

ON MACEDINIAN BIOPOLITICS - Populist Dictatorship and Transition -

I. POPULISM AS IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS

Concerning populism, one can set aside and consider several starting analytical positions! For example, one can analyze it as a phenomenon of some historical period, context, or social formation: populism in Europe, in the 1930s, fascism, the populism in Latin America, or populism of national liberation of decolonization, etc. Likewise, one can analyze populism in a symptomatic or phenomenological manner – by analyzing some of the political techniques, tools, and relations that populism establishes on politics, how populism formulates the notion of “the people”, attitude towards the elites, towards the status quo of the institutions of the parliamentary democracy, attitude towards the political mythology and history, the manner in which populism formulates leadership in politics, attitude towards elections and pluralism.

By means of both approaches – and so it happens in most analyses – one can arrive at conclusion that, in this case, it is not a question of some special ideological formation or theory; rather it is a question of a political technique/rhetoric that is used historically and currently by formations in the entire political spectrum: from the extreme leftwing to the extreme rightwing, via the central mainstream.¹ Well known are definitions that populism is a rhetoric style without substance (Taggard); that it is an anti-political episode that celebrates the fatherland just before a crisis (Taggard, Kirchheimer, Krouwel); that it is a political tactics or a style of communication (Jagers and Walgrave,) etc.²

Let me suggest – in line with Margaret Canovan, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe and Francisco Panizza – that it is a question of consistent ideology of populism, which can be politically conceptualized and which has several key elements of self-creation and several key rhetoric of criticism towards the institutions of parliamentary democracy; these elements and rhetoric are constant and can be singled out in all characteristic cases of populism in all political spectrums.

For basis of such approach, let me borrow the definition of “ideology” from Heywood: it is like more or less a coherent collection of ideas that offer basis for political action, which are aimed at either maintaining or changing the dominant balance of forces in politics. Such set of

* PhD., Full Professor at University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Law “Iustinianus Primus”, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia.

¹ In contemporary context mention is often made of 7 to 8 rightwing parties having clear populist politics and policies: Schweizerische Volkspartei (Switzerland), Front National (France), Lijst Pim Fortuyn (the Netherlands), Vlaams Blok (Belgium), Die Republikaner (Germany), Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austria); and there are also leftwing populist parties like the movement of G. Pepe in Italy. Populist elements have been accepted and pursued also by many other center-right parties; however, further mention of this would lead us away from the main topic. Further on this in: Varieties of Populism, J. D. Raadt, D. Hollanders, A. Krouwel, Working Papers, Political Science No 2004/04, Universiteit Amsterdam.

² Taggard P., Populism, Buckingham, Open Society Press, 2000; Kirchheimer O., Transformation of Western Party System, ed New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969; Krouwel A., The Catch-All Party in Western Europe, Universiteit Amsterdam, 1999; Jagers J. and S. Walgrave, Political Rhetoric of Vlaam Party, Somenleving en Politiek, 10/8 2003; etc.

ideas always includes those ideas that relate to assessment of the existing order, projection of a new ideal order (imagined and desired) and a road how to reach such order by changing the present situation.³

But on character and origins of that “Ideas” of ideology of some help could be definition of R.A.Koenigsberg : Ideologies are *modus operandi* for the expression and enactment of shared fantasies which allow unconscious to be expressed and articulatedthey are containers where shared unconscious fantasies enter historyfantasies through ideologies make its way in to reality ...they are social reality and mirror on which social reality are approached .⁴ And for the basic function of ideology useful could be view of M.Aristodemou : ideology hoodwinks us into continuing to believe that complete enjoyment is possible and attainable if only some external obstacle (be it money or a neighbor , a foreigner or an immigrant) were removed .⁵

In these frameworks, populism is determined as ideology according to the manner in which it constructs the notion of “the people”; afterwards, populism leans entirely on “the people” and, according to its own beliefs, it finally “generates people who are reborn.” Then it is determined according to the manner in which populism constructs the direct and uncorrupt relationship between such people and their new leaders. Namely, through them, it is supposed that the will of the people is directly transmitted, without go-betweens, into politics, thus avoiding the always corrupt classical political elites (the political class) and their institutions. Thirdly, according to the populist mantra, it is possible and it is needed to have direct injection of the will of the sovereign people into the democratic decision-making process; and this is possible to do only through a special type of leadership that is not infected with other known elitist forms. Leadership that constantly refuses to be defined as “political” (at least in the far known forms); leadership that places itself in the myth of “the common man”, being one of us but without special features, but with special mission.

