

PARTY SYSTEM AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE: THE HUNGARIAN SEMI-LOYAL PARTIES

The article provides an analysis of semi-loyal parties based on the discussion of Hungarian politics. The following issue is being addressed: What is the situation with those semi-loyal parties that appear to be fully participating in democracy? It is argued, that despite being marginalized politically, semi-loyal parties might exercise a significant influence over public discourse.

The existence of various semi-loyal or anti-system parties on the fringes of the political party system is a minor but frequently debated issue in the literature of democratic consolidation. In almost all democracies one may find parties that transgress the constitutionally laid down boundaries of democratic consensus or are at least testing the tolerance of democracy. These political groups are the most problematic in countries where the time elap-

sed since the transition from dictatorship to democracy is relatively short. Therefore, democratic practices have not yet become entrenched in the political culture to the degree as to be able to render the society immune to these kinds of challenges.

In Spain, it took over a decade for the post-Franco Right to become «domesticated», that is, to accept democracy not only in theory but in everyday practices as well and to relinquish attempts

to reinstate the previous regime [1]. In France and Italy it took even longer for the Communist parties to fundamentally rethink their formerly revolutionary stance and identity and find their places in a pluralist democracy [2].

In opposition to the system

When it comes to anti-system parties, the fundamental dilemma is this: Can democracy tolerate the fact of its enemies forming political parties and organizations? And if so, for how long? Where is the juncture at which it must take administrative steps to counter their existence? And if these administrative steps are taken would these not constitute a violation of the values democracy is supposed to protect? What is the political touchstone that will infallibly indicate the moment when action can no longer be put off? For not all parties critical of the system are anti-system parties. There are those that utilize anti-system rhetoric to bring about reforms in the system and there are those that basically want to uproot and topple the system.

When it comes to the freedom of speech and association, the liberal principles of legality are very tolerant toward issues connected with these cornerstones of liberty. If we are not careful how we defend our freedom we might end up erasing them. That is why they say it is better to have three guilty people go free than have one innocent punished. But as recent history tells us the dividing lines between «reform», «radical reform» and «system change» are often rather theoretical, while in practice these may overlap and not only during the transition from dictatorship to democracy but also during the reverse process. Obviously, the term «system change» will have a totally different meaning in a dictatorship than in a democracy. There is good reason to become concerned when a political force in a democracy begins to talk about not just reforms but of system change as well - for in this case, the alternative political system can only be an antidemocratic one. Moreover, the rhetoric of a given party might be different from its real goals: to conceal its real intentions, it might officially declare itself committed to the existing system but still fashion its messages to different audiences differently. It might proclaim that the suppression - the «pruning» as they would put it - of some constitutional rights is necessary for the «entrenchment» of democracy. At this moment, a strange game of hide-and-seek commences between the defenders of democracy and the party in question. The former will attempt to

prove that the party has transgressed the boundaries and violated the principles of democracy, while the other side will reply that their purpose in forcing these boundaries is to bring about a democracy that is «truer», more «national» and «Hungarian». One of their most recurring arguments is that the time is ripe to move from a «consensual democracy» to a «majority democracy». These terms have their proper place in political science [3], but in everyday political parlance the term «majority democracy» means little else but the deconstruction of constitutional rights and serves only to conceal antidemocratic intentions [4].

After Morlino, the term «anti-system» party applies to those political entities that question or reject the structures and roles of the existing system and, consequently, intend to transform the system [5]. If this aim is officially declared in their manifestoes they lose their constitutional status and can be banned without further ado. The same applies to a situation where a party plans military action to take power or to undermine the existing democratic system. These, however, are simple and easily discernible situations where confronting these aims is not only constitutionally sanctioned but also incumbent on the entities in power.

Semi-loyal parties

But what is the situation with those parties that appear to be fully participating in democracy? What about those that have no intention to overthrow the system, whose representatives participate in parliamentary debates, whose budget bears official scrutiny - that is, parties who fulfill the formal requirements for democratic parties, but whose exclusionist message consistently carries antidemocratic content, harmful to principles of equality? If this message constitutes an essentially antidemocratic basis for the ideology and political propaganda of the party, it might rightly be accused of challenging the system even if there is a formal contradiction between the party's parliamentary actions and its popular propaganda. Contrary to the case described by the narrow and unequivocal definition by Morlino mentioned above, with these parties we do not always find a straight correspondence between political action and propaganda, though their propaganda and their ideology tend to be harmonized. These are the parties that Sartori calls *anti-system* parties [6] while the other living legend of political science, Juan Linz calls them *disloyal* parties [7].

