and whose to curb? Would it not only lead to embittered and crippling battles within the discipline? Or would it perhaps stifle intellectual discussion? Moreover, even if there was a relative consensus among anthropologists, would such work, that is the work combining scholarship and activism in obvious ways, stand the test of time?

The Risks of Over-Advocacy in Anthropological Work

Would we not be leaving the discipline of anthropology vulnerable to accusations of being 'grievance studies' and anthropologists of 'virtue signalling', thus running the risk of discrediting the discipline?

It is with questions such as these in mind that I wish to dissuade from programmatically 'inbuilding' advocacy into the discipline and I also urge restraint from a contemptuous or moralising tone to categories of people in academic work. But I hasten to add that there is no reason why anthropologists

could not also become activists if they wish to. In fact, anthropology, and social science generally, can and should serve as a source of inspiration for social activism. It can inform it. That, it could be argued, is in fact one aspect of its usefulness. Thus, I feel strongly that rather than making anthropology synonymous with activism, those practitioners of the discipline who are simultaneously committed to activism should declare their own position as such.

The Importance of Objectivity in Anthropological Research

And just as I have my doubts about making activism intrinsic to anthropology, I have equal doubts about having to like the people we study as a precondition for our scholarly work. We do not have to like and agree with the people we study. However, I am adamant that we have to like people per se, people in most general terms. After all, people are at the heart of the discipline and the name of our discipline testifies to that (anthropos or ανθρωπος translates from from ancient greek as a person or human being). People are complex beings, neither exclusively good nor nor exclusively bad. We have to be ready to deal rationally with disappointments when our findings from the field do not fit the ideas we originally had of people or phenomena studied, and when the people in question do not fulfill our ideals of them, whether it be non-industrialised, exoticised people not being, let's say, ecological or egalitarian enough, or when members of far right turn out not to be primitive and violent enough. Furthermore, as Agnieszka Pasieka (2019), who carried out fieldwork among ethnic and religious minorities as well as the far right, observed, people have different sides and cannot be reduced to their ideological beliefs. Given all of the above, it should come as no surprise that we can even come to like some of our far right informants. I quite liked some of mine. Arlene Hochschild (2016), for example, also admitted to liking some of the Tea Party supporters she had worked with. And there should be nothing panic-worthy about it.

The Value of Anthropological Insight into the Far Right

Having made the case for why I think looking at the far right through the anthropological perspective can be illuminating, I would like to move on to why

studying specifically the Czech far right can be noteworthy and valuable, what it can contribute to our understanding of far right generally as well as of the region.

Regional Insights and the Broader Implications

The regional scholars who took an interest in the far right and published on it prior to my entering the field were chiefly Miroslav Mareš (e.g. Mareš 2003, Mareš & Vejvodová 2006) and Jan Charvát (e.g. Charvát 2007), both political scientists. The position of far right women was examined by Jana Schmiggels Kavková (2006), a political scientist mostly focusing on the problematics of gender. According to this literature, based predominantly, it seems, on a research of far right websites and on statistical data gathered by government agencies, neo-Nazism featured quite strongly among the far right in the Czech Republic. Given the history of the area where the present-day Czech Republic is located, namely its age-old tense relationships with its German neighbours culminating in the occupation of the Czech lands during WW2, I became curious about the motivation of people who would turn to neo-Nazism. Taking into consideration the ideology of Nazi Germany, it is easier to imagine people drawn to neo-Nazism from Germanic countries or perhaps also people from former colonial powers. It seems paradoxical, or at least intriguing, that people from countries with no colonial history, people depicted so unfavourably in the ideologies of the Nazis, people whose grandparents and great-grandparents were occupied by the Nazis and under the threat of being exterminated by them, and people whose descendents were historically often second class citizens in their own lands, would find inspiration in National Socialism or aspire to bring about societal changes in line with this particular ideology. Added to this, the parents and grandparents of today's Czech neo-Nazis lived through the 1948 to 1989 years, an era where the official ideology denounced colonialism, neocolonialism, racism and inequalities more generally and where the regime sought to eradicate many inequalities, although the practice, despite some real and radical changes, sometimes fell short of the ideals. Taking all of the above into account, I reasoned that examining the Czech

far right, and neo-Nazis in particular, could contribute something beneficial to our understanding of present-day identities. It could tell us something about how they are formed, including the role played by history and historiography in their formation. Also, since the Czech far right was given disproportionate attention in the Czech media and from the jurisprudence (disproportionate in terms of numbers of the people belonging to the far right and the number of and types of crimes commited), studying the Czech far right, as well as the attitude to it from the agents of the state, public opinion makers and 'ordinary people', should tell us something vital about the post89 Czech society as a whole.

Archival Research and Online Forums

In a sense my fieldwork began before physically arriving in the Czech Republic – when I started following and subsequently analysed the discussion in the Czech and Slovak section of the Stormfront Internet forum. The forum, usually described as White Supremacist, is membership only, effectively anonymous and, it seems, imposes very little censorship. The members are only advised not to ,'advocate or suggest any activity which is illegal under U.S. law' (https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t4359/). My analysis covered entries from 05.10.2006 to 20.11.2012. I identified the most frequent themes in the discussions and examined the patterns in opinions expressed within these themes. I also compiled profiles of individual members, incorporating information they directly provided about themselves as well what I deduced from the way they behaved on this forum. All the time I bore in mind that the membership was anonymous and the participants could have exaggerated or lied; it also could have been brutally honest as this particular medium might have been the only place they could disclose their opinions freely. I had no way of knowing for sure. Thus, not being able to meet participants in person, at best I can say that following the discussion of the Czech and Slovak section on Stormfront gave me a rough sense of who the forum participants were and that it partially opened the window into what people who identify themselves as Czech (and Slovak) nationalists are (pre)occupied with. After having done

participant observation I was, however, able to reexamine the data obtained from the Stromfront forum and consider how this material compared to the material obtained though face-to-face interaction with the Czech far right. In short, there were overlaps as well as differences, but the comparison also alerted me to the rather skewed picture that excessive reliance on an analysis of online material can create.

Comparative Insights: Online and Offline Far-Right Activism

With regard to the parallels, the topics of interest that featured frequently in the discussions on Stormfront also largely resonated with my informants. And, as with my informants, the 'white' or national identities of the Czech and Slovak Stormfront users took a myriad of forms. Some people professed a Slavic identity, others a Germanic one. Some were simply Czech or Slovak, yet others considered themselves to be White. There were many admirers of Hitler and the Nazis, but also people who proclaimed their disgust with the Nazis and NSDAP. Occassionally I came across someone who considered Slavs inferior on accounts of 'being mixed with Mongols', but there were also people who thought highly of 'oriental people'. I also encountered oddities, such as participants who could be quite unproblematically described as neo-Nazis in their self-presentation and views posting a link to a website promoting Slavic heritage or admiring Serbs and frequented the Serbian section of the Stormfront forum, etc. I also witnessed such oddities and inconsistencies among my informants. What is significant is that all these people communicated with each other in the most friendly manner and I detected no frictions whatsoever. Similarly, in my fieldwork I also encountered no coflicts stemming from ideological differences.

Educational Background of Forum Participants versus Field Informants

But the Stormfront users also differed from my informants. The level of education among the Stormfront users seemed to have been higher and also there appeared to be more university-educated people than among my informants. Occasionally some of the Stormfront users would mention in passing their tertiary education. However, rather than that, it was their use of language,

in terms of their vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and style, as well as the ability of many of the discussants to communicate in good English with non-Czech/Slovak visitors to the forum, that led me to make this assertion. I can never be certain that none of my informants took part in the forum, but I find it highly unlikely. Apart from never hearing any of my informants mention Stormfront in my presence, the reasons will be more apparent throughout Part II of the thesis. Nonetheless, my examination of the Czech and Slovak section on Stormfront certainly gave some credence to the claims of several of my informants that there were also university students who shared their ideas, but would never turn up for demonstrations or otherwise openly associate with the Workers and far right generally for fear of being ostracised.

Online Presence and Offline Impact: A Discrepancy

Finally, as a result of my participant observation I could clearly see differences between what my informants thought they were like (e.g. from statements made in interviews with me), how they presented themselves to the wider public (e.g. through their websites, interviews for the mainstream media) and how they actually conducted themselves (as observed by me). The reasons for these discrepancies go beyond their conscious effort to manipulate the public (or the researcher) and the second part of the thesis explores them in some detail. However, I would have never been able to pick up on these discrepancies without the participant observation method. In light of this, it would be unreasonable to assume that the Stormfront members were in this respect unlike my informants and that their online personas faithfully reflected their off-line lives. Therefore, I am disinclined to draw wider inferences merely from an analysis of online materials (and I treat the scholarly work that does so with utmost caution). Instead, I regard the Stormfront material as a reasonable indiciation of what the users believed themselves to be like and treat the opinons expressed on the forum as uncesored and genuine. It is in this sense that I consider the Stormfront data as both complementary and supplementary to my main data, that is the one obtained from participant observation.

Online vs. Offline Engagements: Supplementary Insights

Aside from analysing the discussion on Stormfront I also studied other online sources before reaching the Czech Republic and meeting my informants. These were predominantly the websites of the Workers' Party for Social Justice (http://www.dsss.cz/) and its youth offshoot Workers' Youth (http://www.delnickamladez.cz/), and that of Antifa (http://antifa.cz/). I did not scrutinise these sources with the methodological rigour I applied to the Stormfront material where I coded the discussion. Instead, I read through the articles and other forms of information on these websites and examined the visual material accompanying them in order to 'get the feel' of my future informants. This I continued doing whilst already in the field and interacting with my informants face to face, as well as for some time after leaving the field.

Differentiating Online Narratives from In-Person Interactions

Although also an online source, in my work material obtained from reading the Workers' Party and Workers' Youth websites served a very different purpose to the material from Stormfront. Unlike with the anonymous Stormfront discussants, some of the authors who contributed the articles to the Workers' websites were also my informants. Furthermore, I met many of the people who organised and joined in the events reported on and I attended or was otherwise part of many of these events personally. Just as importantly, I also participated in events that, although being part of the 'Party life', were given no coverage on these websites. It was only during and especially towards the end of participant observation that I was fully able to appreciate the specific benefits of this material and to work with it accordingly. I was thus, for example, able to see that the texts posted on the websites could be regarded as faithfully reflecting the core ideas and opinions of all my informants. Beyond this core the individual informants might have had further and more idiosyncratic perspectives. Nonetheless, the data from my interviews and observation confirmed to me that what was presented on these websites represented the consensus among the Workers and provided a convenient summary of certain aspects of their

worldview. At the same time, the texts and especially the images on the two websites need to be read as self-presentation. Not only conscious presentation of oneself to the general public, the potential members, sympathisers and voters, but also unconscious presentation of the Workers to themselves. Consequently, when the Workers, for instance, favour the snapshots of families and 'ordinary-looking' people of all ages over the snapshots of 'menacing-looking' young men as the visual material accompanying the coverage of their demonstrations, this has to be understood as being as much about the Party's PR as about the Workers' aspirations and their (idealised) self-image aimed at their own ranks. All aspects of the self-presentation, whether intended for the wider public or the Workers themselves, conscious and subconscious, are all equally real, equally significant, and cannot be easily disentagled.

The Challenge of Idealization in Far-Right Self-Presentation

If the above material offered at times a somewhat idealised version of the Workers and the youth affiliated with this party, the other website I accessed a fair number of times before and whilst in the field – that of Antifa - gave me exactly the opposite – a caricatured version of Workers and their friends. Methodologically speaking, drawing on the Antifa material in the study of far right is a double-edge sword. Such material is simultaneously useful and misleading. Useful when used in tandem with other methods and misleading when used on its own.

Antifa Material: Challenges and Insights

One the webpages of Antifa I found the most compromising images of several of my informants, usually in their younger days, such as a photo capturing my informant in a group of people performing the Nazi salute, or a photo of another informant proudly displaying a RAHOWA tattoo on his torso, or a picture of yet another informant sitting behind a desk at a make-shift conference room with the Confederate flag hanging on the wall behind him, to give a few examples. These sorts of images were accompanied by a disparaging commentary, either giving the reader a profile of a given person, or a report of a

particular event. However, since Antifa is a political movement whose raison d'être is the fight against fascism and far right more generally, the material they chose to publish on their website had a clear purpose – to monitor and discredit their enemies. Therefore, it needs to be approached as such. In my work I utilised this material in two ways. Firstly, the information and images helped me to build or refine profiles of some of my informants. Having obtained the data from participant observation and interviews, I felt confident to decide, on a case by case basis, when the Antifa's portrayal of my informants was accurate and when distorting, when it referred to my informants' past but no longer the present and which research participants of mine have been ideologically consistent over time. This 'profiling' formed one of the building blocks from which the arguments in Part II of the thesis were advanced, in particular in the chapter on nationalism and identity (Chapter 2). Secondly, it was mostly through the images posted on the Antifa website that I was able to see tattoos adorning some of my informants' bodies. I also drew on this visual information in Chapter 3, but even more so in Chapter 5, which examined my informants' clothes and style.

Primary Research Methods: Participant Observation and Interviews

I can divide my research methods into primary methods and supplementary ones. The methods discussed so far belonged to the supplementary category and now I would like to turn to my main research methods – participant observation and interviews.

Initial Contacts and Observations

Upon my arrival to the Czech Republic I decided to contact people from the Workers' Party for Social Justice (Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti), explaining my position as a researcher and my desire to meet them in order to get to know their side of the story rather than depending on information from the media, or their adversaries or relying solely on the literature of local experts. I chose to focus my research on people from and around this political party as it had been characterised by local experts as far right, sometimes as extreme far

right or ultranationalist far right, and had been also referred to as such by journalists. Furthermore, according to the literature I read before fieldwork (Mareš 2003, 2006), reports of the BIS (Security Information Service) and of journalists, part of the membership of the party came from the neo-Nazi underground. What's more, before the fieldwork I was already aware that several members of the party had had court procedings instituted against them in connection with the propagation of neo-Nazi symbols. Contacting party members, I reasoned, would open the door for me not only to the Czech far right but potentially also to the neo-Nazi elements within it, as there was indeed an indication of an overlap.

The Challenges of Gaining Access

Initially, I placed myself at the observation end of the participation observation spectrum, however. I started as a spectator, attending demonstrations organised by the far right as well as court trials where my future informants were defendants. I was curious to see what first impressions the Workers would make on me, but also how the general public reacted to them. Of equal significance was how such events were covered by journalists and to compare their coverage with my own observations. I also visited a number of 'Roma' localities (Šluknov, Varnsdorf, Jirkov, the Chánov housing estate in Most, so called Bronx in Brno), that is localities with a strong Roma presence and known for 'problems of coexistence' (problémy soužití) between the Roma and the 'majority society' (majoritní společnost). I went to these localities because they were of strong interest to my informants and because I wanted to get a sense of what life was like in these places and observe a day-to-day interaction between the Roma and non-Roma inhabitants.

The Primary Field Site

Most of my participant observation took place in the town I call Hradiště. This particular site was not a choice as such; rather an opportunity materialised to start my participant observation there in the form of a response from a member of the Workers' Party. He became sympathetic to my project and

introduced me to other party members and sympathisers, most of whom from the same town. In a sense, I count myself quite lucky as this particular informant, who became one of my two gate keepers, was the only one who responded to my email. After spending some time in the field I could see why all the members of the party I had approached directly through an email were extremely cautious. It transpired that occasionaly they were contacted and asked for an interview by a student of political science working on an undergraduate thesis, and, occasionally, some of them indeed granted the students the interview. However, my informants were very wary of journalists, never happy with their portrayal in the media, and on their guard against the agents of the state. They knew the Security Information Service (BIS) was monitoring them and some of their members were charged with promoting Nazi symbols or hate crimes and taken to court. Some of them were also worried that their phones were being tapped and this was having a detrimental effect on their mental health. The atmosphere of suspicion was quite pervasive. In fact, whilst approximately in the middle of my fieldwork, certain acquitances of one of my key informants expressed their displeasure at my presence and I seriously considered withdrawing from the field. After some discussion with the research participants I had interacted with the most, in the end I decided to stay on. Aware of the sensitive situation and to maintain my personal integrity, I wish to fulfil the promise I made to my informants upon meeting them – the promise to preserve their anonymity as much as realistically possible. Still, complete anonymity could only be achieved through writing solely in generalisations. Aside from being extremely dated, this style of writing is unacceptable to me on two grounds. First, it would unavoidably present my research participants as more homogenous, consistent and united than they really were. Second, it would lose sight of them as individuals, as fellow human beings. Aiming simultaneously both to preserve the anonymity of my informants and to present them as flesh and blood people, I pseudonymise the people's names and place names throughout the thesis. In one section I do actually introduce several of my informants to the reader; however, these are composite individuals. All the details used to describe these people are real, but each of these people, its life

circumstances and characteristics are composed of a number of different individuals. The final person is given a fictional name.

Researcher's Role and Position

Regarding my own position, I recognise that I was never considered a full member of their group, nor did I ever strive to be one. I was aware that most members did not allow me completely into their midst, that a certain amount of distance was maintained on both parts – theirs as well as mine. I never 'went native'. Rather than seeing this as limiting, in some ways I thought it beneficial. It allowed for a form of interaction between me and them that worked well for me as an individual at the psychological level, a form that was acceptable to my informants, and, simultaneously, a form that was fruitful for scholarly purposes. Thus, I was able at time to stress commonalities with my informants, in our family histories for example, but also in our worldviews where there was some overlap, particularly on globalisation, capitalism, societal attitudes to crafts and physical labour. At the same time, my role as a researcher enabled me not just to observe, but actively to ask them questions, initially cautiously formulated but later on more confrontational, I might point out to them a number of paradoxes that I observed in their milieu, or sometimes even question various aspects of their behaviour or worldview. I suspect that such questions, probings or remarks would not necessarily have been welcome, had they come from within their own ranks. Coming from me, however, they were accepted, or at least tolerated. Finally, access might have been possible for me also because of my status as a 'native-foreigner' or 'insider-outsider'. My informants were aware, that, although Czech, I moved to the UK aged 19, had lived there ever since and settled there permanently. They knew that I was attached to an English university and that upon completing my fieldwork I would return to the UK. In other words, whilst still having ties to the Czech Republic, I was integrated into life in the UK. I believe this might have made me more politically neutral to them.

Engaging with Various Party Events and Members

As I was attending various party meetings and outings I met members of the party, of its youth organisation and their sympathisers from other regions of the Czech Republic, too, as well as some of their far right friends from Slovakia and in one case from Austria. Nonetheless, most of my informants were from Hradiště. Therefore, I got to view of the far right as well as the Czech Republic through the perspective of the inhabitants of this particular town.

Between 1948 and 1989 in Czechoslovakia there was a drive towards socio-economic levelling and standardisation. However, in the post 1989 years this development was reversed. The country became unevenly developed, with great disparity between the regions and also with greater regional awareness in some parts of the country. I became sensitised to this precisely because of my fieldwork in Hradiště, a place with a very strong regional identity. The socio-economic and cultural specificities of various regions did also play part in the popularity of the Workers' Party there and, furthermore, were reflected in the nuances in their particular form of Czech nationalism. For instance, what in my view contributed to the specific form of nationalism in Hradiště was the proximity to and historic ties with Vienna, a former manufacturing hub, with a sizeable Roma minority and a strong sense of regional patriotism going back centuries. Still, although present, the regional differences in Czech nationalism are relatively marginal to the questions I am addressing and I shall not focus on them a great deal.

As well as joinining in in activities that were officially connected with the workings of the political party or its youth organisation such as meetings, demonstrations and 'team building' outings, I also went to events to which my informants had invited me, that were more private in nature. Some of these events were attended only or mostly by party members and sympathisers (e.g. visiting each other in their homes, going to pubs, camping trips, garden parties, attending a public lecture, a concert, going to demonstrations). But I also participated in events where my informants freely mixed with other members of the public (e.g. at pubs, private parties, a wedding reception, visits to informants' relatives, a public conference, and with two informants I was able to

'shadow' them in their day-to-day lives and visit their workplaces). Thus, apart from being in contact with the people who were officially members of the Workers' Party or its youth organisation, or to people who were part of the far right underground (I detected a small number of people who straddled both these worlds) I also came to meet some of the work colleagues, friends, relatives and neighbours of my informants. This helped me to establish how my informants interacted with people outside their far right milieu and how 'non-far right' people interracted with them. In other words, to what extent were my informants fully integrated into society, and where did they stand in relation to it. It enabled me to examine the veracity of claims made by the informants about themselves, claims made by journalists or academic colleagues about my informants, and the accuracy of the ideas 'ordinary people' held about the Workers and far right generally.

The Role of Semi-Structured Interviews in Gathering In-depth Insights

Semi-structured interviews formed an important aspect of my field data, too. By no means all people from the far-right scene I had approached agreed to being formally interviewed, including those who otherwise frequently and freely conversed with me or with others in my presence. But there were informants with whom I interacted in the field and who accepted my request to interview them. On the other hand, there were even some people who consented to being interviewed, but whom I did not get to know personally that well.

The initial interview consisted of three parts. The first part contained very general questions. The aim here was to understand my informants' worldview. The interviewees were invited to locate the biggest societal problems and present their understanding of the economic and political situation. I wanted them to do as much of their own framing, labelling and defining of issues (or of people) as possible. The second part was more focused on the happenings in the Czech Republic itself and on the aims and activities of the Workers' Party or Workers' Youth. Here, too, I wanted the interviewees to identify and frame issues and use their own terminology. The final part of the interivew was more

personal. It centered on their personal interests, work, family histories, relationships, hobbies and on their dreams, aspirations and ambitions.

With the first round of interviews I kept all the questions identical. Nonetheless, the interviews were semi-structured as I allowed the interviewees to spend as much time on each question as they saw fit, to expand on it, skip it as well as to wander off. Towards the end of the interview they could ask me questions, too. I aspired to maintain the first round of interviews standardised this way as well as quite relaxed and non-confrontational in nature as I knew that the first people who volunteered to be interviewed would 'report' on the experience to their friends. I took to heart Bernard's (2006) advice 'not to ask some things too quickly' if trust is to be built between the researcher and those intervieweed. I consider this suggestion particularly apt when undertaking research among people distrustful of the agents of the state, as was certainly the case with my informants. My other reason for asking everyone the same questions was that I wanted to see where and what patterns would emerge in their answers. Several of these interviews were followed by a second round of interviews. In each of these I revisited interesting or unclear points that came up in the initial interview with the given informant. Also, by this time I had more detailed knowledge of the Czech far-right scene and more intimate knowledge of the informants themselves. Moreover, I modified and narrowed down my research focus. This, in turn, informed the type of questions I was asking this time round. Finally, I interviewed only two informants for a third time, although for reasons of time I was not able fit in any more.

Challenges in Conducting Interviews

I did not interview as many people as I would like, nor could I conduct the interviews in a specific order and stick to it. For instance, some interviews took place at the beginning, when I barely knew the interviewee and only got to know them later; with others it was the other way around. Furthermore, while I was allowed to audio record some interviews, there were informants who did not feel entirely comfortable with this setup and wanted me to take notes only.

Still, these interviews enabled me to to add other dimensions to my research. Namely, the data gathered through interviews helped me clarify or interpret my field observations. Also, in interviews I could delve into some aspects of my research in greater depth. Finally, certain types of data such as family history of my informants, for example, the political preferences or occupational history of the informants' family members going back two or more generations – that is the type of data that could only have been obtained this way.

Exploring Theoretical Orientations of Informants

I also familiarised myself with literature and websites suggested to me by my more theoretically orientated informants. Thus, I read books by the psychologist Petr Bakalář Tabu v sociálních vědách (Taboo in Social Sciences) and Psychologie Romů (Psychology of the Roma). The first book deals with racial differences in relation to IQ, the second focuses on the ethnic specificities of the Roma. Both works are highly controversial in scientific circles. I also read contributions in the webzines Zvědavec, britské listy and Parlamentní listy. All three websites are popular among a readership far wider than the far right. Britské listy are often characterised as leftist in orientation, Parlamentní listy and Zvědavec are usually deemed rightist (apropos, the founder of Zvědavec was accused of committing the Crime of Supporting and Promoting Movements Aimed at Surpressing Human Rights and Freedoms under Section 261a of the Criminal Code and taken to court), although there is no consensus regarding their characterisation in terms of the left-right political spectrum. In any case, all three websites are considered non-mainstream and they either cover events ignored by the Czech mainstream media or cover them from a different angle. I also felt obliged to read Mein Kampf and Turner Diaries (the latter being usually described as a racist dystopian novel and proven to inspire not only the infamous Oklahoma City bombing but also a number of other hate crimes and terrorist attacks in different parts of the world in which more than two hundred people lost their lives and many more were injured (Berger 2016)) as these are often mentioned in the literature on the far right. Here I have to stress, however, that during my fieldwork none of my informants has ever referred to

either of these two books. I suspect that Turner Diaries were virtually unknown to my informants and that a relatively small number of them would have read Mein Kampf.

Conducting Fieldwork from a Home Base: Balancing Insider and Outsider Perspectives

During my fieldwork I did not stay exclusively with my informants. My base throughout the fieldwork was my family home and I first visited my informants from here. Later on I stayed over at informants' homes and, eventually, I stayed longer periods of time in the town of Hradiště, my primary fieldwork site. From this town I also accompanied my informants to other parts of the Czech Republic for various events. Thus, with time the ratio of my stay in my home town to my 'full-time' stay with the informants shifted in favour of the latter. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that the time spent with my immediate family, extended family, my friends and people from my home-town was also crucial to my fieldwork. For one thing, there was an immediate practical consideration. I simply had to have space and time to write down my field notes, code them and place them in a secure place as I was dealing with potentially sensitive material and was somewhat wary of the authorities. Furthermore, although the purpose of my research was known to my informants and although they would have understood that writing down my observations was necessary for me, I still felt that doing this 'right under their noses' would be highly inappropriate and somewhat damage the rapport established between us. Plus, it was convenient to have some time and space to start reflecting on my notes.

On the other hand, these practical, almost administrative, reasons aside, there was another, perhaps even bigger benefit to having spent time in the company of 'non-far right' Czechs. As I was having these informal chats, sometimes brief and sometimes exteded, with my friends, relatives, neighbours, former classmates and people from my hometown, I could not help but to analyse them anthropologically. I had enough background knowledge, sometimes intimate, of these people and enough anthropological training

behind me to do so automatically, unwittingly. This turned out to be, however, more than a 'fun exercise' to amuse myself for I also began to notice these 'non-far' right people (some of whom were socio-economically comparable to my informants, whilst others would be very different) shared many of the views and concerns with my 'official informants'. I felt that this needed to be accounted for and merited a more systematic approach. Therefore, from a certain point in my fieldwork, alongside my main and continuous focus on the people from the far right milieu, I also devoted a portion of my time to the friends, family and acquitances from outside the far right scene. I observed them, participated in events and engaged in discussions with them, making notes on all these activities and analysising them. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with my close friends and family, where I posed many of the same questions that I had given earlier to my far-right informants. This 'non-far right material' helped me to contextualise the 'far right one'.

Utilizing Personal Memory as a Research Method: Advantages, Challenges, Pitfalls.

Another methodological tool I used and have to therefore acknowledge here is my personal memory. The major difference between personal memory and the other methods I utilised and have mentioned so far is that I chose all the other methods purposely. With personal memory, though, there was no such choice. It would have been impossible to block out my personal memory even if I wanted to, let us say in the name of objectivity. However, I contend that trying to do so would be even undesirable. Thus, personal memory was simply one of my tools and, just like with any other method, it has its pros and cons and has to be worked with as such.

I spent the first 19 years of my life in Czechoslovakia (toward the end of my stay renamed as Czech And Slovak Federal Republic), and I have personal and I dare say vivid first hand experience and recollection of the 1980s and 1990s there. All my family lived there, too. At the age of 19 I moved to the UK and by the time of my fieldwork I spent almost as much time in the UK as I did in

Czechoslovakia. Altough my home became the UK, I have always kept in touch with my family and friends in the Czech Republic and have retained a degree of interest in the affairs of the country as such.

To elucidate how my personal memory was or became a method I will draw on Jan Assmann's understanding of collective memory. Jedlowski (2001) provides a useful overview of models and theories of collective memory, Assman's including. Their examination reveals that what these theories have in common is the acknowledgement, following Durkheim (1893) and later Halbwachs (1925), of the social aspect of individual memory.

In his article Collective Memory and Cultural identity (1995) Assmann refers to collective memory as 'communicative memory' to emphasise that collective memory develops over time and through 'communication with others', namely through communication with various categories of people, starting with one's family members and moving onto the communication with people from ever wider categories up to the category of a nation. Communicative memory is acquired gradually and its important feature is that its time span does not cover longer than the living memory, that is three to four generations maximum. Assmann, however, also identified another type of memory, which he termed cultural memory. Cultural memory comes into existence through exposure to literature and the works of art generally, exposure to the material culture in its various forms, through participation in rituals, festivals, etc. (also see Andrew Lass (1994) for a similar argument about how history and culture become a part of people's everyday life). Formal education is also an important mechanism of transmition of cultural memory. Unlike with the communicative memory, the temporal horizon of cultural memory can even extend across thousands of years in some circumstances. This is so because cultural memory consists of what Assmann calls 'fixed points', critical events of the past, and these are quite stable. Different eras may respond to or identify with these fixed points differently. The fixed points are thus not just mechanically transmitted and preserved, but can be also critiqued and even transformed. Having spent the first 19 years of my life in the place of my fieldwork – I have, naturally, both

these memories. And when moving back to the Czech Republic for fieldwork – being physically there, seeing again people known to me, revisiting places - my personal memory, both communicative as well as cultural, became reactivated.

So, what does proclaiming that personal memory was one of my research methods mean? Does it, for instance, differ in any way from making the statement, the rather ubiquitous statement in ethnographies of the past forty years or so, that my personal characteristics, biography and structural position had an impact on what I wanted to study, how I interacted with my informants, what I saw and was allowed to see in the field and that the final work was a reflection or result of all these constraints (or sometimes advantages), in addition to being influenced by the current trends in academia? And if personal memory is one of my methods, why is there in the thesis hardly any discussion of my personal characteristics and biography? To answer these questions I need to first outline my angle on the reflexive turn in anthropology (the statement above would be an example of a very condensed and routinised form of reflexivity) and on debates surrounding the practice of conducting 'anthropology at home'. The reflexive turn in anthropology , 'anthropology at home' and issues around drawing on the personal memory as a method do not correspond completely and cannot be reduced to one another. However, they are definitely linked and overlap.

One of the implications of reflexivity, as for example Salzman (2002) in his critique of the use of reflexivity in anthropology argued, is that there is nothing but an infinite number of perspectives and these are determined by the structural and experiential position of the researcher (positionality). The best an anthropologist/ethnographer can thus do is to discuss their own positionality. It is then left up to the reader of their work to make of this information what they will. Salzman sees this as highly problematic. While he concedes that reflexivity can sometimes provide some useful insights, this is in itself inadequate if not 'followed properly'. He makes a case that relying on the candour of the author's reflexive self-reports is romantic and naive and that increased introspection on the part of an individual ethnographer, even to the point of placing themselves

at the centre of their ethnographies, does not make for better anthropology. The naive positivism of the yesteryear was just replaced by a naivety of a different kind. For Salzman, although individual scientists are indeed subjective, the 'net result of scientific exchange' serves as a corrective to this. By the scientific exchange he means debates between and criticisms from fellow anthropologists as well as engagement with scholars from other disciplines.

I find Sazman's critique persuasive. I came to the view that in terms our understanding of the production of anthropological knowledge, the positionality of the researcher has been overcommunicated in recent decades and its importance somewhat overrated, whilst the collective aspects of the discipline have been undercommunicated and probably not appreciated enough. It is for this reason that, although I declare personal memory as one of my methods, in my thesis there is little discussion of my personal biography and my position. I do not think that these characteristics circumscribed my findings in the field and my interpretation of them, even though I expect that they informed them in some way. But so must have the literature I had read before entering the field, so must have the discussions on my topic with the supervisors and fellow anthropologists, and indeed the discussions with and insights of my informants. The influence came from many places and I feel uncomfortablea to acscribe more influence to one such place than to the rest.

Furthermore, I am not convinced that I am the person who can necessarily identify the relevant characteristics and then present them to the reader. And even if I thought that I could – would I not just essentialise certain identity-characteristics? Jennifer Robertson thinks so. In her article Reflexivity Redux: A Pithy Polemic on "Positionality" (2002) Robertson also recognised numerous problems with reflexivity and positionality in anthropological writing. She observes that the identity-categories 'reflexively-minded' ethnographers tend to list as pivotal in their writing and through which they position themselves in the field (sex, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, religion, socio-economic status, etc.) parallel the categories employed by north American universities, a development that Roberts finds to be the result of 'the corporization of

American universities, where affirmative action can be respun as a type of "niche marketing" informed by identity politics.' (2002: 788). Roberts argues that individual researchers' unique histories cannot be reduced to these identity-categories. To this I would also add that the generic categories Robertson talks about cannot be equally relevant in all fieldwork situations. Finally, as Robertson further pointed out, assigning to oneself these (or in fact any other) categories would mean that these categories are firmly fixed pre-fieldwork, during fieldwork and post-fieldwork, and that the ethnographer is effectively immune to any sort of transformation when encountering new people and situations.

Then, if I am sceptical of the existence of timeless, fixed, unambigous and essentialised categories that can predetermine or at least substantially shape my fieldwork and which I can neatly identify, why don't I, rather than focusing on these categories, instead in some detail talk about my personal history and that of my family in order to demonstrate that I have a long and vivid personal memory of the life in Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic. Some anthropologists argued, most famously perhaps Renato Rosaldo (2000), that only when we go through the same experiences as our informants can we understand them. Having spent two decades of my life in the country of my fieldwork meant that to a large extend I had encountered what my informants or their parents did. This should enable me to see what they saw and feel what they felt. In other words, that experience and my memory of it should then provide me with insight. The situation would have been even better if I were a male in mid 20s in a blue-collar occupation and a member of a far-right political party. Then I would have understood even better according to this line of reasoning because I would have shared my informants' experience even more. But my communicative and cultural memory of the life in Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic plus the blue-collar jobs of many members of my family should hopefully convince the reader that I have had an adequate personal exposure to the same processes and events as my informants and have sufficient grounds to make the claims I do in this thesis.

If the reader detects sarcasm towards the end of the previous paragraph, it is rightly so. For me equating personal experience with knowledge is riddled with problems. Experience, I would argue, is only one of several pathways through which we can arrive at knowledge. Privileging it or making it even a precondition to our construction of knowledge is troubling. For one thing, there is the epistemological dimension to the problem. If we cannot understand those whose experience we do not share, we can only examine ourselves or those like ourselves. In social science this would set limits on what and whom a given researcher can successfully research (a point raised ealier already). Disciplines such as anthropology and history would be quite invalidated for the more distant in space and time the people studied by anthropologists and historians, the less shared ground there would be between the researcher and the researched and the less valuable could such research be according to this line of reasoning. What is more, abandoning researching about those unlike ourselves would result in vast areas of social life simply going unexplored. This, in turn, would prevent us from seeing interrelationships between phenomena and would miss the wider view. Finally, slipping into navel-gazing would be a real possiblity. And then there are also political implications. Simply put, making a close match between the researcher and the researched in terms of their experience a preferable or even essential qualification for research would also be divisive (Salzman 2002). Thus, one form of inequality, whereby once the researchers were mostly western, mostly white and mostly male, free to examine and represent anyone and anything they wished, would be effectively replaced by another type of inequlity. Only this time the researcher's experience or identity-category would predetermine their subject matter. This would create new monopolies and new limits.

To an extent, and rather ironically, this approach is almost a reversal of certain anxieties that appeared when anthropology started being practised at home. 'Homeblindness' of the native anthropologist was one such concern. The familiarity with the fieldsite was a hindrance rather than an asset as far as this sort of reasoning went, although it was suggested that proper training could

ameliorate the problem. The assumption at the time was that an outsider had more of a discerning eye and was more objective. To this one could easily raise a number of objections, however. It is debatable, for instance, whether an outsider can simply think outside of the categories of their own culture. It is also rather naive to asume that upon entering the field outsiders can easily cast aside their preconceived ideas about the fieldsite and that they do not try to transfer, albeit subconsciously, the concerns of their own society onto this new location. While someone who did not grow up in the place where they conduct their research is indeed not burdened by the partiality of their position in their research site, they are still 'burdened' or limited in some way by the partiality of their position in their own culture. On the other hand, before arriving into the field one usually tries to gain as much background knowledge of the place/culture and language as possible. This entails reading academic literature by people who have already worked in the field location or nearby. Nowadays, though, it is also likely to mean exposing oneself to some degree to the work of indigenous scholars and becoming familiar with its literature, films, visual art and material culture more generally. This way an outsider anthropologist is in effect beginning to 'make up for' the time not lived in the given fieldsite as they are starting to acquire - to use Assmann's terminology - cultural memory, that is cultural memory they come to share with their informants. Furthermore, once in the field, and some anthropologists have life-long engagement with the place of their (first) fieldwork location and continue to publish on and around issues connected with it, an outsider anthropologist also inevitably starts to develop what Assmann called communicative memory. In this respect, it is perhaps too optimistic, simplistic even, to attribute greater objectivity and detachment to the outsider anthropologist vis-a-vis his native colleague.