In this sense, some of the populist practices do not deny democracy in principle or as an idea; still, such populist practices refute the present organizational form of democracy – representative, liberal parliamentary democracy. In the mind of a populist, representative democracy needs a revival, restoration, rebirth (remorse – redemption), and not a mere replacement. According to populists, democracy is in essential crisis, because of the corruption of the representational process and its participants – the elites, who do not represent anybody now, but themselves and the close oligarchy around them. These elites and their oligarchy – so say populists – are very irresponsible and disobedient to their own people: they have thrown the sovereign people into oblivion!

Upon this critical point, populists then appeal to the sovereign people to take democracy back through them (populist leaders), to own again democracy, thus clashing with the elites and their structure of power. Hence, a discrepant feature of populism is that it is basically political – in sense of depending on and stimulating antagonism and dynamics of clashing with the status quo. This is valid at least until the moment of coming to power; afterwards, a new dynamics is put in place – shifting the place of confrontation (this will be considered later in the text).

³ A. Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, 3rd edition, Houndmills Palgrave Macmillan, 2003

⁴ *Theory of Culture* , R.A. Koenigsberg , on a line of E. Laclau and S. Zizek especially in *Trouble in Paradise*(pp136) when he defines ideology as: not simply opposed to reality but ideology structure reality, or what we experience as reality ...ideologies fantasy serves as the screen that protects us from be directly confront with raw Real ; or in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (pp 43,44,45) : ideology is not a dreamlike illusion what we build to escape reality ,but it is a fantasy-construction which serves as support for our “reality” itself , an illusion which structures our effective, real social relations... .

⁵ Maria Aristodemou , *Law, Psychoanalysis , Society* , Routledge ,New York, 2014 , pp 53 .

Populism is POLITICS par excellence in context of the manner in which it antagonizes its own program towards the status quo; at the same time, populism thinks ideologically that it is “denial of politics” and some kind of end of history of liberal pluralism. And this is perhaps not far away from the truth if populism wins, because democracy – as we know it – will be covered by the giant and deep shadow of the populist spirit, especially in context of the compromise that is maintained between the democratic and undemocratic tendencies, and between restricting the will of the majority (of the people) and the rule of law and individual human rights.⁶

From all of the aforementioned, a conceptualization of populism would include: constructing “its own people” and appealing to them; anti-institutional rhetoric and antagonism (political, not post-political); and rhetoric of direct democracy, intermediated by the special leadership.

Certainly, it is prosaic to state that some politicians in democracy are “for the people”; namely, no discourse is implied that has analytical value. What is important is to notice how populists CONSTRUCT the notion of “people”, as opposed to the known definitions thus far and grasping of this notion.

The populist position “for the people” and appealing “to the people” for action, and the forms of direct action represent a typically ideological thing; namely, this is a message in a room of echoes – an illusion simulacrum. Such position appeals for originality, a zero point of establishing sovereignty (of the people), in context of something, upon which this position builds itself, and fills it with a very desire. The relationship between a populist leader and his people is a complex and ambivalent issue. The aforementioned desire of the people – later to be imposed on the democratic institutions of the state – is actually a construction of the populist leader inserted “into the people.” In this sense, it is a zombified people. In other words, such people who desire intentionally what they have been told to desire.

This ideological moment (as pointed out by Žižek) in context of ideological construction of the wishes of the people, with the people’s sovereignty being manipulated and processed – is the weakest point in the analyses thus far dealing with populism as such. These analyses finish with the conclusion (based on the tradition since the times of Antonio Gramsci), claiming that the appearance of populism is historically and socially related to the appearance of “organic crisis”; i.e., a crisis that is manifested by proliferation, a huge increase in demands towards the system, which is not able to articulate them through the institutions...⁷ This per se still represents an originary discontent and originary creation of will in the people, a will that is used and directed (but not created) by the populist leaders. This type of analysis is defective because it lacks a more serious understanding of the reverse movement in forming the WILL and role of the leaders in such process. I would like to propose a different viewpoint that is based on the ideas of three authors in the field of collective ideological formulation of the will: Michel Foucault, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Žižek.

So, if we have as point of departure the working thesis that populism is a dimension of politics, which it constructs and gives sense to the notion of “people”, such sense that has never existed before and does not coincide with similar concept – such thesis then builds further on the view of Michel Foucault that the collective memory in the people is subject to fight for

⁶ See how Charles Lamore explains this when he says that (...) he thought democratic home rule was the best protection for the liberal principles and that (...) it was understood human rights were crucial and constitutive for every form of modern democracy, (...) but... In: *Political Liberalism, Political Theory*, Vol. 18, No 3, 1990 pp. 359

⁷ Ernesto Laclau maintains such basis, op. cit., pp. 9; also see: Oscar Reyes, *Skinhead Conservatism: A Failed Populist Project*, ed.; Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, Verso, London, 2005, p. 103

control..., memory control in the people and groups is social control..., controlling the memory and deciding what such memory contains determine the dynamism of a nation..., facts per se are never true or evident; facts are mediated and interpreted and thus represent basis for collectivistic memory narratives...⁸

