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The Leadership of the Czech Far Right 1990–2017:  
Changes in Practical Ideology?

Intersections.EEJSP  
4(4): 125-136.  
DOI: 10.17356/ieejsp.v4i4.482  
<http://intersections.tk.mta.hu>

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### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

The research note attempts to contribute to the analysis of the ideology of the extreme right. Building on Barthes and Žižek, it proposes that we should not reduce this ideology to rational postulates or statements by the participants themselves, but that instead we should look for it in their praxis. It proposes that the figure of the leader should be perceived as an important part of this ideology in terms of both the significance of the leader in the extreme right's belief systems, and the role of leaders in various extra-parliamentary, extreme-right formations. The empirical part of the article is devoted to the figure of the leader in three periods of the existence of the Czech extreme right, and analyses the transformations in the characteristics that these leaders shared during the movement's beginnings (1989–2001), the period of its relative decline and repression (2001–2015), and finally, during the period of the rise of Islamophobia (2015–2017). The article concludes that for leaders it is important to have immediate contact with the movement, and to maintain closeness to fellow fighters. This characteristic may outweigh the importance of the cultural capital of musicians from well-known subculture bands and the symbolic capital that may be possessed by veterans from the distant past.

*Keywords: Leaders, Extreme Right, Czech Neo-Nazism, Ideology.*

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<sup>1</sup> The research for this paper was supported by the European Regional Development "Fund Project" *Creativity and adaptability as conditions of the success of Europe in an interrelated world* (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16\_019/0000734). For comments and criticism, I am deeply indebted to Jan Charvát, Vendula Prokúpková, Jovo Bakić, Hana Blažková, Matyáš Křížkovský and two anonymous reviewers.

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## 1. Introduction

This article has a dual aim. Methodologically, it is a proposal for methodological innovation in researching the ideology of the extreme right.<sup>2</sup> Empirically, it is an attempt to apply this innovation to various environments of the Czech extreme right after 1989.

The theoretical approach that supports the article is a critical analysis of ideology. Instead of reconstructing what members of the extreme right say they *think*, this approach aims to focus on their *praxis* as a way of approaching their ideology. Ideology will interest us here as a *practical* category with an immediate relationship to action, not as a merely declared belief system. ‘Practical ideology’ in this sense is a mixture of approaches which are not fully recognised and articulated by actors but which are reproduced and transmitted by their practices, sometimes only with partial reflection. It is ideology which is not declared, but lived.

As one of the components of this practical ideology, we investigate the image and role of the leader. I argue that the real leaders of extreme right movements have to be perceived in terms of their role in the movements not just as real participants and concrete actors, but also as the bearers of ideological content, and indeed *as part* of this content. The article thus proposes to read them as part of the ideology of the movement and an object of semiological analysis.

In the empirical section, the article seeks to understand the role of the leader in the ideology of the various environments of the Czech far right. It traces the milieu over the three post-1989 decades using a working division of three distinctive epochs, differentiated on the basis of the relations between society and the extreme right: the first, the epoch of searching (1990s–2001), the second, the epoch of repression (2001–2015), and the third, the epoch of the new beginning (2015–present). After a brief summary of the development of the extreme right in the Czech Republic, there follows an analysis of the leaders.<sup>3</sup> Given the long period of time under analysis, we will concentrate most on the shared characteristics of the leaders in the various periods.

## 2. Ideology and the extreme right: from stylisation to ‘practical ideology’?

It is difficult to reconstruct the ideology of the extreme right, however primitive that ideology may seem. One way of doing it is to gather the basic positions of the extreme right into a coherent form, and abstract from these often muddled factors those that

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term extreme right conventionally to mean the far right which shares ultranationalist, authoritarian and racist views, and accepts violence as a political tool for overturning the existing constitutional order. I use the terms radical right or far right for the political forces which share ultranationalist views, authoritarianism and racism (or at least strong xenophobia), but where it is not clear that they are willing to use violence to overturn the existing constitutional order. I sometimes also use these terms as a broader category that covers the extreme right.