An American-Indian anthropologist Kirin Narayan (1998) took aim at the native/outsider and observer/observed dichotomies themselves and made a number of important points. Such dichotomies, she conceded, may have held some currency during the colonial era when the focal point of anthropology were non-industrial societies and unequal power relations were more or less

well defined. Nowadays, however, native anthropologist and outsider anthropologist are not fixed categories. First of all, societies are not homogenous and no one knows equally well all aspects of one's own society or has an equal access to them. Next, our identities are manifold and when speaking of anthropologists specifically, Narayan considers them to be bicultural, belonging in equal measure to the world of academia and to the world of everyday life. What is more, an increasing number of people are of mixed parentage and spend their lives in different countries (as is in fact the case with Narayan herself). With intensifying globalisation our identities are becoming ever more complex, and the concepts of a field site and of home are ever less clear-cut and stable. In the light of this argumentation the discussion about the merits and demerits of the native anthropologist versus the outsider seem somewhat misplaced, somewhat dated.

As can be seen, I have my reservations about the role of shared experience with the researched as critical and about the value and meaning of excessive discussion of one's own positionality. And I find the native versus outsider anthropologist dichotomy also rather wanting. Still, drawing on one's memory as a method is undoubtedly linked to all of these. However as far as I am concerned, utilising one's personal memory poses no more issues than any other method. There is extensive literature on methodology in social sciences that reveals that there are drawbacks as well advantages to all methods, including the insider and outsider research. And familiarising oneself with the literature examining the relationship between individual and social memory also helps to cultivate in a native fieldworker an awareness of particular properties of memory that they need to be mindful of throughout the whole process – from the fieldwork itself to the final analysis of their ethnographic material.

In terms of this literature, I have found Andrew Lass's (1994) contribution to the edited book Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism offers particularly useful guidance in this respect. Lass, inter alia, highlighted the crucial yet ambiguous position of an eye witness. An eye witness, writes Lass, is the history's most esteemed source as their first-hand reports authenticate the

events described. Nonetheless, he hastens to add, these eye-witness accounts are always partial. As someone who spent the first half of my life in the country of my research I, too, qualify as an eye-witness. As a researcher, therefore, I must never lose sight of the fact that being an eye-witness is a double-edged sword. I certainly do have many memories from the period of my life when I lived in Czechoslovakia. And, on one level, it gave me a head start of sorts as it equipped with a reasonable amount of background knowledge on the place of the fieldwork. However, as partiality is intrinsic to all eye-witnesses, I have had to train myself to regard my personal memory as a partial account, partial in terms of what I personally experienced and what and how I remember. Correspondingly, I had to treat my family members' accounts and those of my friends as just as partial. (And, of course, the memories of my informants or their family members were also partial.) In other words, I have had to make a continual conscious effort not to privilege my own memory and that of my ancestors over that of my informants and their ancestors, not to succumb to the temptation to see my memory as a correct version against which to measure the veracity of my informants' testimonies. Equally, I have had to be constantly aware that my memory, my perspective and those of my family and friends could not be simply taken as representative of the people of the Czech Republic as a whole, as some sort of a sample that stood for the generic/non-far right Czech population and in direct opposition to my informants' accounts. Rather, I did my best to approach my personal memory as just one of a number of voices, as one of a number of of souces of data forming the basis of this thesis, where the focus are the testimonies, perspectives and actions of my far-right informants.

For me, a concrete example of how an author's personal memory can be effectively put to use in academic writing is Stephan Feuchtwang's chapter in the edited book Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness (2007). Feuchtwang set out to examine different identifications of people with Jewish or partly Jewish ancestry who had links to Germany and who had all experienced extreme ruptures in their family history. Feuchtwang and a

research assistant extensively interviewed four people about their family past and obtained rich accounts as a result. However, being partially Jewish himself, Feuchtwang included his own family history as one such source, making it five testimonies altogether. Feuchtwang added in his own family 'material' openly and pragmatically, without being overdrammatic about it. And although in terms of detail for the reader he did not give his own family history as much space as he gave to each one of his interviewees' family histories, his account is still on a par with those of his informants. It is certainly not a mere supplement or a footnote to other people's narratives. Personally, I cannot see qualitative difference between Feuchtwang's writings addressing German or Jewish themes, these being linked to his family background and of which the said chapter is an example, and his Chinese/Taiwanese material, that is his usual area of interest and a field location bearing no relations to his own family history.

To sum up, I would like to make two points. First, having had memories of and personal links to the location of my fieldwork did not disadvantage me per se, nor did it give me an edge over researchers coming from the outside. It is perhaps better seen as providing my research with a specific starting point, while non-native researchers would have had their own and different starting points. On the other hand, the starting point is not linked to any specific destination. It does not mean that native and non-native researchers are bound to arrive at the same destination, nor that they inevitably arrive at different ones. Starting points do not automatically determine outcomes. Second, whilst the role of the researcher's biography and biases has been acknowledged as reflected in the final product – the academic piece of writing, the role of the anticipated readership has been less so. In my case, I have received anthropological training at and am submitting my thesis to a British university. Therefore, I am writing my work primarily with the British (or Anglosphere) readership in mind. Thus, I have to consider the needs and interests of this specific audience and decide on the appropriate type of contextualisation, the level of detail provided, etc. These would be probably different were the target readership predominantly Czech/Slovak scholars, for instance. All this

notwithstanding, I am quite certain that the findings and the overall argument would be the same.

Engagement with Mainstream and Non-mainstream Czech Media

In my research, aside from the focus on the far right itself and aside from the emphasis on participant observation, of both far right and non- far-right informants, I also studied materials from which I could extrapolate dominant and/or promoted ideas, opinions and values. Namely, I examined some mainstream media, parts of the national curriculum and reports of the BIS, the Czech security information service, technicably answerable to the Government of the Czech Republic. I chose these types of sources in order to determine what the opinion makers and representatives of various state institutions, that is the powerful, saw and presented to the public as desirable, as the norm, as well as the objectionable or even dangerous. I also wished to know what stand could be identified in these sources in relation to the issues specifically of concern to my informants. Finally, I wanted to ascertain how the Workers themselves, and the far-right and its followers more generally, were depicted in these sources. This was not merely in an attempt to place the Czech far right into wider context. The decision to engage with these materials was also informants-led. Workers aspired to be an important part of the Czech political landscape. However, they very much defined themselves as anti-establishment, as fighting against the 'System', and the words propaganda, dogma and doctrine (propaganda, dogma, doktrína) featured highly in their criticism of the said 'System'. They particularly abhored the media and the education system and complained of harassment, repression and double standads from the authorities. In a sense, their understanding of the workings of power was rather Marxist/Gramscian/Althusserian, albeit in a rudimentary form and without using the associated vocabulary. This shall be unpacked in the chapters 4 and 5, hence here is only a compressed explanation. All my informants - whether those dismissive of capitalism as such or those with a more clement attitude to it and critical only of some of its aspects – were emphasising the link between multiculturalism and capitalism. They saw multiculturalism as pushed onto

people by the elites through the education system and the mainstream media and this served a number of specific purposes. First, in their view, it was designed to weaken the nation state and/or white race – not a marxist position, of course. Nonetheless, for my informants the endorsement of multiculturalism was also an instrument of capitalists to increase their profits. As far as they were concerned, whilst multiculturalism was presented by the elites as an enrichment of the society, in actual fact it simply helped to mask the exploitative practices of capitalism. On the one hand, the import of cheaper and more easily exploitable labour from abroad drives the wages and working conditions of the indigenous labour force down; on the other, the promotion of multiculturalism goes hand in hand with the type of activities my informants scornfully termed ethnobusiness (etnobusiness). These at the time of my fieldwork referred to initiatives set up by various NGOs that aimed at improving the lives of the Roma. My informants not only condemned them as ineffective, they believed them to be schemes purposefully devised to parasit on the taxpayer's money.

It needs to be noted, however, that whilst gaining personal access to members of the Czech far-right was difficult and took time, when it came to the analysis of attitude and values widely disseminated in Czech society, the problem was quite the opposite. Therefore, although I was 'all eyes and ears' throughout the fieldwork, for the purposes of a more systematic analysis I had to limit myself to the examination of a certain number of sources. Placing side by side the legitimate interpretations of events, opinions, values and concerns and the illlegitimate ones, in this case those of the Workers, a number of findings, quite unanticipated by me, came to light and this, in turn, informed the overall direction of my thesis.

The Importance of Archival Research

As I initially thought that the bulk of my participant observation would take place in my home region and as I wanted to gain a longitudional perspective, I set out to do archival research in the archives of Jihlava, the capital of my home region. Over time I decided to narrow my focus down to the content of the

regional newspaper Jiskra, after 1989 renamed Jihlavské listy. I started with issues from 1980 and continued up to 2011. I aimed my attention at the coverage of far-right/fascism, the Roma, Germans and Jews. I also paid heed to the reporting on foreigners/immigrants and the Communist Party. Furthermore, I tried to pinpoint the major themes or concerns expressed by the newspaper. I took note of the way the above stated topics were covered and how frequently, I observed the overall language and tone of the coverage – and how these have changed through time, or not.

I decided to continue with this sort of activity even when it became quite clear that in terms of participant observation my home region would not be the primary site. Not only was I too far into this sort research to abandon it when I came to this realisation, but I also started noticing some interesing patterns. The research showed that there were some thematic constants spanning both the pre and post 1989 era, although after 1989 one could detect somewhat more pluralistic approach to these. And there were some real shifts over time in the featured topics, both in terms of their occurrence and their interpretation. This I had anticipated. However, more significant for me was the recognition that some changes upon closer examination were not changes at all. Firstly, what came through very strongly were some compelling inadvertent parallels or continuities between the socialist and postsocialist periods. For example, it became obvious that the trope of the big, protective and caring brother has stayed on, only the brother is now situated in the West rather than the East. On the other hand, whilst in the past this brother was unequivocally located in Moscow, after 1989, as this material started to reveal, the Czechs were not quite able to decide whether the Western brother resided in Brussels, Berlin or Washington. In any case, the language and rituals celebrating this brother remained virtually unchanged. To quickly illustrate this point here - during the socialist era there was a national school competition testing the pupils' knowledge of the USSR called 'About the country where tomorrow already means yesterday' (O zemi, kde zítra již znamená včera). The competition was always mentioned in the newspaper. After Czech Republic joined the European

Union, the newspaper started mentioning a new national school competition, only this time about the knowledge of the European Union. Secondly, the treatment of some topics or themes, especially those involving certain ethnic minorities, when examined closely, indicated that attitudes of journalists who covered them rather resembled those of my informants, although they were expressed in a modified language. For instance, virtually all articles on the Roma community never omitted to stress their 'different culture', 'sponteneity' and 'temperament'. Or, in the articles covering the black gospel bands that visited annually my regional town in the pre-Christmas period to give concerts, the phrases such as the 'natural sense of rhythm' appeared year after year, as did the remarks about how incredibly cold the black musicians felt in the Czech Republic (although these were UK and US bands). On a superficial level, the language may have sounded respectful, but when read closely, this respectful attitude often came across as insincere and/or the journalists tended to essentialise and overexoticise the 'other'. I found all this rather significant and meritting further consideration, as it helped to establish how extreme my informants' views of certain minorities were compared to the views of these minorities held by most of the Czech society.

Another reason that affected my decision to continue in this sort of research was the character of the region itself. Whilst no region in the Czech Republic can be unproblematically thought of as typical and I cannot simply generalise my Vysočina material in and of itself to other parts of the country, I can fairly confidently say that the region is not atypical, unlike, let's say, the very wealthy and cosmopolital Prague or the impoverished north-western Bohemia with its particularly sizeable Roma population and marked inter-ethnic tensions. Furthermore, my home region had a strong German presence until the end of the Second World War, as well as a relatively numerous Jewish community up until the same period. The Romany people have also lived in the region since time immemorial. These are all minorities of a particular importance to my informants and, as it happened, these three minorities have also played role in the history of Hradiště itself. This would be one reason the findings from the

archival research in my home region can still be illuminating and be incorporated with the rest of my data. More importantly still, the depiction of the Germans, Jews and Roma as well as other minorities and foreigners as found in Jiskra/Jihlavské listy, corresponded with their depiction in the programmes produced and/or aired on the national TV. In this sense my material obtained from the regional archives and the data acquired from digital archives of the Czech national television complemented each other and one set of data corroborated the other. Finally, I will mention two more benefits of this research. On the practical side, reexposing myself to the hegemonic official discourse of the pre-1989 era through reading these old articles served to revitalise my personal memory. In addition, in the archives I also encountered and became acquainted with people who were neither far-right, nor my friends or relatives. I had a number of stimulating discussions with the archive's director and especially with two researchers, one with a strong interest in the Jewish community and the other specialising in the German-speaking population of the region. Their expertise on their topics of interest, our discussions about their involvement in the educational activities of the region in relation to their specialisations, the personal histories of the latter two – all this served to the deepen my appreciation of the heterogeneity of people's personal histories, not only in the region itself but the Czech Republic as a whole, and of the plurality of viewpoints and positions found among the Czech population.

Engaging with Contemporary History Textbooks and National Media

To develop understanding of how historical events were presented to Czech society in the post 1989 years I examined contemporary history textbooks (see bibliography) and digital archivals of the national TV, as well as, albeit to a lesser extent, of other media. From the textbooks I wished to establish how schoolchildren were being taught national as well as world history and how this differed from the official historiography of the pre-1989 era. In the digital archives of the national Czech television (Česká televize) I specifically focused on the programmes dedicated to Czech history, particularly the programmes Historický magazín, Historie.cz and Historie.eu. This allowed me to ascertain

which takes on national and world history were given space in this most important national medium. I also followed online discussions linked to these programmes to get the sense of how the viewers, representing sections of the general public, responded to the depiction of a given historical event or era. All this was in itself a rather useful exercise. For instance, it revealed that the history presented in textbooks of the primary and secondary sector, presumably reflecting a broader consensus among the Czech historians as a whole, was rather conservative in a sense that it was almost identical to the way history had been taught before the change of the regime in 1989. By contrast, the history programmes of Czech TV (as well in other media), gave much more space to perspectives situating the Czech lands firmly into the German sphere of influence. Interestingly for me, the self-understanding of many of my informants as semi-Germans, and their perception of Czech history as a largely peaceful and beneficial coexistence of Czechs and Germans, came much closer to the views expressed in the said TV programmes than to the historiography all children were exposed to at schools. In any case, delving into these different approaches to Czech history enabled me to place my informants'views of Czech history, at first glance unorthodox, into the larger context of meaning-making efforts of the Czech population. This was particularly significant in relation to their imaginations and reconstructions of the national past that were taking place during the time of my fieldwork. Finally, I also searched the digital archives of the national TV for any footage I could find connected with my informants (be it the DSSS party specifically or far right generally), in order to determine how the far-right were portrayed to the rest of the society and how this compared with data from my participant observation.

Exploring the Insights from BIS Reports

Finally, I also studied BIS (Bezpečnostní informační služba) reports, that is the reports of the intelligence service reporting to the Czech government, concentrating in particular on the two years prior to my fieldwork. I utilised the reports both to obtain a statistical overview of the far-right scene (e.g. the number of far-right entities, their classification as employed by the reports'

authors, the numbers of far-right sympathisers, the number and nature of crimes for which the far-right members were convicted) and to establish where the BIS placed the far-right in terms of the overall threats to the Czech state. This yielded some interesting results, two things being particularly striking for me. On the one hand, there was a huge disproportion between the amount and nature of crime committted by the far right in relation to the overall crime figures for the Czech Republic, a negligible figure indeed, and their position as the major threat to the Czech state. Only anarchists and Young Communists also featured in the report. On the other hand, there was a stark contrast between the enemies of the state as identified by my informants (economic crime, corruption at the highest levels of government, strategic industries in foreign ownership, etc., of which there was nothing in the BIS report) and the enemies of the state as identified by the BIS (entities criticising the current political establishment). Observations such as these showed that the Czech far-right cannot be studied in isolation from the rest of the political landscape and it also points to the limitations of relying solely on government sources for information or even data, or at least to the need for their careful interpretation.

PART I

Big Pictures

Chapter 2

Far right in Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic from the 1980s up to 2011

Although this chapter starts with a brief overview of the Czech/Czechoslovak fascist scene of the interwar period, the bulk of its focus is on the post-1989 era. The purpose of this chapter is to give an account of the far right in the Czech Republic in recent decades, to provide basic orientation for the reader and to help to situate my informants in relation to other sections of far right. It helps us to understand the wider milieu within which my informants 'operated', and where they stood in relation to the rest of the society, in particular the agents of the state. In effect, this chapter is as much a brief history of the Czech far right is it is a history of social responses to it.

The history of far right in the Czech Republic goes as far back in as the 1930s and 1940s. Although Czech fascist organisations and/or political parties did exist at that time, this was only a marginal phenomenon among the Czech population and my informants had little interest in it and found no inspiration in it. In that sense we cannot speak of some sort of a direct continuation. On the other hand, this is painting the situation with a rather broad brush. First of all, Czechoslovakia was a multi-ethnic state and the popularity of fascism varied greatly with each major ethnic group. A large sector of the German population in Czechoslovakia was under the sway of fascism/Nazism. This is important, because many of my informants self-identified as semi-Germans.

Below is a brief overview of the history of far right in Czechoslovakia in the interwar period. This account is based largely on the book *Czech and Czechoslovak history II: from 1790 to the present*. (Harna 1991).

<u>Far right in Interwar Czechoslovakia</u>

The newly formed Czechoslovakia in 1918 was a multi-ethnic state to which each ethnic group, when taken as a whole, had a rather different attitude. The German population all of a sudden found itself to be a minority in this new state. Josef Harna (1991) and Patrick Crowhurst (2015) both argue that the Germans resented this situation and organised themselves into their own political parties. These parties adopted a sharply negative attitude towards the state and from the Czech point of view this was a worrying development. Strongly anti-Czechoslovak nationalism persisted in particular in the German National Socialist Workers' Party (Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeitpartei) and the German National Party (Deutsche Nationalpartei).

After the outbreak of the economic crisis of 1929, political tensions increased. Josef Harna (1991) writes that the position of communists in the society strengthened as well as far-right tendencies. Nevertheless, far more serious was the growth of nationalist tendencies within the German community, especially in the German National Socialist Workers' Party, which at this time was already a direct instrument of Hitler's policy in Czechoslovakia. Although the nationalist tendencies were fuelled by social problems, they essentially reflected the rise of Nazism to power in neighbouring Germany in January 1933 (Harna 1991). The government responded to the provocative and anti-state actions of German nationalists by making plans to dissolve both parties. The existing parties broke up, but the Sudeten German Patriotic Front was immediately formed on their basis. In 1934 this party transformed itself into the Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei) (Harna 1991). In Slovakia, in the meantime, Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, always an important party in the

Slovak part of Czechoslovakia, also tried to expand its influence under the slogan of nationalism (Harna 1991, Jelinek 1976).

On the other hand, in the Czech environment fascism did not find a wide response, as Josef Harna (1991) noted. Fascist organizations existed, for example there was the National Fascist Community and the National League. But these stood on the margins of political life. In 1934, some right-wing and fascist organizations merged into the National Unity Party. However, when the parliamentary elections were held in 1935, they showed that fascism had no resonance in Czech society. Less than 6% of voters voted for National Unification, Harna (1991) reported. However, he observed that the position of Hlinka's party in Slovakia was significantly strengthened in these elections, and that the biggest threat to democracy was posed by the huge success of the Sudeten German Party. It gained absolute dominance in the ranks of German voters and became the strongest political party in Czechoslovakia. Only the procedural rules in the allocation of mandates allowed the Agrarian Party to win a larger number of seats in the parliament and retain the office of the prime minister of the Czechoslovak government (Harna 1991). It can be said that at this time the majority of Czech intelligentsia, social reform political parties and part of the followers of the Agrarian Party firmly opposed Nazism and fascism.

After the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, the situation escalated even more (Harna 1991). Members of hitherto loyal German political parties in Czechoslovakia merged with the Sudeten German Party. The right-wing Czech National Union entered the government and in Slovakia, the People's Party acted ever more confidently (Jelinek 1976). Furthermore, the People's Party also started to display signs that it was ready to come to an agreement with the Sudeten German Party.

In short, domestic fascism had a very weak position among the Czech population of interwar Czechoslovakia. The situation was different in Slovakia, where

clerofascism gained a strong position, and, of course, completely different among the German population.

<u>Far right from the late 1980s to the present</u>

After the Second Word War, and during the socialist years in eastern central Europe, for a period of time the far right became subdued. Nevertheless, in the 1980s and 1990s an extreme right youth subculture (re)emerged on the continent. It has its roots in the skinheadism of mid to late 1960s working class London - the time and place of huge changes affecting all spheres of the working-class life. Skinheadism, an exaggerated performance of a conservative working-class masculinity, was a response to this upheaval (Back 2002c). Very early skinheads, however, were apolitical. Nonetheless, soon the subculture branched out into several offshoots, some unequivocally racist, others openly anti-racist. But, by the next decades racist skinheads were becoming more prominent. In the 1980s the subculture started to appear in parts of western Europe, too. It also found its way into the USA, where it started 'living' alongside and to an extend even merged with the indigenous form of the extreme right, the Ku Klux Klan, and it appeared in other parts of the white diaspora, too (Back 2002b). From around 1989, just before or shortly after the fall of the communist regimes, an extreme racist subculture also began to surface in eastern and central Europe (Kürti 1998, Mareš 2003).

In other words, the skinhead subculture started taking root in central/eastern Europe at the time of the integration of the ex-socialist European countries into the global economy. This integration was quickly followed by the widening of the gap between rich and poor, marginalisation and fragmentation of the working classes through unemployment, the contraction of the welfare state, volatility of labour market and, related to this upheaval, an intensification in male youth violence (e.g. see Bridger and Pine 1998, Hann 2002, Pilkington 2010, Kalb 2009, Kurti 1998). These rapid and disconcerting changes brought about an array of negative emotions such as anger, bitterness

and disenchantment and, simultaneously, feelings and emotions repressed under the previous regime could now be manifested openly (Svašek 2006). During this time in Czechoslavakia (from 1993 the Czech Republic and Slovakia) the skinhead subculture unproblematically joined mainstream culture and, during the same period, racial attacks also became very frequent. The first victims were Vietnamese workers and non-white foreign nationals (Mareš 2003), but later it was the Roma who bore the brunt of the racial hatred (Stewart 1997). It was also the time when political parties that could be described as far right, extreme right or populist became part of the political landscape. For example, in Czechoslovakia on December 30, 1989 a political party called *Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia* (SPR-RSČ) was founded. This party, sometimes described as populist, sometimes as far-right, gained seats in Parliament in the period 1992–1998. One of its typical hallmarks was anti-gypsyism. It also became famous for taking a negative position on the signing of the Czech-German Declaration. The Declaration caused a great deal of controversy in Czech society at the time. Many politicians and historians criticised it, arguing that by signing it, the Czech Republic waived all claims to reparations from Germany for damages caused by the German occupation during the Second World War. It is interesting that in the Czech context the very first people drawn to skinheadism were students and intellectuals (Mareš 2003). Nevertheless, soon it was mostly youth of working class background who became attracted to this subculture (Mareš 2003). From the very beginning the extreme right scene – both at the level of the subculture and at the level of political parties – has been very heterogeneous and characterised by persistent intra-group fighting, fission, but, ironically, by an equal amount of inter-group cooperation. In terms of the ideological orientation of the far right subculture, its various sections or groupings have ranged from Czech nationalism drawing on the Catholic or Hussite (i.e. indigenous protestant) tradition and sometimes incorporating elements of pan-Slavism, to pro-German 'Czech' nationalism characterised by pan-Germanism and identification with the plight of Sudeten Germans, to pan-Aryanism – preoccupied with the European culture, preparations for the Racial Holy War (RAHOWA) and marked by strong

anti-Semitism, to emulations of the American Ku Klux Klan tradition (Mareš 2003). Nonetheless, all these various groups have always had a common denominator, namely an aversion to various transnational organisations and institutions, to the ultra-left and to various marginalised groups of people, the Roma in particular. Also, most of them have voiced the desire for the country to be 'governed a firm hand' ('vláda pevné ruky'). From the late 1990s or so, however, a section of the far right typified by both close identification with Germans and pan-Aryanist aspirations more generally came to constitute the most visible and numerically strong part of the scene. These people, popularly known as 'neo-Nazis' but referring to themselves as National Socialists, nowadays distance themselves from skinheadism. They have come to form a somewhat more elaborate and coherent ideology and also display political aspirations.

The neo-Nazi branch of skinheadism started to gain a significant position in the skinhead racist subculture in the mid-1990s. In 1993 the Bohemia Hammerskins (BHS) began their activities in the Czech Republic. In 1995 Bohemia Hammerskins became replaced by Blood and Honor Division Bohemia (BHDB). These organisations were 'branches' of transnational neo-Nazi networks. An extremely important role in the emergence of the neo-Nazi subculture was played by music (White Power Music). On the one hand, the music helped to spread the 'message', on the other, it acted a catalyst in the establishment of international contacts as neo-Nazi skinheads from neighbouring states began to attend each other's concerts. For example, in 1996 Blood and Honor Division Bohemia organised a concert, to which almost 1,000 people turned up, people not only from the Czech Republic, but also from Slovakia, Germany, Austria and Poland (Mareš 2003: 451).

At the end of the 1990s the so called National Resistance (*Národní odpor*) split off from Prague's Blood and Honor and soon began to dominate the scene. It also established transnational contacts. Autonomous Nationalists (Autonomní nacionalisté) was another entity that came into being around this time and in

2010 National Activists split from Autonomous Nationalists. Although their names suggest that all these are branches of foreign organisations or movements, in actual fact, the names just copy German models. Mareš and Vejvodová (2011) suggest that by using these names, the Czech neo-Nazis show that they understand themselves as part of a pan-European or worldwide neo-Nazi movement. Finally, in addition to the above mentioned organisations, organisations with nationwide reach, there are also free-standing independent cells of local activists, usually under the name Nationalists or National Socialists supplemented with the name of the city or region, which again copies the way individual cells are named in the German environment. Examples would be Brüx Radical Boys in Mostecko, White Rebels Klan in Hodonínsko, etc. (Mareš & Vejvodová 2011).

However, it is not only the organisations' names that are copied from abroad, especially those in Germany. A large part of the ideas, and sometimes entire programmes, are taken over (Mareš 2003: 473, 485). In such programmes, quite understandably, there is a rejection of anti-Germanic Czech chauvinism and in its place, there is a stress on pan-European values. Nonetheless, one 'local' element has been added to anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant sentiments that are part of these programmes - and that is the fight against the Roma. Finally, the adoption of these various concepts from abroad is also manifested at the level of image. Skinhead style is now considered outdated and instead there has been a transition to more modern forms of appearance, namely black block style or clothes from fashion brands intended for the National Socialism scene.

Mareš and Vejvodová (2011) also observed that a typical characteristic of a large number of Czech neo-Nazis is that they intend to comply with other neo-Nazis (specifically German) in their territorial demands and renounce the current state of Czech statehood (which, according to them, is a consequence of the connection of previous Czech elites with Judaism and Bolshevism). An example of such an accommodating attitude is the convention called 'Basic Agreement

between Czech and German Comrades' (in German *Grundlegende Vereinbarung zwischen böhmisch/mährischen (tschechischen) und deutschen Kameradengruppen*). The convention was accepted at the beginning of April 2009 at a meeting of representatives of the Czech National Resistance with representatives of the German and Austrian National Resistance. As part of the Convention, both sides rejected the Beneš Decrees, spoke in favour of restoring the rights of Germans living in the Sudetenland, and subscribed to the idea of a 'Europe of Nations', built on the tradition of the German Empire as the 'core and support' of Europe.

Thus, on the one hand, there has been a lot of one-directional imitation at the level of programmes and image. On the other hand, there has also been actual transnational contact and cooperation (primarily with Germans and Slovaks) and the Convention mentioned above is one example of that. Let me present some more examples here. I mentioned earlier the role of music. In fact, in the 1990s the White Power music concerts were actually often held close to the German border in order to make them more accessible to neo-Nazis from Germany (Mareš 2003: 484). But there have also been transnational visits between friends, joint demonstrations and protests. Below is an overview of major activities of this sort that took place before my fieldwork. This overview is based on the account provided by Mareš and Vejvodová in their article *Transnational Dimension of Contemporary Czech neo-Nazism* (Mareš & Vejvodová 2011).

Mutual visits have been typical for the Czech and German scenes, Mareš and Vejvodová (2011) write, especially since the May Day demonstration organised by the National Resistance in Prague in 1999. Sometimes foreign speakers took to the actual stage as well. Since 2007 there has also been a series of visits by the National Resistance activists to Saxony. There they were meeting with the local Free Nationalists - who cooperated with the far right political party NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*). When violent anti-Roma riots took place in Litvínov and Janov in 2008, several neo-Nazi activists

from Germany joined their Czech counterparts there. On the other hand, Czech neo-Nazis support their German colleagues in the annual commemorative march in Dresden. On 18th April 2009 in Ústí nad Labem there was an event to honour the memory of the victims of the Allied bombing. In a sense, this was a Czech equivalent of the march in Dresden. This event, too, was attended by German 'comrades'. Or, when the Workers' Party (more on it shortly) and Free Youth organised a demonstration in Brno on 1st May in 2009, German and Austrian neo-Nazis also delivered speeches at this public event. Finally, in 2008 and 2009 Czech neo-Nazis decided to honour the memory of fallen German soldiers who died on the Czech territory in 1945. They organised commemorative marches in Jihlava, which culminated in a visit to the local military cemetery where the German dead were buried. To these events visitors from abroad were also invited.

In their documentation of the Czech neo-Nazi scene Mareš and Vejvodová (2011) observed that the events organised by the neo-Nazis in the Czech Republic also serve as inspiration for neo-Nazis in some other countries, especially in Slovakia. The emergence of the National Resistance in the Czech Republic was a few years later (probably in 2006 or 2007) followed by the emergence of the National Resistance in Slovakia. Similarly, Autonomous Nationalists in Slovakia also came into existence a couple of years after this organisation was formed in the Czech Republic.

In the meantime, while all these activities were taking place, in 2002 a new far right political party was founded. Initially called *New Power*, it was soon renamed *Workers Party (Dělnická strana)*. The founding members of the party were former members of the earlier mentioned *Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia* (SPR-RSČ) or its youth offshoot *Republican Youth* (Vandas 2012, Štěpánek – personal communication). In its founding manifesto the party declared itself to oppose the entire political spectrum, lamenting its corruption. It also proclaimed the labour movement of the 19th

century was its inspiration. The national and social elements (the rights of workers especially) permeated the manifesto as well as various declarations made by the members of the party made throughout the years. These national and social concerns have always been linked with the anti-EU, anti-NATO and anti-immigration stance, as well as with anti-gypsyism, although the latter has always been somewhat coded.

According to the 2008 Security Information Service Annual Report (see bibliography for the specific documents and webpages of BIS available online) in the years 2006 and 2007 the Workers' Party started closer cooperation with *National Corporativism, Autonomous Nationalists* and *National Resistance*, something the Workers Party has always denied.

In terms of electoral success, the party has never been successful at the national or regional level, not once obtaining a single seat. They fared somewhat better at the level of municipal politics, however. In 2006 the *Workers* managed to win a total of three representatives, in 2010 two representatives were elected. Both successes were in north-west Bohemia, a region with a strong Roma presence and strained relationships between the Roma and non-Roma communities. This pattern of zero success in the national and regional elections and a rather limited success in municipal elections has continued since my departure from the field. So far, the Workers have achieved their greatest success in the 2014 municipal elections in the form of six mandates, three of which were won in a small town of Duchcov in north Bohemia. (see bibliography for the relevant webpage of the Czech Statistical Office, see the DSSS website for more details - http://www.dsss.cz/volebni-vysledky).

Reactions from the agents of the state

In the 1990s, the Czech Republic was a popular destination for visitors to neo-Nazi music productions from abroad, as there was limited criminal

repression of neo-Nazism compared to some Western European countries, especially Germany (Mareš and Vejvodová 2011). Also, throughout the 1990s verbal and physical attacks on the Roma by racist youth met only with a lukewarm reaction from the Czech authorities. Their attitude changed considerably in connection with preparations towards joining the EU (human rights and protection of minorities were among the condition for joining the EU), and upon becoming an actual member the Czech government has become fervently anti-extreme right. In 2008 the Czech Government through its Ministry of the Interior attempted to dissolve the *Workers' Party*. The High Court, however, did not grant the request as it did not find grounds for doing so. Nonetheless, a year later came a particularly strong crackdown on the Czech extreme right scene. That year arrests and imprisonments of many ultra-right activists took place. And in 2010 the Czech government tried for the second time to dissolve the Workers' Party and this time it succeeded. The Supreme Court indeed dissolved the ultra-right *Workers' Party* that year. All these efforts from the establishment notwithstanding, the extreme right continues to exist. The abolished *Workers' Party* re-formed only one month later under the name the *Workers' Party for Social Justice*. On the other hand, regarding the National Resistance or similar far-right organisations, by the time I started my fieldwork it was obvious that as a movement they were decimated.

However, to put things into perspective it is useful to examine the criminal activity of the far right. What is striking here is the marginality of the far right in terms of number of criminal offences committed. Equally noticeable is the fact, that most offences were non-violent in nature. My informants referred to the crimes of offences people from the far-right scene were charged with as political crimes.

Let us take a look at the statistical information. For example, in a document published by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic in 2010 called Strategy for Combating Extremism in 2009 we learn that the total number of criminal offences with an extremist context recorded in the Czech

Republic between 1996 and 2009 when expressed as a percentage were: 0.03, 0.04, 0.03, 0.07, 0.09, 0.1, 0.1, 0.09, 0.1, 0.07, 0.07, 0.05, 0.06, 0.07 (see the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic website in the bibliography for a report available online: 46). For year 2010 the percentage of the criminal offences with an extremist context was also 0.08 according to the Report on the Problem of Extremism on the Territory of the Czech Republic for 2010 (see the specific webpage of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic in the bibliography: 31, 32, 33). According to the same report the year 2010 was similar to the previous years also in the composition of crimes and other trends. The following offences prevailed: *Establishment, support and promotion of a movement directed to the suppression of human rights and freedoms*, *Expression of sympathy for the movement towards the suppression of human rights and freedoms* and *Denial, questioning, approval and justification of genocide*. The authors of the Report write that the proportion of detected criminal offense *Defamation of the nation, race or other groups of people* was lower than in the previous years. 37 people (17.1% of criminal offences with an extremist context) were prosecuted for *Violence against a group of residents and against an individual*. 7 persons were prosecuted for *Intentional bodily harm,* and one person was prosecuted for criminal offense of *Attempted murder*. Finally, we learn that no terrorist crime was committed in connection with extremism.

To sum up, when I entered the field, the Czech far right underground scene was in crisis and the politically organised far-right in the form of the *Workers' Party* failed to attract voters and remained on the periphery of the political life. Despite its low popularity among general population and despite its low levels of crime, it was very much under the scrutiny of the authorities for several years, attracting a disproportionate attention from the state. The Czech state tried to eradicate it and the *Security Information Service* (BIS) presented in their annual reports far right and far left as the biggest (and only) threats to the Czech society. (Apropos, far left organisations, according to the data presented in BIS reports were numerically more or less as marginal as the far right and the far left crime levels were even lower.)

<u>PART II</u> - Ideology and Performance

In this ethnographic section I focus on values, anxieties, ideologies and areas of concern as identified by my informants. I look at my data and identify the usual differences between what people say they do, and what they actually do. I also start comparing my informants' concerns, worldviews/ideology and lifestyle to those of the larger society. The first two chapters in Part II will be concerned with discourse – chapter 3 will examine identity in relation to nationalism, chapter 4 identity in relation to socialism. The subsequent two chapters explore the actual practice. Performance of masculinity through sartorial choices will form the basis of chapter 5 spaces and places of masculinity will be dealt with in chapter 6.