In the following case, which is central to our topic, the leader or representatives of a political party - which can be called a democratic one only in the formal and procedural sense - consciously and repeatedly ignores the democratic consensus as defined by the Constitution and makes statements whose propriety in a democratic country is more than questionable. In other words, what we have here is not a party whose ideology or messages are consistently challenging the system but one whose leaders regularly employ elements of anti-system rhetoric. They have different faces for different occasions: when given the opportunity to speak in the Parliament, the media or at other multi-party political forums they will deliver a message different from what they reserve for their own forums and own audiences. What they only hint at publicly, they will spell out privately, in their own circles. Thus the party leads a sort of «accordion» existence: face-to-face with the general public they contract and draw back, but they expand in front of their own audience and attempt to integrate their followers with anti-system utterances. After Linz, political science calls those political entities that are sitting on the fence of democracy, sometimes ignoring, sometimes observing the consensus, *semi-loyal parties* [8]. The typology sketched out above may be tabulated thus:

Table 1. Types of opposition parties critical of the democratic system

Relation to the democratic system	Manifestation of the critique of the system	Specific Hungarian examples
Anti-system parties	Anti-system party program, consistent ideology and propaganda	None
Disloyal parties	Consistent anti-system ideology and propaganda	None
Semi-loyal parties	Inconsistent anti-system ideology and propaganda	Hungarian Life and Justice Party, Workers' Party

Source: compiled by the authors following the definitions by Morlino, Sartori and Linz

The phases of democratic integration

Analyses of the stabilization of democracies in Western and Southern Europe established three phases for the democratic integration of parties that had started out as antidemocratic. These can be labeled: 1. assimilation, 2. acceptance and 3. getting to power.

In the first phase, the antidemocratic party accepts democracy and its rules as binding and declares this in its party rules. Its inner identity undergoes a transformation. This alone will not

make it integrated because other parties, justly or unjustly, still suspect it of anti-system tendencies. They will not invite them to multi-party negotiations and continue to question their commitment to democracy.

The second phase of integration occurs when the other parties accept the party formerly regarded as antidemocratic as one of their own - they will be included in the decision making processes and regarded as a potential factor in government coalitions. This phase has not been attained by the Communist Party of the Czech Republic and Moravia (KSCM) in spite of their relative popularity: they have no chance of getting to power even if they do well at the polls. One party that has attained is the party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), which is based largely in the Eastern part of Germany and had led a pariah-like existence for a long time. In Hungary, the Hungarian Life and Justice Party also reached this point as they had made it into the Parliament and therefore were included in the six-party negotiations. By this, their legitimacy and integration was indirectly reinforced.

Finally, the third phase of integration occurs when the party is not only acknowledged as a democratic one but becomes capable of assuming serious roles in the political arena and as a coalition partner, may even appear at the controls of the democratic system. This phase has been attained in recent decades by the Communist parties of France, Portugal, Spain and Italy [9] and lately the social democratic parties of Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary [10]. Only extremist parties question their democratic legitimacy gained through votes.

The legitimacy of the former Communist Party of Hungary, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) cannot be questioned since their significant victory in the 1994 elections, even if cheerleaders of marginal groups still call them «murderers of 1956». To doubt their political legitimacy is to question the will of the Hungarian people manifested a number of times at the voting booths. The orthodox Communist party, now called the *Workers' Party* was never a government-forming factor as they have never cleared the threshold necessary to get into the Parliament. However, with the far-right Hungarian Life and Justice Party (MIEP) this has been and still is a focus of heated debates. The heads of

the largest governing party - even if only after the international reaction to the New York terror attacks of September 11 - ruled out the possibility of MIEP being included in the government. So this party has failed to make it to the third phase of democratic integration - and not because their voter base could not push them near enough to power but because the other parties consider them as only fit for parliamentary representation but not for governing. International factors also played a role in this as the European Union has made it known that the country cannot join the Union with a government that includes MIEP.