<sup>3</sup> The paper limits the right-wing movements in the Czech Republic in the first two generations above all to those that issued from the environment of the racist skinheads. It thus passes over the Republicans, a notable political party of the first generation. In the third generation, it covers both new forces that entered the neo-Nazi field, National Democracy and Islamophobes who try to represent a movement that distances itself from the classic extreme right and racism.

are of key importance for the rational reconstruction of extreme right-wing positions (cf. Mudde, 2000). Another possibility is to reproduce, faithfully, what *the actors themselves* consider their ideology to be (cf. Mareš, 2003).

The risk of the first approach is that it involves too much rationalism, while the risk of the second approach is abstruseness and scholasticism. If an ideology is reduced to rational arguments, it is possible to ask whether it will not then fail to capture the moments that are experienced by its participants just as much, if not more, than argumentation formulated using reason. In the case of the second approach – the descriptive reproduction of self-images – we may ask whether we take too seriously (and non-analytically) the adventurous and romantic backdrops that the neo-Nazis and other far-right ideologies imagine. The preceding caveats may be underlined with reference to Robert Paxton's words that 'Fascism was an affair of the gut more than of the brain' (2007: 42). I consider these words to be problematic because they indicate that other ideologies are affairs of the 'brain'. However, focusing on the 'gut' is important, and is a fruitful approach to the examination of an ideology that I believe has to be reconstructed as a mix of rational and non-rational elements that motivate behaviour. This examination of ideology focuses on things that are not articulated by the movement itself as its ideology, but are more its practice; the lived reality, that functions as the bearer of the significance and values of the movement in question (cf. Žižek, 1989; 1994).

I propose that one of the examples of this practical ideology is a focus on the person of the leader. While leaders are important to most political currents, if not all, on the extreme right an ideological emphasis on leadership and the *Führerprinzip* makes leadership an even more important part of 'practical ideology'. If the majority of extreme right-wing currents promote the strengthening of power in the hands of the leader, then the specific qualities of the leader who, they suggest, holds this power becomes an important part of their ideology.<sup>4</sup>

### *3. 'Führer' as 'symbol': an analysis of reception versus semiology*

A basic problem in the analysis of extreme-right leadership is the tension between the role of the leader in most extreme-right ideologies and the reality of the extreme-right movement. In programmatic and historical terms, however, a large number of extreme right-wing movements accentuate the role of the leader and elevate them far above the rest of the movement's members. In sociological terms, most extreme-right movements are, in their initial phases, egalitarian movements with only small levels of difference. Especially in combative subcultures such as the racist skinheads, a 'warrior democracy' makes itself strongly felt, and there is often practical equality between individuals; indeed, a seemingly more egalitarian structure than in most other social subsystems. There is a weaker role for the leader than in most political parties (with their leaders), companies (with their managers) and universities (with their professors).

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<sup>4</sup> This focus on the leader as a carrier and part of the ideology of the movement is the reason I do not deal with literature that focuses on the 'charisma' of far-right populist leaders, because despite some important insights this literature is focused on the leaders of political parties and based on a more technical approach to leaders' charisma, and does not include a discussion of it in the context of the ideology of movements (cf. Pappas, 2016; Eatwell, 2018).

Maybe this is the reason for the tendency of some extreme-right movements to adopt a 'leaderless resistance' formula.

How can we analyse leaders' charisma and the ideological meanings which it supports? Inspiration may be drawn here from the semiological approach that builds on Roland Barthes and his *Mythologies* (1957/1972). In a Barthesian vein, we can perceive extreme right-wing leaders as symbols that can be analysed at least in part independently, without considering what their reception has been.