This thesis appears to be important because the construct of the memory by populism, i.e., its struggle to implement its own memory as dominant in the new identity of its own people, telling how sovereignty was lost in favor of corrupted elites, how such sovereignty was stolen and how the people were cheated – represents exactly such competitive memory that becomes a basic political tool. In case of populism, this memory is not at all a memory; on the contrary, it is a construct and a forged remembering, which is a mythological arbitrary interpretation of history and specification of social antagonisms of a rather black-and-white world. In the very center of this, a PHANTASM is located (often present in the imagined communities of the nations, according to W. Anderson). This phantasm fabricates the existence of a ZERO POINT in history, where the contemporary sovereignty and state (the covenant on democracy) of a given nation were founded, and where the sovereignty was initially transferred to the representative elites, thereby founding democracy there.

Such imagined outcome point or the phantasm of the basic covenant (Laclau calls it an empty signifier⁹) is presented by the populist rhetoric as lost through the fraud made by the elites and hence appeals that this point be returned to the people through political action.

Actually, this can also be a more complex Lacanian construction: namely, when something, which had never existed, has been lost – such loss then assumes the form of phantasm. This is the Lacanian LOST OBJECT of the people. The people and/or the community then feel sorry for such loss; in other words, they are in sorrow for the lost originary being together. This sentiment then spins the political knitting of the identity of the people – how they see themselves, what they want, whom they support, how they fight. Namely, the identity of the people is more of a relationship towards their phantasms rather than being a relationship towards the rational understanding and mastering the world around them. Populism, as ideology, feeds upon this and then upgrades itself; all of the aforementioned is politically organized by populism as very ideology.

Liberals claim that the price of our today's freedom and liberation is that very loss of (the phantasm of) the initial unity of the nation. However, communitarians and populists indeed do claim that such price of modernity is too high and so they want to make return to such unity of the people.

This is a powerful message and mobilizing creed regardless of the fact that the final unity of the people is illusion just like a classless society is. Nevertheless, appealing to the people is rather efficient especially in situation of social crisis and expanded collective existential fear (Zygmunt Bauman).¹⁰ Actually, the situation of organic crisis (Gramsci) and expanded existential fear of the population can develop taking two directions or two-and-a-half directions. The first direction involves denial of the legitimacy of the institutions and elites through forms of participative deliberation and radicalization of the forms of inclusiveness within the representative democracy, including also various forms of civil disobedience. The second direction involves manipulative populism (most often a conservative, xenophobic, repressive populism; still it could also be a leftwing populism); such populism organizes the dissatisfaction

⁸ Michael Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits*, 1954-1988, Vol. I-II, Gallimard, Paris, 2001

⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *Populism: What's in a Name*, ed, Panizza, ibidem, pp. 38-46

¹⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Life In Fragments*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995

of the people through a response to the representation by other means (a quasi-direct democracy), other elites and other rhetoric. Certainly, the third option, or the halfway option, is to dilute the protest and make it then gradually disappear into the current institutional arrangements; this indirectly gives legitimacy and power to these arrangements.

In populist ideology, “their people” is perceived as organic unity. Issues dividing the people, entire pluralism, and especially the representative elites from the government and the opposition are put aside; these elites are entirely portrayed as corrupted political class. The epicenter of antagonism and clash with the status quo is thus shifted from the democratic pluralism to a new level –the new people and their leaders versus all the rest.

Certainly, denial of legitimacy of every individual elite of the political class is further expanded by populists also to include economic oligarchies, university intellectual circles; this especially takes the form of such populist feature called anti-intellectualism, which is very often cited in history.¹¹ Hence, it can be concluded that populism, as ideology, creates new identities and new collective desires.

At this point of the debate, it would be interesting to refer to a group of authors who are focused on the creation of collective desires of the people in the process of confronting with the status quo and whose work also deals with populist practice.¹² Namely, populists usually define politics as “a dirty game”, trying to bring redemption into it or at least to make it purified. Populists reject politics as it is presently known and MORALIZE it intensively, thus replacing its discourse with moralizing. I deliberately say moralizing and not ethics; moral in politics – because it is exactly that: simplified, sometimes rather pathetic messages against corruption; loss of public moral; deforming the essence of the nation; betrayal made by the intellectuals, etc. – all of this involving “the struggle” between “us, the good guys” and “them, the evil ones”, thus denying any room for a compromise substantial for democratic politics. Use of tabloid language and general (over)simplification in presenting relations and very politics is just a tool that should create a picture about being direct and straightforward, being close with “the language of the people” and express indirect contempt for the language of intellectuals. What is very important in order to understand the success of such language is that populist politics does not address problems (does not solve them); rather SUCH POPULIST POLITICS RADICALLY REDEFINES THEIR STATUS and symbolically mediates them. The moral signifiers, which we mentioned as leverage of political qualifications, work differently, in a more warlike and destructive manner if they are framed in a political rhetoric, which is basically antagonistic and producing conflicts. They create internal boundaries, new divides, or the so-called internal periphery!¹³