Introducing informants

Ethnography, both as a research method and as a form of anthropological writing, forms one point of an anthropological triangle, the other two points being comparison and contextualisation (Sanjek, 1996). However, a richly descriptive account of people, events or places is more than just empirical material. It also serves an aesthetic function as it makes these people, events and places encountered in the field come alive for the reader.

When I approached the people from the DSSS party I declared that I was interested in them as people opposed to the current political and economic system. I proclaimed that I neither wished to rely on the mainstream media portrayal of the party members and sympathisers nor on the accounts of the local scholars specialising in the far right. I stressed that I was interested in their angle on things and that I wanted to meet them as people. I also clearly stated that I would do my utmost to preserve their anonymity to avoid any potential harassment or persecution from the state. This was a tacitly agreed pre-condition upon which I was allowed into their midst.

This, however, posed a challenge to me. In an attempt to reach a reasonable compromise between complete anonymisation of my informants and giving some sense of them as flesh and blood people I have decided to start Part II of the thesis by presenting five of my informants to the reader – but as composite individuals. In other words, not only did I use pseudonyms, each of the following men and women is a combination of aspects of several different individuals known to me from within this milieu.

One of my key informants was **Petr**. Petr, one of the pivotal figures within the party and the 'nationalist' scene more generally, was the first one to react to my wish to conduct research amongst them. Although only in his early 20s, Petr had a long history of activity among nationalists. He frequently contributed to a number of websites – sometimes publishing under his own name, sometimes anonymously. When sober, Petr sounded very eloquent. Had he not dropped out of law school, he could have made a decent solicitor, I thought to myself at the time.

Petr was one of the facilitators of the contact between the Czech and German nationalist entities. He spent a lot of his time reading. He searched for inspiration in various places, but German nationalism and National Socialism (on one occasion he declared himself to me a Strasserist) seemed closest to his heart. 'Germans are people who are very similar to us – giving the common history of the past thousand years or so', he claimed. 'We can learn from them a lot. We can also learn a great deal from the NPD', he would tell me, referring to the far right political party in Germany. Petr visited Germany on numerous occasions and often acted as an interpreter in the Czech-German encounters amongst the nationalists.

Over the 10 month period when I encountered him frequently in the field his life seemed to be in a downward spiral. I saw him drinking and becoming severely inebriated more and more often and his appearance also became progressively unkempt over the months. Apparently once an avid kickboxer, Petr

was no longer doing any sports. Towards the end of my stay Petr lost his post within the party to someone else.

 I can only speculate about the reasons for the decline that I observed. Some of his friends mentioned a difficult break-up with his girlfriend. The relationship with his parents was probably not rosy either. Petr mentioned that his parents, both working as scientists, were constantly exerting pressure on him to re-enter university.

Although I never heard him complain about his material situation specifically, I gathered that things were not easy. There were periods of unemployment and periods of temporary work as an unskilled labourer – jobs often obtained through friends from the far-right scene. He rented a place in a Roma-dominated part of his town. He did not own a computer or a TV set at the time of my fieldwork.

Míra took a pride in his appearance. Always sporting a highly fashionable hairstyle, Míra also had a penchant for dressing up in very smart clothes. This was possibly linked with one of his interests – acting. Underneath the clothing, however, hidden from the view of most, are numerous tattoos covering his upper body. Some of them are very controversial.

Unlike his father and grandparents who worked as pitmen Míra decided to become a baker. Although with one eye on acting, Míra actually enjoys his current job. 'I have always wanted to be a baker', he confessed to me. 'The salary is awful, only 10000 korunas a month! My mum's parents keep on asking me why I don't find myself a better-paid job. But I am not looking. I like working with the dough.', he added.

Míra is active on the scene in terms of attending various demos, but he does not wish to become a professional politician. He joined the scene to be part of a 'change for the better', he said to me. From young age he was aware that things were not quite right – whether at the local or international level.

According to his own words, in his free time Míra reads a lot, particularly literature on politics. But he also devotes a considerable amount of time to kickboxing. What is also interesting about Míra is that he is one of the few people from this milieu who believes in God. What is more, he defined himself unequivocally as Christian. 'The most patriotic nations are also the biggest believers', he stated to me.

Míra's close friend was **Luboš,** a young man in his mid 20s. Luboš was originally from northern Bohemia. He was one of the most prominent members of the DSSS. He was definitely a seasoned nationalist activist, as prior to joining the DSSS, Luboš had founded of one the most well-known underground far right groups. This group was no longer in existence by the year of my fieldwork. In fact, when the group was being dissolved Luboš recommended to its members that they join the DSSS. In other words, a portion of the young membership of the DSSS came from this underground formation thanks to Luboš.

When interviewing Luboš, I found it hard to reconcile his present-day image with his younger self. Photographs I saw from his teens showed a man wearing hoodies from brands very much favoured by the Czech far right or even military-style clothing. His upper body was covered in numerous tattoos referencing Norse mythology. By the time of my fieldwork, he had softened his image a great deal and wearing a formal suit posed no problems for him. In fact, from the people I met at that time he perhaps fulfilled the best most people's mental image of a politician – in terms of his appearance as well as articulate verbal communication.

Luboš differed from most other *Workers* I came to know personally on two counts. First, he kept on referring to the DSSS as a conservative force. By contrast, most party members and sympathisers considered DSSS to be first and foremost radical. Second, Luboš, working as a technician in the health sector, had a well-paid job. He was one of only two people I knew who owned a car (most did not even have a driving licence, let alone a car). Apropos, when his political activities were pointed out to his employer, his superiors took no notice

of it. This benign attitude on the part of Luboš's bosses was not particularly common as many people from the DSSS experienced problems at work or with finding work as a result of being *Workers*. The precise reason for standing behind their employee is not known to me. However, I can say that Luboš was rather good at impression management. On the nationalist scene he moved seamlessly among upper echelons of the Workers' Party, university student groups as well as the far right underground. According to his own account he also had a rather rich social life outside of the far right world.

He was also very pragmatic regarding the time horizon within which his party could enter the parliament. Diligent political work will eventually bear fruit, he was convinced.

Luboš seemed to find his day-job and the work for the Workers' Party equally satisfying. He contributed to the DSSS website profusely and as a result had very little free time as such, he claimed.

Roman, a mechanical worker in his mid 20s, was a party member from the Morava region. Although not a party functionary – and never wishing to be one - he took part in party actvities in virtually all parts of the Czech Republic geographically accessible to him. Roman claimed that camaraderie was the most important thing for him. His place seemed to be always full of people as he would let his friends, whether from the far right or 'non-far right' ones, sleep over in his place, especially those visiting from other towns.

Roman often contrasted the good quality of his friendships with the poor kin relations. By poor relations he usually referred to the strained relationship with his maternal grandparents. 'They are posh, you see', he complained to me. 'Under the communists my grandfather had a really important job. He travelled abroad a lot. Thanks to that they were among the first who owned a TV, a washing machine, a dishwasher. In those days! And his father, my great-grandfather, was a businessman. In his day he was the very first one in his town to own a car…. My grandmother had piano lessons as a child. You see, they live

in the villa part of town. They have always looked down on us for living in a prefab housing (*panelák*). They did not like it that my mum did not go to study, that she worked as a shop assistant. And that my father just worked in a hotel. They hated my father. They said he was an alcoholic.'

Roman was principally dedicated to Moravian patriotism. This did not prevent him from also expressing his admiration for the 'achievements of Germans during the WW2'. On the other hand, like virtually all of his DSSS friends and sympathisers from his region, he had serious reservations about Czechs.

Just like Petr, and many other members and sympathisers of the DSSS, Roman drank heavily. When off work he would start his day with a bottle of beer and continue drinking throughout the whole day. Also, just like Petr and many other people from within this milieu, Roman struggled to make ends meet. The last week before the pay day Roman was - quite literally - always searching his pockets for the odd coin.

Roman never contributed any piece of writing – whether for the party itself or for another, similarly orientated, group. In fact, his spelling was far from impeccable. However, he read extensively, mainly history books, particularly those to do with the history of Moravia. His other major hobby was tramping and he had a pet snake. (Apropos, tramping is a rather difficult term to translate. In Czech it is called *tramping/tremping* or *chození na vandry*. It was popular between the wars, during the previous regime, and is still popular now, though less so than before 1989. It basically means that over the weekend some men (women are part of this less than men) – either in groups, in pairs or by themselves – dress up either as cowboys or as soldiers, or something in between, pick up a tent, a couple of necessities into their rucksack and 'wander off into the nature'. They sleep in a tent or under the sky, eat tin food warmed up on a fire, 'simply being in the nature'.)

Peťa, a soft-spoken man in his early 20s, was a dedicated member of the Workers' Youth, the youth organisation affiliated with the Workers' Party. Before joining the Workers' Youth, Peťa was part of the 'nationalist scene'. Now, in this far right youth organisation, he is one of the highest placed members.

He came across as one of the most dedicated and serious people within this milieu. He was a teetotaller and seemed to be genuinely scornful of people from the party and its youth wing who drank prodigiously, wore 'heavy boots, bombers and shaven heads' and 'acted like primitives at concerts', to use his own words. He was well aware that such an image gets the party nowhere. Whilst many of the people from the nationalist scene I spoke to criticised the sartorial choices of many members and their propensity to drink, Peťa seemed to show perhaps the greatest disapproval of such behaviour. Peťa was also unhappy with what he called an over-emphasis on Gypsies. He also regretted that many people sympathised with his party but were too afraid to join for fear of the consequences.

Peťa worked as a bricklayer. In fact, both his parents and all four grandparents were blue-collar workers. This was more unusual rather than typical. From among the people I have come to know best, and where I was able to establish the occupations of parents as well as grandparents, Peťa and Míra were the only ones coming from exclusively blue-collar families. All the rest came from more mixed families in terms of class and occupational background.

Speaking of the job, Peťa despaired whenever he came across blue-collar workers who voted for the ODS party (the Civic Democratic Party – a central-right party, perhaps the equivalent of the Conservatives in the UK). He did attempt to disseminate some Workers' Party materials at work, but he said that the young co-workers were not interested and the older ones found it simply amusing. He rated his day-time job as 'OK', but I had the impression that most of his efforts were indeed reserved for the Workers' Youth. He wrote pieces for their website and organised various events for them. His girlfriend, a teenager studying nursing, seemed as driven by the desire to change ' today's youth towards appreciation of higher values' and to root out 'superficial consumerism'

as her boyfriend. She often helped him organise various activities and acted as a proofreader for his pieces for writing. Whilst I never quite managed to pin down Peťa's notion of nationalism, his girlfriend was an open pan-Slavist.

Libor was in his mid 40s and thus one of the older members. This meant that, unlike the younger party members, he was not part of any far right underground scene prior to joining in.

Just like most other *Workers*, Libor, too, was rather disappointed with Czechs. 'You see, what you hear at our party meetings are things you would hear at any pub anywhere in the country right now.', he said to me once. 'Yes, in pubs they all grumble. But do they go to cast their vote comes election time? No! There just is not enough solidarity amongst Czechs.', he added.

Libor was adamant that one of the problems of today's regime was that communists never relly relinquished the power. 'They remain at their pig-mangers.', he complained to me using a very popular trope used in the Czech Republic for people in the position of power. But Libor was equally critical of former dissidents. For him they were people who had a bohemian lifestyle and had nothing in common whatsoever with 'ordinary people'. As far as he was concerned the transfer of power in 1989 from one group of people (communists) to another (dissidents) was no transfer at all. The same people stayed in power, the changes were only cosmetic. This was a rather widespread view among the *Workers*.

 Libor's family was one of those that were polarised during the years of socialism. People from his mother's side, his mother including, were communists. And although Libor was very anti-communist, he had actually had a warm relationship with this side of the family. 'The grandfather was very very good with his hands. He was a renowned craftsman', was the way Libor described his communist grandfather to me once. 'That's why he had a prestigious job. He was, for example, building the Magion satellites, if you remember those.', he continued. And then he added: ' My mother was a lovely

woman. 'She was a teacher who tried to instil 'socialist principles' in both her pupils and us, her own kids.' About his anti-communist father, however, Libor completely refused to talk, save the little detail that his father's father was a solicitor.

The extreme political positions within his family did not end there, however. Libor always spoke very fondly of his daughter. It was clear that he was very proud of her. Yet, interestingly enough, the daughter decided to become a social worker and it was her desire especially to help Roma. This I found paradoxical since Libor's attitude to the Roma was particularly hostile. For him 'gypsies' always have been a problem. As far as he was concerned, they were work-shy and would never change. 'Look, if I can find and hold down a job, anyone can – if they really want to.', said Libor to me on one occasion, referring to his job in the automobile industry and hinting at his disability. Libor claimed his and his daughter's very divergent positions on the Roma were circumvented by both of them simply agreeing never to discuss the issue. 'Anyway, I want to let her discover what they are really like by herself, in her own time', he concluded.

While Libor's family was sharply divided on their views of communists, **Zdeňka's** family belonged to those where no-one was interested in politics as such. As far as three generations back all her family members worked as unskilled labourers, as cleaners and in factories' floorshops. After 1989 Zdeňka's parents tried their luck at setting up their own small business – but failed abysmally.

Zdeňka, still in her teens and still a student at a highly selective secondary school, kept it secret from her parents that she was a member of the *Workers' Youth*. 'They wouldn't be happy.', she told me. 'They are not interested in politics and they just blindly believe whatever they overhear from the TV. They think the *Workers' Party* is really bad and dangerous – as the media portray us. Yet they also complain about what things are like! They say exactly what I am saying.', she added.

Zdeňka also kept her affiliation with the *Workers* secret from her classmates and schoolteachers. Her classmates 'would not get it', she claimed. Their interests, according to her, centred mainly around alcohol, clubbing and dating. They took no interest in politics. As far as the teachers were concerned, Zdeňka was afraid of the consequences, should her political activities become known to them. 'All the people who are still students or who want to get a good job conceal their membership in the DSSS.', she said. 'They do not want to get kicked out.'

Zdeňka's favourite subject was history. She took some additional classes and was planning to take her maturita exam in this subject. However, she was very much at odds with her history teacher, especially his strong anti-communist stance. It did not tally with the stories told to her by her parents and grandparents. 'When I told him that financially people were better off under the communists, that they had interest-free mortgages, that they could start families, that they had jobs – he replied that he was not interested in material things. That freedom was much more important for him!', she complained to me. Then she added: 'But of course he can say that. As a teacher he is on 20 000 (korunas a month)! My mum is on 10 000. My grandmother is on 7 000. What kind of freedom is that, knowing that we have the possibility to go anywhere, but that we really can't, because we can't afford it!'

Once, during our long chat, it seemed to me that the disagreement with her history teacher on the previous regime made Zdeňka mistrustful of interpretations of historic events not only by this particular history teacher, but of accounts in history textbooks more generally. The closer to the present times the history classes focus was, the more wary Zdeňka became of the dominant historical interpretations. Thus, the communist regime aside, she also had a number of reservations about what she was taught at school about World War II, citing alternative sources.

Zdeňka was not quite sure what she would do after completing her school. 'I don't mind even working manually.', she said. 'At least I would be doing something useful.' And then she went into a lengthy talk about how workers, as

people who actually make things, are the most important - yet remunerated the worst. She conceded that professions such as architects were, of course, needed. But without workers, she added, no house would ever get build. She then contrasted such jobs with the work of office workers, which she dismissed outright as useless, pointless – and certainly not deserving of the financial reward such jobs get. In some sense, her understanding of the job market was not miles away from the notion of bullshit jobs, that became famous especially in 2018 (Graeber 2018).

Whilst Zdeňka was quite pro-active in her 'nationalist efforts', **Radka**, at the time of my fieldwork, was less visible on the far-right scene than she apparently had been in the past. Having a little toddler, no doubt, was one of the reasons for her sparse appearances amongst the *Workers* during my time in the field.

Although Radka's partner, the father of her child, was also an active member of the party, she was apparently one of those girls who did not get 'into the scene' through a boyfriend. More often than not, I was told, young women become members because of their partners.

Radka was a bit of a 'wild child'. Her parents separated when she was in her early teens and her mum simply could not handle her. As a result, and at the request of her own mum Radka was placed in a juvenile re-education institute. There Radka straightened herself out and whilst there she even became qualified as a hairdresser. She never worked in that trade, however. Instead, she had a string of low-skilled, uninteresting and badly paid jobs and was deeply dissatisfied with all of them.

In contrast to Zdeňka, everyone in Radka's family knew about her membership in the Workers' Party. 'My grandfather is a great supporter', she said. 'He was a big communist, a communist functionary in fact, worked in the cooperative farm…. But he voted for us!', she laughed. And then she added that under communists everything was better and if the Workers' Party did not exist,

she would have voted Communists. Her grandmother, also a cooperative farm worker in the past, took no interest in politics.

Radka's mother also thought the political scene needed radical change. Her life had not been going well for some time. Her marriage did not work out, her new partner died tragically several years ago and very recently her temporary contract (she worked on a shopfloor) was not extended and she became effectively unemployed. Each election Radka's mum tried to vote for a new party that had happened to come into existence before elections and that had promised radical change. And each time she became disillusioned with the party of her choice once it got into the government. But, to Radka's disappointment, she would never give her vote to the Workers' Party. Furthermore, she also feared for her daughter's safety at demonstrations.

Radka was generally dissatisfied with the situation in the country – with the corruption, with being bossed about at work and paid very little, with insufficient support from the state for young families. But one of her major concerns seemed to be the 'double standards', in Czech *dvojí metr* - literally translated as the double meter. The double meter is a ubiquitous trope among the Czech far right. It refers, as they understand it, to the advantageous position of the Roma in the Czech society with regards to the benefit system, the legal system, etc.

They were adamant that the double meter really existed. The more intimate contact my informants had with the Roma, the more social space they shared (e.g. Radka lived in a part of the town with a high percentage of the Roma population, the Roma youth were also disproportionately represented in the juvenile re-education institute where she spent time), the more preoccupied they were with the notion of the double standard.

Chapter 2

Nationalism and Identity

No matter whom I spoke to and no matter what their private worldview, all my informants identified themselves as national socialists first and foremost – that is as nationalists and socialists in the most general sense, rather than necessarily looking up to the legacy of Nazi Germany (although interest in Nazi Germany was there, too).

Common Nationalist Ideology: Corrupted Elites and Betrayal of the Nation

Different levels and forms of the nationalist ideology were present. However, there was also something like a common denominator – an official ideology that all my informants shared. This ideology can be easily gleaned from various articles on the Workers' Party website, from the content of speeches at demos, but also from people's utterance in more private settings. Here is the summary:

The lack of national unity and impoverishment of the country are caused by corrupted elites who are money orientated only, serving their own interests, betraying the nation – by selling the country's assets to foreigners and siphoning off the national property. The elites do not represent the nation and do not serve the nation's interests by giving up the political mandate to the undemocratic EU, seen as the new USSR, as well as serving other overlords such as USA, NATO, WB, IMF, etc. EU and NATO are viewed in a particularly unfavourable light. The EU ultimately means that the truly important questions that have a great impact on the Czech nation-state, such as immigration or fiscal policy, are decided elsewhere – by non-Czechs. As a result, it is virtually irrelevant what kind of a government people in the Czech Republic elect. Regarding the membership in NATO, for Czechs it means nothing else but needlessly killing people elsewhere and sacrificing lives of Czech soldiers in someone else's wars, wars whose only purpose is to further the interests of world hegemons. Furthermore, the Czech elites also happily import the ideology of these powerful overlords – (global) capitalism and multiculturalism. 'We are

at the state when we do not have the economy for the nation, but nation for the economy!', was a succinct evaluation of the nature and impact of global capitalism that was uttered by one of the speakers at the 1st of May demonstration of the DSSS party in Prague in 2012, an evaluation shared by all my informants. As for multiculturalism - it was seen as instrumental and unnatural, even pathological. These ideologies serve to further impoverish the nation for they enable those in power to get rid of the state's assets and companies and let in foreign capitalists who pay Czech workers as little as possible and make them work under very bad conditions – a natural but bad development since foreigners cannot possibly have the best interests of Czech people at heart. The economic self-sufficiency and technological knowhow of Czechs have been lost forever. Foreigners, imported for work, depress the wages and work conditions. To justify this state of affairs, that is bringing in and keeping foreigners here, the ideology of multiculturalism is imported and forced on people. The accusations of racism are ever present and fascist-like. As a negative side-effect those foreigners that wish to, can be potentially antisocial, dangerous and enforce their values on the Czechs. This can be clearly seen in western countries where the interest of the majority is subordinate to the interests of minorities. This is as undemocratic as it is unnatural, my informants maintain. What is more, going back to the Czech Republic, through their sheer numbers and reproduction the foreigners will eventually be more numerous than the rest of the society and will dictate to the autochthonous Czechs. At the same time, the ideology of multiculturalism allows parasitic Roma to live at the expense of the nation through not working, and to make the life of Czechs difficult with their antisocial behaviour – and even reverse racism. For this behaviour the Roma go unpunished – A) for fear of accusations of racism and B) the social pathology of the Roma is presented as a culture. To strengthen the disintegration of the Czech nation, the numerical decline of the Czechs vis-a-vis non-Czechs is further achieved by the promotion of antenatal values, such as the promotion of feminism or homosexual families, all of this leading to the decline in natality. To reverse this sorry state of affairs, to regain the political sovereignty, the nation state needs to leave the EU, NATO, etc., foreigners need

to return to their home countries, and the Roma need to be cut off from benefits and punished for antisocial behaviour. The present-day elites need to be replaced and their actions questioned. They must be put on trial whenever crimes have been detected. Once the foreign overlords and contemporary 'national elites' are removed, the perverse, pseudohumanist ideologies that go against human nature can be done away with and promotion of national history and traditional values such as a strong family or Christian roots can be (re)instated. Workers and their sympathisers see the real state of the affairs - which the elites and many or most people either cannot see or do not want to see - and are not afraid to voice out loud their opinions. As people they are honest, dedicated to the nation/the national thought and are willing to make huge personal sacrifices to see societal changes through – through democratic means. They are interested in the national collectivity and want to support the most vulnerable sections of the Czech society. They aim at redistributing resources more equitably, at economic self-sufficiency and political independence of the Czech nation/state, and strong punishment of antisocial behaviour. As individuals they are model citizens – law-abiding, hardworking, family-forming, uncorrupted, dedicated, advocates of the weak.

In relation to nationalism several things strike me as conspicuous and I explore them in this chapter. What underlies all these, however, is the difference between ideology, discourse and practice. And this I make explicit.

The Concept of the Nation Falling into Disgrace Within Mainstream Society

For instance, it is striking that whilst the Czech far right sees nationalism as healthy, natural and virtuous and a strong national identity to be the basis of a healthy individual and healthy society, most Czechs find the concept of the 'nation' to be irrelevant or backward, and sometimes one gets a sense that it is almost a shameful or abhorrent word. The word 'nation' is nowadays almost absent from the public life in the Czech Republic, especially from the language of politicians. The words republic or the state are frequently used instead and over the past decade or more even those two terms are being done away with and

being increasingly replaced with 'the central European space', an updated version of the 'heart of Europe', or 'return to Europe' – the two terms in general use in the years following the 1989 change of the regime.

Central European Space Instead of Nation, State, and Republic

The term 'central European space' is not tied to a single originator. The notion of central Europe, and by extension 'central European space' has been a topic of debate and reinterpretation, especially following the political changes brought by the end of the Cold War. Prominent Czech intellectuals like Milan Kundera and Václav Havel or Jiří Pehe have contributed to the conceptualization of central Europe. Kundera, in his influential essay 'The Tragedy of Central Europe', published in the 1984, lamented the erosion of central European culture under Soviet hegemony. He argued that central Europe that shares more with the West in terms of cultural and intellectual history, although Kundera sees central Europe as distinct from both western and eastern Europe. Václav Havel and others used similar frameworks to assert a central European identity that aligns more with western liberal democracies than with eastern authoritarian legacies. Jiří Pehe, an intellectual as well as a public figure in the Czech Republic, also addressed the intellectual and historical roots of central European identity in his work. In 'The Rebirth of Central Europe' (1990) Pehe discusses the reemergence of central European identity post-1989 and its implications for regional and European integration.

The term 'central European space' is solely used by intellectuals. However, when these intellectuals use the term in the mainstream media in public discussions, rather than in academic publications, they use it in such a way that it denotes the Czech Republic only. It never includes the neighbouring Austrians, Slovaks, Poles, Germans or Hungarians, countries Czechs have no information about and no interest in, with the exception of Slovakia and to a much lesser extent Germany. In fact, 'central European space' is interesting in a sense that

its literal meaning is almost purely geographical and therefore politically neutral. It seems to be a euphemism for the Czech nation or state.

Fascination with the EU and Anglo-American World

Alongside the 'central European space' during the time of my fieldwork simultaneously existed a rather infatuated relationship with the EU. For example, in Prague Street stalls one could purchase a 'eurohotdog', or one could have 'eurowindows' installed in one's house, have 'euronails' done in a beauty salon or place an injured/unconscious person into the 'europosition' when giving them first aid. One could also take part in the school competition about the knowledge of the EU, etc. The 'euro' prefix seems to contain an implication that euro things (and in this context non-Czech!) are superior. In addition to the fascination with all things 'euro-', there was also a strong orientation towards the Anglo-American world, for example exemplified by an increasing number of shops having shop signs exclusively in English, by the ever-increasing replacement of Czech words with English words, and even through the marked decline in the declension of nouns. The broader historical context of this development are ideas about the Czech part of Czechoslovakia being European, about it being always (by outsiders) considered part of western Europe.

Critical Self-View of Czechs

Prior to entering the field, during the fieldwork itself as well as in its aftermath I perused a plethora of online discussions on a variety of topics in an attempt to 'get the feel' for the country, as well as watching and listening to various TV and radio programmes. What almost immediately stood out for me was how negatively Czechs thought of themselves. 'We are the worst in the world in/at ....' was a rather frequent beginning of many sentences. The Czech Republic was not only seen by many online users as corrupt, backward, underdeveloped but also as absurd. In fact, *Absurdistan* is a nickname for the

Czech Republic that Czechs used frequently. Alternatively, they used the term *Kocourkov* to the same effect. (*Kocourkov* is a fictive village, whose inhabitants in their efforts to bring about a range of improvements to their town do extraordinarily absurd things. The first stories about Kocourkov apparently appeared in literature in the 17th century and they from then on never went out of print.)

Historical Events and Low Self-View of Czechs

There are a number of reasons for this highly critical self-view on the part of Czechs. Here I would only like to pinpoint the most important historical events that contributed to the low self-view of present-day Czechs – the Russian occupation in 1968, the start of the communist rule in 1948 and the German occupation of Czech lands during the WW2. All three events are always present in the mass media (from the state level media to the most obscure local papers) to the point of saturation whenever an important anniversary comes along. My examination of the accompanying discussions – be they letters from readers published in newspapers or discussion fora on the internet – revealed that the German occupation during the Second World War was by far the most contentious event. However, whilst the experts in the media by the time of my fieldwork had started to provide a number of different angles on the events surrounding the Second World War in the Czech lands (or tentatively on the events of 1948 and 1968), for most Czechs World War Two was a period in Czech history people held the least nuanced opinions of. Some discussants felt that Czechs were helpless victims of events larger than themselves, others tried to underscore the bravery of the Czechs active in the resistance movement. Nonetheless, a rather large section of the discussants felt ashamed, regarding the Czechs first and foremost as collaborators of the Nazis. When Czechs then think of themselves not only as backward but also as 'small' weak toadies, it is a reaction especially to this period of the Czech history. What is more, other historical events tend to be (re)interpreted through the prism of these 20th

century events, too. To give just one example, when in the year 2000 it was deliberated whether St Wenceslas Day should be simultaneously officially celebrated as the Day of the Czech state, a discussion in the political circles ensued. One of the counterarguments, probably the most well-known ones, came from the then prime minister Miloš Zeman who indirectly labelled St Wenceslas as a symbol of servility and collaboration with occupying forces – the insinuation being that Wenceslas was a weak ruler paying protection money to the Frankish Empire.

Negative Attitude towards Czech Nation Held by Far Right

Interestingly, the analysis of my fieldwork material also revealed the fact that despite the self-professed nationalism of the Czech far right they held the same, mostly negative, attitude to the 'Czech nation' as the rest of the population. Just like the many or even the rest of the population the far right also believe Czechs to be cowardly and subservient to big brothers. My informants' view of Czechs in that respect is perhaps best encapsulated in the article published on the Workers' Party website on 4th December 2012 titled 'Brezhnev Yesterday, Netanjahu Today' (*Včera Brežněv, dnes Netanjahů'*). In it its author, the deputy chairman Štěpánek, reacted to the current affairs – especially the decision of the Czech government to vote against Palestine becoming a non-member observer state at the UN and the subsequent visit to Prague of Benjamin Netanjahu. Štěpánek described the Czech government as lackey-like and summed up that, although in the EU, the Czech government is nothing but henchmen of the USA and Izrael. Yesterday we served Russians, today these two new masters, Štěpánek concluded. (for the full article see http://old.dsss.cz/vcera-breznev_-dnes-netanjahu?newspage39=2) On the Workers' Youth and Workers' Party websites the contributors also accuse Czechs of another negative trait – namely only being interested in satisfying their material needs. In addition, during my participant observation and in one-to- one interviews I noticed that my informants perceived Czechs to be passive, which they also found to be a highly negative attribute. When I pressed my

informants in interviews to list positive attributes of Czech people, and I usually indeed had to press, most said that being good with their hands as something typical of Czechs and some added the propensity to work hard. Apropos, the society at large also associates these two qualities with 'Czechness' and they will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter. On the other hand, it also needs to be stressed that quite a few members of the far right I came into contact with found characterisation of Czechs or nations in general problematic, refused to generalise – and this came across to me as genuine. In other words, despite their self-professed nationalism my informants did not differ a great deal in their national consciousness from the rest of the society which, by contrast, professes nationalism to be beside the point at best.

Complex Relationship with Germany

Coming back to the issue of subservience, it is interesting that although critical of this, as they saw it, servile nature of Czechs, there was a marked tendency on behalf of many Workers and their sympathisers to look up to Germans and Germany, including the Third Reich. Also, the Workers' Party had relatively close ties with the German Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD), a far right political party in Germany. Furthermore, many of my younger informants and their acquaintances had at least some interest in the German extreme right underground scene, had certain familiarity with its music, and some of them, though not many, cultivated personal friendships with their German counterparts. It was quite clear that most of my informants had an interest in the events of Ward War Two and quite a lot of them read a fair amount around the subject. They also did their best to avoid the topic with me. When I pushed somewhat, pointing out what were from my perspective incongruities, I was met with hostility and the discussion came to a halt. Nonetheless, from my analysis of the Czech section on Stormfront from the year 2011 and from what I overhead directly when my informants were less on their guard (usually after drinking large amounts of alcohol), many of them identified

with the occupiers and virtually no one with the Czech resistance. Germans were thought of highly for 'what they achieved during Second World War' and a lot of admiration went particularly to the 'ordinary German soldier', who was commended for his bravery and resilience. (Apropos, this brave German soldier is the direct opposite of the famous Czech literary figure Soldier Schweik, who, among other characteristics, the epitome of passive resistance.) In the same vein, the fate of Sudeten Germans in the aftermath of World Ward Two was heavily criticised by the people from the far right scene.

Appreciation of German civilisation and viewing Germans as a civilising element in the Czech lands is by no means something reserved to the Czech far right. In fact, this has been a common stance among many Czech public intellectuals after 1989, especially among those with background in history (see Chapter 3 for more details). 'When my informants said things like: 'Germans were culturally more advanced, the cooperation of Czechs and Germans is good.' (words of one of my key informants at our very first meeting), or 'Just like Chalice People and Catholics lived together and were one, so did Czechs and Germans live here together as brotherly nations.' (one of the speakers at the 1st of May demonstration in Prague in 2012), or 'Finally I have a German surname.' (a female informant confided in me at her own wedding reception) – these statements reflect the fact that Germans were perceived by my far right informants as close and intertwined with Czechs, but that the German element was somewhat superior and more prestigious. In this respect many members of the Czech far right are closer to the post-89 reinterpretation of Czech history by professional historians than the rest of the population.

Fluidity of National Identity and the Dismissal of Purity

As I spent more and more time in the field, I also found it conspicuous and interesting that I came across no purists in my research. Some of my informants

in one-to-one interviews specifically stated there was no such thing as a pure nation or race or clear boundaries between people, and were aware of Czechs being relatively mixed. Others stressed the genetic as well as cultural links with neighbouring Germans – a view present day Czech intellectuals endorse and genetic science supports. But my interviews showed that most have not been particularly interested in these matters. But what is perhaps even more worthy of note is that my informants were definitely not interested in each other's 'pedigree'. Antifa certainly revelled in publishing on its website piquant stories about those members of various neon-Nazi organisations or the DSSS party who turned out to be of partially Jewish or Roma ancestry, or who were discovered to be gay. Nonetheless, relatively early during my fieldwork I myself started noticing that at the level of practice the Czech far right was not vetting its membership for ethnic background. Thus, when attending my first far right demonstration in Varnsdorf (one of the towns in northern Bohemia known for its populous Roma minority and a strained Roma-gadzo relationship) I registered that many marchers looked like Roma. Subsequently, I have encountered people who looked partially Roma at almost all demonstrations organised by the far right. Correspondingly, when I attended the Sports Day organised by the Workers' Youth (effectively a football tournament made up of teams of Workers' Youth representing different towns), I was convinced that one of the football players participating there had some Roma ancestry. I was also a witness to a situation when at one of the meetings of the Workers' Youth a new application form was discussed by members of one of the local organisations. The applicant was a young girl from the town of Most (another town in northern Bohemia with a sizeable Roma population and Roma-gadzo conflicts) and she also attached her photo. '*Černoška*', meaning black (African) woman, was the very first comment made by one of the men looking at the application form, and everyone laughed. Straight after all the men present gathered over the picture and started admiring the beauty of this highly attractive darker skinned girl, whose appearance suggested to me some Roma ancestry. Whilst I do not know whether the girl was at the end admitted into the organisation or not, not once did I hear at that meeting a suggestion not to accept her due to her

questionable ethnic origin. In fact gadjo men fancying gypsy girls – whether generally or a specific female – was something I witnessed on a number of occasions. Those informants that did so, admitted this quite candidly to their far-right friends, who, in turn, reacted to such confessions with some sympathy. Rather than purely sexualising and thus dehumanising the Roma women in such conversations, I sensed a degree of frustration on the part of my informants, frustration from 'incompatible culture', as one of my informants put it, that prevented formation of romantic relationships.

But perhaps the most bizarre situation was when once after attending a concert I slept over at the place of one of my informants, together with another member of the party. In the morning the host treated the guest to some beer and started showing him his collection of newspapers and magazines from the Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren (the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia) period. The guest started browsing through them with some interest. He remarked that the magazines were interesting as they had historical value. And then he added that he did not like it when he saw at a concert last night some young men giving the Sig Heil salute. Then he told us that he was born three years after the second world war and that his mother was of partially Jewish origin. Moreover, his uncle was a prisoner in a concentration camp. His town, he continued, had a sizeable German and Jewish population and Yiddish was spoken widely – which he demonstrated by saying a number of Yiddish words. The host did not react in any particular way to this piece of information and I was quite amazed at the time how casually the guest disclosed his partly Jewish origin. What the guest did not know, but I already did at the time, was that the host was partially Jewish, too. One of his parents was either 1/4 or 1/8 Jewish, although the man was not entirely sure which as he had no contact with that part of his family. His Jewish background was known to his close friend, one of the most prominent members of the Party, who was incidentally very much into 'all things Germanic'.

Apart from these people with some 'non-Aryan' elements in their family history, I also came across a number of other people who had some German, Hungarian or Slovak ancestry. Most of my informants, however, would be considered 'standard' Czech. Here I hazard the guess that in terms of the variety of their ascertainable ethnic background my informants were very much on a par with the rest of the Czech population. They were equally mainstream in terms of their indifference to each other's origins, ethnic as well as social. However, the question is how this less than rigid definition of – or unconcerned attitude to - a nation (as well as ethnicity and race – see below) square with their insistence that nationalism is paramount to (healthy and successful) societies, and that having a 'strong national feeling' is principal to one's identity? On the face of it, my research participants had a powerful public discourse, but it does not (quite or not at all) reflect the realities of their lives (I examine the practice in chapters 6 and 7).