The advantage of such an approach may be that it allows analysis to be carried out in cases when we do not have access to data regarding its reception. The disadvantage may be elitism and the risk of interpretational error and projecting. Essentially, this is a problem analogical to that which arises in debates regarding the analysis of youth musical subcultures, in which Hedbige's analysis (1979), inspired by Barthes (and Kristeva), was criticised by Muggleton for its projective nature (2002). When Muggleton read this analysis as a young punk, he did not understand it. When he read it years later, after graduating in sociology, he understood it, but it did not correspond to his experiences. With a certain amount of doubt, we may also inquire: How does Muggleton know that he was not also formed by something he did not realise; something that he rejected when confronted with Hedbige's analysis?

Given the experimental nature of this paper, I shall combine approaches: when sources are available regarding the perception of the movement, I shall make use of them with an awareness of their limits. This concerns, above all, the non-academic 'oral history' of the early years of the racist skinheads, *Těžký boty to vyřešej hned* ('Heavy Boots Solve It Immediately' – a quotation from a skinhead song), by the key neo-Nazi leader Filip Vávra (2017).<sup>5</sup> I shall also attempt to provide an interpretation. Before making such an analysis, I briefly review the history of the new Czech extreme right.

#### *4. The Czech extreme right: a brief overview and periodisation*

The roots of the contemporary Czech extreme right can be found at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The second half of the 1980s saw the slow rise of the skinhead subculture, with the first musical bands. The most important of these was Orlík. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989, skinheads experienced a boom. They separated themselves from punks and profiled themselves (mainly) as nationalist, racist and militant. Skinhead subculture soon became a hotbed not only of Czech nationalism, but also neo-Nazism (Mareš, 2003; Charvát, 2007; Charvát, 2018a; 2018b). After the Velvet Revolution a new far-right party was founded, called Republicans, which between 1992 and 1998 included members of parliament (cf. Roubal, 2012).

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<sup>5</sup> The use of this source of course leads to methodological and ethical dilemmas. Even if we accept that the book is an honest attempt to record the writer's/narrators' own memories, they are understandably memories deformed not only by time, but also by the fact that they involve self-representation of the movement, albeit retrospective. Non-critical use of the book in question exposes us to the risk of participating in the spread of the neo-Nazi self-image. Nevertheless, we believe that it gives us an insight into factors and situations that occurred in the creation of the movement that would otherwise be hard to access. In our analysis we shall make use of those factors when the author does not seem to have any motivation to lie.

There are various approaches to the description and periodisation of the Czech far right in print (cf. Mareš, 2003; Charvát, 2007; Bastl et al., 2011; Daniel, 2016; Slačálek and Svobodová, 2017; 2018; Charvát; 2018a; 2018b; Slačálek and Charvát in print); in this section, I will argue for my own proposal and combine information from these scholarly sources, as well as long-term observations based on mass media and direct observation of related media and events. I propose a division into three time periods *based on the position of the extreme right in society*. The first one, 1990–2001, we may call the *epoch of searching*; the second, 2001–2014, we may call the *epoch of repression*, and the third one, from 2015 until the present, we may call the *epoch of the new beginning*.

The beginning of the time period 1990–2001 was marked by new opportunities brought about by the completely new and open conditions in society after the Velvet Revolution. For a couple of years, the skinhead musical band Orlik had a broad audience and could be found on mainstream TV hit parades. In some cases, racist skinhead violence was even covered by the police and applauded by some parts of society. Skinheads became, together with the Republicans (who obtained striking election results) and a few groups of nationalist or reactionary clerics, the most important basis for the Czech far right. They were also the basis for some nationalist organisations (the Patriotic Front, and Patriotic League), and even neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups and sections of international platforms (National Fascist Community, Bohemia Hammer Skinheads, Blood and Honour).

After a few years of expansion, marked by violence and even racist murders, the skinhead movement faced pressure from anti-fascists (recruited both from liberal and anarchist milieus), and state repression and media attention due to this pressure, as well as the consolidation of the new regime. After 1998, electoral support for the Republicans declined (they were no longer represented in parliament), probably because socioeconomic cleavages became most prominent in Czech politics, and also because of scandals related to the party.