Thus, according to Panizza, populism destroys the borderline between private and public, exposing the public sphere/domain, the domain of *res publica* to the private desires, phantasms, and fears.¹⁴

¹¹ See especially in: Margaret Canovan, *Trust the People, Populism and Two Faces of Democracy*, Political Studies, Vol. 27, 1999, pp. 2-16; and: Barney and Laycock, *ibidem*, 1999, pp. 321

¹² Certainly, some authors point out that one should differentiate from one experience to another experience, claiming that there are more pragmatic versions of populism, more collectivistic populisms, all the way up to abstractly romantic populisms. See in: Jasper de Raadt, David Hollanders, André Krouwel, *Varieties of Populism*, op. cit., 2004, pp. 20

¹³ See in: Benjamin Ardit, *Populism as an Internal Periphery of Democracy*, in Panizza eds, p. 98.

¹⁴ F. Panizza, eds, op. cit., 2005, pp. 24

It is also in a same direction comments of Austin Sarat and Thomas Kearns, in *Cultural Pluralism, Identity Politics and the Law*, ... “that in an age of sentimental politics, policy and law and public experiences of person-hood are

I find this conclusion especially important! This is the place where the real drama of populism and its entire fall under the rules and dynamics of the collective subconsciousness of the people happen. This “awakens the tiger” in the subconscious of the people and becomes the leader of the spirits of the elements that are sidelined and subconscious in the human mind, and, at the same time, also their slave.

Such transformation of the political discourse and rhetoric aimed at the collective phantasms is experienced by the people as “cultural revolution” and collective catharsis, unpunished outburst of xenophobia, hatred, demonization, while multiculturalism, for example, is signified as a fraud made by the intellectuals and imposed by them.¹⁵

Even if such new identity-based unity is shared on grounds of what Oscar Reyes calls “our small dirty secrets” or what Žižek calls “the forbidden and shared collective enjoyment that is only ours” – it must be ours (versus theirs) and must represent a cathartic discharging instead of a deliberative politics. An unavoidable consequence is moralization of politics and in politics, between “us, the good guys” and “them, the evil ones” and agonistic perspective of politics (Mouffe). This hurts democracy because it is treated as “a zero sum game” and so the opportunity for a democratic compromise and deliberation is reduced.¹⁶

What is, however, important in both processes and determines the force of populist initiative (something that concerns us in the text) is the element that Alain Badiou calls syndrome of the MASTER in organizing political action and collective motivational creeds that push it forward! Namely, Badiou claims that the masses of people are politically activated and organized by appeal to the MASTER (the leader) who should know what they want! The MASTER is the one helping the individual and the masses become a subject, an actor. The masses need MEDIATION in form of AUTHORITY in order to move forward on the road of political action and defining what they actually want from politics and who they are (collective subjectivity). Badiou claims (and S. Žižek agrees with it) that it is not possible to carry out such political mobilization without the role of the authority, either in emancipative or in populist and manipulative direction.¹⁷ Žižek pushes further this argument by stating that we think the people know what they want! They do not know and what is even more tragic, “they do not want to know”... There is need for elite through which the people discover what they actually want (sic?).¹⁸

Lacan radicalized that position of sovereign- impostor with claim that “in an age that not believe in truths can only be accepted pragmatically, backed by force ... that we need new social

conveyed through rhetorics of utopian/traumatized feeling....that over-organize social antagonism.... That utopian/traumatized subjectivity has replaced rational subjectivity generates cinism , but simultaneously respect for sentiment Feeling politics is a politics of protection, reparation, rescue...” pp.57,58

¹⁵ Very often, such discourse contains a clear anti-EU position, as a project imposed by the elites.

¹⁶ Oscar Reyes, *Skinhead Populism, Failed Populist Project*, Panizza eds, 2005, pp. 99-117

¹⁷ Both authors further build upon the thesis of Lacan that it is not possible to have a direct access to reality; namely, that such access is brokered by the phantasms of the individual or the collective. By means of such phantasms and a metaphysical speech, the collective understands the identification with it and is so motivated towards a political action. The collective understands itself in relation to such action. The political leadership draws its dominant power certainly from this context and especially by organizing and interpreting such function. Slavoj Žižek further adds to this thesis by claiming that “the fatigue” of the masses, their disorientation after waves of protest and fierce actions represent not only a psychological but also ontological fact. Without leadership, usually a protest is disorganized; it fades away and finally disappears.