The Workers' Party and the semi-loyal opposition

Compared to the formerly non-democratic parties that are moving towards the political center now, the parties located on the fringes are partly of a different type. Regardless whether they trace their lineage back to the previous regime or not, they are less willing to adopt to a democratic system because their self-identity is tied up with a specific form of democracy, be that a «national», «*volkisch*», or «true» form. These groups usually lack - or possess only to the minimally necessary degree - the will to adapt to the rules as shaped by the center, for their identity is based on this kind of separation. These parties are usually radical formations occupying positions on the extremes of the political spectrum and they gain political capital from the stance that presents them as «sincere» and «with the guts» to talk openly about the things the other parties are only thinking. They participate in the democratic public life but as a semi-loyal party, they often employ antidemocratic and exclusionist concepts.

On the radical right, their representatives are generally of the opinion that Hungarian democracy (or Romanian or Slovakian in those countries) are for Hungarians alone (or for Romanians and Slovaks there) and Hungarianness is defined along ethnic and not civic lines. The «advocates» of ethnodemocracy reserve the right to determine who is Hungarian and who isn't, i. e. who is a member of the democratic community and who is not. In multiethnic, multicultural countries (i. e. in most democracies) the concept of «ethnodemocracy» is misleading - for the demands for a «deeper democracy» are actually a rejection of the principle of equal rights. These parties couple the critique of democratic institutions with the critique of a «power elite», a «caste» regarded as

alien or «alien-hearted». In the case of the radical groups on the left, we generally encounter attempts to obfuscate the differences between the former regime and the current political democracy with the message that for the «man on the street» nothing has substantially changed. By virtue of this they disdain the «men on the street» and regard freedom of speech as the privilege of the intelligentsia. For them democracy exists in the social, Marxists, revolutionary or welfare-leveling sense and they reject its political meaning. And since the new democracies fail to live up to their standards, the radical leftist parties tend to scorn constitutionality and the institutions of a pluralist political democracy. They regard these as instruments by which the bourgeoisie cement their class position and power.

In Hungary, the intense example of this kind of political organization is the Workers' Party which in 1989 carried on the banner of the original Communist party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Party leader Gyula Thurmer welcomed the anti-perestroika coup in 1991 by Yanayev and others and expressed his support for those who wanted to reverse the process of democratization in Russia. In a similar move, he visited Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Slobodan Milosevic before the NATO intervention put an end to ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Apart from these actions carried out in the face of the democratic consensus, domestically the Workers' Party has been involved in trying to rekindle a cult of former Communist leader Janos Kadar. These endeavors were somewhat similar to the efforts of certain marginalized forces to keep alive the legacy of Franco in Spain, or that of Mussolini in Italy.

In Hungary, the Workers' Party has been a rather conservative outfit in that it had initially paid more attention to the maintenance of nostalgia for the Kadar regime than to its critique of the new capitalist democracy. These days, they are more vehemently focused on the issue of class repression from the point of view of which neither the «mine owner» Viktor Orban, nor the «banker» Peter Medgyessy can be regarded as democrats but only as representatives, even if of different backgrounds, of the ruling bourgeois class. The difference between the parties headed by these individuals, as seen by the Workers' Party is that Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP) is a «new capitalist» outfit while MSZP is a «converted capitalist» one. At any rate, both are supposed to embody the «brazenness» of the *nouveau riche* versus the «Puritanism»

of Kadarism. Be as it may, the extra-parliamentary Workers' Party is enjoying decreasing popularity and the remainder of its support comes from pensioners - so the party whose critique of the system stops at a nostalgic pining for the days of the Kadar regime, poses no credible threat to democracy.

MIEP and its visions of the enemy

Observers usually question the commitment to democracy of the far right Life and Justice Party on the basis of its rhetoric, ideology, peculiar political influence and its potential for causing international embarrassment. Between 1998 and 2002, their representatives sat in the Hungarian Parliament. However, for most of the political elite, MIEP is an embarrassing liability and even the center-right governing party of the period, Fidesz-MPP, was only counting on their voters but not on their potential as coalition partners.