During my time in the field, and to my initial surprise, I never came across anyone who would believe in purity as such – be it purity national, ethnic or even racial. There was a widespread agreement that 'sticking to one's kind' at the level of the race (though race or races was never much thought about let alone clearly delineated, see below) was still an ideal worth striving for. However, Czech nationalism as I encountered in the field most commonly was consciously hybrid, acknowledging and celebrating the German element. Essentially, I argue, this Czech-German hybrid is an attempt to forge a new, updated, form of Czech nationalism, nationalism that fits the new circumstances.

This situation is not dissimilar, though not a direct equivalent, to Euroasianism, a form of nationalist ideology that gained some currency within the Russian federation after 1991 (Humprey 2002). Euroasianism, claiming to combine the spirituality, mysticism and collectivism of the 'East' and rational, technologically advanced and individualistic Slavic 'West' offers Inner Asian regions of Russian federation above all 'an escape from their peripherality,

obscurity and insignificance' (Humphrey 2002: 265). To achieve this, Humprey writes, the provincial Eurasianists in present-day Russia 'often carefully ignore previous regimes of difference and even downplay historical episodes of terror and repression' (Humprehy 2002: 262). I argue that when my informants chose to emphasise the peaceful coexistence of Czechs and Germans in the Czech lands through centuries, and especially when they expressed their awe of 'German achievements during World War Two', they too, just like the provincial Euroasianists, had to soft-pedal or completely disregard the repression and terror Czechs experienced from the hand of their more powerful and advanced German neighbours.

Diverse Nationalist Leanings and Interactions

On the other hand, even those that actually demonstrated stronger nationalist leanings or ideas in the conventional sense, usually the younger members, belonged to very different, and one would have thought conflicting, camps. Yet this heterogeneity, this plurality of views of one's origins mattered very little in terms of their interactions. For example, one of the closest friendships I encountered was between a pan-Slav and a neo-Nazi. Both also signalled their ideological beliefs through their sartorial choices, the former usually wearing a *Hromovládce* hoodie (*Hromovládce* or *Perun* being the Slavic god of thunder and lightning), the latter his *Valhala* hoodie that was complementing his numerous tattoos with themes from Nordic mythology as well as his distinctive Blut und Boden tattoo. Once when with them in a pub I even witnessed their discussion over whether the Czechs were Slavs or Germans. The man who was into Slavic paganism seemed to be winning the argument. Nonetheless, the discussion was in a friendly spirit and both men, together with another man present, who was incidentally primarily into the regional Moravian patriotism, concluded the discussion by saying: '*Stejně sme pičovskej národ*!' (Anyway, we a nation of cunts!).

The next example demonstrates how different nationalist ideologies coexisted at the level of the family. One of the most famous members of the party was a strong-headed young female, in the past very active on the underground scene. She was a controversial and rather divisive figure. On the one hand, she attracted a rather large following, on the other, many members of the DSSS and its youth organisation despaired at her unwillingness to 'make compromises'. I was never introduced to her personally, but her views and actions were well known to everyone. This young woman also clearly indicated her interest in Nordic mythology and penchant for the Third Reich through the way she dressed. Even when attending her own court trial, I could see that through her choice of clothes and accessories for the occasion this woman tried to stay true to her beliefs as much as possible, toning down her style as little as she could get away with. A rather risky act, I thought to myself at the time. At the trial I also observed that her parents were present, very much showing her their support. Later on, out of curiosity I examined the Facebook profile of her father, and to my surprise it transpired that he had a strong interest in Slavic mythology. Their very different nationalist orientations seemed to have no effect on the father-daughter bond.

My final example shows that sometimes even at the level of an individual there was a degree of incongruity with regards to the nature of 'Czechness'. Petr, one of the informants I introduced to the reader at the beginning of Part II, was the best example of that. Petr was very pro-German. He told me he did not like the idea of pan-Slavism, Czechs seeing themselves in Russia, and that he was not keen on the National Awakening. He also detested the contemporary Czech clero-fascism or the Czech fascism of the 1930s. Yet, it was also him who, for instance, out of his own initiative organised an academic lecture on the Grand Moravia for his party comrades. It was also he who alerted me to the existence of old Slavic settlements in the town of Brno and told me about how he once took part in a neo-pagan (my words, not Peter's) ritual performed on the site of one of these settlements.

To sum up, I observed that the declared different and often incompatible ideological leanings did not matter at all in practice. They seemed not be perceived as conflicting and simply coexisted. Instead, it was the concern with roots, the concern with identity per se that was the common denominator, something that bound my research participants together.

Common Denominator: Search for Identity

'Identity' appeared in Workers' slogans very frequently and was often juxtaposed with 'multiculturalism'. Identity, in fact, has often been researched in connection with multiculturalism. However, my brief glance at the literature on multiculturalism suggests that it has invariably been the identity of minorities - first or second-generation immigrants, people of mixed parentage, expats, etc., not the identity of members of the dominant ethnic group. Somehow it seems, at least from the Czech example, that concern with identity is no longer confined to these groups, and therefore I examine why my informants deemed their identity to be somehow under threat. Here, however, I address only some aspects of my informants' emphasis on identity. The issue of identity will be continued and expanded on in the chapter on workerism.

Before I can explore why the Czech far right elevates identity into one of its core values, what they actually mean by it and why (their) identity cannot, according to them, exist in or - at least somehow suffers - in a multi-cultural society, I zoom in on multiculturalism itself. I set it into context as an ideology that has its specific origins somewhere, has spread into a number of different contexts - where it has been put into practice in particular ways. I give a brief outline of arguments of both advocates and critics of multiculturalism. Then focus more narrowly on the presence of multiculturalism (at least as an ideology and policy) in the Czech setting.

Apropos, whilst reflecting on the issue of multiculturalism in the Czech setting, it was interesting for me to realise – and this is important - that despite the alleged contrary position on multiculturalism, there is a degree of overlap in the ideological positions held by both proponents of multiculturalism and my informants, who are its passionate opponents. Similarly, at the level of actual practice the behaviour of people from the far right scene and of the promoters of multiculturalism is not as diametrically different as members of both groups believe it to be. Regarding the ideology, I identified that what both these opposing parties held in common was understanding that people belong to cultures and that these are distinct and bounded. The major difference here was that whilst one group celebrates this difference, values it and claims the presence of the difference to be enriching, the other group proclaims it to be problematic. It views multicultural society as unworkable, at best a naïve fantasy, at worst as something pernicious - and in private presented it to me as a source of irritation and stress. Yet I observed that in everyday life my informants interacted with various foreigners, second-generation immigrants and sometimes even Roma a lot more – and a lot more unproblematically – than they realise and would like to admit. They work with them, live in the same neighbourhood and go to the same schools. But they also voluntarily shop in their stores, attend mixed venues, and even openly fancy them. In other words, there is a bit of a discrepancy between the ideal of sticking with one's own kind and a more relaxed practice, a discrepancy of which the people I did research amongst were not aware. In other words, here we have again ideologies versus practice ("I hate Gypsies, but not THOSE Gypsies. They are my friends".) On the other hand, my informants often accuse advocates of multiculturalism of hypocrisy, of not practicing what they preach, of not being forced to share space with the Roma, immigrants, etc., as well as of consciously avoiding contact with these groups. Although I did not research Czech elites and do not have concrete evidence for the following, my own impression is that that accusation is not

completely true. Yes, the middle class, and political and intellectual elites especially, do not compete with the Roma and foreigners for jobs and resources, but they do have some contact with foreigners, minorities -and perhaps even the overly unpopular Roma. However, unlike people such as my informants, they are able to control to a great extent how much contact, where, when and with whom specifically they have contact. The advocates of multiculturalism however do not acknowledge that their perception of and attitude to various 'others' stems a great deal from the different structural position they occupy in society vis-à-vis the working class. Instead, they prefer to attribute their mind-set solely to (inborn or acquired?) broadmindedness.

To help me make sense of the above, I do three things. First, I re-visit the work Paul Gilroy and Stewart Hall's work on identity politics and also identify more up-to-date literature on the topic. Second, I bring in the population figures – the numbers of the Roma and other minorities - in order to talk about demographic structure and change. Third, I discuss the Roma at some length, particularly the various discourses on Roma – negative (stressing their social deviance) as well as positive (romanticising of the Gypsies – their freedom, glamour, romance, eroticism of their women). Michael Stewart's The Time of the Gypsies is the first point of reference here, together with Jan Grill's later work on Slovak Roma. I also incorporate more recent work on the topic by Czech authors.

Idealisation of Traditional Family vs Lived Practice

Next, I spend some time in this section of the chapter on the link between 'nation' and 'family'. Some of my informants explicitly speak of the nation in terms of family, some pointing out the common root of the words nation and family (*národ/rodina*). And certainly 'traditional family' or 'young family' are tropes frequently invoked. My informants' official view (as presented on their

websites but also when interviewed by me) of the family form and its function can be perhaps best characterised as old-fashioned middle class (i.e. the traditional family equals a heterosexual couple that marries and starts having children (about 2?) when young. In this family the man is the breadwinner (either exclusively or at least primarily) and the woman's task is to take full responsibility for looking after the house and children, ideally not working outside of the house.) It is held that this traditional family has been under attack from the post-1989 governments – A) through the governments' antisocial policies which economically prevent young couples from starting a family, B) through the spread/promotion of feminism, C) through the 'promotion of homosexuality'. All the three combined mean that one's own family (nation) is encouraged to die out - at the expense of foreigners. It was evident, however, that there was a huge discrepancy between what these people publicly claim as their concerns, what they say when not on the guard – and how they act. Almost all of my (male) informants delayed getting married, having children and the two founders and most prominent members of the party, now in their forties, both remain unmarried and childless. What is more, whilst single mothers were said to be something unhealthy, many of my informants in fact formed unions with single mothers. Furthermore, girlfriends were very much expected to work. The only case of a female member of the party who found it hard to keep a job for any length of time and was said to 'live off her boyfriend' was unanimously deemed abhorrent. I am sure the financial situation of my informants had very little to do with it. Part of the answer lies in the incompatibility or tension between my informants' heavy emphasis on camaraderie and lifestyle revolving around beer drinking on the one hand (discussed later in the thesis) and being a dedicated and responsible husband and father on the other. Still, to me this begs a number of questions such as why my informants adhere so much to the rather dated (formerly) middle class family values, and why the (mostly male) camaraderie takes precedence over family life. Gender and class are both relevant here (linking the performance to gender). I deliberate the role of women within the Czech far right and I explore the notion that as middle class women are becoming perceived as more

masculine, working class men are more confrontational in their style. Here I draw on Tatjana Thelen's edited book Reconnecting State and Kinship (2017). Anthropologists contributing to this volume explore various ways in which kinship and the state are entwined. The underlying message of the book is that kinship and statehood indeed are not and should not be considered theoretically as two discrete modes of social organisation. This supports the view of nationhood, specifically the role of gender in the construction of nationhood, in Nira Yuval Davis's influential book Gender and Nation (1997), I also draw here on classic works such as Young and Willmott's Family and Kinship in East London (1957), Raymond Firth's Two Studies of Kinship in London (1956) and Families and their Relatives (1970) and Elizabeth Bott's Family and Social Network (1957). All stress working class separation of genders and middle class separation of couples and nuclear families.

Narrow-minded Racists vs Tolerant Mainstream Society – or not?

Subsequently, I look at the nationalism of the Workers from the other side, from the position of the, broadly speaking, rest of the society. What the Workers and the far right view and label as nationalism, the rest of the society usually terms as racism, xenophobia and extremism. In fact, the three just mentioned negative labels are used to define the Workers (and far right more generally).

In connection with racism/xenophobia/extremism, two things stood out for me whilst in the field. First, and to my surprise, I came upon no crude biological racists. I had expected to come across people who believed rather strongly in distinct and hierarchically ordered races, where the distinction had a biological basis. (I am not sure whether there is much point trying to decide whether my informants would come under the 'cultural racism' umbrella, etc., as all varieties of racism so far named and defined have always involved a belief in inborn traits that are typical of groups of people and that define each person.)

However, the attitude I encountered in relation to this strongly resembled the attitude to nationalism, which I sketched out earlier. Namely, most of my informants were not particularly interested in theories of race (or culture) – whether in the dated theories of scientific racism or in the more recent works discrediting those. There certainly were dislikes, suspicion and even hatred of certain ethnic groups. However - and this is the second point which stood out for me – my participant observation and various surveys commissioned by the governments or media revealed that my informants' attitudes to various others were almost mainstream. Although there was some individual variation in my informants' views, when taken as a whole they held more or less the same dislikes and fears of - or likes and admirations for - various others as the rest of the population – and provided identical or similar justifications for these views. (The possible exception might be attitudes to Jews and Germans). It is also significant that where one would expect to find a great deal of difference regarding the attitude to various minorities or foreigners, the difference is often only superficial and indeed bordering on (cultural) racism. To give just one example here to illustrate this point – I noticed that Czech journalists, who normally dismiss the far right as racist and prejudiced, when covering stories featuring the Roma often highlight the 'temperament' of the Roma, their 'love of music' and 'simply having different values than the 'gajos' (not unlike the US commentary on black Americans with their 'natural sense of rhythm', etc.) Whilst at first glance these characteristics sound positive, in connection with the Roma in the Czech context they have negative connotations, coming very close to the three typical negative labels attributed to the Roma by the Czech far right and the wider population alike - aggression, laziness and antisocial behaviour. Again, I refer to Michael Stewart's examination of different Hungarian views of the Roma (as romantic and beautiful, but simultaneously as dirty and ignorant) in my interpretation of the above. There are comparisons with other settings, for example, the way American whites talk about blacks (as people outclassing whites in jazz, blues, basketball, .., but also as people socially deviant), etc.

After stating my own findings and providing some examples/evidence to support my observations I attempt to theorise it all. To do that, I have first to work with the concept of racism (and xenophobia and extremism). In relation to racism, I have to acknowledge that there are two, interconnected, facets to the concept. First, it is a phenomenon that is of interest to social scientists. The scientific understanding of racism has been developing through time, together with the concept of society itself, and I will provide an overview of some key academic literature here. The trend in this literature is to capture ever more nuances of the phenomenon, but also to provide ever wider definitions of the term. These definitions of racism are currently so broad that, I think, they almost negate the usefulness of the term as an analytical concept. Second, it is also a moral and a legal term, and as such it is used (the accusations of racism, that is) as a political tool. Therefore, racism is not simply a neutral explanatory/analytical concept; it is also value-laden, highly charged and used to political ends by a variety of actors. Therefore, my discussion of the racism (and xenophobia and extremism) of my informants takes into account the political nature of these concepts.

Bearing the above point in mind, I attempt to get to grips with some more specific questions that troubled me whilst in the field. For example, according to a number of surveys, Czechs as a whole have negative attitudes to a number of minorities. The most negative stance at the time of my research (as well as through times, actually) was towards the Roma, where 85% of respondents admitted to holding a negative attitude towards this minority, according to the surveys conducted by the research agencies STEM and CCVM (see bibliography for two links to the STEM agency results for years 2010 and 2012 and one link to the CCVM agency results for the year 2012.) The research also showed that this negative position was more likely to be encountered amongst people who lived in areas with a strong Roma presence. Statistics such as these are supposed to tell me something about the Czech society. But what do they really mean? I have to determine in what ways to use them, how to interpret them, what they actually tell me. For instance, on one level it means that the extremist label that

is being attached to my informants by politicians and the media alike is minimally problematic, if not misguided. Or, if my informants indeed are extremists, so is the majority of the society. The question then is what the norm is and why, and how it has come to be established.

Or, to give another example of what I found interesting whilst in the field - Roma have been expressing dissatisfaction with the presence of Ukrainian workers for over twenty years, as these successfully compete for jobs traditionally held by Roma. In that sense, the Roma's view of or attitude to Ukrainians has been essentially the same as that of a rather large section of the society. However, I have never found the Roma being labelled as racists or xenophobes, whereas non-Roma people voicing the same opinions (i.e. 'Ukrainians taking over Czech jobs') do not escape this branding. I think it is significant. In connection with this example, it might be useful to look at alternative approaches to explain inter-ethnic animosity, to see how they can help me make more sense of my data. Therefore, I should at least briefly look at literature on ethnic competition theory, ethnic diversity theory, reciprocity theory and welfare chauvinism. Overall, it means looking at the problem from a different theoretical angle (cultural politics), although there is likely to be a connection/an overlap with the literature that takes racism as its starting point. Again, works of Gilroy, Hall and Stewart will be my point of departure here.

This chapter also considers the following two questions. Given the enormous stigma membership in the Workers Party or in far right groups entails, what is it about my informants that 'makes' them say quite overtly what they think (albeit in a somewhat modified or softer way than when in private) on a number of sensitive topics (e.g. the immigrants, the Roma, same-sex marriage), whilst most other people who share some or even many of these views, would never declare them in public? And why most of those who in private share these views genuinely despise the Workers? The answer to this question is, at least in part, found in their image – the brutal image of brutal masculinity. Their image is linked to their powerlessness. Literature on tattooing, piercing, anorexia, etc.

shows how powerless people concentrate on their bodies. This is the focus of chapters 5 and 6. Nevertheless, I sketch this argument out here, to be returned to later.

Chapter 3

Workerist identity

To my informants to be socialist and to be nationalist was merely two sides of the same coin. For many of them these two terms were even self-evidently interchangeable. And whilst the previous chapter focused on the 'national' of national socialism, this chapter considers the 'social'.

Throughout my time in the field, I have encountered countless references to social policy (*sociální politika*), and countless references to social justice (*sociální spravedlnost*). The role of workers in the Czech economy and in the Czech society was also one of the preoccupations of my informants. Mentions of work ethic were ubiquitous. Simply put, my informants' emphasis on socialism begs to be engaged with seriously. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is a critical examination of my informants' workerism, understood here as a prominence given to workers and working class culture (to the point of idealisation), of their understanding of socialism and of their attitudes to labour – both proclaimed and actual.

I start this chapter with presenting my informants' official discourse on socialism and related concepts such as social justice, workerism and labour. Next, I supplement these people's discourse with that expressed in a less guarded setting – in interviews and in my 'hanging out with them' – from what I overheard. Next, I focus on the observed behaviour and how this squared with their proclaimed values. Finally, I set my informants' Workers' discourse, their values and behaviour into a wider context; I consider where and how it sits with the rest of the Czech society.

Why to take the Appeals to Workerism Seriously

Taking my informants' appeals to socialism seriously is a different approach to the one usually taken by regional scholars specialising in the Czech

far right and the Workers' Party. Czech social scientists engage very little with Workers' appeals to socialism, social justice, etc. and instead focus on their nationalism/racism/xenophobia. They take as their point of departure finding links between the Workers' Party and other far right entities and Nazism or neo-Nazism (Mareš 2003, Charvát 2007). To do that they focus on these groups' official discourse and scrutinise the symbolism they employ. This has serious repercussions in real life as many if these scholars also cooperate with the Czech government, judiciary and possibly the BIS, the national intelligence service. Thus, for example, political scientist Michal Mazel served as an expert witness during the 2010 trial at the Supreme Court, the outcome of which was the dissolution of the Workers' Party. The party's logo played a major part here. The prosecution argued that the logo, a cogwheel with the letters DS (standing for *Dělnická strana*/*Workers' Party*) in it, resembled the logo of the Free German Workers' Party (*Freihieitliche Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*), a post-WW2 neo-Nazi movement, as well as that of the German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*), a Nazi trade union that came into existence in the Weimar Republic after Hitler's ascent to power (the full verdict is available online at http://www.nssoud.cz/docs/Delnicka_strana_original.pdf). At the court hearing the chairman of the party argued the cogwheel has been a common symbol of many factories throughout the ages. Elsewhere he also proclaimed that his party builds on the workers' movement of the 19th century. With regards to this chapter, what is perhaps most important as far as I am concerned is the fact that although prior to going into the field and during the first few weeks or months there I too was fixated on the Nazi/neo-Nazi connection, after several months this angle became marginal to me and my interests shifted elsewhere.

Whilst I do not wish to completely sidestep the issue of resemblance to Nazi and neo-Nazi organisations - after all, my research confirms that some members of the party had connections with the far right underground and, indeed, at first glance the symbolism the party has employed throughout the years does show alikeness to that of some Nazi organisations - if we are to understand anything about the contemporary Czech far right, and potentially comprehend the recent far-right turn throughout the western world, being

fixated primarily on similarity of outward signs with Nazi Germany is not the most useful starting point. We absolutely need to look for current motivating factors, be they economic, political, affective, etc. Furthermore, paying insufficient attention to the 'social', not giving it much space beside the application of the populist label, can give undue weight to psychologising explanations for the existence of the Czech far right, or indeed the far right anywhere. This I find problematic. I stated that I had and have reservations about looking at the far right through the prism of pathology in the introduction. I also revisit the issue in the conclusion. What I want to do now is to take the Workers' appeals to socialism seriously. Therefore, I present here the prevalent view or views held by my informants as to what role the economy should play in the society and how the society and its economy should ideally be organised. I examine the Workers' discourse in the context of their everyday lives, and see where it takes me.

Official Discourse on Socialism and Related Concepts

When one inspects the content of the DSSS website, analyses speeches by various speakers delivered at demonstrations, examines media appearances of the party's chairman Tomáš Vandas and the content of his book (2012), one can see that the official discourse boils down to the following:

The role of the state is protective and supervisory. Its duty is first and foremost, or perhaps even exclusively, to look after its citizens. This means providing them with certainties such as jobs, looking after those unable to work (due to old age, disability or when actively searching for work), guaranteeing just wages as well as dignified working conditions, fair prices of goods, a good-quality healthcare and education. The state should also support families, so that it is possible for young people actually to form families, and to ensure the citizens' safety. Furthermore, the state should be also of assistance to Czech businesses and must own all the strategic industries and infrastructure, such as the energy industry. Finally, the state should also explicitly promote a healthy nationalism as a value. The duty of the citizens, that is all the citizens that are

able to, is to work, work well and to abide by the law. If everyone does their fair share, we can all be better off, we can all benefit.

As the situation stands, my informants believe, most people are decent and hard-working as well law-abiding. However, they are forced to live in uncertainty and are struggling to make ends meet. They are worried about their safety, about their future, and, unable to receive justice, most are becoming passive. The state is obviously not fulfilling its obligations. The root cause is to be found in the fostering of the individualistic ethos. The promotion of individualism as a value – and my younger informants would equally emphasise the promotion of capitalism as an economic system - is catastrophic for the (Czech) nation-state. It has led to the existence of denationalised elites that only follow their own narrow economic interests. Not only do they engage in all sorts of corrupt practices - siphoning off from the state, selling off cheaply state assets - they are not interested in, or are in fact contemptuous of, their fellow citizens, whom they are meant to serve. They are very happy to follow directives from Brussels and Washington, either due to receiving a personal profit from this or through sheer indifference to the interests of the nation.

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from Brussels and Washington, either due to receiving a personal profit from this or through sheer indifference to the interests of the nation.

Ultimately, the aim of the Workers' Party is to redress this situation, to create a moral economy (my wording, not theirs). This needs to be done through the near reversal of the existing policies and arrangements - that is through protectionism of domestic industries and workers, through regulations of excesses of capitalism (e.g. too high a cost of certain basic goods and services) and through striving for the self-sufficiency of the national economy. To achieve all this, political independence is needed and leaving NATO and EU is therefore paramount.

Consensus in Discussion

During my time in the field, it was striking how unanimous everyone was with regards to their understanding of ins and outs of politics and economics and their preferred political and economic order. The discourse on the political and economic situation of the country was time and again reproduced not only in interviews I conducted in the field, but also cropped up spontaneously in informal chats with me or in conversations I simply overheard. This unanimity was all the more remarkable when compared to the plurality of their grasp of notions such as nation or race. As we saw in the previous chapter there were marked differences across the group in the degree of interest in and elaboration of such concepts. Furthermore, their attitudes to various 'others' also differed substantially across individuals.

When I attended as a guest my very first party meeting, after attending to the conventional political party matters, such as discussion of electoral strategies for the upcoming elections, I was formally introduced to the people there. What followed was in effect condensation of some of the main points I encountered later on in the field time and again.

Only about after two minutes after explaining my presence there I heard one of the older men there saying: 'Havel is really loved by the USA. He got rid of our arms industry. So, our people employed in this industry lost their livelihoods

– and Americans keep on exporting their arms!' All those around indicated their agreement. 'Privatisation was the biggest theft.', contributed another party member and continued: 'What already belonged to people was sold to them.' 'Fruta and other Czech companies from the times of socialism are gone now. Sold out!', said one of the older men there, to the nodding of all those around (Fruta was one of the biggest food companies in socialist times). Other people there started naming local factories and food plants that were no longer 'in Czech hands'. 'Starobrno is now owned by Heineken.', joined a very young boy sitting to my right and added: 'Only very small local breweries are still in Czech ownership.' (Starobrno was a brewery in Moravia going back to the second half of the 19th century, always exporting to the rest of the country.) Another one of the younger men there said: 'I work in agriculture and I can tell you that only 20% of the food consumed here is produced somewhere in the Czech Republic. The rest is an import. If the imports suddenly stop, we can survive for several weeks only. That's maximum.', he elaborated. Then somebody shifted the conversation to how people shop in Tesco, because it is much cheaper. That means, the people agreed, that all the profit goes abroad, the state has no money from it, its coffers are empty and the only thing that the state can try to do is to raise the VAT. Which it keeps on doing. At the same time, local people, those in agriculture, cannot compete with the low prices from companies like Tesco – and go out of business. And this part of the discussion was concluded with some disagreement about the causes and probable consequence of the latest sharp rise in the price of eggs. There were also more general statements such as: 'The whole country went downhill. Look at all the corruption, look at the massive and growing differences between the rich and the poor!' The men who uttered these words then added something to the effect that under the communists everything was better. Everyone expressed their agreement. Someone else then remarked that the housing situation was incomparably better under communists. But then his neighbour disapprovingly pointed out that communists were still in power. 'The same people are still there!' he exclaimed emotionally and again, the rest of the people there acquiesced.

Next, someone steered the conversation 'to the idiocy' of Uhl and Kocáb. Uhl and Kocáb, a journalist and musician respectively, both of whom after 1989 turned politician, and worked for the government in posts to do with human rights and/or the Roma minority. 'Kocáb is especially mental.', one of the men declared, again to the nodding of those sitting around. 'He is completely out of touch. I respect him as a musician. But as a politician he is a complete idiot!'. Finally, towards the end of the discussion I was assured that they were not extremists, that what they were telling me was something I would hear in any pub anywhere in the country. People just would not dare to say these things in public, they are scared, I was told. Such is the nature of Czechs, was the collective conclusion. They just complain in private and do not dare to speak out openly.

The whole discussion was very emotionally charged. It felt to me like a group therapy session in which I was the therapist. People spoke faster and became more animated as the evening progressed, some of them breaking into their regional accents. A strong sense of injustice, disappointment and anger characterised the evening. In some respects there was a resemblance to the grievances encountered by Hochschild among the right-wing supporters in Louisiana (Hochschild 2016).

Permeation of Economic Discourse

Debates such as these were by no means restricted to party meetings. They were never far away. And they were for the most part not brought about by my presence. Thus, during countless, lengthy and boisterous 'sessions' at pubs where my informants would be having beer with their pub mates, flaunting vivid accounts of drunken exploits and of 'funny defecation stories' would be alternated with talks of politics and economics where, for example, extremely low wages of Czech vis-a-vis German workers would be discussed, linked to the low purchasing power of Czechs, subsequent collapse of local businesses, and followed by yet another increase of the VAT, etc. Similarly, I recall a small talk at a party with an 18 year old girl, a factory worker, who belonged to the circle of far right sympathisers. Against a very noisy background and after a super-quick

introduction by our mutual acquaintance, upon learning that I was from England the girl confided in me that she wanted to come to England to work. And immediately she started complaining about the unfairness of the pension being calculated from the average wage. 'No one has the average wage.', she explained rather angrily. 'The average wage is far too high. It is skewed by immensely high salaries of managers.' And then she went on to talk about the injustice where people who do not work not only get money for nothing throughout their lives, but when they retire, they actually end up with much higher pensions than people who worked all their lives. Here she was alluding to the Roma minority and, I was quite certain, manual labour. At the time I was rather taken aback that such a young person would take an interest in and even become quite emotional over the pension scheme. And that she would make it a talking point at a party.

The longer I stayed in the field the more I could see how concern with politics and economics very much permeated my informants' lives, how they perceived their surroundings very much in those terms. Here are a couple of examples. When once escorted to the Brno train station by one of my informants, this man, employed by an international food chain, all of a sudden and totally unprompted, broke into how 'no one from here owns anything'. He complained that there were four energy companies, but that only one of them - ČEZ - had 50 percent government ownership. 'These companies can leave any time they want.', he said disapprovingly. And then, as we jumped on a tram and rode through the streets of Brno, he kept on pointing at different shops and at regional headquarters of various companies, stressing what was foreign-owned and what closed down since 1989. 'This very tram bears the name of a Czech company, but in reality, it is foreign.', he concluded. On another occasion, when travelling on a train with another one of my informants to northern Bohemia, I was sitting silently and enjoying the rather beautiful landscape. But my companion must have seen something very different. Out of the blue, he started naming the factories we had already passed and factories that we would still see on the way before arriving at our destination, saying which of them were still manufacturing, and which no longer did. In other words, this man, a factory

worker himself, was taking in the same landscape such as myself, but reading it very differently.

Collective Identity and Anti-Capitalism

At some distance from the party 'canon agenda' were a number of other concerns or ideas. These usually came out during the interviews and informal chats. For example, the older party members laid an emphasis on 'communists still staying in power'. This assertion was usually followed by naming communists known to them who even after 1989 held on to their job or office.

For younger people, by contrast, the major problem was capitalism per se. Capitalism was spoken of as antisocial by its very nature. And this made capitalism unnatural in the eyes of my informants. As was repeated to me by several people - humankind is based on collectivity, cooperation, and - not on pursuit of private interests. Pursuing private self-interest is divisive. And as far as my informants were concerned, the said collectivity starts with the family and can be applied to higher or wider units – up to the nation. 'Every individual family member, where children fulfil their duties through diligent studies and parents through having stable employment, has the best conditions for their own self-realisation.', said one of my key informants in his impassioned speech at the 1st of May demonstration in Prague. 'And that's precisely how it has to work with the nation.', he continued. 'It's not a coincidence that family and nation share the same word root.' (Family is *rodina* in Czech and nation is *národ*. Both words share the root *rod,* which is also a standalone word that is sometimes translated into English as clan. From the root *rod* also derives the verb *rodit* – to give birth.) Given the interconnection, as they saw it, between collectivity based on blood ties, cooperation and personal fulfilment global capitalism was then deemed double dangerous. A foreign employer, I was told once during an interview, has no ties to the country, no moral obligation to local workers. It is not a problem for him to exploit the locals. And if they (local workers) do not like it, if they complain, the employer can simply take his company elsewhere. Other informants would pinpoint living off the capital as the most disagreeable feature of capitalism. One of my informants, a member of

the Workers' Youth, was very curious during our interview about my own view of capitalism and then he volunteered his. 'To live off capital is extremely bad, most unjust.', were his exact words. 'It is most unjust to live off capital, to do nothing – instead of making one's living through work.'

Metaphor of Self-Colonisation

Interesting was also the usage of the metaphor of self-colonisation (*sebekolonizace*) that I also encountered in the field. My interlocutors, however, understood it primarily in economic and political terms. The users of the metaphor thus referred to the voluntary, unprompted decision on the part of Czechs to submit their national riches and labour to outsiders. Whilst in colonialism the colonised always try to resist the exploitation from their colonisers, Czechs, it was asserted, out of their own will, simply offer themselves to outsiders. They seek out their colonisers, so to speak.

Conspiracy Theories and Positive References to National Socialism

Finally, whilst these views I have summed up so far were openly and boldly presented to the public, there was an additional layer, absent from the official party line. First of all, many of my informants also believed that this state of affairs is being orchestrated from above – by the international community of Jews. This conspiracy theory is quite universal amongst the far right world-wide and has been researched quite extensively – both its origins and its pervasiveness in different parts of the world, whether the Jews are still present there or not. Here I can only add that whilst I did chance upon this among my informants every now and then, the said domination or rule of Jews in international politics and economics was never elaborated upon beyond the 'the Jews are behind all the evil in the world' line. Secondly, towards the end of my fieldwork during interviews with some of my younger informants I also happened upon some positive references to national socialism of the Nazis. When I pressed these individuals on the difference between the red and brown socialism, especially with regards to workers' rights, they seemed less confident to answer, making a vague reference to the '(good) social policy for the people' and 'paid holiday'. I felt that there was not only reluctance on their part to

discuss the merits of the Socialism of Nazis with me, but that they knew, or perhaps realised at that very moment, they could not provide me, but perhaps even more so themselves, with a convincing answer.

Here it needs to be stressed that the Workers' Party official discourse is by no means unique. In fact, I found it rather widespread, although it was impossible for me to quantify. Travelling on public transport and eavesdropping on fellow passengers proved quite revealing. In the previous chapter we could see how people in public (such as on public transport) had no qualms about talking in most negative terms about the Roma, or foreigners, using truly racialised and racist language. I also overheard a number of people criticising the existing regime, with the same boldness, along the same lines as the DSSS. Here are a couple of examples. On one such train journey I overheard two men in their 50s. From the context of their whole conversation, I gathered that they were railway workers. They were also both on close to the minimal wage and one of them was recently dismissed from his job. 'Kalousek is a brute! They are brutes! Foul brutes! They are impoverishing the poorest!', complained angrily one to the other about Miroslav Kalousek, then the Finance Minister, famous for his austerity measures. 'Kalousek said: We are a right-wing party. We are not here to represent the working class but intelligentsia.', went on the man, showing his revulsion at the Finance Minister' words. And the rest of the conversation between them was one big criticism of 'those above' who had no idea about, in fact, did not care about ordinary people. On another train journey another man, also about fifty years old, started a conversation with me, soon turning into a long monologue. Apart from being advised to be vigilant 'of Roma thieving in this part of the country', the man spent a considerable amount of time on 'how bad the situation has been since 1989' and 'how the politics have become twisted'. He was disgusted with the corruption in the country and corruption at the level of his local government. He attributed these problems to 'the people in power being former communists'. On another occasion I went to an art exhibition in Prague. Throughout the whole time I involuntarily listened to two middle aged female attendants who lamented that the young generation nowadays cannot have secure employment or a house of their own, unlike the

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previous generation, and then they spoke favourably about the times of socialism when 'the state looked after its citizens'.

Whilst I knew nothing of these people and their circumstances, and certainly nothing of their voting preferences, what was rather astonishing for me was how many people I did know intimately actually shared my informants' criticism of the post-1989 development, despite the fact that they found the Workers' Party somewhere between comical, irrelevant and detestable.

Here I will limit myself to just to two people to demonstrate the point. I start with my late father. Once when he was giving me a lift in 2012, we passed a factory building. 'It's terrible we got rid off a company like Motorpal and allowed Bosch in here.', he sighed. When I asked him to elaborate, he explained that Motorpal (a local company that had come into existence during the socialist years) and Bosch produced exactly the same products. Motorpal, however, has not able to withstand the competition and was undergoing insolvency proceedings at the time of our conversation. At another time we attended together a parade of antique cars and motorbikes. After expressing admiration for these old vehicles my father shifted the conversation to how these old cars and motorbikes were Czech-made, that we had been able to satisfy not only our own market, but even export to some other markets. He conceded that at some point we started lagging behind in technology behind with west, but that we were self-sufficient. 'Now Škoda was bought by the Germans and Jawa by the Chinese.', he said with sadness in his voice. 'And we no longer have our own know-how!' And then he wrapped it up with saying that 'It's like this with everything. This is the impact of globalisation on the Czech national economy.' Here it needs to be pointed out that my father, always a left-wing voter, found my research of the Workers' Party most amusing, not in the least taking this party seriously.

My second example is one of my long-term close friends, whom I shall call Lenka. Lenka is a centre-right voter. She has always been adamant that there is work for everyone, that one only needs to look for it. She also has no time for people who complain that they receive minimal wage for their work. She

dismisses such people as simply lazy. Regarding the Workers' Party – she finds them despicable. And yet, whenever I heard her passing judgement on the situation in the country after 1989, and there were many such times, she echoed the words of my informants from the far-right milieu. Thus, I would hear her on many different occasions to complain about corruption, about siphoning off the state assets, the poor quality of food products imported into the Czech Republic and the lack of or insufficient regulation. Lenka also saw the privatisation of the post-1989 era as a theft and proclaimed that during the previous regime not only was there much less stealing, but that the state was actually 'building something, building something for the people'.