Afterward, Czech neo-Nazis, based on the skinheads, tried to change strategy. From 1998 onwards the new militant organisations National Alliance and National Resistance started to organise large legal public demonstrations at which they intended to present their views as a political alternative (and to fulfil the political vacuum that arose after the failure of the Republicans). They attracted some attention, but their political party the National Social Bloc (founded in 2001, later renamed the Right-Wing alternative) had neither electoral nor organisational success.

The moral panic caused by neo-Nazi violence (sometimes connected with football hooliganism) meant the start of a new period, which we may call the *epoch of repression*. This does not mean that there was no repression in the development of the Czech extreme-right scene before or after this (as we have seen, there was), but it means that repression and exclusion became the dominant component of the relation between the far right and society. The Czech neo-Nazi scene had changed under various influences, with a prevalent role being played by the German neo-Nazi scene. Skinhead roots became less important, and new approaches such as those of the ‘autonomous nationalists’ came to the fore.

After the end of the Right Wing Alternative, the militant extreme right participated in the relatively marginal Workers’ Party (composed of some former Republicans and neo-Nazis), which never had electoral success and was even officially

banned (and replaced by its carbon copy, the Workers' Party for Social Justice). The largest extreme-right mobilisation, the march through the Jewish quarter of Prague on the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* in 2007, ended with a mass anti-fascist mobilisation and police intervention. Many activists, organisers, and musicians were paralysed by the police intervention and criminal prosecution, and the situation also led to an atmosphere of fear and paranoia (with regard to collaboration between the police and neo-Nazis).

In spite of the repression, the extreme right was quite successful at organising some marches against Czech Roma, above all in Northern Bohemia (during the time period 2008–2012). Marches organised by the Workers Party and other extreme-right groups (there were also others, organised at a grassroots level or by local politicians) received a considerable level of grassroots support, and local people even supported neo-Nazis who participated in violent clashes with police. In some municipalities, the Workers' Party (and then Workers' Party of Social Justice) had considerable electoral successes.

Nevertheless, this did not help the party to any sort of success on a national or even a regional level in the new period which came after 2014 and the refugee crisis. This epoch, which we may call the *epoch of the new beginning*, may be characterised by its new opportunities, new topics and new actors. In the elections of 2014 the far-right populist party The Dawn of Direct Democracy, led by entrepreneur Tomio Okamura, had marked electoral success. After 16 years, a far-right party was back in the Czech parliament; moreover, the party was very open to collaborating with the extreme right. Since 2015, the Islamophobic movement has had a considerable presence, both on the streets and in public debate. Islamophobes scandalised liberals and anti-racists with some extreme statements and performances, but at the same time their hostility to refugee quotas was shared by the majority of society. A majority of mainstream politicians also expressed anti-refugee opinions, and the Czech president even spoke at an Islamophobic demonstration.

This atmosphere became a source of opportunities which traditional extreme-right forces tried to exploit. However, they were quite unable to do so – they were relatively weak in the aftermath of years of persecution, with little political capability and a very bad image in the public space. The main Islamophobic forces, which were able to organise a relatively strong Islamophobic platform and to organise fairly frequent public demonstrations, were single-issue anti-Islamic xenophobes formed around the grouping We do not want Islam in the Czech Republic, later known as the Bloc Against Islam. Even this platform, which tried to be the Czech Pegida and which was relatively visible in the public space, was unable to organise demonstrations larger than several thousand protesters, and was also unable to attract electoral success (indeed, because of internal conflicts they were unable to participate in the elections). Their leaders, Martin Konvička and Petr Hampl, were very militant in their rhetoric against Islam, the EU and human-rights liberals, but they did not work with traditional extreme-right symbols and references, thus their views were more similar to the 'new xenophobia' of Western Islamophobes in the Pim Fortuyn mould (cf. Barša, 2006; Brubaker, 2017; Slačálek and Svobodová, 2017; 2018).