¹⁸ Alain Badiou, *The Courage of the Present*, La Monde, and *An Essential Philosophical Thesis: It Is Right to Rebel Against Reactionaries*, MUSE, Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 669; Slavoj Žižek, *Hrabrost odluke*, BUKA Magazin, 4/23/13, <http://www.6yka.com/>

contract to install or reinstall a rule of the game in the absence of any rule, at a time when truth is no longer believable...¹⁹

The power of the populist ideology lies (perversely)in this point. It is not found in the content of its political program that is eclectic, rather in the manner of approaching the relationship leader-people-direct action, in shaping the political identity of the newly constructed people and their desires.²⁰ The vehemence of the crisis forwarded to the institutions and the inability of such institutions to absorb it, transform it into legislative actions – can disappear in medium term, can be diluted, unless it is taken over by the interpretative political rhetoric of the leaderships who further build upon this vehemence, increase it, then explain it in historical and value perspectives, and, finally, use it to overthrow the government.

Populist leaders claim that they are in unmediated connection with their people and so they directly transmit the will of the people in context of politics! Gramsci, Laclau, and Mouffe call this an established HEGEMONY. Populist leaders present themselves as internally coherent and transcendental representatives of the only truth of the people – as being one! Hence, populism depends very much on the sense of internal homogeneity – demonizing heterogeneity and pluralism, against which such homogeneity is formed. In this sense, antagonism against heterogeneity and pluralism is the key political tool of populism.²¹

II. POPULIST DICTATORSHIP MADE ON FANTASIES, FAKE MEMORIES, IDEOLOGY OF LOST OBJECT IS SERIOUS ONE

The strength of the national connecting among individuals (especially in illiberal societies of post communism and transition to democracy) becomes ideologically leveled with the position of a victim of conspiracy.

Nation and nationalism is always buffer for the shocks that social and economic imbalances create and not directly, but through the mythology of conspiracy. Ethnic unity and fantasy of stable, homogeneous social body are always “disrupted” by some enemies that are actually synonymous with the situation of imbalance, contradiction, tearing and devastating tensions, which prevent the former! ²²

National myths always serve to organize a community which they address in respect of any or some external/internal threats. In that sense, nationalism is always in need of “others”, hence it is essentially relational. It is mostly in the form of qualifications, networks of prejudice all the way to demonization of others, especially by means of an institute that Žižek introduces: theft of our “pleasure-in-the-nation” committed by others.

In Lacanian logic is the same: because a nation is not a biological formation but a contingent and discursive construction, as its base it has a non-discursive anchor, the anchor of enjoyment. It must exist for the nation to establish ontological consistency... The nation itself is organized around the myth of the original national trauma about “the loss of unity, the primordial

¹⁹Jacques Lacan , *Ecrits* (Paris SEUIL 1966) cit.130

²⁰ Likewise in: Margaret Conovan, *Populism as the Ideology of Democracy* in Many Y. And Y. Surel, eds, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Houndmills: Palgrave, pp. 25-40

²¹ See especially in: Ernesto Laclau, *Towards a Theory of Populism and Populist Rupture in Democracy*, Screen Education, 1981

²² See also M.Aristodemou , *Law....* Cit. pp 65 : Community cohesion therefore , is usually at the expense of an excluded other , be she a refugee,or illegal immigrant or Agamben’s homo sacer. There is nothing like a threat , real or imaginary , to rally people into solidarity with each other and form a so-called “community” .

whole”, which - as an impossible desire to reconquer, or “object petit a” - constantly scatters the current political and social milieu and its harmony. ...Again social bond passes through our traumatic relation with the Other and is determined not by principles of pleasures and pain, but by our uncanny dependence on jouissance.²³

The nation seems to be organized around the constant decay, failure to reach the renewed harmony, around the antagonism of that radical negativity. On the other hand, the exit from the vicious circle and getting anchored in the stabilization and consolidation - something that we would call finally a calm nationalism - is not avoiding the intrusion of the REAL that refuses symbolization in language and politics, its avoidance (which is impossible) but a *modus vivendi* with that contradiction, facing it, articulation through its sublimation in the best practices of tolerance and creation. Second thesis important for our analysis is the one that is set among others by Hayden White: that every history or every historical narrative is prose that is built on facts. It never consists only of the facts, but it is a story built on them. Historians never “reveal history” but take events and make a story out of them representing them as a model that explains, as logic of any development that they desire. They decide what is important to remember and to forget from the chronology of the facts in the context of their story.

At the moment of such decision on how to make the selection of historical material, what is important and what narrative should be woven and developed, the historian becomes a politician who creates an ideological milieu. That decision is subject to ideological motives and rules that have, as we will see, also libidinal matrices, not only direct historical. It intends to explain why today we are in a situation in which we are and how accordingly we need to act.²⁴ Therefore, the ideological intervention cannot be deprived of conflictual interpretations, and so becomes antagonistic. Further in the conflict, Lacan places the emergence of what cannot be symbolized, but is felt exactly in such interruptions - THE REAL - the traumatic beginning, the fundamental antagonism of that beginning of each nation and identity. Also among the Macedonians, such traumatic moment prevents stabilization of the community in total harmony and establishment of a harmonic/whole unity.