Many facets of my far-right informants' arguments were also, for example, aired from several places, by different parties or groups in Prague on the 17th of November. (The 17th of November is in the Czech Republic the day of the anniversary of the start of the Velvet Revolution. It has become an opportunity for the opposition political parties or protest groups to criticise the government in power.)

All in all, the position on the economy and the state upheld by my informants and outlined above and, to a greater or lesser degree also replicated among other sections of the population, goes directly against the neoliberal canon and individualistic ethos promoted after 1989. Such position comes across as unfashionable at best, conservative in the sense of conserving what was – i.e. enlarged socially responsible state, etc., and – in the eyes of mainstream politicians and economists, as erroneous and dangerous. The economist Ilona Švihlíková and sociologist Jan Keller, left -leaning scholars whose analysis of politics, economics and social life overlaps to a great extent with the understanding of my informants (although their work is of course a great deal more sophisticated) were the only left-orientated experts challenging the said canon and given any airtime in the mainstream media during my time in the field. Aside the infrequent media appearances of these two people, I registered only two other instances of such challenge in 2012. In one TV appearance a sociologist questioned the legitimacy of capitalism and on another

day and in a different TV programme a young philosopher explicitly labelled the privatisation a crime and declared that he would take Václav Klaus, the finance minister who oversaw the privatisation, to court.

Workers' Party Identity and Socioeconomic Background

Who were the people who decided to go against the tide and present this unfashionable, 'wrong', or at least 'off beam' discourse to the public? Who were the people who styled themselves as (manual) workers - a form of association that has very much fallen into disfavour in the post 1989 years? And how plausible was their workerist identity?

Let us start with the numbers. The Ministry of the Interior published on its website *Report on the Extremism in the Czech Republic for 2012*, with data gathered by the Security Information Service (*Bezpečnostní informační služba* or BIS). Under right-wing extremism the report counts the Workers' Party of Social Justice as well as the organisations Autonomous Nationalists (*Autonomní nacionalisté*), Free Youth (*Svobodná mládež*) and National Resistance (*Národní odpor*). This sort of demarcation corresponds to the type of people I worked with during my fieldwork, although my main focus was on the Workers' Party itself. According to the report the far right scene comprised about 5000 people, of which 150 activists could be considered militant. The main activism and leadership was restricted to about 50 people (Zpráva o extrémismu na území České republiky, available online at https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/extremismus-vyrocni-zpravy-o-extremismu-a-strategie-boje-proti-extremismu.aspx). In my field research I was exposed to ordinary members, the main activists, as well as sympathisers.

Considering the membership of the DSSS party I estimate that three quarters of all the members and sympathisers were men. Two main age groups prevailed. One age group were young men in their 20s, people who often, but not always, were active in some sort of a far right underground organisation prior to joining the DSSS. The second, somewhat less numerous, group were people about fifty years of age and older. These older people, before joining the DSSS were members of the Association for Republic – Republican Party of

Czechoslovakia (*Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa*), a political party usually classified as populist, sometimes even as extreme right, that ended its existence in 2003. There were not very many people inbetween these two age categories.

What I have done so far in this chapter is a fairly standard approach to the study of far right. Just like most research into the far-right (typically carried out by political scientists and sociologists), I too started the chapter with the analysis of the discourse of the people I studied. The specialists on the far right then proceed to present socioeconomic information on voters (or supporters) of a particular far-right or populist party. Age, gender, occupational stratum, income level, educational level and sometimes criminal record of the voters are of primary interest to these researchers. This information is then statistically analysed and conclusion and inferences are drawn. This I have done also - up to a point. Namely, I have made some general observations about the age and gender composition of the Workers' Party members and sympathisers. In the rest of the chapter, I too focus on the educational and occupational background of these people and on their level of income. However, this is not some sort of a mechanical 'going through the motions' on my part. Rather, the importance of these aspects of their life emerged from the fieldwork itself. I will relate the socio-economic data back to their discourse and their life actually lived as I observed it. In the course of doing so I will speak back to the literature.

One thing that came through quite strongly was that my informants were indeed serious and genuine about their workerist identity. The contemporary far right anywhere in the western world may indeed draw its supporters mostly from blue-collar workers. However, the *Workers' Party for Social Justice* is the only contemporary far right party I am aware of that has the word *Workers* in its name, though they could have easily come up with a party name consisting of the usual words such as *democratic, national, free, people's, socialist*, etc., that are in the repertoire of all parties, including the far right ones. (Apropos, the most correct translation of the Czech words *dělník/dělnický* would be blue collar/manual labourer or workman, not worker. This distinction, I think, is quite

crucial. However, in keeping with the established translation of *Dělnická strana* as *Workers Party*, I too will use the term workers, though where necessary, I will switch to the more precise translation of the word as *manual worker*.) What is more, restoration of the prestige of manual work (the exact wording) is one of the points in the party manifesto. No other political party in the Czech Republic had or has such an aim in its party programme. The strong workerist orientation is also evident from the term of address that members and sympathisers of the party use - *kamarádi* (*friend*s in English translation). C*omrade* in English has usually been associated with Communism. It seems that the word *kamarád* has entered the Czech language from the German *Kamerad*, where it serves as a form of address among people brought together through some strong common interest). It is in fact the only term of address I heard amongst them and it is in stark contrast to the term *brothers* that one would conventionally expect from a nationalist party or movement, and that one ordinarily finds already amongst the neighbouring Slovaks, for example. Moreover, other common nationalist terminology such as *blood*, *soil*, let alone *God*, is completely absent from the discourse of my informants. And yet again, it is commonplace among Slovak nationalists. The comparison with Slovaks is highly intentional here as Czechs and Slovaks were in a common state between the years 1918 and 1992 (with a short separation during the WW2) and people from both nations still consider each other to be culturally very close. This difference is then all the more conspicuous. This workerist identification is significant all the more because since 1989 the working class in eastern Europe has become rather tainted through its association with the former regime. Furthermore, assuming the workerist stance (emphasising manual labour) also runs contrary to the rather established view amongst academics that from the 1970s onwards, identity in post-industrial societies (the shares of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the Czech economy are 2.4%, 37.6% and 60%) does not derive from occupations or occupational groups but from consumption. The identity is said to be therefore more individualistic and less class-based. This argument has been recently problematized by some of the newest literature on class (e.g. Friedman 1994, 2002, 2014, Narotzky 2015), pointing to the reconfiguration of

class rather than its disappearance as a form of identity. My fieldwork also bore out the relevance of class, at least to my informants.

Educational and Occupational Background of Informants

Let me now proceed to my informants' educational background and employment history. However, in keeping with my commitment to maintaining my informants' anonymity I present the information here in a more generalised manner.

Some of my informants went to a vocational school and gained an apprenticeship certificate in the following professions: baker, hairdresser, catering, confectioner, plumber, cook. Others attended professional schools, lycea or gymnasia and took (and passed) the maturita exam (in the Czech Republic this type of exam is the main entry requirement for universities). Of these people four studied at a gymnasium, further two at a Catholic gymnasium. Others studied nursing, sports, business or at some sort of a technical school (construction, transport, three of my interlocutors studied mechanical engineering). Some of these people did first their vocational training and only later in their lives they studied at a professional school with maturita. One person did post-maturita studies at a higher professional school and was awarded a diploma in a medical field. Most of the students with maturita went on to university to study law, economics, mechanical engineering, teaching or nursing. Two people had degrees in media studies. There were two more people with university degrees, but I did not get to know them well enough to establish what kind of a degree they had. Two of my interlocutors went all the way from an apprenticeship certificate to a university degree. And two of my students dropped out of their university (one of them studied law) and were quite clear in their mind that they would not re-enter the university in the future.

At the time of my fieldwork some of my informants were still students, but others already worked full-time. Of these - two worked as unskilled labourers in the construction industry, one of them using this work to supplement his own part-time business in the construction field. Four informants worked as waiters. There was a construction worker, a builder, a bricklayer, a cook, a mechanical

worker, an electrical engineering worker, a baker, a tool maker, a road digger and a warehouse worker. Four of my informants were assembly line factory workers. There was also a construction manager, two sales officers and a teacher. Two people during my time in the field started together their own business in the hospitality industry - but their business did not take off and they went bankrupt just as I was exiting the field. Of all these people, some, perhaps about a third, held a higher qualification than would normally be required for that particular job –e.g. skilled labourers worked as unskilled labourers, people with maturita were doing a job where an apprenticeship certificate should be sufficient, people with university degrees in jobs where maturita or even an apprenticeship certificate would meet the requirements.

In other words, the members and sympathisers of the Workers' Party who were already employed were indeed more often than not in a working class occupation, both skilled and unskilled. Personally, I did not meet anyone who was in a job that could be classified higher than lower middle class. On the other hand, the number of sympathisers from among university students and graduates should not be underestimated. My informants were adamant that they knew people who were university students and who tacitly supported them. These supporters remained invisible because the association with the party was toxic and would have severe repercussions for these people's future prospect, I was told. Furthermore, the profile information and contributions of the Czech and Slovak discussants on the Stormfront website from the year 2011 suggests that many, if not most, were tertiary educated. On occasions the discussants stated it themselves. The veracity of these statements cannot be confirmed, of course. Nonetheless, the tertiary education could be also inferred from their overall tone, turn of phrase and from the ability to communicate in good English when non-Czechs/Slovaks visited the Czech-Slovak section.

Intergenerational Mobility and Class Mixing

When taking into consideration the educational level and occupation of the siblings, parents or grandparents, the picture is quite interesting – through its lack of a clear pattern. Some of the Workers were from exclusively blue-

collar/peasant households. Others reached a higher level of education than their parents and grandparents – in accordance with the developments in the wider Czech society over the past sixty years or so. Yet with others we could speak of a downward mobility in occupational and income prestige. For example, I recall a sympathiser whose mother practised as a solicitor, but he had the *maturita* exam 'only' and worked as a toolmaker. Two of my other informants also had 'only' the *maturita* exam and worked on building sites. Yet they both came from families of natural scientists and medical doctors going back two generations. The siblings of these two young men were enrolled at prestigious universities. Then there was another informant who had an apprenticeship certificate and worked manually, but whose grandfather and great-grandfather were really highly placed in their societies at the time – the great-grandfather was a renowned businessman before 1948 and the grandfather held a prestigious position during the previous regime and was able to frequently travel abroad, something truly rare between 1948 and 1989. There were also two other young men working in rather modest professions and again with the *maturita* 'only' 'under their belt', but they both had a grandfather who was a university dean. Another informant of mine had a grandfather who was a university professor. His parents, however, had already rather unremarkable jobs and he himself first did an apprenticeship, then he attended a technical college and passed his *maturita* exam, and only as a mature adult he went to university.

Whilst the intergenerational downward mobility in occupational and income prestige might seem the most eye-catching, the fact remains that there was no one prevalent trend, let alone a pattern in my informants' family fortunes. My informants were a very 'mixed bag' in that respect. As someone who was brought up in Czechoslovakia and later Czech Republic, I would even say that class-mixing was typical of the wider Czech society. This might be therefore a good place to pause and look at some important features of the socialist Czechoslovakia. The reason for this is threefold. Firstly, my informants' parents and grandparents lived through this period, as well as some of my informants themselves. Secondly, the references to this era form part and parcel of the present-day social and political landscape in the Czech Republic.

Therefore, socialism is still in the living memory of my informants, their families and country as a whole. Thirdly, through going over some characteristics of the socialist Czechoslovakia we can slowly begin to understand some reasons behind why, despite the current stigmatisation of the working class, some people dare adopt the specifically workerist stance.

Socialist Czechoslovakia

The levelling of social inequalities in Czechoslovakia went the furthest in the whole of the socialist block. There were very small differences in people's salaries between professions compared to the disparities as we know them from today. For example, Branko Milanovic looked at the income inequalities between various socialist countries. According to the data he provided, Gini coefficient for 1988 in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia the lowest of all the countries he examined – at 19.4. This was followed by Slovakia (of Czechoslovakia), Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Estonia, Ukraine, Romania, Russia, Moldova, Poland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and finally Uzbekistan (Milanovic 1998: Appendix 4). Likewise, Atkinson and Micklewright, who examined the economic transformation in eastern Europe and the distribution of income, came to the conclusion that among eastern European nations, Czechoslovakia was distinguished by its notably low and stable income disparity. They added that the consistency in the distribution of earnings across three decades in Czechoslovakia was particularly remarkable (Atkinson and Micklewright 1992: 104). What is more, when discussing the socialist years with my own family members, that is those who had lived most of their lives in the previous regime, they strongly insisted that people in blue-collar jobs had had higher wages than many office workers.

Furthermore, there was also virtually 100% employment. This statement, so typical of those who personally remember the era, can be corroborated by the findings of Brank Milanovic (1998). In his publication 'Income, Inequality, and Poverty during the Transition from Planned to Market Economy', Milanovic analysed state employment as a proportion of the labour force in various socialist countries in 1988. Czechoslovakia topped his table of socialist countries,

with the 98.8 % (Milanovic 1998: 12). As for education, it was free at all levels and completely standardised. Whilst nepotism in the education system existed at the level of highly placed communists, it had certain limits. My relatives could all recall someone they knew who had been offered a place at a specific college or university as a result of their (communist) parents' influence and connections. But they also named those among these children who eventually dropped out of their college or university as they were not academically apt enough to complete the course. The nepotism was therefore not all-deterministic. Another important characteristic of the Czechoslovak socialist state was the support of young families, namely through building social housing, availability of low-interest mortgages and other loans, through long maternity leaves, guaranteed employment for mothers returning to work, through child benefits, etc. What all this amounted to was that the state took on some of the responsibilities and burdens away from parents. But it also took from the parents some of the leverage they otherwise would have had over their offspring. In other words, the state curbed the potential efforts of parents to shape their children's life. Consequently, young people could and did gain their independence from their parents quite early in their lives. They exercised a greater individual choice – an individual choice to pursue or not pursue particular education, or in their selection of a spouse. In the case of the latter, romantic attraction was thus the main guiding principle, much more so than is common in more stratified societies. Thus, given the levelling tendencies of the state on the one hand and its propensity to co- parent on the other, in the socialist Czechoslovakia there was less class reproduction as such and more of mixed-class families.

This means two things. Firstly, people who were in manual-labour occupations were not a class apart. The larger the family, both horizontally and vertically, the greater the mix of educational and occupational levels within each family. Secondly, the previous regime made frequent appeals to the dignity of labour and emphasised the special role of the proletariat. And whilst this was at the level of rhetoric rather than practice, it is owing to both this official rhetoric and to the earlier mentioned relatively high wages that blue-collar workers were afforded a degree of dignity under the previous regime. This has become

appreciated only with hindsight. Nonetheless, this legacy has left behind a big enough trace for some people - my informants - to be able to assume a workerist identity, 11 years after the fall of the previous regime.

Similarly, when I analysed my interlocutors' families' attitudes to politics, both before and after 1989 and both inter- and intra-generationally, the picture is equally diverse, with no clear patterns. Some families were very anti-communist, others thought fondly of the previous era, yet others were completely indifferent to politics. More often than not, however, there were quite extreme positions within my informants' families. These opposing positions were not only between different sets of grandparents, but also between grandparents and parents or between spouses. What is more, my informants' siblings' standpoints on politics likewise varied, ranging from sympathies to their brother's or sister's far-right leanings, to the dismissal of it, to the total lack of concern. Nonetheless, speaking of patterns, two could be identified with certainty. Firstly, my informants, despite their proclaimed anti-communist stance, were not interested in the least in each other's family political background. Or mine for that matter. Secondly, I have already alluded to the ambivalent attitudes of the *Workers* to the communist era. What is more, when I asked my informants in the interviews to locate themselves on the left-right spectrum none of them placed themselves on the right. Some decidedly positioned themselves on the left, such as this sympathiser: 'We are national socialists. Socialists!' We, socialists, want social certainties, work for everyone.' And then he angrily added: 'Who is making them (national socialists) into the right-wing is a *debil*!' Radka, an informant I presented to the reader in the Composite Individuals section, openly and without hesitation said to me that had there been no Workers Party she would have voted Communists. Yet many were irritated by the question itself. They were unhappy with such 'pigeonholing', dismissing it as an anachronism, as something beside the point. But then they would add that if really pushed to choose, they would situate themselves on the left side of the spectrum. Only one of my informants confessed that years ago he had labelled himself a right-winger. Then he clarified that that was no longer the case and that anyhow the Workers Party

headed in the left direction. And then there were some others who were very inconsistent. No one probably more so than Roman, an informant I also introduced in the Composite Individuals section. On numerous occasions Roman made scathing remarks on the address of communists, yet at other times he commended the socialist era. Once, while we were watching together a Czech film made after 1990s but set in the 1950s Czechoslovakia, Roman all of a sudden exclaimed: 'If I lived in the 50s, I would be a communist!'

This heterogeneity of political engagement and orientations within my interlocutors' families also testifies to the said levelling of the socialist state, whereby people had a greater freedom to choose their own spouse vis-a-vis more stratified societies and as a result more diverse families came into closer contact with one another. However, this is not the point I wish to make here. Instead, I want to draw attention to the fact that labelling my informants as far right, new right, extreme right, right-wing, etc. is misleading. As we could see, despite all their anti-communist rhetoric, their take on the socialist heritage in Czechoslovakia actually wavered somewhere between a positive evaluation and a critical one. They also self-defined as being on the left. Their championing of socialism, I argue, is sincere and needs to be taken seriously. It is not a mere smokescreen for emulation of Nazi Germany. Whilst a fair amount of my informants also looked up to Nazi Germany and some of them researched various fascist or dictatorial regimes (one of the founders of the Workers Party for example revealed to me that he studied and found inspiration in economic policies of António de Oliveira Salazar), changing the society to achieve a greater social justice was the primary motivating factor for my informants. Incomparably more so than, let us say, a fascination with powerful dark forces, although there were elements of that, too, usually manifested in remarks made in passing about the 'endurance and dedication' of German Wehrmacht soldiers. (High regard for Wehrmacht soldiers and for the hypermasculine in general will be addressed in Chapters 6 and 7.)

In fact, setting the Workers Party into the wider context, I observed that if I divide Europe into western and eastern along the lines of the former iron

curtain, then in their economic outlook nationalist parties of western Europe a lot more often than not espouse liberal market principles whereas protectionism and nationalisation are to be found more amongst their eastern counterparts. In terms of their take on welfare state or welfare redistribution the *Workers* certainly seem to be amongst the most leftist far right parties in Europe, if not the most leftist, and their party programme bears quite a strong resemblance to that of the present-day Czech communist party.

Workerist Identity and 'Czechness'

However, workerist identity as the primary nationalist identity is rather unusual, or the more so given the earlier mentioned current stigmatisation of the working class in eastern Europe. Therefore, I now examine why my informants chose to embrace this specific identity or, put differently, how this identity tallies with the ideas of 'Czechness'.

I start with an eliminatory approach. The first, more general point to be made is that Czech Republic is one of those countries that make it hard for their far right to identify and emphasize characteristics of its nation-state that are conventionally understood as great. These are namely the great antiquity of the nation, a huge territory, the colonial past or eminent technological or cultural achievements. Nor could the Czech far right play the Christian card, given the rather strong antireligious, and especially anticlerical, overall mood in the country. (Having said that, the 'Christian basis' of the Czech/European society has been invoked more over the past two years as part of the rationalisation for the anti-immigration position.) Finally, the between-the-wars indigenous fascist scene was a relatively marginal element in the social and political life at that time and there is nothing illustrious for the present-day far right to draw on. Indeed, during my entire fieldwork the National Fascist Community (*Národní obec fašistická*), the Czechoslovak fascist movement active in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s and 1930s inspired by Mussolini's National Fascist Party, was not mentioned once. The source of national pride had to be therefore found elsewhere. As explained in the last chapter one of the strategies for many of my informants, but certainly not all, was to assume a semi-German identity. A

workerist identity, however, was another plausible identification or position for Czech nationalists.

This is not to say, though, that the founders of the Workers' Party calculatingly chose identification with the working class and their interests. I suspect that, quite on the contrary, this sort of identification was close to home. The two founders of the Workers' Party, the chairman Tomáš Vandas and his deputy Jiří Štěpánek, have the 'blue-collar background'. Vandas first went to an apprenticeship centre and received an apprenticeship certificate in plumbing. Later on he went to a technical college which he completed with the maturita exam. According to the information on his own website Vandas then worked in his field for a number of years. Later on, as a mature student, Vandas went to university and currently he is self-employed in the construction industry in managerial positions (His CV is available online at http://www.tomasvandas.cz/zivotopis). Štěpánek, one of my interviewees, first worked as a warehouse worker, where he slowly worked his way up. At the time of my fieldwork Štěpánek worked as a sales officer. Just like Vandas, Štěpánek enrolled to a university in his more mature years. It is also of relevance that during our interview the one relative Štěpánek spoke of at some length was one of his grandfathers, a 'renowned craftsman' and that the grandfather's characteristic Štěpánek chose to highlight was his dexterity.

However, personal background of the party's founders aside, I argue that there are broader historical roots for the 'marriage' of Czech nationalism and workerism. During my fieldwork I certainly had the impression that it was quite logical for the Czech nationalist party to invoke such identity as Czechs as a whole believe themselves to be good, in fact quite special, with their hands and use the expression *golden Czech hands* (*zlaté české ruce*) to capture this notion. There is a relatively large section of the population that believes that Czech products are more 'honest', meaning longer-lasting and of better quality and Czech craftsmen are deemed dextrous and ingenious, or at least in times past, if not necessarily present. Such characterisation of Czechs also appeared in the interviews with my own friends and relatives (here I am referring to the

interviews I conducted in parallel with the interviews with the far-right informants – see the previous chapter). Unsurprisingly, my informants did not differ in this belief from the rest of the population. When asked in their interviews to characterise or describe Czechs, several of my informants listed dexterity (*šikovnost*) as well as diligence (*pracovitost*) as one of the defining features. One of my older informants even specifically contrasted Czechs and Germans to drive this point home. 'Well, Czechs can be characterised by quite high creativity. People say that if a German buys something, the first thing he does is read the instructions.', he asserted. And then he expanded: 'A Czech doesn't do that. He figures it out for himself. He reads the instructions as the last resort. We are simply handy. We know how to be creative. How to improve on things. That is not to say that the others are stupid. I am a patriot, but not a chauvinist!' Handiness was also brought up spontaneously outside of this particular interview question. For example, two of my informants, although from white collar families of doctors and scientists, when talking about their family did, totally unprompted, highlight the DIY skills of (some) of their family members. I argue here that the roots of this self-conception are historical. Czechs have traditionally defined themselves in opposition to Germans, implying the dichotomy of German rich capitalists versus the Czech country folk, manually adroit. Indeed, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire the position of ethnic Czechs – economic, political, social – was for the most part inferior to that of ethnic Germans (and later on the Jews) and Czechs in this empire were mostly peasants, workers, petite bourgeoisie and quite a large section of them went to work in Vienna as craftsmen, servants and factory workers. In any event, in the present-day Czech Republic skilfulness with one's hands is still cherished all through the societal strata and DIY activities are still a popular pastime, although probably not quite to such an extent as during the previous regime. In other words, the ideas of pride and self-value coming from work and/or skill are not confined to the working class, let alone the far right. And as the Czechs keep on suffering from the inferiority complex regarding the strength and structure of their economy, technological advancement and political importance of their

country vis-à-vis the 'west', this emphasis on special manual skilfulness as a distinguishing and positive national feature remains in place.

This is not to say that it is the only, nor the superior value. Based on my work in the field as well as drawing on my background knowledge of the region, I argue that, from let us say three generations on, the aforesaid manual handiness is neither the only societal value, nor the superior one to all other values. Education and professions resulting from tertiary education have been highly prized too (for historical explanations for this development se Szelényi 1998). The latter is well exemplified by the perennial use of academic titles outside of academic settings, in fact in the Czech Republic one can find academic titles engraved even on people's tombstones, as well as by the sharp decline since 1989 in the numbers of young people learning a trade and going into tertiary education instead. Perhaps it could be said that both manual dexterity and academic achievement have been valued, but that since 1989 the importance of the latter rose even more whilst the standing of the former has declined somewhat. The earlier mentioned stigma attached to the working class in the post 1989 years did not quite translate into the stigmatisation of manual work itself. Instead, its meaning, its importance has been more pushed into the private sphere. Thus, nowadays perhaps the ideal person is a weekday professional and a weekend craftsman/manual worker. By contrast, I would say that business has always been viewed by a substantial section of the population with suspicion – both in the past as well as in the present. Over the past 27 years or so, whenever talking to various people and discussing local businessmen who have become wealthy since 1989, that is people personally known to the discussants, I do not recall a single time the discussant would praise such an individual and attribute their newly acquired wealth to their business talent, for example. Instead, no matter what their personal political preferences and no matter how happy they were with the outcome of the Velvet Revolution, people invariably explain the acquisition of such wealth as a result of 'thieving' or 'thieving from others' (*nakrást si, okrádání druhých*).

The mistrust of those who acquired their wealth through business skills seems to be generally prevalent among people who were in socialist times tightly integrated into the state, generally people in heavily industrialised areas where factories provided the main or even sole source of income. Frances Pine provided a lucid example of this attitude from Poland (Pine 1998, 2002). She contrasted Gorale attitudes to market and business skills (referred as *handel*, from the German) to those of the factory workers in Lodz. The former love it when people are skilled at dealing and business, and tend to celebrate it, especially if it one of their own and hence not against them. The latter, by contrast, found a suggestion that someone was dealing deeply shameful and embarrassing, and implied that if they were, it was only out of dire necessity, caused by the collapse of honest, hard, factory work.

Here we have thus two important distinctions – the idea of honest labour versus the idea of almost a bricolage of skills and tricks. Not surprisingly, in the Czech context, apropos a country much more homogenous than Poland during the socialist years, these two distinct ways of thinking about labour exist, too. However, here the main dichotomy in the attitudes to labour is to be identified between (ethnic) Czechs, who by and large subscribe to the notion of honest, hard, productive work, and the local Roma, whom the Czechs perceive as living off others through their parasitism and dealing. This dichotomy is then further replicated in relation to other categories of people pertinent to the Czech context – a point I touched upon in the previous chapter. Thus, the Ukrainians, for instance, are seen as capable of hard, honest work, as far as my informants are concerned, whereas, say, Muslims or the intelligentsia are not. The approval or acceptance of the presence of the Vietnamese minority is expressed through statements such as '*Je taky vietnamskej dělník*' ('Some Vietnamese are also blue-collar workers').

In addition to manual skilfulness there is another strong value upheld by most people that is related to labour and needs to be underscored – and that is work for work's sake. It is mostly physical work, however, that is being prized, and this type of work, ever since I remember, has been very much encouraged in

Czech households. 'Go and do something!´ (´*Běž něco dělat!*'), spouses frequently urge each other as well as their offspring. Simultaneously, 'He/she doesn't do anything!' is a recurrent complaint of people about their partners, indicating their weak morals. Cultivation through labour and even labour as a means to fight off dejection are themes that appear in a number of folktales local children grow up with. Michael Stewart, drawing on the work of the historian Jacques le Goff, traced the origins of the value attributed to labour to the Middle Ages (Stewart 1997). The peasant notion of the virtue of labour on one's land then dates back to that time too, as do the appeals to work ethic by capitalists and later by communists under the actually existing socialism.

Work for Work's Sake – The Value of Physical Labour

Now I home in on the perception of work in relation to self-worth amongst my informants. Let me start with work for work's sake. My informants often made remarks testifying to the fact that together with the rest of the population they too revered strong work ethic. The value of work for work's sake (implying predominantly manual work) featured prominently in their discourse. Here I limit myself only to a few statements from my informants. For example, Radka, a composite individual whom I introduced to the reader earlier on, once talked to me about her work colleagues. She spoke particularly scornfully about one of them. '*Makat neuměla*.', were her exact and condemning words, meaning 'She did not know how to work hard.' (The Czech word *makat* comes from the German *machen* and it can be translated as to work extremely hard or to work one's arse off, depending on the context.) When Libor, another (composite) informant of mine, during our interview emphasised that he had a job, even though he could have easily been on a disability benefit, he also alluded to the value of work for work's sake. And, finally, when a party sympathiser on one occasion confided in me that he was lazy and that he really wished he was harder-working, he was too, in a way, subscribing to the notion of the virtue of labour.

I have chosen these specific examples to help to illustrate the following point. Stressing work for work's sake formed an important component of my

interlocutors' self-identity. They utilised it to define their own position in the society – namely though contrasting their supposed hard (physical) work with the supposed indolence of various others. When Libor underlined that he held down a job, his disability notwithstanding, he did so to make a clear a distinction between himself, as a person, and perhaps as an ethnic Czech, and between the work-shy Roma. Even though Libor was one of the most anti-Roma people from the pool of my informants, the laziness and parasitism of Gypsies was a constant and widespread theme. Together with 'making mess' laziness was the most defining feature of the Roma as far as the Workers were concerned. Conversely, 'good gypsies' were those that 'worked'. And here it needs to be added that, just like the Roma, other minorities were also judged for the most part in terms of their attitude to work. Thus, as can be recalled from the previous chapter, Ukrainians may have been involved in Mafia, but they were not afraid of work. The Vietnamese, the minority my informants as a group were otherwise most undecided about, were also admired for their extreme work ethic. Another ethnic group my interlocutors valued for their attitude to work were Sudeten Germans. Hardworking, civilised, tidy and entrepreneurial – these were the characteristics usually attributed to them. These characteristics, probably somewhat idealised, were utilised by my informants and other sections of the population alike to contrast them with the (alleged) slack work ethic of the people who replaced the Sudeten Germans in the borderlands – Roma as well as ethic Czechs. The Roma were not the only people in the eyes of my informants who provided a negative example of work ethic, however. At the time of my fieldwork people from the Middle East were seen in the same light. Finally, my informants did not only contrast their own alleged industriousness with the laziness and parasitism of Gypsies and certain other ethnic groups, but also with the laziness and decadence of anarchists and laziness of thieving elites.

As suggested, working hard was particularly prized when referring to physical work. And physical labour – and manual dexterity especially - is something that resonated not only with the population at large but, unsurprisingly, even more so with my informants. It seems to me that in the treatment of academics, however, without ever saying so explicitly, physical

work - including skilled physical work - is often passed over as a negative consequence of a low level of formal education, of 'not making the grade' at school. The possibility of it being sometimes actively chosen, by some people at least, is not really considered. This bias on the part of researchers is quite detrimental, I think, for it prevents us from a full grasp of what we sometimes have in front of us.

When considering my informants' own accounts of work, there are a number of observations to be made. Firstly, it is clear that they genuinely valued handiness. During interviews when the questions centred on the family members I noticed a pattern – namely that a manually skilled relative, typically one of the grandfathers, came to be spontaneously brought up by my interviewees. In this regard perhaps the most memorable was an account of one of the Workers' supporters, whom I shall call Robert. Robert spent a relatively considerable part of the interview talking about one of his grandfathers. Although the grandfather was a senior consultant in a hospital, his father was a carpenter as well as a blacksmith. This great-grandfather passed these skills to his son, that is Robert's grandfather, who, in turn, passed them on Robert. Robert then proceeded to explain to me what various and varied tools his grandfather had in his shed and garage, what things he was able to make with them, what he made for Robert and what specifically Robert learnt from him. Robert then went on telling me how he was glad that during the disputes over the inheritance after the grandfather's death he had managed to gain for himself a series of grandfather's knives and swords, including some very special pieces from the point of view of craftsmanship. 'Nowadays boys do not even know how to hammer a nail.', Robert assessed the current situation. Robert, however did not work as a craftsman. His parents were scientists and his brother was a university student at the time of my fieldwork. As for Robert, despite a number of attempts, he did not manage to get into university. He was a semi-professional sportsman, also had his own little private business and supplemented his income with the occasional unskilled work on building sites. I always had the feeling that despite the real admiration for his brother, or

parents, he himself never took any interest in academic subjects and sports and 'making things' was where his interest truly lay.

Just like for Robert, for many of my research participants manual work was in fact their preference. They chose not to pursue higher education and not to pursue white-collar jobs. For example, a far right sympathiser whom I shall call David, the son of a solicitor mother, decided not to continue with his studies after the maturita exam and worked as a tool maker instead. David rather enjoyed his job and in his spare time he engaged in various DIY activities. It was clear that David derived a lot of satisfaction from making tangible objects. There was another informant, a baker by trade, who stood out for me in this respect perhaps the most. On several occasions he told me how much he enjoyed working the dough, shaping it into different types of bakery products. His wages, however, were particularly low and some members of his family urged him to find a better paid job. Even the Workers' Party chairman apparently tried to convince him to do further studies and pass the maturita exam as a way of getting a better paid job. The baker, however, refused, claiming he really took pleasure in his job.

From examples such as these, I argue, we can see that extolling the virtue of manual work, at least the skilled one, can be more than a virtue made out of necessity. The nature of the work itself, that is creating tangible objects, can be a source of pride as well as pleasure. When this type of work is devalued or even taken away completely, so is one's way of life. However, this gets usually discounted from the analysis of the far right. Instead, theorists tend to focus on a number of other explanations. Usually, the researchers tend to account for the political preferences of the far right voters either in economic terms or with reference to low educational levels, or both. Czech social scientists use the same explanatory framework with regards to the *Workers' Party*.

Engaging with Conventional Explanations of Political Preferences of the Far Right

Low level of formal education, it has been argued, leads to lower skilled and thus lower paid jobs. Such workers bear the brunt of unpredictable market forces. They are therefore more prone to becoming 'victims of modernisation'

(Sheuch and Klingemann 1967, Falter 1996). Far right extremist parties pledge to defend the economic interests of these voters – especially through curbing the rights of foreigners (who compete for the same low skilled jobs) to work and to welfare services. This is an interest-based argument.

Whilst nothing in my own research suggests that this line of argument is wrong, it is somehow incomplete or one-dimensional as it does not quite reflect my informants' own understanding of the world around them. Yes, my informants decried the continual devaluation of their crafts – manifested through the closure of apprenticeship centres, through employment of unqualified labour from abroad, that is of people not possessing given vocational qualifications, and through the subsequent lowering of standards of craftwork. On the other hand, I need to clarify here that most my research participants thought about foreign workforce less as mere competitors and more as a corollary of global capitalism. They frequently referred to them as 'slaves'. However, this was not a term of mockery but instead reflected how my informants understood the working conditions of foreign workers. Besides, foreigners were not thought of only as migrant workers, but also, perhaps even more so, as employers. Working for 'slave wages' for foreign companies with the profit leaving the country, national companies, unable to withstand the direct competition of the global market, being phased out, the know-how developed by them being lost forever with their closures - these were the concerns of the Czech far right as much as the presence of foreign workers. Concerning the Roma, my informants saw them not only as competitors for welfare services, but also as people with whom they have had rather intimate relationships (schooling, place of residence), but relationships fraught with tension and conflict. According to them the 'System' gave the Roma special treatment and it was first and foremost the 'System' that needed to be changed radically.

The literature on working class masculinity can be also illuminating (e.g. Connel 1995, Benyon 2002, Bourdieu 1984, etc.). It recognises the centrality of boasting about physical prowess (and, in the same vein, emphasising the physical demands of working class jobs) to the performance of working class

masculinity and links this to the subordinate structural position of the working class (men) in the society. In fact, the relationship between gender and class is important, in general terms as well as in the Czech Republic specifically. For example, during my fieldwork it struck me that the class distinctions I know from the UK map quite well onto the gender distinctions I find in the Czech Republic. Namely, across the social spectrum Czech women appear to have more middle class tastes, men more working class. Also, when comparing employment patterns pre- and post-1989 with regards to gender one can see that there has been an increase in the number of females entering tertiary education, for example. There is a high number of females in tertiary education (just over 50%, depending on the source), almost full and full-time female employment and also prevalence of the female workforce in white-collar jobs. The position of women in public life since 1989, coupled with the wider trends of this era such as unemployment, precariousness of the job market and lowering of wages for manual work, have repercussions for working class males. Their way of coping with this disempowering situation is to overstress the importance of hard physical work (discourse) and adopt a brutal masculine style (performance). The only shortcoming of the literature on working class masculinity is that it tacitly views any physical work, even skilled, as something unfortunate.