A more radical political force connected with the traditional radical right and also with open antisemitism was National Democracy/No to EU!, but this political party was electorally irrelevant. Another part of the Islamophobic movement was the

Home Guard *votes Domobrana*). It is still not clear if these guards really exist and how many real combatants they may potentially have.

Of the far-right populist forces, only Tomio Okamura was electorally successful, his new party Freedom and Direct Democracy receiving 10.64 per cent of the votes in the 2017 election. However, throughout almost the whole political spectrum the ideas of exclusionary nationalism and Islamophobia became acceptable, and even calling the far right ‘extremists’ became more problematic. In 2018, the office of the Czech President asked for statements about Okamura’s party to be cut from the Interior Ministry’s report on extremism, because, according to the president, this racist and nationalist party was not extremist. In the same year, the court canceled the criminal prosecution of one group of neo-Nazis and in its reasoning stated (among others),<sup>6</sup> that the ideas for which the neo-Nazis were being prosecuted had in recent years found their way into the media and political mainstream.

### *5. The first generation: musicians?*

The individuals who on the given scene have some sort of ‘natural’ influence and charisma, as it were (given the significance of music in the skinhead subculture), are understandably musicians; above all, the lead singers of bands. In the first years of the movement, the latter have taken on the role of spokespeople, and have had the space to influence the formulation of values through a unique and key medium – song lyrics – but also using some other media elements (such as speeches during concerts).

The key musical group at the beginning of the establishment of the Czech racist skinheads was Orlík (1988–1991). Its frontman, Daniel Landa, may also serve as a case study of the limits of a musician’s influence on a subculture. In its work, Landa’s Orlík expressed in a classic and influential way a whole range of themes: anti-Communism, racism, nationalism, a collective belligerent identity, and a relationship towards alcohol (Charvát, 2018b). Orlík gained popularity and an audience, but when Landa tried to establish the identity of the skinheads around a rejection of German Nazism and the legacy of the Czech Hussites of the 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>7</sup> the attempt had only minority appeal.

Hypothetically (on the basis of testimonies in *Heavy Boots Take Care of It*), we may formulate three reasons for the former lack of success: 1) musicians were not credible, because words spoken with feeling at concerts and fiery appeals were followed by moderate statements in the media; 2) the charisma of the musicians was thus relatively distant from the everyday reality of street battles; 3) in opposition to the logic of the lyrics, there also existed a ‘logic of style’ (cf. Hedbigge, 1979) and a will to identify with an idea of ‘what it means to be a skinhead’. This problem was solved by the fact that a ‘ready-made’ skinhead style was already in existence in Western Europe, thus it did not make sense to create a local variant.

Vávra (2017) claims that, against the will of Orlík’s frontman Dan Landa, Nazi salutes became commonplace, partly because of foreign influences and the sense of

<sup>6</sup> The main legal reason for stopping the prosecution was its duration.

<sup>7</sup> The Hussite movement, which provoked a religious and social revolution in 1418–1434, was one of the key reference points of the Czech nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and also of the synthesis between nationalism and communism.

doing ‘something forbidden’, as well as the radical anti-Communist opposition, but also for another reason: a character called Ben.

The opposition to these phenomena within the scene was surprisingly weak. The only person to say anything against it was Dan Landa. However, Dan, although the singer of a skinhead band, was not perceived as a chief of any kind. The guys liked him, and he was great at talking and winning people over, but they saw him as one of them. Not as an authority. The whole early skins scene in Prague, despite the impression of uniformity and order that it gave, was still based on punk, and it rejected leaders. Authorities did not exist, only people who had respect. Respect either because they were good fighters, or because they exuded it naturally. It was Dan’s bad luck that this natural respect was held by the guy who was most into Nazism in Prague. Ben

(Vávra, 2017: 67–68).