In many ways, MIEP is a party of many voices and many faces: their representatives strike a different tone of voice when speaking in the Parliament from the one they employ «at home», i. e. in their own press and forums. Their parliamentary faction took an active part in debates and was one of the hardest working groups of representatives as is usual with factions small in number. Their pre-agenda speeches however, smacked of xenophobic rhetoric, even if delivered in a tone more muted than what they use in their weekly paper, the *Hungarian Forum*. They appear to be in their natural element when addressing their own. Party president Istvan Csurka exerts a completely determining influence on their party, a writer whose talents are given full vent in his weekly column *Through Hungarian Eyes* and other writings. His authority in MIEP is unquestionable and his weekly «orientations» serve as signposts for the party faithful on political and ideological issues.

Ideologically speaking, the party carries out a consistent enemy-discourse [11], employing such tools as oversimplification, creation of dichotomies and reliance on stereotypes and prejudices. The essence of its ideology is ethnically-based politics and anti-Semitism. Party representatives often employ the device of «scope-shifting», i. e. investing issues with an ambiguity and intensity that is beyond the socially accepted meaning of said issue. Conjuring up images of the enemy goes hand-in-hand with a continually kindled state of emergency, caused, according to MIEP rhetoric, by the enemy that must be ostracized or defeated in order to

overcome the problem. The enemy is quite clearly discernible: they are the «small circle of liberal and un-Hungarian people out to destroy the nation, who deliberately loot the coffers and occupy all key positions», as Csurka puts it [12]. When it comes to solutions proposed to the problems, we encounter quite unequivocal statements worded ambiguously, especially when it comes to the Holocaust. «The *Endlösung* is the final solution that had unpardonably ended in the gas chambers» [13]. Interpretations of this statement allow for the reading that if it hadn't ended in the gas chambers it might have been pardonable, i.e. the problem was not the intent but the execution. Csurka draws parallels with the past and the future of the Hungarians, saying that «the last two vassal governments taught us that everybody who does not belong to the vassal elite caste defined along ethnic or cliquish lines, has become uncompetitive, a second or third-rate human being» [14]. Therefore the future, as Csurka points out, is bleak beyond words and «Hungarians will meet their gas chambers in their cold homes, in their misery and despair» [15].

MIEP is a party sensitive to social issues - though not of course those of the Romany - but it does not seek solutions to problems in the domain of social and welfare politics, instead, it consistently looks to answers steeped in racial and ethnic tint. Csurka is forever attacking the power cliques and castes and often hints at reasons of ethnicity as responsible for bringing about this situation. This gives support and a scapegoat for tens of thousands desperate and hopeless people. Because the capitalism of the 90s in Hungary was characterized less by free competition as by free thuggery, MIEP found itself in the position to be able to articulate the concerns of certain middle class groups whose hierarchical view of society is coupled by fears of falling down the social ranks and being «declassified». In Csurka's book of concepts, liberalism and communism are two sides of the same coin. What he claims is uniting them is that they are essentially a «front» - under the guises of globalism and universalism - for the world dominating aspirations of the Jews and the «Jewish spirit».

Listening to Csurka would have one believe that MSZP is still a «Communist Party» whose MPs are grinding the «Marxists prayer mill» and are only concerned with «carving out cushy jobs» for themselves [16]. Because MSZP is harder to characterize along ethnic lines, Csurka presents them as a clique or a caste interested in salvaging and preserving the power and wealth they enjoyed under

the former regime. The liberal SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats) for Csurka is a «Jewish party» aping the West and pitting their materialist-consumerist spirit against the historical churches of Hungary [17]. Finally, the moderate right MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) in Csurka's book is a political prostitute, a «pact-party» that was of «good birth» but went terribly astray. In his political jargon, a «pact-party» is a traitor of the political right. MDF ruled itself out of pursuing a true «national radicalist» line on account of their pact with SZDSZ, i. e. their capitulation to the liberals. The blame for this is placed on the shoulders of Jozsef Antall, the first Hungarian Prime Minister after 1990, whose original intentions, Csurka grants, might have been honest enough but he fell victim to the «liberalist conspiracy». MDF became an enemy of Csurka when he seceded from that party to found MIEP. The governments opposed to the MIEP line are «vassal governments» directed by a «world government» representing the interest of the international Jewry. The members of these governments have been described as «villa proletars», «infiltrators» and members of a new «maharaja caste» who are collectively known as the «grave diggers» of the Hungarian nation. It is a consequence of their action that Hungary has become an «installment plant» country devastated by pseudo-democracy and «interest-rate-slavery» where society is in servitude and the political system is but a «hamburger Gulag».