In other arguments education itself is viewed as the most decisive factor as to whether one votes extreme right or not. It has been proposed that the longer one stays in formal education the greater the exposure to liberal values. This increases the likelihood of accepting these values (Erikson & Goldhorpe 1992, Kitschelt & McGann, A.J. 1997). Alternatively, the longer one stays in formal education the more complex thinking one acquires. Complex thinking leads to greater open-mindedness and to the refusal of xenophobia (Weil 1985). By contrast I argue that the link between the level of education and extreme right views, and indeed the role of education itself, has been treated as unproblematic. Formal education in this research is glossed over as impartial, neutral. Adherents of extreme right, having reached only low level of formal education, are deemed to think simplistically and/or wrongly. Stopping short of saying so, formal education thus amounts to a correct worldview. Reasons for

entering or not entering higher education tend to be dealt with unproblematically.

The problem with attributing the far right views solely to the level of education is that it was not born out in my own research. Firstly, a number of my informants, for some perhaps a surprisingly high number of my informants, went to university. Sometimes they entered university several years later than is usual, as was the case with the Party's chairman and his deputy. What is significant, however, is that although having obtained higher education, including gaining degrees in the disdained social science (my informants were on the whole very scathing about social sciences), none of these people left the far right 'scene'. Quite on the contrary, they have remained very much active within it. It seems that exposure to the higher education in itself does not do away with the existence of extreme right. If anything, it only seems to sharpen their argumentation.

There is no doubt that my informants understood (higher) education – and social science specifically - as a form of indoctrination, as something bearing little resemblance to reality. This is more than just privileging practical skills over theory, something perhaps common to the working class more generally, as for example argued by Willis (1977) in Learning to Labour in reference to the English working class. The Czech far right more or less rejects higher education as propaganda of the elites. And, in turn, views and observations of the far right have been conventionally dismissed outright by the establishment as simplistic, prejudiced and flawed. This can be also done in a rather subtle way. Often when describing the worldview of people with extreme right leanings the scholars employ the term perception, perception in the sense understanding or thinking about something in a particular way. This does not necessarily mean a correct or logical way.

My first-hand encounter with the members and sympathisers of the Workers' Party and careful study of their views as well as practice revealed that the line between the right and wrong views is by no means clear-cut and, as we can see from more recent social and political development, it has come under

some serious challenge – from various quarters. For example, debates around the Brexit referendum, emergence and success on the political scene of people from the non-political class (e.g. Donald Trump in the USA, Andrej Babiš in the Czech Republic), the 'safe space' versus free speech debates on college campuses, etc., etc. – these all somehow testify to the struggle by sections of the (western) societies to change the prevalent or dominant strands in public ideologies. It is remarkable to observe how, over the past five years or so, many of the assertions of the far right have come to be seen in a radically different light – from something that tended to be written off as unfounded by the establishment to something accepted as valid and up for the discussion (by the very same establishment). Such assertions are no longer seen as extreme and connected with the far right. Perhaps the best example of this at the moment is the discussion regarding the presence of immigrant workforce and the depression of wages. At the same time, it is interesting that in his chapter 'Global systemic crisis, class and its representations' from 2015 Jonathan Friedman (2015), hardly a propagator of extreme right, understands the interconnection between economy, class, elites and dominant discourses and moralities to a large extent in the same way as my informants. Friedman's articulation is more eloquent, he takes a broader historical perspective – and there is no trace of any conspiracy theory, of course. Nonetheless, the overlap is striking.

Michale Billig's work (1988, 1991) suggests a different and interesting perspective on the seeming paradox where high exposure of some of my far right informants to formal education not only did not translate into more liberal views, as expected, but instead enabled them to hone their already existing views. Billig argued that extreme right, rather than being a repository of conservative or reactionary worldviews, draws on the same discourse of the Enlightenment as anyone else. And as the Enlightenment body of thought is permeated with ambiguities, dilemmas and outright internal inconsistencies the far right simply skilfully exploits these.

So far I argued that the existence of the Czech far right and their asserted workerist identity is not solely a response to an economic competition from foreign labour force, or to their subordinate and ever more precarious structural position in the Czech society, although these do play the part. I have also argued that searching for their stance in their undereducation is misplaced. I suggested that instead we should consider that denigration of the manual work, whether skilled or unskilled, is also an attack on my informants' personhood. And whilst there was a degreee of romanticism in their understanding and imagination of socialism - whether of the 'brown' or the 'red' variety, and romanticism both reflective and restorative (see Boym 2002), my informants did not overromanticise physical labour. Thus, while exalting the virtues of a strong work ethic on the one hand they simultaneously considered work meaningless when the hard manual labour was remunerated very poorly. Then the standard expression to describe such a situation was *dřít se jako vůl* – literally to work like an ox, perhaps the equivalent of the English idiom to work like a dog. When reflecting on their identity as (manual) workers, my informants would not be totally consistent, either. The sense of pride in being a manual worker was certainly there, asserted, and felt quite genuine. But so were the self-denigrating remarks of the type '*I am just an ordinary stupid manual labourer'* ('*Jsem jen obyčejnej blbej dělník.*') that I came across during my fieldwork so often. And where my research participants came from families where parents and/or grandparents were professionals, there was a sense of disappointment in their descendants. It seemed that the Workers and people from their milieu tried quite hard to 'drum up' their workerist pride. Nonetheless, given the not so amenable environment in the larger society they could not quite succeed.

Now I would like to go back a little to the interest-based argument that holds that far right voters, employed in lower skilled and lower paid jobs, compete with foreigner workers for livelihood and therefore want to see the rights of the foreign labour force curbed. However, what I would like to do here is focus on the implications of my informants' material situation on their worldview and their actions.

As mentioned earlier, most of my informants were on low or even minimal wage. When in the field, without giving it much thought, I concluded very early on that my informants were poor. It was their outdated gadgets or even a lack of certain electronic devices, quite commonplace in the Czech Republic among their age group, their lack of cars, their clothes, sometimes bordering on shabby, their rather frequent bickering amongst themselves about money, complaints about the non-payment of party membership fees by some of the members and especially, quite literally, searching for coins in their pockets in the last week before their pay day that made me come to this conclusion. In other words, I have construed their economic situation as one of relative poverty.

I argue that there is a link between the specific economic situation my informants found themselves in and what effects this had on their expressions of solidarity, generosity, tolerance, forms of sharing, etc. Unlike people on higher wages and in more secure employment, and unlike university students, perhaps of the same age as my informants but not earning their own money yet and being financially dependent on their parents, Workers were made to think about money constantly. They had to budget all the time and most were experiencing a level of stress as a result. Due to this scarcity of money the Workers took a particular interest and were very sensitive to how the state used and/or redistributed money collected from the taxes. As money was very much perceived as well as directly experienced as in short supply, my informants wanted the state to use the tax revenue only on 'our own people', that is on the Czech nation itself. They were particularly critical of tax relief for various foreign companies, of money being used as a humanitarian aid outside of the Czech Republic, as well as the unemployment benefits for the Roma, always perceived as parasites. People 'from the outside', that is foreigners, can have certain qualities and some of them can contribute to the Czech society. However, there is the notion that in the times of scarcity 'our people' always come first. In other words, this is a classic example of welfare chauvinism. In terms of welfare chauvinism a number of propositions have been made as to what are the causes of such attitude. In the Czech case, I argue, it is the income inequality that drives such a behaviour, rather than negative prejudice against various others.

Perception versus Reality of Work Ethic

I will want to conclude this chapter with an observation I found really striking whilst in the field – that is the gap between the self-perception of the far right in relation to work and the reality. I have reasons to be sceptical of the self-proclaimed work ethic of my informants in their employment. Throughout the fieldwork I overhead many stories of my research participants being drunk at work, having a hangover in the workplace or being absent due to excessive drinking the previous night. What is more, my informants' work ethic in relation to the work for the party was far from ideal. Although self-development was often alluded to on the website of the *Workers' Youth,* in terms of their self-development there was room for improvement, to put it diplomatically. My informants did not attend part-time or distant courses after work – whether to broaden their knowledge or to obtain specific practical skills they could utilise in their work for the party, such as learning web design, languages, etc. Their engagement in the day-to-day running of the party such as preparing demonstrations, contributing articles for websites and newspapers, etc. also left a lot to be desired according to my judgement. The rather limited and sometimes very limited financial means of individual members certainly played some part in their decision not to pursue formal education. However, I observed that a great deal of money and time was spent on drinking in pubs, therefore financial reasons cannot fully explain the lack of investment in 'self-development', nor can this be entirely accounted for as a result of the disdain for formal education, seen as indoctrination. It seems that although invoking working class, working class roots and working class interests, the party has simultaneously tried to present itself as upholding middle-class values of perseverance, looking into the future and making sacrifices for future reward. It has also attempted to instil these values in its own ranks. There however, the notion of personal sacrifice for future benefits competed, and not particularly successfully, with the 'live for today and enjoy yourself' attitude. My informants very much tried but were unable to resolve the two approaches to life.

Chapter 4

Clothes, style, (broader aesthetic)

While the subject matter of the previous two chapters centred around my informants' ideology or ideologies, in this and the subsequent chapter I turn my attention to the expressive culture of the Czech far right. In other words, after exploring what my informants said they do and what they thought ought to be done, the focus here will be on a performance.

I decided to dedicate a full chapter to my informants' way of dressing and appearance more generally as the fieldwork situation called for it. Firstly, it was the preoccupation of the informants themselves. Secondly, the police and academics and other experts working with the police or the intelligence agency BIS were very much interested in the symbols employed by my informants, including those on their clothing. The usage of so called defective or flawed symbols (*závadový symbol*), to use the parlance of the Czech police, was in fact of as much of the interest to the authorities as my informants' ideologies. Thirdly, I observed that for people outside of the far-right milieu the appearance of my informants played a pivotal role in forming a negative judgement of them. For members of the general public 'reading' the appearance of my informants was sufficient to form an opinion of them and they did not feel any further need to read or listen to their actual message.

All of the above suggests that putting the appearance of the (Czech) far-right under some scrutiny is of no lesser importance than the analysis of their ideology or socio-economic background. In fact, this focus both complements and supplements the usual areas explored by those who study the far right in their attempt to comprehend the far-right phenomenon. Not only is it a useful tool to reflect on what all goes into our forming of a political opinion and what

affects our voting behaviour, it also speaks more generally to scholarship concerned with human communication.

Some Typical Reactions to my Informants' Style

Let me begin by presenting here comments made by my friends and family members when I showed them images from the Workers' Party demonstrations, photos of individuals belonging to the 'far right' scene or photos of groups of friends from within this milieu.

Whilst it cannot be said that my friends and extended family faithfully reflect every single stratum of the Czech society in terms of socio-economic class, or that their preferences for political parties and movements extend to all of those existing in the political landscape in the Czech Republic, I can be confident that this sample covered a reasonably broad range of political positions. In the very least, none of my friends or relatives hold views that could be deemed in any way extreme. Furthermore, when putting my friends' and relatives' comments on the look of my informants side by side with the portrayal of skinheads and other far-right groups in the media or, let us say, with their artistic rendering such as in films or comedy sketches, then my friends' and relatives' remarks were entirely consistent with and reflected the notions about the far right circulating in the wider Czech society.

(Here I need to make an important note. I have never taken any photographs in the field and all the images used below were taken from various open access internet websites (many of these websites or the particular pages no longer in existence). This was a conscious decision. As I was carrying out research among people who belonged to or were associated with a political party whose legal status was under constant challenge from the political establishment, I reasoned that taking photographs would be inappropriate and would in fact damage the rapport I was trying to build.)

Below are the most typical types of response I received upon showing my friends and relatives images from demonstrations or from the private life of the people I studied. For each image I limited myself to presenting one or two comments.

Middle class. No. Workers. These people are not particularly well educated. Young people. A bit aggressive. Or not aggressive. Just unhappy. Not aggressive. Explosive? No, that's not the right word. (Fig. 1)

Fig.1
[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

According to the way they look they don't have much experience. Or knowledge. They are manipulable. (Fig. 2)

Fig. 2

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

One informant: I can see anger. They are angry. They haven't achieved anything themselves, yet they are angry. (Fig. 3)

Another informant: Ah, some demonstration. A right-wing demo. They look like they have their own opinions on things and are not interested in alternatives. (Fig. 3)

Fig. 3

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

First I can see this man here. The 'muscle man'. He looks scary. The rest is somewhere in the background for me. He does look scary. (Fig. 4)

Fig. 4

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

No one looks likeable in here. This one in the combats – he looks like a nationalist. I don't like them. (Fig. 5)

Fig. 5

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Not this one! Jesus Christ! These are some fascists! (Fig. 6)

Fig. 6

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Jesus! I don't like him. He looks like some kind of a villain from James Bond. Judging from this badge – he is some kind of a fascist. I don't know what this badge means – but it looks suspicious. (Fig. 7)

Another informant: This one looks German. A normal Nazi (a laugh). Just like from German films. (Fig. 7)

Fig. 7

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Ah, bone heads. Nazi-propagators. To me they look like they wouldn't need much to start a fight. They look animal-like. As someone who wouldn't think with their heads. (Fig. 8)

Fig. 8

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Jesus Christ! I can't even look at it. He looks demented. Manipulable. (Fig. 9)

Fig. 9

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Oh – another disgusting image. So manipulable. (Fig. 10)

Fig. 10

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

One informant: They look unusual. They make me feel uneasy. (Fig. 11)
Another informant: Well, these are also some fascists. Or maybe they are not. But these badges ... I don't know what they mean, but they remind me of some fascist symbols. (Fig. 11)

Fig. 11

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

One informant: This reminds me of a young German. Like someone from WW2 film. A good-looking guy, though. (Fig. 12)

Another informant: This one does not look nice. Although he would be good-looking. (Fig. 12)

Fig. 12

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

These guys are off to some get-together. From their tattoos I can tell this is some kind of a violent movement. Judging from their expressions – they are not happy people. They have aggression inside them. (Fig. 13)

Fig. 13

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

These people look tipsy. A drinking party. I can see that there might be a fight somewhere down the line. (Fig. 14)

Fig. 14

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Ah, the bone-heads again. This time they have some girls with them. Who's got a girl-friend – they bring her in. But the girls are not into what these guys are. They think differently. (Fig. 15)

Fig. 15

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

However, when I showed my 'non-far-right' informants images of the same people – but this time donning suits – the reaction was following:

One informant: Some politicians, no doubt. (on my question why) Because they are dressed in suits and ties. (Fig. 16)

Another informant: Ah, these look like some CEOs of corporations. Those that take money for nothing. Those suits … They look neat. Better than those you showed me in the previous picture. (Fig. 16)

Fig. 16

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

This one just looks like someone working for a railway company. Is he? (Fig. 17)

Fig. 17

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

One informant: Hm. This one looks like someone who has got something in his head. He is a thinking type. Minimally college educated. (Fig. 18)

Another informant: This one looks nicer. Possibly he is a bastard. But he looks kinder than the people in the previous photos (referring to people shown in figures 9, 10, 13, 14, 15). (Fig. 18)

Fig. 18

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

He looks like just a normal guy. I can't characterise him. (Fig. 19)

Fig. 19

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

This one looks like a teacher. Or a Jehovah's Witness. (Fig. 20)

Fig. 20

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Perceptions of the Public Analysed

A number of points are clear here. First of all, although my friends and relatives did not know any of the people shown to them, they did not hesitate to form an opinion of them. For some time it has been acknowledged that in face-to-face interaction appearance usually comes before discourse (Stone 1962), at least in an urban environment and other anonymous settings. In such an environment we deduce people's social identity from their appearance. This sets our expectations for their behaviour (Barners and Eicher 1993) and we feel we can effectively act towards them (Johnson, Crutsinger and Workman 1994). The same applies when we view images of people unknown to us. This ties up with another observation. Namely, when my friends and family members saw images of my informants from demonstrations or private parties, their comments were overwhelmingly negative, often asserting low intelligence and aggressiveness of the people in pictures. Importantly, this was also the case when they viewed images with no Nazi or other far-right or nationalist symbols or references on the clothes and bodies of the people in them. However, in images where the very same people were wearing a formal attire, the reactions of my friends and relatives switched from being disapproving to being neutral or even positive. Here I have to at the same time point out that the external appearance of the *Workers* was viewed in less dramatic terms by some of my male relatives and their friends. These men themselves were apolitical, but were in occupations that could be characterised as blue-collar – as was the majority of my informants. And their own personal style of dress resembled that of my informants, too – albeit it was in a more muted form and devoid of any extremist references. Here the link between the working class males, their specific style of dress and their self-image is slowly beginning to shape up. This point will be attended to later on in this chapter. Simultaneously, this also indicates that there was no sharp break between my informants and the rest of the society. This should not be particularly surprising. For instance, Bourdieu (1984) in his book *Distinction* influentially argued and demonstrated for post-World War II France that people from the same social group occupy identical

position in social space and are inclined to manifest the same tastes, no matter what symbolic practice we are talking about. Dress is an example of symbolic practice and Bourdieu evidenced his theory also on an analysis of the vestimentary behaviour of different sections of the French population of that period. His observations and theories are still worth engaging with, even when we consider material from class-based societies other than the 1960s France.

Another observation I would like to make that will be addressed in the course of this chapter is that not only was the outward appearance of my informants crucial to the public, but the public found their appearance really off-putting, regarding them as aggressive louts with low IQs worshipping Hitler. Here, however, I have to highlight that my personal experience of these people either proves otherwise – or at least complicates such a negative perception. Some of the people whose pictures I had shown, people who were so negatively commented on earlier by my friends and relatives, had been known to me personally. Not only did I find most of them well informed about the world around them and their argumentation usually quite cohesive, they were on the whole much better informed about both domestic and international politics than my non-far-right informants, who saw themselves as superior in both knowledge and natural intelligence to the people from the far right scene. Nor did I ever experience my informants as aggressive. Of course, I would like to stress that this is not to say that people from the far-right scene are more insightful than everyone else. Nor can I claim that the people I grew to know during my fieldwork have never ever been engaged in violence. Nonetheless, and this is significant, there is certainly some mismatch between my experience of these people and how the general public perceives them and this merits consideration.

I also noticed that my informants had some awareness of the negative image they presented to the world through their appearance. In their conversations with me the people I studied – both party officials and ordinary members - would stress their condemnation of the fellow members and sympathisers who

would arrive for a demonstration dressed 'too far right'. The same stance against this way of dressing appeared in some of the articles on the party website and the website of its youth wing. 'Dressed too far right', however, is my expression. 'Unsuitable clothing and behaviour' are, for example, the exact words as they appeared in an article written by the chairman of the Workers' Youth as it appeared on the Workers' Youth website in connection with the DSSS organised demonstration in Svitavy. In private I often heard 'dressed like idiots' (*oblečený jak blbci*) or *boneheads (holé lebky)* as the most common articulations of disapproval. Such self-criticism certainly seemed genuine.

Here, though, two things struck me as interesting and even ironic. Firstly, in the face-to-face interaction the clothes/appearance would never come between those who criticised the 'far right attire' and those who wore it. Secondly, many of those who condemned such self-presentation then showed up at a demonstration in exactly the same fashion they were so critical of earlier on and/or in another context. What interests me here is why these people find it so difficult, or even impossible, to change the way they dress, albeit temporarily and for a very specific purpose, even though they are reasonably aware how negatively perceived they are by larger public when dressed this way and that it impedes their success as a political party. I explore what is being produced and/or claimed by being dressed in a particular way and why is the way my informants dress and adorn their body so repellent to so many people in the first place.

The 'Far Right' Look of my Informants

In order to start answering these and other questions, first I need to examine what the Czech far right wear, how, and why. Therefore, what follows is a relatively detailed description of the clothing, body art or ornaments I found among my informants during the time of my fieldwork.

I start with a little historical contextualisation. The roots of my informants' style can be found in the skinheadism of the late 1980s and 1990s when the skinhead subculture entered the Czech Republic from the UK as well as via Germany. Visually the subculture was very striking and an emulation of the style of their English and German 'brethren' was an important feature of this period. Nonetheless, over time from within the far right there has been the move away from an emphasis on style (i.e. the visually conspicuous skinheads) to the more diluted skinhead or post-skinhead look or complete neutrality. This shift corresponds to the development of the Czech far right from a youth subculture to a protest/social movement to a political party. Less style and more substance, one might perhaps add.

Before delving into details, I would like to pinpoint the overall visual effect. Consulting my fieldwork notes from the whole time period, but especially those from the very beginning when I observed my future informants at their public demonstrations from afar as an onlooker, I can say that for me personally, taken as a whole, the look would be best summed up into two words: poverty and aggression. To a large extent this – especially the aggression aspect - also reverberates the impressions of my friends and family members when I asked them to react to the photos I presented them with.

When looking at them at a larger gathering – e.g. at demonstrations or at a party meeting - the overall visual effect notwithstanding, upon closer inspection my informants were not a homogenous mass. Three main types of look could be discerned and will be first described now. The party representatives, particularly those middle aged ones, would wear smart-casual clothing or formal suits – depending on the occasion. The hairstyles and clothing, whether more smart or more casual, would be best characterised as 'middle of the road'. Their clothes seemed respectable and not particularly expensive (Fig. 21, Fig. 22, Fig. 17). Younger party representatives would be dressed in the smart-casual style or dress formally for the party conference and/or when representing the party to the wider public. On the other hand, in their private life they would wear the 'far

right' look. Most younger ordinary members and sympathisers would wear the said 'far right' look at virtually all times. Finally, the ordinary middle aged and older members of the party would dress in a 'normal' or 'ordinary' way. (Fig. 5.5 – a picture taken at the party conference in 2011 shows both the 'ordinarily dressed' and 'far-right dressed' people in the audience.)

Fig 21

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Fig. 22

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Fig. 23

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

The look of the middle-aged and older members who dressed in an 'ordinary' or nondescript way equally testified to their total lack of interest in clothes and appearance as well as to the material poverty. This sort of approach to clothes corresponds to the one described by Bourdieu for the French working class (1984). Working-class people, writes Bourdieu, spend little on their personal appearance, including clothing. This is so due to the lack of economic capital on the one hand, but also because they are aware that their position in the market does not assign value to their appearance. Thus, they would derive no material or symbolic profit from putting money and effort into the way they look. As a result, working-class people opt for functional and versatile clothing, that is clothing that is practical, cheap and long-lasting – long-lasting both in terms of fabric durability and in terms of avoiding clothes that are clearly fashion fads or that are designed for one specific specialised purpose.

When I was showing pictures from various gatherings, none of my friends or relatives remarked on the appearance of these ordinarily-dressed people, but they would notice and comment on the young people dressed in the more eye-catching, that is 'far-right' way. It seems that for my non far-right informants these 'ordinarily' dressed Workers were invisible, in part probably because they were simply overshadowed by the younger, more conspicuously dressed *Workers*. Nonetheless, these older and visually non-conspicuous *Workers* are worth a mention because their clothes still shared certain characteristics with the clothes of the younger, more noticeable and more macho-looking colleagues. Namely, both the visually conspicuous younger and the 'invisible' older *Workers* had no interest in following fashion trends, and the clothes of both groups was functional or practical. However, unlike the older, 'normally' or 'ordinarily' dressed *Workers*, the younger, more 'far-right' looking men used their clothes to serve an additional purpose. And since they were numerically more prevalent as well as visually more obvious, I shall now shift the focus to this group of my informants.

To reiterate, most members and sympathisers sported the 'far right' look – a style that has clearly evolved from the skinhead style and that also retained something of the black bloc style donned by the members of National Resistance (*Národní odpor*) (Fig. 6.5, Fig. 8) and Autonomous Nationalists (*Autonomní nacionalisté*), the far right movements of which many of the younger Workers I came to know had been in the past members. It was precisely this style that repelled the general public, and my informants wanted, but could not, compromise on. Apropos, the most extreme versions of this style were sought after by journalists who used these images as the visual shorthand to represent the Czech far-right generally, much in the same way that journalists in Britain, for example, disproportionately use photographs of women with face coverings to represent Muslim women as a whole, although in reality British Muslim women dress in very diverse ways and only a minority veils their faces (Tarlo 2010).

The said 'far right' style consisted of the following elements. First, there was the sports element. Wearing sportswear was very ubiquitous among my informants with the Lonsdale and Everlast, mainstream sportswear/streetwear labels, dominating. Then there was the army element. Heavy boots and combat trousers – whether camouflage or fatigues - were the most prevalent, though not exclusive, items of army clothing donned by my informants. Clothes (or tattoos) proclaiming a particular political or ideological message or position, whether overtly or in a more coded way, was another important aspect of my informants' appearance. During the times of my fieldwork I also encountered anticapitalist messages written on T-shirts. 'My heart for Moravia' was a very common slogan on T-shirts of my informants in the region of southern Moravia. An example of a coded message, on the other hand, would be wearing of an unzipped bomber jacket over a Lonsdale t-shirt. This t-shirt would have the word Lonsdale written across the chest of the wearer. And as the unzipped jacket would obscure the first couple of letters on the left and a couple of letters on the right, only the letters nsda would be visible, this way referencing or evoking the NSDAP party. Then there were hoodies and T-shirts referencing the

Nordic/Viking mythology and badges with the DS logo (the DS - Workers' Party - was the predecessor of the DSSS party, dissolved by the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic in 2010). The Thor Steiner label was also relatively popular. The slogans, imagery as well as the font used by this particular label strongly evoke the Third Reich. The items produced by this label border on legality – indeed wearing the label is prohibited in some states in Germany. I have also come across the label Helly Hansen. It is a mainstream benign Norwegian functionalwear label, appropriated by my informants for its HH logo. Tattoos were also very widespread among my informants. Most of the time they were hidden from the view of most people, myself including. From what I saw in person and from incriminating photos published on the Antifa website, dragons, Nordic mythology, but also references to the Third Reich were the main themes. Most of these young or younger men would have very short hair bordering on bald. Baseball caps were common among them. The overall effect was tough, masculine in a sporty or military sort of way, but not expensive and not laboured. Finally, there were two other and much smaller groups. Some young members of the party or its youth wing were quite fashion-conscious. This group was relatively small. An even smaller, in fact a tiny, group were those who, at least as far as I am concerned, flirted with the Hitlerjugend style. The characteristic undercut, formal black shirts, etc., somehow called to mind the Hitler's Youth (Fig. 7).

Fig. 24
[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

The young female members and sympathisers of the party usually took pride in their appearance, but they did not follow fashion trends per se. They often

wore their hair long and dyed in bold colours. They donned tight tops, short skirts and make-up. Tattoos were not unusual, particularly among females prominent on the scene. However, their tattoos looked rather 'masculine', and seemed to be no different from those of their male counterparts (Fig. 25 and the female in Fig. 26). On some level in their appearance they bore resemblance to the English 'chavette', but were less 'flashy'. Those girls or women who were charged with certain official duties during demonstrations wore on such occasions more elegantly cut clothes and those very few who were appointed to an office even donned suits for official photos. The overall effect was quite girly, inexpensive, never flamboyant (with one exception of a female who was into the gothic look), quite 'middle of the road'.

Fig. 25

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Fig. 26

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Finally, it needs to be remarked that very few individuals would 'look far right' in themselves. For example, the labels Everlast and Lonsdale are in the Czech Republic very popular generally, particularly among 'working class' young men.

The same goes for a very short hair (for men). Similarly, tattoos are by no means specifically the 'prerogative' of the far right. It is only when together, that the style of my informants becomes more visible and identifiable. As individuals they blend into the mainstream more.

Scholarly Examinations of Dress

Rather than being something trivial or banal, not worthy of a serious scholarly attention, paying attention to one's dress can be very revealing and can provide another angle on a given social phenomenon. Here and in throughout the rest of the chapter I adopt the term 'dress' as used by dress scholars Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) who define dress as an 'assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements' which I find as having a usefully wide meaning.

Scholars who have examined and theorised dress come from a variety of disciplines, such as social psychology, sociology, gender studies, material culture studies, aesthetics, as well as anthropology. Summing up various contributions from all these disciplines one can say that the protection from elements aside, clothing and adornment serves other functions. Namely, there is the communicative function. The way people dress, adorn and modify their bodies can be very expressive – and can be used strategically. The wearer expresses their personality and communicates his/her cultural and social positions to the wider world, to in-groups as well as to themselves. It can be also understood as performance. What is crucial, though, is that this form of communication is not directly equivalent to linguistic communication, rather it is non-discursive or pre-discursive communication. Through dress one can 'say' and imply things that would be crass, vulgar or sometimes even dangerous to convey with words. To an extend this applies to all material objects with aesthetic or artistic dimension. However, material culture studies scholars observed that people react to criticism of their clothing much more intensely than to criticism of their other material possessions (Prown 1982). They therefore concluded that studying dress/adornments is much more indicative of personal identity and values of the

wearers than the analysis of other material objects, such as houses, cars, TV sets, etc. Finally, in addition to the body as a sight for communicating identity I suggest that body has a transformative potential. In other words, through clothes, adornments, various body modifications, body posture, etc., one can seek to transform himself/herself. Once we start drawing on insights such as these, we can understand better the motivations behind my informants' sartorial choices, their inability or unwillingness to 'turn down' their style and the reasons why the rest of the society disapproved.

Let me now start developing a number of points brought up earlier in the chapter.

The Importance of Style, the Disinterest in Fashion Trends

First, there is the actual preference for a particular style of dress and adhering to it at all times. The aforesaid frustrated efforts of the party functionaries to convince their party members and sympathisers (and sometimes even themselves) to neutralise their 'far right' look at demonstrations and other events visible to the public – and thus appear more respectable or agreeable (my own words) to the wider society - are particularly telling. As these appeals fell on deaf ears, it is clear that the way my informants dressed and adorned themselves was very strongly linked to their identity. (At the same time it needs to be pointed out that within the in-group this 'dress code' was rather tacit and the in-group was very tolerant of and unconcerned with the fashion-conscious members, whom there were very few indeed, or those who dressed in a grey, nondescript way.) The first point to be made here is that self-expression through or an emphasis on dress is by no means universal. It is not equally significant to all members of a society and at all times. For example, speaking of the western world in recent decades, the categories of people who tend to express themselves through their bodies are mainly the youth, subcultures and women. For these groups physical appearance is central, even paramount (Hodkinson

2002). My informants, members of the newly disenfranchised working class, are very much attempting to enter the public discourse and ultimately become a key political force in the country. However, so far their efforts have been frustrated. Not only are they, as a political party, denied a voice in the political discourse, two aspects of their self-professed identity, workerism and nationalism, even when the latter is presented in its most innocuous form, are deemed ridiculous, parochial, retrograde, dangerous, and dismissed as such in various arenas of public discourse. This, I argue, contributes to the strong tendency amongst them to express themselves sartorially, that is through non-discursive/extralinguistic means.

In literature with dress as its subject matter, a further and rather sharp distinction is usually made between those who follow fashion trends and those for whom a style is central. For instance, the youth have been observed to follow fashion trends quite slavishly. Women, in addition to paying more attention to and spending more resources on their physical appearance than men, are also said to abide by fashion trends more than men. On the other hand, subcultures are alleged to express their protests against dominant values through a particular style (Hebdige 1979), (although later on the style might be co-opted into the fashion world and re-appear in the form of trends). My informants, being attached to a particular style and disregarding fashion trends, belong to the second group. Financial considerations cannot be dismissed altogether – abiding by fashion trends is expensive and the people I worked with were quite poor. However, I argue that ignoring fashion trends and remaining faithful to a style means that my informants knew and were comfortable with who they were or who they wanted to be. Sticking to one's style implies a dedication to an ideology and/or a group. (In fact, my informants were quite scornful of people with no interest in and no ideas about politics.) And nothing, I argue, exemplifies this commitment more than the permanent inscription on the body, the tattoo – the tattoo being a fairly common occurrence amid the people I worked with.

Another angle or another explanation as to why my informants took virtually no interest in fashion trends and why they struggled to adopt the style typical of the political class can be found in the work of Georg Simmel (1904), a classic on the topic, as well in the writings of his critics such as Herbert Blumer (1969).

Georg Simmel was one of the few scholars of his own era, as well as for many decades later, who treated fashion as a serious area of enquiry. He argued that fashion is essentially a form of class differentiation in a class society that is relatively open. In such a society the elite class always seeks to differentiate itself from other classes and it does so through the adoption of a distinctive form of dress, objects or activities. The classes below the elite class desire to join the ranks of those above them and they try to do so also through the emulation of their style. This, in turn, prompts the elites to take up a new fashion in order to distinguish themselves further from those lower than them. This is an ongoing process, with each new style or fashion trickling down through all the strata of the society.

Interestingly, Simmel's understanding of the fashion mechanism, although formulated over one hundred years ago, can still account for the sartorial behaviour of my informants. However, with regards to my informants it is crucial that they did not wish to copy the elites.   When they spoke disparagingly of the 'System' and of the ruling elites, they were sincere. They wanted to bring about a big societal change, in effect changing many aspects of the current regime, not to rise through the ranks of the existing society and replace the current elites in the same system. This too helps us understand why they found it genuinely very difficult to embrace the style of dress of the elites. Undeniably, when I showed photographs of my informants to my own friends and relatives, they reacted much more positively to my informants wearing suits than when my informants wore their usual 'far right' look. However, when I saw in person or when I look closely at the images of those of my informants who normally wore the 'far right' look, but on that particular occasion or in that particular image wore a suit – they did not look convincing to me. They did not wear this

style effortlessly and gave the impression of not quite being 'in their own skin'. Sometimes the suit did not even fit (fig. 17). They simply did not feel at ease putting a suit, this potent symbol of middle 'classness' and respectability.

Simmel's work has undergone some criticism. Herber Blumer (1969 for example, whilst acknowledging Simmel's insight, claimed that Simmel's model did not fit the 20th century. In the modern era, Blumer argued, the trendsetters are not necessarily the elites and they are not necessarily seen by everyone as the most prestigious and worthy of emulation. Fashion, he proposed, should be instead understood as a search for the zeitgeist, as 'collective groping for the proximate future' (Blumer 1969: 281), as an 'effort to move in a direction which is consonant with the movement of modern life in general' (Blumer 1969: 282). Although Blumer's understanding of fashion differs from that of Simmel, his theory explains my informants' disregard for fashion equally well for my informants were not interested in being in tune with the current life now or in the very near future. They found the contemporary times distressing, were anxious about the future course of events and very much wanted to actively change the direction of the society.

Working Class Masculinity and Transformative Potential of Clothing

Now I would like to focus more closely on the dress itself and propose what can be actually inferred from it. In other words, I start exploring the link between my informants' dress and the message, or identity or perhaps desires, they communicated or performed through it.

As mentioned earlier, the sporty look was very popular among my informants. The relationship between sports and masculinity - and certain specific sports and working class masculinity - has been explored in the men's studies literature (Connell 1995, Levant and Pollack 1995, Kimmel 1987, Beyonon 2001, also see Hoggart 1957). This literature examined multiple masculinities in the west, particularly those in the latter half of the 20th century.

Its authors argued that the emphasis on physical prowess is a typical feature of the working class masculinity and the explanations are to be found in the power relationships and with this connected uneven distribution of different types of capital in the western class society à la Bourdieu (1984). The absence of economic, social or cultural capital, the argument goes, leads to the ideological emphasis on physical masculinity among the working classes. My own data shows that the interest in sports among my research participants, their preference for certain types of sport (usually contact and collective), their occupational background, their own notions of masculinity, etc. – fit the assertions and arguments made in the literature just mentioned.

With regards to sport - there is no universally agreed upon definition. I will work with what I believe to be the notion of sport common to most people, that is sport as a physical activity with a set of rules and usually with an element of competition, even when the sport is practised for fun. The physicality of sport notwithstanding, it needs to be emphasised that sport is not exclusive to the working class. Rather, different classes at different times have preference for different sports, or they may practise the same sport differently, or with a different goal in mind. A general rule offered by Bourdieu is that 'a sport is more likely to be adopted by a social class if it does not contradict that class's relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level' (Bourdieu 1984: 218). With this in mind it is possible to see why my informants, given their background, would be drawn to sports, to collective and contact sports especially, and, by extension, to sportswear and specific sportswear brands. Kickboxing, football or ice-hockey were sports some of my informants actually engaged in at some point in their lives, but most of my informants enjoyed these sports as spectators rather than practitioners. The reasons for the popularity of these particular sports among my informants is not arbitrary. Bourdieu (1984) argued that spectator's involvement and an opportunity for collective festivity are key to the working-class lifestyle. For example, in post-WW2 France circus or melodrama were popular among the working-class people precisely because these forms of entertainment allowed for audience participation and revelry.