On the other hand, the historical review in question, according to the famous remark of Hegel, is always rewriting, or writing of history from the perspective of the present; it means intervention that finds historical roots and ‘necessity’ for current relations. It retroactively repudiates the former relations and gives legitimacy to the new dominant relations of power. When something new appears, this new retrospectively constructs its historical “necessity”. There are never “bare facts”; always these narratives “have already been set by us.” Tradition is tradition only if it is established by us. A fundamental paradox of rediscovery of tradition, returning to the roots and similar policies to create a national identity is that they are tautological, self-referential, they reveal themselves as already-present-in-tradition!

When Hegel uses the word “oblivion” (*docta ignorantia*), he does it in a way to enable the absolute knowledge to absorb the essence of historical truth, to get rid of the layers of historical memory, which is not “essential”. Sometimes I think that such an overlap of memory and

²³ Especially see in: Jodi Dean, *Zizek Politics*, Routledge, New York, 2006, pp. 112-113. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, Duke University Press, 1993, p. 201. and Lacan, cit.

²⁴ Hayden White, *Metahistory*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1973. At the same place Hayden says that such ideological reactions, interventions into and by history can be of four types: conservative, liberal, radical, and anarchist...

forgetting the “phenomenal self” is needed for the Macedonians to be able to extract from themselves the real essence, as a modern European nation.²⁵

This retroactive memory/forgetting is always ideological and always builds and is built upon the libidinal economy of the nation (that is the contribution of Lacan and Žižek in this story). It is not expressed through the neutral and scrupulous, scientific analysis, but always and without exception through the fantasies of the nation. Fantasies about the trauma of the breakup with the former imaginary unity (which never actually existed), in the divisions and fighting that followed and the constant desire to rebuild it and to dream one’s own dreams. Fantasy is a network of meanings through which a social content, object, person is shown to us as the destination of our desire or as an obstacle to satisfying it. It explains why our fundamental desire (achieving primordial unity, final harmony) cannot be reached and so offers us alternatives, compensations through the pleasure principle. It offers us sublimation, suppression, transgression; it keeps open the possibility of satisfaction and explains why basic frustration of not being able to be completely pleased actually is such, as it is - unattainable. Basically, this is what Lacan implies when he says: fantasy is the ultimate leverage for reality and that reality is stabilized when framed in a fantasy (which controls the influence of the chaos of the REAL), and that, most radically, fantasy constitutes the reality, not vice versa, and that we receive the reality only through the filter of fantasy.

We mentioned earlier that one of the features of nationalist and patrioteer mobilization is creating notion of external threat to the very nation. Hegel calls the operation “the illusion of deliberating outside”, when unity or identity of the nation is the result of deliberations that it is threatened from the outside, from someone or something that threatens to swallow it. Hegel goes a step further when he says that sometimes these threats create identity. Such illusion, raised to level of fantasy - serves for legitimization of politics as action in realizing the dream/fantasy about protection from attacks and attaining unity.

The problem may not be so in the way that is shown by this powerful explanatory theory of sources and driving forces of the ideology of nationalism - but in the fact that it points out that one ends up in vicious circle of alienation, the capture of the nationalist spirit in the economy of the collective “libido.” Whenever the nation would attain what appears to satisfy the desire of rebuilding chthonic primordial unity (creating independent state such as, for example, the Macedonians), it is immediately concluded “this is not it” and the desire is renewed in its constant failure to be satisfied.

Such pleasure-in-the-nation, only available to us, which can never come true (to reach the primordial unity that is lost, stolen from us) is transformed (according to Lacan and Žižek) into a drive. It is compulsive repetition of trying to achieve enjoyment, which we know will fail, but the failed attempt turns into a ritual that creates unique and specific satisfaction! The Macedonians constantly repeat that “... Macedonia, from three parts, will become whole... so that everyone knows it...” But it is not happening, nor ever happened in past, for Macedonia as a country to be made up of those three parts - whole and independent. But such drive of the Macedonians repeats itself and is mentioned in songs as a special kind of pleasure in repeating failure. However, according to Lacan, it becomes dangerous when these drives are converted into DEAD-DRIVE, drives of death! And that is the case when a nation or greater part of it is dominated by an ideology that reaches for the impossible satisfaction, and there is desire for de-subjectivization in merging with the “fate”, which is interpreted as extinction or just by

²⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History, Philosophy of Rights, Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992; *Philosophy of Religion*, Clarendon Press, 2007

becoming “one” with the whole and achieving harmony. Such so-called passage à l’acte (Lacan) by which is desired this reaching of full, ultimate satisfaction is fatal for the nation as such. It is expressed in the form of radical political actions of self-harm, civil wars and genocides, wars of exhaustion, disputes that lead to divisions and so on, especially in smaller nations it is a dangerous road. To sacrifice life and autonomy for reaching of ultimate pleasure in what is considered secret and de-subjectivization of the nation, leads to its disappearance and is the second side of the coin of estheticism, glorification of the nation in dictatorships.