### *6. The first generation: fighters with a political project?*

The people who came to prominence in the street fighting groups were people with charisma. This was not enough, however – political ideas were also needed. Considerable renown and a reputation for leadership were won by the brothers Michal and Ladislav Procházka, famous for both their brutal violence in skirmishes and for their project of renewing the interwar Czech organisation the National Fascist Community (*Národní obec fašistická*). Their involvement ended in a prison sentence. The skinhead subculture gradually spilled over into various political projects, from fascisising nationalists to open neo-Nazis. It is interesting that the leaders of these projects, too, had the appearance of street fighters: the leader of the neo-Nazi National Resistance (*Národní odpor*) Filip Vávra and the Prague-based leader of the neo-fascist Patriotic Front David Macháček not only have distinctive, muscled and thick-set figures, but are of above-average size. Vladimír Skoupý, too, was a relatively strong man.

However, physical constitution alone is not enough. It was important during this period to combine 1) a robust physical constitution, 2) charisma, 3) a political project, and 4) the ability to present the latter credibly.

As far as political projects are concerned, the source is usually Western Europe, above all Germany, and to a lesser extent the USA, as well as historical fascism and Nazism. Vávra’s National Resistance was a direct copy of a German group, while in Skoupý’s case his National Alliance was a translation of a group from the USA, while his magazine *Vlajka* (Flag) was reminiscent of an interwar radically nationalist and then ultimately pro-Nazi collaborationist magazine.

As far as the ability to present this political project is concerned, the far-right leaders found themselves caught between two threats: the first was a loss of credibility among their supporters for *not being radical enough* during street demonstrations, while the second was the threat of criminal proceedings for the propagation of fascism and racism for being *too radical*.



### *7. The first generation: old survivor ideologues?*

While most members of extreme right-wing groups (except the Republicans political party) were recruited from the youth skinhead subculture, and the same was true of most of the leaders, the less significant figures, leaders and speakers at demonstrations also included older people. Jan Skácel (born 1934) came from a significant family of interwar Czech anti-German nationalist National Democrats. Roman Skružný (1932–2004) came, in his own words, from a family of Nazi collaborators, and later in life allegedly joined some surviving Nazi anti-Communist resistance fighters.

Contact with the older generations also had symbolic significance: it created the impression of continuity and seriousness. At the same time, however, it is evident in the case of the neo-Nazis that Skružný could not (and maybe did not even want to) play the role of a real leader, nor was this even offered to him. His role was more decorative, an accessory. Skácel appears to have been more of a leader type but even he was at least balanced by more important young leaders with a subculture background.

### *8. The second generation: holding on*

After 2001 it became more and more clear that the attempts of the racist skinheads to create a radical political formation were not going to be successful. Repression and police pressure to cooperate created a paranoid atmosphere in the skinhead subculture that led to some accusations, well-founded or not, of collaboration with the police and informing (even Filip Vávra was accused to be police informer).

In seeking to identify the key leaders of the extreme right connected with neo-Nazism and the (post-)skinhead subculture, we can name Erik Sedláček, Petr Kalinovský and Jiří Petřivalský (as leaders of neo-Nazi groups) and Jan Kopal and Tomáš Vandas, two defectors from the Republicans who became leaders of political projects with notable neo-Nazi participation (the National Social Bloc in the case of Kopal, in which he was probably only a fictitious leader and acted as a cover for other, more radical leaders, and the Workers' Party in the case of Vandas).

A basic and remarkable difference compared to the previous period is that none of these leaders was particularly outstanding in terms of physical or mental qualities. Only Petřivalský in his physical proportions corresponded to the idea of a physically dominant militant, and even he was less physically distinctive than Vávra, Skoupý, and Macháček. In the case of the others, there can be no talk of any kind of physical dominance over other neo-Nazis – their figures were normal or even on the weak side. Neither do the extreme right-wing leaders of this period dazzle with their personal charm. Some do not even pass muster by neo-Nazi standards: Jan Kopal is sometimes called a 'gypsy' by neo-Nazis (like Filip Vávra).