Regarding sport, the working classes would favour wrestling, boxing and all forms of team games as these provided the same benefits, Bourdieu argued. Now, going back to the popularity of football and ice-hockey among my own informants, apart from their participatory and festive appeal, it is important that these are also team and contact sports. As such they call for physical qualities such as strength, speed and endurance, but also for team spirit and self-sacrifice – something that Bourdieu refers to as 'working class strength in its approved form' (Bourdieu 1984: 213).

While all this goes some way to explaining why football, ice-hockey or kickboxing should be popular among the *Workers* and their friends, it does not necessarily clarify why these people adopted sportswear associated with these sports as their everyday dress, that is dress to be worn at virtually all times. During my fieldwork I observed that a funeral and a wedding ceremony (but not the wedding reception!) were the only times where my informants made an exception and wore something the society would deem appropriate for such occasions. Still, the intimate, personal relationship with these sports was not there for most of my informants. By the time of my fieldwork there was only one informant who was still playing professionally (both football and ice-hockey). None of the other people who were in the past involved in kickboxing, football or ice-hockey were still active. One reason for the abandonment of these sports can also be found in the work of Bourdieu (1984). When comparing attitudes to sport among different classes in France, Bourdieu realised that three quarters of peasants and manual workers gave up sport by the age of twenty five, whereas the sporting activity of higher classes and especially elites continued for much longer. Bourdieu attributed this to the type of sport activity different classes engaged in. Whereas the elites would select sports and physical activities that were physically less demanding, less dangerous and were actually health-promoting, by contrast, the working-class men took up sports that required more energy, more effort, more pain, and could be even damaging to the body and dangerous. The body simply cannot sustain such strenuous treatment for too long. In any case, the minority of the former practitioners

aside, most informants wearing the brands associated with the said sports were never practising them in the first place.

Although Bourdieu draws on the material of the 1960s France which he then theorises, it is striking how much of his theory can be extended to class-based societies of other times and places, perhaps with certain adjustments. For instance, Bourdieu's theory is still very helpful when explaining the attitude to one's appearance for the middle aged and older *Workers*. However, it is not sufficient to account for the vestimentary preferences of the younger *Workers*. Therefore, we have to go beyond the concepts such as the 'choice of necessity' and consider other aspects of dress, too. I argue that at least one reason behind donning brands that have been affiliated with boxing, mixed martial arts and, to an extent, football, is a desire on the part of my informants to somehow embody qualities involved in practising these types of sport. I certainly observed that in most general terms toughness, strength and readiness to fight were often invoked in my informants' verbal expressions or performances.

Secondly, to comprehend my informants' partiality to sportswear labels associated with boxing and mixed martial arts we have to acknowledge the transformative potential of clothing. Dress scholars have noticed the power of clothing on one's self-perception and behaviour. In short, we wear what we want to be and the clothes we don and other changes we make to our bodies not only reflect our desires but, to some extent, influence our own behaviour. Psychologists have conducted a number of experiments that demonstrated this point. The most famous experiment perhaps involved the white laboratory coat, in effect demonstrating that wearing this type of coat, associated with scientists and medical professions, positively affected the cognitive performance of the test participants vis-a-vis the cognitive performance of those test participants who wore something else (see the article Enclothed cognition by Adam and Galinsky 2012). Connections between dress and its transformative potential have been advanced in the anthropological literature, too. For example, an argument was being made that wearing of the ritual masks (e.g.

ritual/ceremonial masks in parts of Africa) induces a transformative state in the wearer (Tonkin 1979, Pollock 1995). The inducement of a particular mental state was also one of the purposes of the usage of war paints among some native north American groups.

If we switch from these 'exotic' anthropological examples back to the contemporary western setting, we can observe that here the possibility of transformation through dress is assumed and acted upon among the general population, too. Adages such as 'you are what you wear' and 'clothes make the man' exemplify this rather well. Both sayings in equal measure refer to how our choice of dress has an effect on how we are viewed by others, but also how a particular dress shapes our behaviour and the way we perform. These points, especially the latter one, are also constantly pushed by fashion writers. Their claims that donning specific clothes items leads to a person's transformation are made in an over-dramatic, exaggerative fashion peculiar to their writing genre. Nonetheless, the conviction behind these claims is genuine.

Viewed in this light, the analogy between the use of masks for ritual/ceremonial purposes or the use of war paint with the view of offering protection to its wearer and making him look and feel more ferocious - to go back to the examples from the anthropological literature, and the choice of my informants to wear specific sportswear brands (and military clothing – more on that shortly) is justified. The motivation behind all of these just mentioned sartorial choices, body modifications and supplements essentially comes from the same place. In the first example the wearers' direct identities are obscured and the mask/facial paint is applied on specific occasions only. It is probably this that makes the intention of seeking transformation easier to identify. In the second example, that of my own informants, the 'transformative' dress is put on daily. Here the purpose might be therefore initially less obvious. Nonetheless, the difference between the two examples is that of a degree, not kind. Besides, there were other ethnography-based scholarly works also set in the contemporary West that likewise noted the transformative aspect of clothing

among the informants. Sophie Woodward's book on sartorial behaviour of women in London and Nottingham called *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (2007), and Emma Tarlo's examination of the recent shift among young Muslim women in London to a more visible Muslim identity titled *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith* (2010) are a case in point.

Now I zoom in on sports clothing itself and consider its more intrinsic quality. After that I redirect the attention from what my informants try to achieve by wearing sports clothing to how the rest of the society regards wearing sportswear outside of the sports/gym environment.

Speaking of intrinsic quality of clothes is somewhat going against the tide. Much of the scholarship on dress is still based on the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes who himself built on Saussure. Since Barthes's seminal work The Fashion System (2010) the scholarship on dress or fashion has expanded in its approach and in addition to concerns with representation it has been increasingly interested in issues pertaining to embodiment. Nonetheless, this shift in emphasis notwithstanding, Barthes's notion of fashion as a form of communicative system, a system of signs whereby the relationship between a signifier and a signified is utterly arbitrary, is still taken as a given even in the works of later authors. According to this logic there is no natural relationship between a signifier (when considering fashion it could be a particular garment such as a bomber jacket, or an aspect of one's appearance such as shaven hair) and a signified (a bomber jacket may suggest a variety of things depending on the cultural and historical context; for example, for some people it may evoke WW2 air force, for others skinheadism, etc.; shaven hair may also call to mind skinheadism, with all its connotations, but also monkhood, and so on). While I agree that this is to a large extent true, I argue that there is also certain materiality to dress that is universal, that can underlie our attitude to certain clothes in certain times and place and that therefore problematises the assertion of a completely arbitrary nature of signs. Below I shall argue that with

regards to my informants' penchant for sports clothes this materiality is actually a factor in the negative perception of my informants by the general public.

As for their cuts and materials, the sports – or sports-inspired – clothes are highly comfortable, unrestrictive, soft yet sturdy. In short, they are highly functional. In terms of tailoring, sports clothing is unstructured. The body silhouette, at least in the sportswear brands favoured by my informants, is neither revealed, nor exaggerated, nor modified. It is loose, but follows the body. Usually, save for the logo, there are no embellishments. In such clothes one moves with ease, the movements of one's body are unhindered. Simplicity, practicality and above all comfort, I think, characterise wearing, or the feel of wearing, such clothing the best. Donning these sports labels at almost all times (in my experience, weddings and funerals seem to be the only exceptions) suggests that comfort is something that is paramount to my informants. Comfort, by contrast, certainly cannot characterise wearing of the middle class or professional 'uniform' – the male suit. Or its female offshoot. Such clothes are definitely meant to impress. This is done through strong, angular shapes, hard fabrics and exaggerated silhouette (broad shoulders and contrasting narrowish waist). Such clothing is not very comfortable – the fabrics are rather stiff, the cut is relatively restrictive and extra kilos are not particularly easy to hide in such an attire. In other words, to appear powerful or respectable or professional the wearer of such clothing must undergo a degree of discomfort. Both bodily discomfort at the moment of wearing the clothes and discomfort in the long run – through restrictions placed on one's food consumption and through physical exercise. And this requires self-discipline. Even the casual wear and leisure wear of the people who in the work environment and formal situations opt for suits, is still to an extent uncomfortable (e.g. jeans, slacks, chinos, leather shoes, leather jackets, polo necks, etc.). These items of clothing are too fairly revealing of the figure and thus demanding of the wearer to possess a body in a good shape to pull this look off. Also, some of these articles of clothing are still somewhat constrictive – both in terms of cuts and the materials used (e.g. jeans or leather jackets). It is only when engaged in sports activities per se that this

group of people wears truly comfortable clothes, that is clothes specifically designed for workouts.

I argue that in terms of public perception this is actually significant. The 'general public' perceives people wearing solely sportswear irrespective of the occasion, people such as my informants, in a negative light because it indicates a lack of self-discipline on the part of the sportswear 'devotees'. My informants then come across as people who are not willing to accept discomfort should the situation require it. This unwillingness to undergo a level of discomfort, most people believe, extends to all areas of life – beyond clothing. People who 'live in their joggers' are then seen as people who do not strive for 'self-development' (e.g. through life-long studying, setting themselves goals in terms of their physical fitness, and suchlike) and as people not willing to bring personal sacrifices for the common good or some higher cause. But there is another layer to it. Being dressed in sportswear when not working out might simply be a 'matter out of place', to use the Douglessian expression. In the minds of most people different situations call for different dress codes. Transgressing these is then met with disapproval.

Another element in the clothing of my informants I put under some scrutiny is the army element, manifesting itself mainly through the presence of camouflage trousers, fatigues and heavy army-style boots. The combat clothes are very conspicuous and here, too, it is important to understand both why the members and sympathisers of the Workers' Party wear items of army clothing and the reactions such style receives from other people.

The people from outside of the far right 'scene' whom I interviewed, on the whole, responded negatively to the combatant clothing (e.g. see again responses to fig. 5 and fig.6). I argue that being dressed in items of army clothing, at least in a civilian setting, is confrontational and implying more brutal masculinity. Thus, people wearing military clothing outside of a combat situation are seen as unduly aggressive. Or, to look at it from another angle, the army

element in a civilian setting is perceived as anomalous, as 'matter out of place', similarly to the sportswear worn when not engaged in sports.

To a large extent the analysis and explanations of my informants' tendency or preference for articles of combat clothing overlap with the above analysis of their penchant for wearing sportswear. It seems that the motivation to put on a pair of army boots or fatigues comes from the same source as the motivation for donning kickboxing and mixed martial arts sportswear labels, except that the combat element might perhaps come across as more extreme than wearing the said sportswear. Once again, certain themes that appear in Bourdieu's work (1984) and in the men's studies literature (Connell 1995, Levant and Pollack 1995, Kimmel 1987, Beynon 2001) are a useful starting point. This literature highlights prominence given to physical strength in the working class masculinity, the (only) form of masculinity available to working class men, and this form of masculinity tallies with certain characteristics associated with the figure of the soldier such as toughness and stamina, in addition to the physical strength itself. It is then understandable, or at least unsurprising, that men such as my informants would also incorporate elements of combat clothing into their wardrobe.

Body Modification and Body Ownership

However, insight is also provided by scholars who researched anorexia, tattooing, piercing and (more) extreme methods of body modification. Of course, military clothing can be put on and taken off, whereas body modification is longer lasting or permanent – and sometimes even irreversible. But this, too, is a difference of degree rather than kind. When Victoria Pitts (2003) studied (extreme) body modification in the contemporary west she observed that women and queer people were overrepresented among body modifiers. This informed her overall analysis and led her to conclude that discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, and inequalities stemming from these, were key factors that played a role in people's decision to modify their bodies.

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Modifying one's body was about reclaiming the ownership of the body, Pitts argued. All in all, a key take away point in her book, and in literature on body modification and anorexia generally, is that powerless people tend to concentrate on their bodies. Essentially, we find a similar point in the men's studies literature. While the literature on body modification takes the body as a point of departure and tends to foreground the importance of gender and sexual orientation, the men's studies literature takes different masculinities as its unit of analysis and in its theorising it is the class that plays a prominent role, although race and sexual orientation were considered in some of the works as well.

John MacInnes (1998), for instance, argues that in modernity the position of all men has declined in relation to that of women, of which the men are aware. One of the important factors here is constant technological innovation as this makes the strength of the body, something at which men surpass women, increasingly irrelevant. By implication, diminished self-worth is something we find especially among those categories of men that have been traditionally employed in professions requiring physical strength (also see Beynon 2001 for a similar argument). With regards to my informants, since they belong to these categories of men, I argue that they therefore experience powerlessness both in terms of class and gender. Thus, the image of brutal masculinity that many of the Workers adopt through wearing army clothing (and an accompanying shaved head or sinister-looking tattoos) is not only about amplifying physical masculinity, something typical of working class men, it can also be accounted for as a strategy on the part of the working class men to deal with the situation where women, or at least middle class women, are increasingly making inroads into traditionally male occupations and social roles. This advancement of women into traditionally male occupations also has a certain parallel at the level of the women's dress, whereby nowadays a greater variety of styles is open to women, including the option for women to dress in styles deemed masculine. I therefore conclude that the more confrontational style evidenced by the combat clothing of my informants is somehow a reaction to what they perceive

as the masculinisation of women. They simply feel compelled to play up their physical masculinity even more.

Nonetheless, it would be insufficient to think of my informants donning military clothing merely in the terms described above, for the image of the soldier evokes several associations, not just that of brutal masculinity – at least in the eyes of my informants. Yes, on the one hand, it does or can imply something sinister, aggressive and dangerous. On the other hand, the figure of the soldier also embodies readiness to fight, immense mental and physical toughness, discipline and self-sacrifice. These latter values also very much resonate with my informants, at least at the level of discourse, if rarely born out in reality, as I have observed. It thus appears that through wearing combat clothing my informants also wish to induce their transformation into this noble figure of the soldier.

My informants, however, sometimes went further than simply putting on items of combat uniforms in their attempts to take on the qualities of the soldier. They also tried to enact their phantasy of the life of a soldier through one of their favourite pastimes – camping. In the Czech context campers typically wear either elements of military clothing or elements of the American cowboy outfit – or they can combine both. The significance of camping among my informants will be developed in the next chapter, but here it deserves a mention for it indicates that my informants belonged to those Czech men (camping has been more popular among men than women) who tried to act out their phantasy of toughing it out in nature, something which both soldiers and American cowboys in the imagination of many Czech men have embodied. What also contributed to these romantic ideas my informants held of soldiers, at least in part, was simply the fact that most of them did not undergo compulsory military service. The service was abolished in the Czech Republic in 2005 and only very few of my informants therefore had this 'taster' of the army life. As a result, the army life was rather romanticised among the Czech far right and at the time of my fieldwork two of my informants were actually even

contemplating going to fight on the side of Iran. One of them was Roman, one of my composite informants.

In a nutshell, donning army clothing, and to an extent sports clothing too, and certainly simultaneously, serves several functions. Through these clothes their wearers want to transform themselves, signalise their identity to each other, be it subcultural, class or political identity, and intimidate adversaries. Yet, they concurrently genuinely wish to sway the highest number of people possible to their political cause. The former (i.e. the hypermasculine style) and the latter (the ambition to become a political force to be reckoned with), however, are incompatible. My informants were to a greater or lesser extent aware of it, but unable to resolve this situation. Some, for example, did attempt to find a workable solution where they would stay both 'true to themselves' and conceal the most confrontational or controversial aspects of their appearance from the general public. A typical example of this would be the aforementioned Lonsdale T-shirt worn with an open bomber jacket (whereby only the NSDA letters were visible – for insiders a clear reference to NSDAP). By the time I was in the field this strategy was routinised and I suspect that not all of the people from the far-right scene who wore this particular 'attire' were even aware that it was a strategy as such. They just wore what their comrades did.

An example of a far more conscious effort not to compromise one's belief or identity, on the one hand, and stay within the law, on the other, would be the sartorial choice of one of the defendants at a court hearing with certain members of the Workers' Party that I personally attended. These people were accused of the crime of promoting movements aimed at suppressing human rights and freedoms and one of the defendants, a female, a rather well-known and somewhat controversial member of the Workers' Party, arrived at the hearing wearing a Thor's hammer pendant and a translucent top. Thor's hammer appears frequently in Norse mythology. During the Viking age it was worn as a pendant, and later on this symbol has been co-opted by a variety of people, including certain far-right groups. In itself, however, it could be argued

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to be neutral. Regarding her top – it was translucent enough to reveal the presence of tattoos underneath it, without the audience being able to make out what these tattoos were. Given her notoriety – she was considered 'too much' and as 'going too far' among most of my informants – one could be forgiven to suspect that her tattoos were not some pretty dragons but something more contentious in nature. When I searched for images of this particular young woman I could not find conclusive evidence as to what her tattoos depicted, nor could I be certain I found images of all her tattoos. (Fig. 27 shows the female defendant in question at the said court hearing (on the left), fig. 25 and fig. 28 shows the same female in a different setting. In these images her tattoos, or at least some of them, are somewhat more visible.) In any case, in my view this particular girl managed to find optimal solution in the given extreme situation. Being accused of a crime, a form of hate crime at that, there was a very real danger of being found guilty and sentenced. She was more than likely aware that being dressed too provocatively might aggravate the judge. She also knew that present at the hearing would be not only her supporters but also some journalists, and that pictures of her would be taken and later on available in the public domain. What the defendants wore would therefore not be taken lightly. I suspect that the female defendant gave a serious amount of thought to what to wear, and on the day of the hearing she dressed for the occasion in such a way that she managed to maintain respect from fellow far-right hardliners as well as stay within the law.

Fig. 27

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Fig. 28

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

The only other example of a deliberate effort to alter one's dress to better fit in and not to antagonise those around them that I personally witnessed in the

field would be the time when Roman, one of my composite informants, took me to a lecture organised by the student group *Červenobílí*. *Červenobílí* is a non-political organisation focusing mostly on educational activities. It refers to itself as patriotic and, according to their website at the time of my fieldwork, it claims to be a continuation of the Czech interwar movement of the same name. The original movement became first associated with the political party called Czechoslovak National Democracy (*Československá národní demokracie*). The movement became increasingly more fascist-like and eventually joined the National Fascist Community (*Národní obec fašistická*), a Czech fascist party, anti-German in its orientation. As Roman and I were nearing the building where the said lecture was to take place, Roman all of a sudden stopped, took off his T-shirt with the motif referring to the National Labour Day introduced by the Nazis in 1933 (fig. 29 shows the motif that was reproduced on Roman's T-shirt), pulled out another T-shirt from his bag and put it on. His new T-shirt had the text 'My heart for Moravia' (*Moje srdce pro Moravu*) across the chest. When I asked him why he did that he replied: 'They (i.e. Červenobílí) are somewhere else.' (*Oni jsou někde jinde*.) By this he referred to the ideological thinking of the *Červenobílí*.

Fig. 29
[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Obviously, all of these are examples of conscious attempts to reconcile my informants' identity and aspirations expressed through dress with their attempts to 'stay legal' and not to provoke people of not quite the same persuasion. The success of these strategies is up for discussion. It might be argued that in the first case, the strategy is unsatisfactory. Whilst most people would not indeed make the NSDAP connection (or even know what the NSDAP was), the style was still too skinhead-like. The third example would simply not be very practical on a day-to-day basis. The strategy presented in the second example was probably not so easy to carry out either. One would have to think hard what and how to wear every time before stepping out of their front door. Perhaps one could speak of a partial success in relation to the three examples. Overall, however, my informants' dress and their political aspirations were permanently in tension.

All the examples above also demonstrate that one strategy employed in their efforts to simultaneously sartorially communicate with very different sections of the society was layering – be it through one layer completely or partially covering the one underneath or putting on and taking off layers. Nathan Joseph (1995) argued that multiple layers of clothing make possible different levels of communication. Through the outermost layer we communicate with the widest set of people and with each successive layer we communicate with ever more intimate circles of people – until we reach the innermost layer. Even here, though, the communication still takes place, Joseph argues, because the wearer interacts with himself/herself and through the innermost layer he/she can engage in fantasy.

In the case of many of my informants it is the tattoo that can be considered as the innermost layer. As it is etched into skin, the tattoo becomes part of skin and it is a virtually permanent form of body modification. This means a number of things. Firstly, it points to a strong commitment to something or someone - this something being visually expressed in the design of the tattoo. The design itself is therefore important, especially if the message of the tattoo is contentious. (Fig. 30 shows an example of such tattoos on the body of one of

the people I came to know in the field. On the abdomen there is a RAHOWA tattoo which stands for Racial Holy War; the stylised number 88 in the tattoo on the chest represents the order of the letters HH in the alphabet, HH being an abbreviation for Heil Hitler). Minimally, the conviction or the dedication to the cause is very strong at the time when one has the tattoo done. Indeed, when Clinton R. Sanders (1988) investigated the reasons for getting a tattoo, he found that participation in a group and an indelible commitment were one of the main reasons why people underwent this procedure. Secondly, earlier in the chapter I argued that dress has a transformative potential. In the case of the tattoo it is even more so since, in the end, what is more transformative than a permanent change to one's body? In addition, it has been widely reported that for many people the physical pain that goes with the procedure forms an integral part of the tattoo experience (e.g. Sanders 1988). I suspect that it also plays a role in the case of my tattooed informants as it corresponds to the high value they placed on toughness and endurance. Finally, it has been asserted that a permanent body modification is also about the ownership of one's body (Pitts 2003). We may live lives that are for most part determined by forces over which we have no or little control, the argument goes. The body is thus perhaps the only thing over which one can exercise some agency. Or at least that may be how it is seen and experienced in this context. My informants, as noted earlier, perceive themselves as powerless with regards to class and gender and this, too, may help to explain their focus on altering their bodies through tattoos.

Fig. 30

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions])

Heterogeneity and Incongruity in Clothes Messages

When earlier in the chapter I summed up my initial impression of the soon-to-be informants, an impression formed when I saw them the first few times from a distance, I used the words poverty and aggression. However, once I started spending time with them, once I was in close physical proximity, I got past this first visual impression and started to see something else, namely incongruity. The people I researched often chose to wear clothing displaying not only logos or pictures, but also overt verbal political statements. For instance, 'My heart for Moravia', in the Czech context a strong statement of regional nationalism, was a slogan that appeared on T-shirts of many of my informants. T-shirt slogans unequivocally denouncing capitalism were also a frequent occurrence, to give another example. In any case, and interestingly, the same individuals could on different days and for different occasions wear garments with very different and even contradictory allusions or political messages (e.g. German Nazism, Czech nationalism, Moravian nationalism, pan-Slavism, etc.). Or

close friends could happily each wear a dress proclaiming messages poles apart or even completely incompatible. Moreover, I noticed that some individuals expressed conflicting ideas or messages even within the different layers of the same dress – that is from tattoos to outer garments.

Before exploring it further, I need to clarify two things. Firstly, by no means did I observe that the inner layers of the dress were more true to my informants' convictions. Sometimes this was indeed so, but not always. It could be argued, though, that the inner layers were perhaps more controversial than the outer layers, which were safer in terms of the message proclaimed. Secondly, I need to emphasise that incompatibility or incongruity is how I saw it. My informants did not perceive any dissonance at all. They did not usually scrutinise each other's political messages and allusions on their clothing. It is certainly the case that people from the far right scene often expressed disapproval of the fellow *Workers* for not being dressed appropriately at public events. This, however, always took form of a general self-criticism, never of personal attacks. Furthermore, the problem was specifically about not being dressed appropriately or representatively enough when presenting themselves as a political party. It was thus about not exercising enough self-restraint in the use of a hypermasculine style when the situation called for it and about opening themselves up to the accusations of neo-Nazism. In short, a poor PR. In a more relaxed, more private setting, one's dress message was not examined. During my time with the *Workers* and their friends I witnessed only two confrontations over an item of clothing. What is more, it was by the same person and on the same day. I was present at a Sports Day organised by the Workers' Youth. I was sitting at a table with a number of people when a young man dressed in a skinhead style from circa 1980s or 1990s joined us at our table. A man sitting next to me, a seasoned supporter of the Workers' Party, turned to this newly arrived man, the man who was not part of the scene but, as I learned later, very much wanted to be, and challenged him to explain what individual items of his clothing signified. The wannabe *Worker* was unable to answer. The veteran *Worker* supporter was annoyed with both the dated style of the wannabe and

his lack of knowledge of the symbolism contained in his own dress. Then the same man turned to his long-term friend who was also sitting at our table and with whom he has had some long-term unresolved tensions. The friend was wearing a hoodie with a Germanic neopagan motif and was also asked to account for the meaning of what was on his top. But the 'Germanic neo-pagan' was able to demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and the inquisitor became pacified. This was a solitary example of a face-to-face confrontation over a meaning of clothing during my time in the field. For the most part, the 'precise message' of people's dress was not pored over and no contradictions within each other's dress were picked up.

In retrospect, these 'contradictions' or 'incongruity' would be much better interpreted as a sign of heterogeneity of ideas about Czechness and/or ethnic belonging more generally as well as a sign of mutual tolerance. The example above shows that it is reasonable to think that my informants, or at least some of them, were able to pause over the meaning of their dress, challenge each other over it in that regard, and provide explanations – if they wanted to or when pushed to do it. But they did not. I suggest that this heterogeneity of nationalist identities and messages referenced in their dress paralleled the heterogeneity and mutual tolerance that one found in their nationalist discourse, as discussed chapter 4 titled Nationalism and Identity. Just as their nationalist identity expressed verbally on their websites or in interviews with me was characterised by a diversity of ideas as to what it is to be Czech, and sometimes even by internal inconsistency, so did their nationalist identity expressed sartorially. In both the former and the latter, the common denominator was not endorsing a particular form of national identity per se, but the fact that my informants were searching for one and that the identity had to be specifically a national identity, however one defines the word national. In fact, one could almost say that virtually any form of national identity would do, as long as it would fall under the broad white category. Perhaps the most extreme example of this that I personally encountered was when I was observing the 1st of May march organised by the Workers' Party. The theme of

the march was 'For social certainties – against the reforms'. However, just like with almost any demonstration organised by the Workers 'Party, in the speeches the social and the national were presented as strongly intertwined. The criticism of the presence of multinational corporations in the Czech Republic and of the ever diminishing Czech state ownership was a strong, albeit not the only, theme in the speeches given. As I was scanning the crowd, there among the marchers I saw a female wearing a Union Jack handbag. Of course, this sort of a handbag is a fashion accessory available outside of the UK, perhaps even the world over. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that this particular girl, given what she was participating in, would be imperceptive or oblivious to the meaning of this particular symbol. Or that her fellow marchers were. At the very least, at this particular event, a time and a place of a heightened (Czech) national consciousness, this particular flag motif did not offend anyone present.

No Escape from Globalisation and its Cultural Logic

Finally, we must not lose sight of other, wider forces when considering the 'incongruity' of images and messages on my informants clothing and bodies. When I asked one of my most articulate informants in a follow-up interview about his thoughts on the girl wearing a Union Jack handbag to a Workers' march, he simply responded: 'Globalisation. We are all susceptible to it'. The statement reminded me of the simple fact that even when analysing something like my informants' dress, we have to bear in mind that my informants also lived in a specific era, the era of late capitalism. Late capitalism, as for example Frederic Jameson (1992) argues, has its cultural expression in postmodernism and in postmodernism we are all constantly exposed to media images. These images, through their sheer quantity and the speed at which they are thrown at us, become decontextualized. Their meaning or the meaning of the concepts they represent therefore shifts or is broken down, and the boundaries between various concepts are disrupted as a result. In the fashion industry this is even done consciously and is applauded. Fashion houses considered to be cutting-edge mix various disparate and incongruent elements in their designs and this

approach to fashion is also highly encouraged by fashion stylists and fashion writers - who are in fact scornful of style purity, often dismissing it as 'costumes'.

Earlier, however, I asserted that my informants were definitely not subject to fashion fads and that they were faithful to a particular style. While there is no unanimity in understanding of the difference between style and fashion, it is generally agreed that fashion is changeable, while style is, relatively speaking, constant. Style is understood to evolve, but at a much slower pace than fashion. And I also argued that adhering to a style signified my informants' commitment to a particular ideology and/or group. However, and this is important, loyalty to a style notwithstanding, my informants still could not escape the cultural logic of their era. They, too, were rapidly bombarded by media images, including 'nationalist' images from abroad. They, too, were exposed to the ever-expanding market, including the market for far right goods such as clothes. The market for the far right goods (just like many other markets) has been growing in terms of variety of goods on offer, and in terms of size, often expanding to other countries (e.g. see Deicke 2009 for an example of the expansion and evolution of the right-wing market in Germany). My informants had thus access to 'nationalist' designer brands from abroad, especially from Germany. Recognising their 'nationalist' character they were drawn to their products and purchased them. In this light, mixing these various images and messages in their dress, something that I personally perceived as incompatible and incoherent elements placed side by side, is no different from the sartorial behaviour of the rest of the population. My informants just consciously drew on a more limited pool of messages and images for their clothes or tattoos than many other groups of population, especially the said fashionistas. Still, the sartorial behaviour of my informants was broadly in line with that of other sections of the society.

Methodological Implications

To conclude this chapter, minimally in some research contexts, focus on dress should be more than just a stylistic device to paint a more vivid picture of the ethnographer's subjects for the reader. With the type of enquiry such as mine it should be taken as seriously as the examination of the ideology or of the socioeconomic background of the subjects, the two areas scholars interested in far right usually concentrate on in their efforts to establish who are the people attracted to far right or what makes far right appealing to some people. Psychological literature abounds with studies about the significance of non-verbal communication, of which dress is one form. Although there is some debate among its authors as to the exact percentage of the importance of verbal versus non-verbal communication in various settings, what they all seem to agree on is that we use non-verbal communication, including communication through clothing, all the time, and that it is as important, if not more, as verbal communication, especially when meeting someone for the first time. Consequently, favouring verbal communication over other forms in our analysis is bound to be somewhat distorting. Especially so if we recognise that verbal and non-verbal communications are not always identical. Sometimes their messages may reinforce each other, at other times they may be different or even contradict each other. Therefore, we should examine the sartorial behaviour of people and see where its analysis stands in relation to data obtained from other areas of enquiry. Does it corroborate the data from other methods? Does it expand it? Does it even open new areas of investigation and reveal something the conventional focus of the researchers of the given phenomenon do not or cannot? I hope that in this chapter I demonstrated that in my case the focus on dress largely supported my findings obtained through other methods and that in addition it also helped me understand better why many of the Czech people not connected to far right in any way actually despised my informants, sometimes viscerally, despite the fact they shared many of their views.

Chapter 5

Alcohol Drinking

Like the previous chapter, Chapter 5 also centres on an aspect of the expressive culture of my informants. This time the focus is alcohol consumption. And just as with dress, the focus on alcohol also arose spontaneously from the fieldwork situation itself.

Ubiquity of Alcohol in the Field

Alcohol was simply ubiquitous. Not only was it drunk by the vast majority of my informants, in huge amounts, and in most places, it was also constantly talked about by them. Interestingly, there were a number of parallels with the dress 'situation'. Here, too, some people in leadership positions within the Workers' Party, whether we are talking about formal or informal positions of power, did try to curtail the drinking, worrying about the negative impression excessive alcohol consumption of the Workers might make on the general population. And, as with the dress, they were unsuccessful in their efforts. Nonetheless, there were also some differences. Many people, perhaps most, dressed in the 'far-right' way to a greater or lesser extent. At the same time, their personal preferences regarding their sartorial self-presentation notwithstanding, they were unconcerend and tolerant towards those members and sympathisers of their party who dressed differently than themselves. Furthermore, many Workers also agreed that they should tone down their own style to look more 'normal' or 'presentable', although in practice very often the very same people did ignore their own advice. With alcohol the situation was not quite the same. Firstly, from all those people in the field I have been personally exposed to I could count moderate drinkers on the fingers on one hand. I came across only one teetotaller – and he used to drink heavily in the past. Secondly, the broad-mindedness when it came to people's sartorial choice was not extended to their attitude to alcohol. Not only was one expected to drink alcohol, one was encouraged, pressurised even, to drink and to drink a lot.

In other words, there was very little tolerance towards moderate alcohol consumption, let alone towards abstinence.

All this demonstrates that drinking alcohol was highly important to my informants. In this chapter I shall consider why drinking played such a huge role, and therefore why my informants were reluctant, in fact even found it quite impossible, to change their behaviour in relation to alcohol. Additionally, scrutinising the position that alcohol occupied in the lifestyle of my informants has practical repercussions. As we shall see, it had some bearing on their success (or rather the lackthereof) as a political party.

Contradictions in Public and Private Perceptions

If I was to base my opinion solely on the content of the websites of the Czech far right and/or on formal interviews I conducted with them, then I would expect to come across individuals whose life is divided between the work for the party, paid work (i.e. a job), and family life – and really not much beyond that. On the other hand, from the way they are portrayed in the media and from people's impressions of them I ascertained, especially from my interviews with my friends and family members I carried out alongside the interviews with members of the far right, one would have thought that this is a rather separate group of people, people who are abnormal, violent and are constantly drunk – therefore quite easily identifiable. In the end I concluded that neither their self-presentation, nor their representation in media or their indirect portrayals by the agents of the state (e.g. through a heavy police presence at every far right demonstration, court trials of the far right, etc.), nor the opinion of them held by the general public was quite right. They were neither model citizens driven by the protestant ethic, nor, despite their liking for alcohol, violent drunkards, a threat to the moral fibre of the society. There is thus a lot of misrecognition and misrepresentation of the far right taking place, though it is not necessarily intentional.

Methodological and Personal Challenges in the Fieldwork

Although prior to commencing the fieldwork I suspected that drinking alcohol would somehow feature in the lives of these people, I did not anticipate how pivotal the role of alcohol would be, even to the point of posing the biggest challenge to my fieldwork from the methodological point of view. Before entering the field, I feared I would be regarded with utmost suspicion and never gain access. I wondered whether my non-European surname would prove to be the first and biggest hurdle. I also speculated whether I would be quizzed about the presence of communists within my family history. I asked myself whether I would be able to respond to such questions sufficiently well to gain their trust yet keep my personal integrity. And if I managed to get over the above mentioned obstacles, I reasoned, would my relationship with informants remain limited and superficial due to gender and age differences? (I expected them to be almost exclusively men and very young). After contacting and meeting in person a couple of people from the far right scene and after attending the first two party meetings I experienced a rather big surprise. How I came to a 'foreign', non-European surname interested no one. My far right informants were also completely unconcerned about the presence or absence of communists in my family. Instead, the biggest impediment to my being fully accepted by my informants laid somewhere completely different – in my inability and unwillingness to drink prodigiously. The more I drank with my informants the more rapport we had and the more data could be obtained. However, as soon as I tried to abstain or at least slow down my drinking, it was immediately noticed and met with disapproval and suspicion. It can be said that I spent the entirety of my fieldwork trying to come up with a workable solution to this problem, but I never managed to resolve it.

Literature Review: Anthropological Perspectives on Alcohol

Before I delve into some details of my informants' drinking behaviour and relationship with alcohol, a brief overview of anthropology's approach to alcohol is in place, as I will situate my own argument in relation to this literature.

Alcohol has been present in the lives of humans s since the very beginning of their history. In fact, in nature, primates and other mammals have been observed to get intoxicated (Dietler 2006) and most societies in the world have produced and/or consumed alcohol, as both archaeologists and ethnographers have established. Recently, the theory that production of alcoholic beverages was at least in some places the driving force behind the development of agriculture has been gaining ground (add reference.). And archaeologist Michael Dieter suggests that it might be more useful to think of (McGovern 2009) alcoholic beverages as a 'special class of food with psychoactive properties' (2006), a view shared by many peoples in different parts of the world, rather than sticking with alcohol as the analytical category. The invention of this category, defined by the presence of ethanol (Dietler 2006), goes back to the 19th century temperance movement, and is therefore culture-specific and not necessarily helpful in all contexts.

Despite its ubiquity, anthropologists initially paid little attention to alcohol. The intellectual and organisational beginnings of anthropology/ethnology go back to the 19th century when various institutes and university departments were being set up in the UK, in parts of western Europe and in the USA. This period overlaps with the existence of the temperance movement, the movement which started in the USA, but also became important in the UK and parts of continental Europe (McDonald 1994). It was during this period that habitual drinking started being thought of as a disease and alcoholism, a term for this new disease, was coined. Whilst initially the problem was thought to lie in the substance itself, later on it was the susceptibility of certain individuals to become addicted that was stressed as problematic. Nonetheless, ever since the 19th century, the prevalent view in western societies has been that habitual drunkenness poses a problem (McDonald 1994).