Among the Macedonians, this dead-drive is associated with the curse of Macedonia proper being divided into three parts and inter-Macedonian divisions, and is irrationally realized in the current proposals for divisions or politics of identity self-denial: ... if we are not of three parts, let us not be, let them divide us again... Macedonia may disappear, but VMRO (right-wing Populist Party) will still exist, and similar irrationalities of the dead-drive.

Another point is interesting and fascinating for us the Macedonians, in the theory of libidinal support of identity and nationalism - it is the explanation about the deep attraction that some models of ethnic identity and nationalism have in terms of dominance, collective guilt, anxiety and addiction, attraction of the authoritarian model of existence and social organization. We begin with the question: where is our enjoyment situated? Where is and what constitutes our specific collective fulfillment that we are Macedonians? What kind of a pleasure is that - never achieved, but constantly desirable, on the edge of pain and defeat - which exists as compulsive repeated attempt to reach? How is it turned into jouissance, just ours, which only we can understand? Who are those seeking to “steal” our pleasure? How are we motivated against them? How do we envision the history of our very community? I want to set the thesis of our self-construction as nation versus “objet le petit a” of this process, the part that is missing and permanently disturbs the order and its harmony.²⁶

In fact, the Macedonian discourse about being in shelter or “the Macedonians in the hole” can be tricky as typical Lacanian structure: when a person loses something that never existed - the loss then takes the form of phantasm. That is his lost object, which is the basis of “the impossible desire”, that of the abolishment of any subjectivity and melting into the holistic primordial being together of the nation as the ultimate pleasure. After that loss, the community constantly is in sorrow for such loss, by showing lamentation for the lost primordial being together, while such sentiment is exploited in populist manner to spin a political crochet. It is the humus of the identity of the community: how it sees itself, what it wants, whom it supports, and how it struggles. Namely its identity is more like relationship with its phantasms than attitude towards rational understanding and mastering the world around it. It feeds on and it is built on this. It also organizes the Macedonian nationalism of the political right, its political utopia as “our dirty little secret”. Their dirty secret is that we, the Macedonians, love ourselves only dismembered, divided, repressed! Our false newly acquired ancient pride and shouting a big NO to the Greeks, Albanians and the international community is a smokescreen hiding the satisfaction of the pervert, and his secret is that he wants to be besmeared, divided, and as such to be a tool in the hand of a bestiality of others.

In the case of Macedonia, the right-wing identity of the Macedonian is formed around the lack, emptiness, partitioning, and phantasm of being united about imaginary unification of that partitioned national body. Identity is formed upon the hole, the void that remains from the subject of the nation, which is de-subjectivized. Thus identity becomes something that turns into

²⁶ Lacan J., *Desire and the Interpretation of Desire*, Yale French Studies 55/56, 1152, 1977; also in: Lewis A. Kirshner, *Rethinking Desire*, 2004

special pleasure, the constant failure of reaching it, namely - a drive. This right-wing nationalism ends in a fascinating paradox: MACEDONIAN NON-RECOGNITION OF MACEDONIA as contemporary, internationally recognized state.

1. Functioning of populist emotional “screen”

Lets us recapitulate (and screen in action) this complex populist, nationalistic dialectic based of assumption that the desire of each generation is to try and heal metaphoric castration of nation and give back its lost full enjoyment (followed in a case of Macedonian authoritarian recent experience which I know best and in details). I suggest following the line of desires, lost object and the search of it, production of scapegoats (the stealers of our enjoyment) – embodied in phantasmatic narrative: the way fantasy of national unity links socio-symbolic field and particularly political institutions and mobilization with sticky emotions and affects of the subject. Ideology of nationalism here derives its force from logic of fantasy and the way this structures our relation to enjoyment. We could call this all Politics of emotions.

I would consider three levels of populist functioning: emotional, ideological, mobilizing:

As dealing with the first level, one can note the forming of the ideology of identity, which needs to be regenerated and persistently secured or based on a false mythological and non-existent memory or as can be putted – an ideology of the lost object. This level is supported by so called promising fantasy of harmonious resolution of social antagonism or a “beatific fantasy”.

The second level is fulfilled with activities that form a political screen (as with the example of colonized media in authoritarian regimes, when media is actually what Giorgio Agamben says – a constituent part of power). This political screen shows what we want to accomplish and what we want to be, although this screen consists of the secret desires of a nation in one part, but also it consists the anxiety of the previous.