The extreme right-wing leaders of this period are ordinary. Their main virtue lies in not leaving the movement and their leading position in it and remaining publicly visible persons, even in situations of considerable pressure. They shared the movement's lack of success, but did not deflect it and were willing to share its fate.

### *9. Third generation: deserters from the establishment*

With the gradual rise in Islamophobic sentiments that occurred during the third decade after the velvet revolution, the position of extreme right-wing movements changed, and so did their leaders. The new leaders are people who have come from the commercial, media, or academic establishment. In the eyes of their supporters, they represent a certain link with these establishments, but they want to distinguish themselves from them.

Even the highly extreme and anti-Semitic National Democracy gained a leader, who for many years was a journalist with the most widely read mainstream daily, *MF Dnes*. Adam B. Bartoš, who has become the country's most famous anti-Semite and conspiracy theorist, was originally a follower of the mainstream conservative right and even a supporter of Israel. The Islamophobic movement Bloc Against Islam, which distanced itself from connections with the extreme right and racism, had different leaders, including associate biology professor Martin Konvička and commercial sociologist Petr Hampl.

All three come from the establishment, but they are not subject to the taboos that the extreme-right leaders of the previous generations reacted to in their public declarations. Adam B. Bartoš openly articulates anti-Semitism, something that even the neo-Nazis of previous decades expressed in a more indirect way.

All three declare a clear fondness for physical violence. Adam B. Bartoš, at a demonstration against refugees, threatened the government and other 'traitors' with the noose, while Martin Konvička has made jokes about grinding Muslims' bones into flour and talked about concentration camps for Muslims. Petr Hampl repeatedly talks about armed revolt against the alienated elites and the shooting of boats carrying migrants, regardless of the fact that people on board would be drowned. These leaders who come from the establishment have an ambivalent role. They represent the partial acceptability and success of this establishment, but at the same time a revolt against it through the violation of its strictest taboos. To break these, they use a combination of the self-confidence that their previous membership of the establishment gives them, as well as their support in the radical movement.

### *10. Conclusion*

The empirical research into social movements and the extreme right needs to engage in more dialogue with approaches that conceptualise ideologies. While in cultural studies and partly also in research into musical subcultures this dialogue is normal, it too often avoids the most common approaches to researching political actors. The result is the *reduction* of extreme-right ideology either to rationally-reconstructed postulates, or to the *reproduction* of the movement's romantic and historical self-image.

This article has provided a proposal for such a conceptualisation: taking the leaders of extreme-right groups not just as the bearers but also as part of the ideology of the extreme right, and perceiving these figures as a source for the analysis of the practical ideology of the extreme right. Certainly, there may be many options for analysing the leaders as standard bearers of ideologies. I have chosen a combination

of the interpretation of the self-perception of the movement (where it is available, in the case of the first phase of its existence in the Czech Republic) with an analysis of the potential effect of the features shared by the leaders in the given period. A further possibility is, of course, to undertake direct research into the way in which the characteristics of the leaders affect the movement's participants, or to engage in a more detailed semiological analysis of the various characteristics of the various individuals.

What has the analysis shown? The shared characteristics of leaders start with their rootedness in subculture, which most appreciates a marked and muscly masculinity. Subsequently, after the scene became ideologised, and following significant media and public pressure, leaders reflected the defensive state of the whole scene: the ability to withstand pressure and to hold on became a key and respected value. In the third generation, permeation with the mainstream led to ambivalence: the success of individuals in the central current appeared to bring a promise of success for the whole movement, but at the same time also made them somewhat suspect and forced them to define themselves clearly and all the more incisively.

The extreme right is frequently associated with the image of a leader standing high above a mass of supporters. Our research into the extreme right creates a different picture: what is decisive in a leader's position and ability to lead supporters is not only charisma, but above all proximity, the ability to bear the same burden, and to last the journey. These abilities are tested, become the object of controversy, and are the reason why leaders may lose their positions. Musicians may become significant carriers of the ideas of the movement and gain the status of 'stars', but this is not enough for political leadership.

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