Changing Anthropological Views of Alcohol

For a long time in the history of the discipline very few anthropologists actually went into the field to study alcohol consumption per se and most of the literature on the topic originated as a by-product of a different research. This has gradually started to change and approximately from the 1960s onwards, alcohol-focused anthropological literature started being produced. Anthropologists were interested in on so called normal drinking patterns and argued that many non-Western cultures considered drinking alcohol a culturally valued behaviour and asserted that drinking alcoholic beverages had a stabilising effect on the societies studied, helping to maintain social cohesion. Not only did they steer clear of value-laden terminology and concepts, anthropologists viewed drinking and even drunkenness in a positive light. They thus pioneered a different approach to disciplines such as medicine, psychology and sociology, which continued to regard alcohol consumption as an individual pathology or a social problem.

Insights on Functional Drinking from Classic Anthologies

Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology (1987*)*, a volume edited by Mary Douglas, and *Alcohol, Gender and Culture* (1992), a volume edited by Dimitra Gefou-Madianou, seem to be particularly influential exemplars of this specific outlook on the social role of alcoholcross culturally . Virutally all contemporary anthropological and archaeological literature in English on the topic of alcohol references these two books. Contributors to these volumes emphasized a number of important things. For example, for Douglas 'drinking is essentially a social act, performed in a recognised social context' (1987: 4). It is an important token of personal and group identity for through the act of drinking people construct the world as it is as well as an ideal world (Douglas 1987). Dwight Heath in the same volume emphasised, for example, that drinking alcohol is not only seen as normal but even as positive for the society for, he argued, it promotes sociality. He asserted that most societies that consume alcohol, even those where drunkenness is frequent, experience practically no 'alcohol-related troubles' (Heath 1987). Furthermore, both Heath

and Douglas agreed that not just drinking but even drunkenness is a learned behaviour and subject to cultural variation.

For my own purposes, Gusfield's chapter in Mary Douglas's edited book and Dimitra Gefou-Madianou's own chapter in the volume edited by her deal with ethnographic examples that are most relevant with regards to my own fieldsite.

Gusfield examined patterns of alcohol drinking in the contemporary American society. He presented drinking alcohol, including drinking whilst at work, as a romantic resistance to the industrial organisation marked by a strict division between work and home and correspondingly between sobriety and play (Gusfield 1987). 'The use of alcohol symbolizes a temporal life style and accentuates the transformation out of the posture of social controls and self-imprisonment.', writes Gusfield (1987: 86). The time reserved for drinking alcohol is treasured by the romantic for it provides a 'bounded and limited space and time in which a more authentic self can achieve expression', he continued (Gusfield 1987: 86). This suggests one direction through which to approach my own fieldwork material.

As for Gefou-Madianou, in her consideration of the differences in the drinking patterns in adulthood in one's leisure time between and within societies she makes an observation that there are differences as to how and why alcohol is consumed between and within societies. Ethnographic studies (not only from Europe) suggest that in societies where drinking alcohol is integral to religious and family rituals and one is therefore socialised into alcohol consumption in this way there is more moderate alcohol intake in adulthood during leisure time. By contrast, where alcohol is absent in religious and/or family rituals heavy drinking and alcoholism are more frequent (Gefou-Madianou 1992). The 'moderate' Jews and 'excessive' Irish are often used to demonstrate this point. The 'excessive' Czechs could perhaps be another such example.

All in all, the major contribution of anthropologists was to move away from the western, ethnocentric and normative view of alcohol consumption, and instead examine the cultural logic behind people's drinking practices and

patterns, including the effects of one's culture on the way one conducts oneself when in the state of drunkenness. With regard to the latter, there are even claims that there is no universal biological basis to intoxication from alcohol (or other substances). I found the most extreme example of this position in the writing of Maryon McDonald. In her introduction to the volume edited by her and titled *Gender, Drink and Drugs* (1994) McDonald asserted not only that 'alcohol of itself, (….), does not determine the behaviour of the consumer' (1994: 13) and that 'the behaviour which alcohol induces is a cultural matter' (1994: 14); she also proclaimed that 'a substance has no reality external to perceptions of it' (1994: 18). McDonald argues that the perception of drunkenness as a societal problem as well as a disease (habitual drunkenness) can be traced to a specific time and place in history – north America and parts of Europe during the times of industrialisation and colonial expansion. This was a time when the ruling classes were concerned with productivity and thus discipline, with the quality of the human 'stock' within their own populations, and it was simultaneously the time of the rise of the medical profession. James H. Mills (2000) agrees with this and adds that concerns over alcohol consumption were also in colonies, where the colonisers feared uprisings from the subjugated populations.

Challenging Functionalist Accounts of Alcohol Consumption

This approach came under attack from Robin Room (1984), a sociologist who charged anthropologists with 'problem deflation'. Room was convinced that focusing on positive features of alcohol consumption took too lightly problems resulting from alcohol use. In complete opposition to people such as Heath, Room saw these problems in all societies. Anthropologists responded, arguing that rather than being guilty of 'anthropological bias' and 'functionalist approach' they simply do not divorce alcohol use from the context, that they pay attention to the meaning of alcohol consumption in a given society (see Douglas 1987 and Gefou-Madianou 1992 for more details on the debate). Nonetheless, more anthropological works that problematised alcohol consumption as benign or even as straightforwardly positive started appearing.

An anthropologist Paul Spicer was one such voice. His aptly titled article *Toward a (Dys)functional Anthropology of Drinking: Ambivalence and the American Indian Experience with Alcohol* (1997) is based on his own research among native Americans in the 1990s living in and around Minneapolis, and it simultaneously provides an overview of alcohol-related literature on various native American groups. Spicer concedes that among native Americans drinking alcohol, too, helped to facilitate social bonding and that drinking was valued because it induced or enhanced behaviour promoting hospitality, reciprocity and emphasis on kinship, all these in themselves being values held in high esteem among these groups. However, he also observed how disruptive, fragmentary, indeed dysfunctional, the heavy drinking he encountered was for the people he studied. Crucially, his research participants themselves recognised the negative impact heavy drinking had on their community as well as on themselves as individuals. They reported how the frequent state of inebriation made it difficult for them to meet their kin obligations, how it often led to violence within the community and over time to health deterioration of its members. Many tried (unsuccessfully) to quit.

A similarly bleak picture was provided from another part of the world, Australia, by the anthropologist David McKnight who worked among Aboriginals of Mornington Island. In his book *From Hunting to Drinking* (2002) McKnight documented the harmful and hazardous effects of heavy alcohol consumption on his informants, as well as on Aboriginal groups in other parts of Australia. Whilst in the past alcohol was just one component in a ritual life, among present-day aborigines ritual life still carries on only because of the presence of alcohol, according to McKnight. McKnight identified several factors that contributed to the heavy usage of alcohol among the people he studied. The availability of alcohol in huge amounts since the contact with the Europeans was one factor. Dispossessions of the Aborigines of their lands and, by extension, of their livelihood, way of life and dignity, was another. And then there were the specific effects of the substance itself. Alcohol emboldens and it was in the state of intoxication that Aborigines voiced their demands on the white community and dared to voice them in English, the language of which they did not have a

perfect command and were conscious of using when sober. In any case, in McKnight's writing the negative aspects of alcohol drinking outweigh any positive ones.

Other people working in indigenous communities in North America, Australia and New Zealand also write about the disastrous consequences of the combination of land loss and consequent powerlessness under colonialism and of the availability of cheap alcohol in government stores. However, heavy alcohol drinking and subsequent alcohol-related health and societal problems have been reported from outside of the above-mentioned colonial regimes. An interesting comparison can be drawn with the situation in some places of the former socialist block. For example, writing of the rural areas of the European part of northern Russia Tutorsky (2016) describes how drinking patterns of the rural inhabitants in this region changed dramatically. Up until the 1960s the villagers produced their own beer and produced it for the specific purpose of a communal consumption which, in turn, was being an integral part of certain rituals that accompanied the agricultural cycle. The drinking habits of the very same population, however, changed markedly in the 1970s. By then binge drinking became the norm. Tutorsky traces this development to government-induced changes in the organisation of the agricultural sector and with this connected decline of traditional rituals, to the unintended effects of the introduction of a new, that is soviet, ideology, and, simultaneously, to the availability of cheap vodka in the government stores. Furthermore, he pointed out that in addition to all these factors, people also tended to consume this for their region non-traditional drink, that is vodka, the same way as they used to drink their traditional drink, beer, by its very much less potent alcoholic beverage than vodka. Also writing of the USSR, Myrian Hivon (1994) emphasised the physical as well as financial availability of vodka, at the time when other goods (or services) were scarce. In a similar vein, Timothy Hall (2003), who researched the cultural significance of beer drinking in the Czech Republic itself, also drew attention to the relaxed attitude to alcohol drinking and to artificially kept low prices of beer in the socialist Czechoslovakia, as well as in the years after 1989. Hall saw this as a 'tacit social contract' between the

government and the people in the era when Czechoslovaks could not travel abroad and had to make do with goods of low quality or in short supply. The literature from these sometimes different settings points to the link between the disenfranchisement and (intentional) availability of cheap alcohol and suggests the direction through which one might approach the drinking patterns I observed among the Czech far right.

Personal Observations on Informant Drinking Behaviours

Let me now turn attention to my own informants and to their relationship with alcohol. So far, I have proclaimed that 'they drank a lot', without further specification. However, what does it mean to drink a lot? Let me start with some figures. In terms of international statistics of per capita consumption of beer, Czechs always figure either at the top or somewhere near the top position. In his article Pivo and Pohoda from 2003 Timothy Hall writes:

> Czech consume more beer capita than anyone else in the
> world, and have consistently maintained the highest rates
> of general alcohol consumption over the last century (....).
> Beer consumption has increased to 165 litres per capita
> in 2002. Most authorities suspect that reported
> alcohol consumption underestimates the true numbers.
>
> (Hall, 2003: 116-117)

As someone who was raised in the Czech Republic I am aware of what is regarded as still an acceptable way of drinking alcohol (how much one drinks alcohol, the frequency of drinking, in what settings and whether the person is a man or a woman) and what is already deemed excessive. I have also been aware that among men from blue-collar professions there has been, or thought to have been, more alcohol consumption. And yet, despite all this background knowledge, I was still taken aback by the prodigious drinking I encountered in the field.

Alcohol, or more precisely beer, was always there. My informants drank in pubs, which they frequented often, at night clubs, concerts, at private parties of all sorts, at party meetings, on 'team-building' trips. Many also had bottled beer at home and when a visitor stopped by, the visit almost automatically started with the host opening the bottle of beer and offering it to the guest. But, at least some of my informants also drank at home alone. I personally witnessed that on their day off work some of them easily started their day with opening a bottle of beer and continued in this fashion at a leisurely pace throughout the day. When I went with a group of people to a party outing, 'a trip into the nature', beer drinking started at 5 a.m. at the bus station, continued on the bus, and then steadily throughout the day until arrival at the destination. At the destination it continued into the early hours in the morning. The following day began with all the present drinking together shots of *slivovice* (plum brandy), and then they switched to beer drinking. When my informants went to the all-party conference, to give another example, they started the preparations with meetings in a pub the evening before, drinking there till early hours in the morning, and then on a train on the way there. At the conference some of these people switched to soft drinking. However, once the conference was over, the beer drinking resumed. On another occasion when I saw two of my informants making banners for the upcoming Sports Day organised by the Workers' Youth, did they so with the help of beer. In other words, they consumed alcohol whilst carrying out productive work for their cause.

Whether in a pub, a private party or at some outing, what was characteristic of my informants was that they drank not only extraordinary amounts, but that they also drank constantly. It was also significant that they drank the same thing, at the same pace and the same amount of it. Furthermore, they persistently mutually encouraged themselves to drink more, usually by exclaiming 'Have another one!' (*Dej si ještě jedno!*). The preferred beverage was beer, specifically the local beer (see Hall 2005, and Hall 2003 for an explanation of types of beer served in pubs in the Czech Republic and the reasons behind them), although towards the end of a drinking 'session' people sometimes switched to spirits. In

terms of quantity, in my notes I would find sentences such as: 'they had six or seven beers and then they switched to spirits', or 'by the time they had about eight beers, I left' or 'I remember counting about six or seven beers per person, after which point I became too drunk myself to continue keeping the track of the number of beers consumed'. For the record, beer is usually served in half-litre glasses and Czech beers are usually 10° or 12° (see Hall 2003 for more details about the types and strengths of beers produced in the Czech Republic). This, according to the National Health Institute website, amounts to 1.5 and 2 units of alcohol in a glass of beer respectively (National Health Institute website http://www.szu.cz/tema/podpora-zdravi/hodnoceni-spotreby-alkoholu).

Anyhow, as I was there, participating and observing, it became obvious to me that the state of intoxication, in which one could do silly and/or dangerous things, was much appreciated and the act of drinking beer was also a popular topic of conversation. Particularly popular were tales of near-death experiences or of embarrassing moments (not for them) such as defecating oneself in public or at home as a result of excessive alcohol drinking. The more extreme tale an individual could narrate the more he grew in the eyes of his companions. A wasted body was also a sign of great prestige. The more one could describe how sick and incapacitated he felt the morning or the days after drinking, the better. I frequently came across complaints of having a body permanently wasted, sometimes by men as young as in their mid 20s. They identified the extreme drinking in their 'younger days' as the culprit. And although it was, in their view, the heavy drinking that undermined their health, they did not speak of excessive consumption of alcohol in terms of regret. Rather, I got a sense that a body so worn was evidence of a life well lived.

Perhaps to give a better sense of how integral alcohol consumption was to the lives of the Workers, let me present here my account of a 'bonding trip' the Workers organised during the time of my fieldwork and to which I was invited. I pseudonymised the names of the participants.

A bonding trip to the Vranov dam

At the end of July 2012 at 4.30 am I found myself travelling on a night bus in one of the largest towns in the Czech Republic in the company of young men belonging to or sympathising with the Workers' Party or its youth organisation Workers' Youth.

We were heading to the main coach station and from there to the Vranov's Dam, one the most pictoresque parts of the Czech Republic. The official purpose of the trip, a camping trip of sorts, was to strengthen the cohesion of the party members and supporters. The precise itinerary of the trip has never been fully disclosed to me by anyone, chiefly because no one seemed to have known for sure what it was. And apart from me no one was troubled by it either. All I knew was that there was a long distance to cover on foot and that we would sleep in some sort of a cottage overnight.

The first people to mount the night bus were me and Pepa, one of my gatekeepers. Soon more Workers started getting on the bus, some of whom I already knew. More people were awaiting us at the main coach station and the last group of Workers were to join us later on, somewhere along the trip.

Overall, most people looked fit for purpose. In the Czech context this means they looked like *trempové/vandráci/čundráci*. These words derive from the English words *tramp* and *wonder* and from the German *tschundern* (to loiter without a firm purpose or aim). *Tremping* is a Czech (and Slovak) phenomenon that came into existence between the two World Wars. Initially inspired by the novels of Jack London and by films and novels set in the 'wild west', as well as by the Scout movement, it attracted those who idealised the life of American pioneers as self-sufficient, free and at one with the nature.

The attire and equipment of a typical *vandrák* has undergone some modification through time, but mostly consists of green combat clothing or, alternatively, a checkered 'cowboy' shirt, military boots, a cowboy hat, a rucksac, a sleeping bag, tins of food, a fork or spoon, a military water bottle and a ubiquitous knife. A dog and a guitar are optional. And indeed, about a half of

the Workers going on the trip that morning sported this very look, the rest being dressed in a vagely sporty way.

Going over my notes from that day, I can still sense my despair, at times giving way to anger, as the events unfolded. Here it needs to be stressed that the despair was exclusively mine, other participants considered the trip mostly a success.

The way I saw it, there were four main themes that ran through this trip like a constant – excessive beer drinking, disorganisation, getting lost, impracticality and the desire to 'tough it out in nature'. These themes perhaps stood out for me so much because they were in direct contrast to the self-portrayal of these people on their official websites where words such as duty, order, discipline and common sense feature so prominently. Let me go over these themes in more detail.

Excessive alcohol consumption, in fact, even foreshadowed the trip as some Workers had been drinking heavily the night before. The most extreme was Johny, who had been on leave over the past two weeks and had spent every single day in the pub. But on the day of the trip they all somehow turned up. A franctic search for beer, draft beer especially, punctuated the whole trip. It started at 5 am at the main coach station. After that, at every single coach station and virtually every pub that we passed on our walk the men would stop for 'one or two' - which usually turned out to be 'five or six'. Interestingly, even though we all knew by that time that we were to cover 30 kilometres on foot in a temperature that would climb to 36 degrees Celsius, no one, myself aside, was worried at all that constant and lenghthy 'beer breaks' could prevent us from reaching our destination on the same day. And as the day started with beer drinking, so it also ended.

The above mentioned poor organisation definitely characterised the whole outing and can be perhaps best exemplified in connection with an Austrian guest. On that day in the morning I learned that that there was some sort of an understanding that fellow national socialists from the neighbouring Austria were

joining us on this bonding trip. It was not known what time the Austrians were coming and how, how many of them – or indeed if they were coming at all. No one had their telephone number. All that was known was that the Austrians would join us in the town of Znojmo, in the train station. Once we finnally arrived at the said town, we waited for them. And waited. After nearly one and half hours of waiting, one young Austrian man finally appeared. Unfortunately, by the time he arrived most of the Workers happened to be dispersed in the area, 'quenching their thirst' with beer, and now it was the Austrian who had to wait for the beer drinkers, who were coming back to the train station at their leisure. Furthermore, the Austrian guest was carrying nothing whatsoever on his person. What he was to drink and eat and how he was to sleep was beyond me. But I was in no doubt that his total lack of provisions was due to being misinformed by his Czech friends as to what was to take place on that day.

Finally we hit the road. A long track through woods was awaiting us. And, getting lost in the woods was another recurrent feature of this trip. As we were walking through the forested areas we split up into smaller groups and some groups simply went astray. There was a lot of waiting and searching for one another. The situation was not made any easier by the fact that one of the lost groups contained our guides. Nevertheless, in the evening we all finally managed to reunite and walk together to the Cottage where we were to sleep overnight. However, perhaps one kilometre away from the final destination one group stopped by a kiosk to drink more beer, rather than heading for the Cottage. This group did not reach the cottage until about 3am. The following morning the men confessed that they could not actually find the cottage. They were walking through the forest in circles, desperately looking for the place. One young man even admitted he had started crying. At the end, the owner of the cottage went to search for them, somehow managed to locate them and brought them in.

What also imprinted on my mind very strongly was what I would call the less than sensible judgement on the part of my fellow travellers. This manifested itself in several ways. For example, the earlier mentioned Pepa, together with

others, semeed quite bemused that I was carrying such things as an insect repellent, a sunbloc or even a sleeping bag. He had never needed one in his life, he claimed, and would certainly never use one! Nonetheless, once in the woods , my repellent was very much in demand by all those around me. Furthermore, throughout the night Pepa kept me awake. He bitterly complained about the cold and at the end had to resort to covering himself in a party flag. I doubt it provided much heat insulation. To give another example still, there was a young couple who turned up with their pugs. It was known to us that the temperature would rise to mid 30s and that the journey would be very long. Yet the couple really thought the pugs could make such a journey on foot. Needless to say, the pugs were slowing the whole group down and after about three kilometres the pugs could not walk any further. Their desperate gasping for air was unbearably painful to hear and at the end they just spread themselves on the ground, motionless. Their owners finally realised the dogs could never make the journey and opted to carry them in their arms to the nearest village. Then the girl called her father to come and give them a lift to the cottage. Also slowing the group was Johny, limping at the back. Apparently he had had something wrong with his toe for weeks, but despite being in excruciating pain, had not sought medical help. On the trip he was trying to fix his possibly broken toe with sellotape. However, having seen that the couple with the dogs opted out of the walk, Johny and his friend Defe decided to walk to the nearest village, too, and from there to take a bus that would bring them as near the Cottage as possible. Johny provided his painful toe as a reason while Defe claimed his rucksac strap had snapped. I made a mental note that it was rather ironic that Johny and Defe went to the greatest length to put on the *čundráci* look, both even sporting a cowboy hat and a menacing looking knife in a sheath attached to their belt. Rather than quickly and with ingenuity fixing the problem with the rucksac, as the brave lone men of the wild west frontier might have done, the two took the nearest opportunity to abandon the trip. Ultimately, even the fact that some people carried with them no bottles of water or only alcoholic drinks on this day long trip in sweltering heat did not evince practicality.

Last but not least, on this trip there was definitely an undercurrent of 'toughing it out'. It was, for instance, apparent in Pepa's (and some other people's) refusal to take along such 'luxuries' as a sleeping bag or an insect repellent or in Johny's decision to defy physical pain and simply 'get on with the trip', a broken toe or not. However, the point was really driven home to me by the following incident. When the owner of the cottage was in the morning making us all cups of tea and coffee, he semi-apologised for what he called the 'field conditions' of the place. "No, no, this is really good", Pepa assured him and he genuinely meant it. In fact, Pepa often went *na vadry*, often by himself, sleeping rough in all sort of the weather conditions. On numerous occassions I also overheard him praising the endurance of German soldiers during WW2. It was obvious he fantasised (as did many of his comrades) about the bravery and toughness of the German soldiers, who were alleged to have survived in the most brutal conditions. Going *na vandr* seemed to me to be an attempt to emulate such conditions, such a way of life.

It took me days afterwards to work off the anger and frustration I had felt so intensely on this trip. But, simultaneously taking part in this camping trip also provided food for thought. First, there was the comical contrast between the 'wild west/pioneer/frontier men' garb of these young men and their, from my perspective at the time, rather pitiful conduct in nature. Second, the question to ponder was why to choose a long-distance walk and camping as a bonding device, something they did quite frequently, apparently. And then there was the prodigious drinking! Drinking the night before the trip, throughout the trip as well as the following morning. Why did alcohol feature so prominently? Did the trip serve its purpose?

Over time, through questions such as these, and alongside more fieldwork material, what was begining to take shape was an intersection of heavy alcohol drinking and number of other themes, such as heightened socialisty, equality, masculinity, and (dys)functionality. I am listing these in this very order for a reason that will become apparent shortly. Nonetheless, first I would like to say a few words about the last of these themes – (dys)functionality.

Functionality and Dysfanctionality of Drinking

If 'drinking a lot' or ' drinking excessively' are contentious statements, talking about functionality or dysfunctionality is perhaps even more contentious. My field notes are replete with tales of constant waiting for someone, with people turning up late or not at all, forgetting to do things, and with people not sticking to their promises to do something either because they forgot or did not have the energy to carry them out. ,'Being drunk' or 'having a terrible hangover' were often given as a reason for these 'failings'. I also deliberated the financial implications of heavy drinking. The dent their alcohol consumption made in their finances seemed considerable, especially given the fact that most of my informants were on a minimum or near-minimum wage. The most extreme example was that of Roman, one of my gatekeepers. Out of his salary of 11,000 Czech korunas a month (a minimum wage at the time of my fieldwork), Roman would spend approximately 5,000 Czech korunas on beer. He was able to survive only because beer also formed a significant part of his diet and because he was subletting a room in the flat where he lived.

However, here it needs to be stressed that my informants did not see things my way at all. There were some, somewhat half-hearted attempts by the elites, to curb the drinking. Nonetheless, not once were they rationalised in terms of, say, concerns over productivity. Rather, they were concerned with projecting a negative image for the party. Drinking prodigious amounts of alcohol was thus something that the far right leaders would like to be less visible to the general public. The ordinary members were aware of it and when in the presence of the elites, they pretended to drink less. For instance, once I was in a pub with a large group of Workers after one of their pre-election public actions. The Party's upper echelons were present at the pub, too, and the ordinary members ordered only low-alcohol content beer and other non-alcoholic beverages. It was only after the Deputy Chairman finally ordered some beer that some of the ordinary members followed suit. And when the Chairman and other functionaries left, everyone 'let their hair down' and 'proper' alcohol drinking began. One of the functionaries of the Workers' Youth was actually truly

unhappy with this lifestyle per se, and not only because of the resultant bad image. In his online articles he urged fellow Workers to cut down on alcohol and as an organiser of cultural activities for the Workers' Youth he did his best to engage the people in other, more 'cultured' activities such as sightseeing. However, as he admitted to me, it was only a modest success.

Complexities and Consequences of Alcohol in Political Spaces

Two things need to be highlighted at this stage. First of all, the incessant and prodigious drinking certainly cannot be explained away as a lack of commitment to the Party. After all, membership in the Workers' Party or the Workers' Youth is – in the words of one of my informants - a 'branding for life'. The people opting to join these organisations knew that there was no turning back. They were often stigmatised by those around them, they sacrificed a portion of what was often a minimal wage, devoted a certain amount of time, ideas and energy to the work for the party/youth organisation and not all of them even believed that the changes they desired would materialise in their lifetime, let alone any time soon. At the same time, when spending time with these people there was no doubt in my mind that the heavy alcohol consumption was negatively affecting their functionality as individuals as well as a political party. To me it seemed that alcohol consumption was as much of a hindrance as it was vital to the existence of this party. It was simultaneously functional and dysfunctional.

Secondly, my informants did actually make a connection between alcohol and functionality themselves. However, they just had the bar set lower than I did. For them being dysfunctional meant unable to hold down a job and being homeless. None of the people I knew were in that situation and they had little sympathy both for the jobless and for the homeless.

Anthropological Contributions and Continuing Debates

Whatever positon one takes in the debate regarding the romantic view of alcohol consumption among anthropologists versus the problem deflation by anthropologists, there is a widely shared agreement that the contribution of anthropological literature on alcohol, especially literature from recent decades,

lies in demonstrating that through the study of alcohol consumption (and production) we can learn a tremendous deal about human societies. The focus on drinking alcohol tells us much about moralities, ideologies and power relations in societies, about the creation and demarcation of identities, etc. Attending to the cultural aspects of alcohol consumption has thus broadened our view of alcohol and has helped us go beyond the perspective of alcohol as a social vice.

What anthropology is perhaps less good at is providing explanations as to why most societies throughout much or most of their histories and in most parts of the world have opted to produce and drink ethanol-based beverages in the first place. This is, however, important, too, since it feeds into the debate about whether drunken behaviour is learned, and therefore influenced, determined even, by culture, as many anthropologists claim, or whether the effects of alcohol (ethanol) consumption on humans are universal. The latter approach is still very much characteristic of medical science. My examination of articles published on the topic of alcohol in medical journals revealed that medical science takes no account of culture as a factor in the analysis. In terms of effects on the human body, including the brain, the medical science views these as universal. It recognises differences in tolerance to alcohol, but these are genetic differences among individuals, differences between men and women, and sometimes also between populations. Here, however, we speak of different populations in terms of genetic relatedness, not in the sense of belonging to different cultures.

Conclusion

This thesis has delved into the complexities of the Workers' Party of Social Justice and its supporters, challenging predominant narratives and exploring the nuanced interplay of identity, socio-economic factors, and political ideology. Through a detailed ethnographic approach, this research has sought to answer pivotal questions and test specific hypotheses about the nature and evolution of far-right and its ideologies in the Czech Republic. Here, I revisit these questions and hypotheses to integrate findings and draw comprehensive conclusions.

Revisiting Research Questions

1. Reconciliation of Nationalist Identity with Admiration for German Neo-Nazis:

The research revealed that Czech neo-Nazis reconcile their nationalist identity with their admiration for German neo-Nazis through a complex process of identity reshaping influenced by post-1989 globalization. This admiration is often seen as an attempt to reclaim a sense of empowerment and prestige by aligning with what they perceive as a more successful nationalist movement.

2. Role of the Far Right in Shaping New Working-Class Identities:

The Workers' Party for Social Justice plays a crucial role in shaping new working-class identities by emphasizing themes of social justice, national sovereignty, and protectionism. These themes resonate deeply with the working class, who feel left behind by the neoliberal economic policies and cultural changes in post-communist Czech Republic.

3. Evolution of Skinheadism to Neo-Nazism:

The transition from skinheadism to a more structured neo-Nazism within the Czech far right was driven by a need for a coherent ideological framework that could not only justify their beliefs and actions but also provide a stable base for recruitment and political engagement.

Evaluation of Hypotheses

1. Paradoxical Identity Shift:

Confirmed: The hypothesis that Czech neo-Nazis adopt German neo-Nazi symbols to elevate their status and distance themselves from their communist past was confirmed. This shift is partly a response to globalization and the associated inferiority complex vis-à-vis the West.

2. Working-Class Identity Reassertion:

Confirmed: The resurgence of a workerist identity within the Czech far right, contrasting with Western European right-wing populism, confirms that this reassertion is a search for dignity and recognition. The Workers' Party's focus on traditional values and nationalization appeals to workers' desires for economic security and social recognition.

3. Ideological Evolution of Skinheadism:

Confirmed: The evolution from relatively ideology-free skinheadism to ideologically driven neo-Nazism was confirmed to stem from the need for a more detailed and robust framework to sustain long-term political engagement and to address the increasing complexity of their members' and supporters' socio-political grievances.

The findings of this thesis underscore the necessity of understanding far-right movements through a lens that appreciates the socio-economic and cultural contexts in which they operate. The Workers' Party of Social Justice, like many far-right groups, addresses feelings of disenfranchisement and disempowerment among the working class, offering them a narrative that intertwines nationalist fervour with a critique of global capitalism and liberal multiculturalism.

This thesis has explored the intricacies of the Workers' Party of Social Justice and its supporters within the broader spectrum of Czech society and Western societal norms. My research has illuminated not only the paradoxes inherent within the far-right's integration into Czech society but also the broader Western misrecognition and pathologization of such groups, drawing parallels with other societal phenomena that are perceived as marginal yet are omnipresent.

My research has revealed that the far right, at least in the Czech context, is not a caste apart. It is not a detached or alien segment of society. Instead, its members are profoundly integrated, both ideologically and in terms of lifestyle, into the mainstream societal fabric. This integration challenges the prevailing narratives of deviance and marginality often perpetuated by media and some scholarly interpretations.

On the other hand, far right is not the only phenomenon in the Czech as well as wider western society that is being misrecognised, misrepresented, distorted and/or pathologised by its society's members. For example, sociologist and criminologist Dick Hobbs (2013), who has been researching societal understanding of crime, and who also looked into its representation in novels, concluded that the criminal world is depicted as an underworld, as an exclusively deviant space. This, according to Hobbs, makes the rest of us feel exclusively good. He insists, however, that the reality of crime is that it is something everyday, normal. I can definitely see some parallels between his findings in relation to crime and my findings in relation to the far right. far right

is too often depicted as an exclusive community, an exclusively deviant community at that, and this simplistically reassures the rest of society about their own moral standing. This misrecognition of far right, I argue, is a form of societal self-protection that mirrors Occidentalism within Western contexts, or minimally in the context of the Czech Republic.

Let me therefore consider the Czech society's treatment of the far right in terms of Occidentalism. (Here I stress that I am limiting the concept of Occidentalism only to the self-image of the westerners themselves as opposed to the image of the West held by non-westerners). According to James Carrier (1996), Occidentalism is an essentialised, stereotyped and somewhat warped rendering of the self and tends to reproduce the self-image of powerful groups in the West. Importantly, it is thus closely linked to the construction of identities and identity politics and is a form of social control (1996). Speaking specifically of the Czech Republic, during the time of my fieldwork people with expert status (or opinion makers more generally) that were appearing in the mainstream media were either explicitly stating or implying that democracy, tolerance, individuality and possessing tertiary education credentials were the core values as well as actual characteristics of the western society. And it seemed to me that people who were given space to appear in the mainstream media in the post1989 Czech society felt a particularly strong need to constantly evoke and endorse these values and supposed attributes. An understandable development, I suppose, given the still relatively recent change in the regime and therefore its efforts to legitimise its position. I argue that in this sort of atmosphere people who do not live up to these values and characteristics and/or even openly question them and propose something different in their stead are internally orientalised.

In literature internal orientalism has been mostly employed to refer to internal othering in the context of the nation state. It is then either specific geographical regions within the nation state that are internally orientalised (Jansson 2005, Jansson 2010, Eriksson 2008) or ethnic minorities within them (Kim, Basile, Jaime-Diaz & Black 2018). Buchowski (2006), however, credibly

used the term to describe othering where the border between the orient and occident is no longer strictly geographical. He argued that the frontier between the orient and occident shifts as does the geopolitical situation. Thus, during the Cold War, he observed, the border between the occident and the orient was concomitant with the Iron Curtain. The west was held to be rational, efficacious, productive, individualistic, respectful of the law, etc, whereas people to the east of the border were viewed as the reverse of these characteristics. Came 1989 and the societies of eastern Europe 'reconfigured themselves' - in such a way that the border between the east and the west now runs through the social space of these societies. Examining Polish society specifically, Buchowski distinguishes at least four social groups. And although Buchowski admits that the division of these social groups into occidentals and orientals is not completely straightforward and uncontested, on the whole it could be said that intellectuals and white collar workers, espousing the new societal order and navigating successfully within it, deem themselves to be true westerners. They hold disdain for workers who, with their egalitarianism and their alleged laziness and lack of agency, are the residual homo sovieticus as far as the elites are concerned. It is the workers' primitivism, their eastern nature, that is to be blamed for their own misfortune as well as for holding the whole country back. Incidentally, Don Kalb (2009) when describing attitudes of the Polish intelligentsia to the working class in the post-1989 Poland also operated with the term internal orientalism in order to describe internal othering pertaining to class.

Moving from Poland to the Czech Republic – the picture is virtually identical, as my own research has shown. The Czech elites ostracise the local workers using the same argumentation and levelling the same charges against them. The Czech elite's disdain for the working class then reveals a deep-seated class prejudice that portrays these groups as backward or unenlightened.

Internal orientalism aside, another concept or concepts that can be utilised in the context of the Czech far right are Gramsci's (1992-2007) notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony, organic intellectuals and the subaltern. The

reason is twofold. First, my interlocutors were workers – both nominally and in actual fact. Although they would actually never use the terms such as counter-hegemony, organic intellectuals or the subaltern, although they were not even familiar with such terminology, they indeed viewed themselves in such terms. They overtly attacked individualism and what they saw as limitless tolerance and openness (to both internal minorities and forces of globalisation). Instead of individualism they proposed to take into account a larger collective unit – the nation - and to gear everything towards its wellbeing (or that of the nation state). They were adamant that the society must put limit on tolerance. Tolerance as a concept must be disregarded the moment the wellbeing of the nation state is threatened or compromised. They also criticised the proliferation of university degrees, particularly in humanistic disciplines. They regarded formal education primarily as indoctrination, serving the interests of the elites. Many also doubted capitalism per se and, whilst by no means questioning democracy as a political system, they were dead against or have had a number of grievances with the democratic system as it was currently in place – at least, and for some especially, in the Czech Republic.

Secondly, the role of (traditional) intellectuals should not go unexamined. Terms such as racism, nationalism, xenophobia, prejudice, etc. are analytical categories employed by social scientists, especially those studying the far right. In the worst case, some scholars of the far right only use them as descriptive labels without further elaboration. Then there are scientists who stretch these categories to encompass a number of different phenomena. However, stretching the term too far can lead to the category stop being useful as an analytical tool. This was at times my issue with the way Pilkington used the term racism in her otherwise excellent book Loud and Proud (2016). Of course, if the definition of the term is never revised to accommodate changing circumstances in the society, it is also problematic. And then there is the fact that the aforementioned terms are also political tools. They are negative descriptive labels utilised to discredit political opponents, utilised to effectively shut any form of discussion with them. The relationship between the two, that is

between the (supposed) neutral social science and the world of politics is something we, social scientists, should never lose sight of.

I have drawn in my thesis on the work of psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists (not in this order). Ideally, we should explore the relationship of these disciplines to the existing social structure and values. For example, a useful critique from within the discipline of psychology appears in the article by Isaac Prillentensky aptly titled Psychology and the Status Quo (1989). In Prillentensky's account the discipline of psychology not only uncritically accepts the status quo but also actively endorses it (Prilleltensky, 1989). I found his arguments highly convincing andI think he sets a useful example for all of us.

Overall, this thesis argues for a more nuanced understanding of the far right, recognizing it as an integrated part of Czech society that challenges the simplistic categorizations of extremism. By contextualizing this within broader societal dynamics and historical shifts, we gain insights into the enduring appeal and transformation of these groups in post-communist Europe. This comprehensive examination underscores the importance of dispassionate analysis and critical engagement with all societal phenomena, regardless of their perceived marginality or deviance.

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