This political screen is the place where is actualized the concept of the Master (Alain Badiou) or the intrusive establishment of the Big Other, the sovereign of the symbolic order in politics (or in Laclauian terms it is fulfilling the place of the empty signifier with values of the new hegemony). At the stake of this level, for the first time is also made actual the conflict situation with others that are perceived as ones that are stealing our pleasure and this sort of contact can be defined as paranoid fantasy. The same, as evaluated by Žižek, is helping with conceptualizing the obscene site of the order of politics and law in the community. All this as an operation, reflected as the most dangerous and destructive one, having on mind that is directly related with hopes that a “stolen pleasure” can be recovered conflict and destruction of the ones marked as “others” and as a thread to our fantasy and the processes of generating it (also production of scapegoats).

The third level is dedicated to the action of abrogation of political pluralism as unnecessary in the site of generating a fantasy, thus mobilizing against the ones that steal and activating a conflict with them, only in favor of establishing the organic unity of the nation, namely an organic authoritarian regime.

If you take a more detailed look at these operations, with the danger of simplifying we would say that the legitimate core and political strength of the authoritarian populism and dictatorship, is not the usurpation of democratic institutions and their discharge, but in its ideology created upon "searching for the lost object of desire" (national unity, the organic one of the nation). The drive that derives from wanting return the return of the lost object (extending towards a dead drive), the libidinal economy of enjoying defeat - the inability to once more achieve the fantasized unity (the lost object never returns because it never existed in the first place) - finally faith in a party that promises (regardless of its constant failures to deliver it) to restore this unity or fight for it – as elements of that search and elements of the creation of the ideology of a populist authoritarian regime.

This right wing ideological utopia materializes through the concept of Master of the political sphere, political leadership, or as we listed through the technology of the ideological SCREEN, where the desire comes alive, the leader's position, his dominant take on things. Here lies the picture of what "dominant people" should want and what is supposed to motivate them into political action. Here, the political antagonism is shifted in the political sphere and is rearranged towards eliminating the antagonistic nature of politics within the political system - directing it towards the others on the outside, towards the political enemies. Here is where the main battle is being set up. It's good to bear in mind what creates the special cruelty of the populist boot directed at the "enemy within" (all the threats – from spies, to bad ethnic groups and other infiltrators that symbolically jeopardize the phantasmal unity of the people). According to Carl Schmitt the purpose of outside enemies is to unite the nation within. This outside enemy is marked as a "good enemy", unlike the enemy within which is considered a "bad enemy" (actuality fellow citizens of different political options or classes). The interpretation of Etienne Balibar of this situation is very helpful: "It begins with antagonism and from there establishes a boundary between "camps," such that, for each of them, internal solidarity and the community effect are maximized, while, between them, hostility and incompatibility are also maximized. Of course, such a conception of conflict (based on a comparison of class struggle and nationalism) also has institutional implications. It postulates that the function of the state is to internalize all solidarities (in the privileged form of a "homogeneous people", which fascism went so far as to attempt to "create ") and to externalize all forms of hostility. This implies first subordinating all conflict to the imperative of national unity, and then establishing, each time it becomes necessary, a "state of exception" through which "internal enemies" can be identified and eliminated, or at least forcibly returned to unanimity."

While the "clash with the external" enemy remains in the realm of the symbolic and propaganda, the clash with the "internal bad enemy" is very specific and cruel. Listings of political persecution and repression of their citizens in transitional populist systems are long and abundant.

The finally established dictatorship of this political project is difficult to topple with institutions and procedures common for democracies. These institutions are gone, colonized from within by the new populist people (elections, judiciary and public administration).

If the system is lucky to be of importance to the wider international community (for whatever reasons) as Macedonia has proven, then the road to change is long, difficult and original in some way. Namely this path completely bypasses all necessary existing institutions or applies heavy pressure on them from a strange political front made of international actors (EU and US in the case of Macedonia), part of the liberal political opposition, some of the media, an

active civil sector and part of the prosecution and the judiciary system, (who need a lot of help to stand on their feet for minimal resistance to the dictatorship).

In the case with Macedonia this is the creation of a parallel prosecution (and perhaps a separate judicial council) so the moment of transitional justice can be realized as the basis for a new democratic beginning (prosecuting corruption – profile cases and criminal wiretapping).

All this should be followed by a long road to cultural revolution and institutional rebuilding, renewal of the liberal matrix because the idea "organic unity in search of the lost object" is still here, alive among "their people" even though the populist leaders are gone. My point is that there can be no cultural revolution without addressing, provoking and reinvesting in the national enjoyment (its nationalistic jouissance). . As Lacan used to baptized : La traversee du fantasme , going trough fantasy of nationalistic dreams faced and reorganized them .

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