From the texts of Csurka's critique of his opponents, there emerges a vision of Hungary where the traditional political division of *Left vs. Right* is only partly relevant and has been partly replaced, partly augmented by the *Top vs. Bottom* division. With this approach, the vertical structure of social division, Csurka preserves something of the classic populism [18] and social sensitivity of the «rural writers». The social diagnosis the MIEP offers is a populist one but the cure they propose comes

from the radical right. For the diagnosis: «On this side, we have the wonderfully equipped players of shopping malls, global enterprises, multinationals, joint ventures, etc., who train on the Cayman Islands against paying taxes, and on the other side we have the team of tinkers, swarthy or black, yellow or red, who also pay no taxes but who are favored for employment by the people who under normal circumstances would employ honest tax paying contractors, plumbers, bricklayers and so on» [19] (...) «To ensure the evolution of the desired structure in Hungary - with the people on the bottom and the 'Eur-aping', cosmopolitan, vassal elite on top - they must make sure to grab all dollar-paying, Euro-liaising procuratorial offices and positions right from the start» [20].

In the age of globalization then, the right-left and top-bottom dimensions are augmented by another ethnic/social pair of opposites, the *global-vs. -Hungarian* one. Only those can occupy truly top positions who are part of the «global» section as well whereas at the bottom we find the victims of globalization. In this division of society, the part of political elite that was in power between 1998 and 2000, especially the Fidesz-MPP leaders are not truly in top positions and are not part of the true elite (i. e. the domestic puppets of foreign interests). He regarded this group as caught between opposing forces but worthy of support. In his estimation they were attempting to represent the interest of the Hungarian middle class while caught in the crossfire between multinational capital with its domestic representatives on the one hand and national and international poverty on the other. The main thrust of the critique of that government from Csurka was that they were too «middle class» and not «national», enough - i. e. representing the interests of one segment of the Hungarian population instead of standing up for the entire nation.

Csurka's perspective of the Hungarian social and political structures may be summarized thus:

Table 2. A three-dimensional view of the structure of society according to the radical Right in Hungary (Top-vs.-Bottom, Left-vs.-Right, Global-vs.-Hungarian)

		Left	Right
Top	Global	Ideologically neutral, Western and Jewish multinational capital, international riff-raff regime, repressive world government	
	Hungarian	Infiltrators in opposition (MSZP, SZDSZ)	Hedging middle class government (Fidesz-MPP)
Bottom	Hungarian	Cheated Kadarist workers (Workers' Party)	Radical nationalist Hungarians (MHP)
	Global	Ideologically unclassifiable, repressed, exploited blacks, Asians and other colored «tinkers», refugees, anti-Jewish and anti-Western Arabs	

MIEP and the governing parties (1998-2002)

Of the governing parties of the 1998-2002 period, Fidesz-MPP and the Smallholders Party (FKGP) are missing from MIEP's vision of the enemy. We have already mentioned MDF: Csurka refused to make peace with them but as their significance waned, Csurka was less and less adamant to attack them. But the voters of the Smallholders were of special importance to him for their potential to constitute a rural base for MIEP as the exploited losers of the transition. In his speeches Csurka attacked Smallholders leader Jozsef Torgyan, the second most influential government politician, as the embodiment of irresponsibility, corruption and lies, a character unsuitable for the politics of national radicalism. Still he was no enemy, but a victim, whose February 2001 downfall was caused partly by his own vices, partly by outside forces. But these outside forces, according to Csurka, were not the Fidesz-MPP politicians responsible for «icing» Torgyan but the leftist-liberal press and the «anti-Hungarian» political forces ranged behind it: «Torgyan and the Smallholders are knocked out, shattered to pieces. The protocommie press is kicking a dead body on the ground and pumping it full of lead... The Smallholder M. P. s are fighting for their existence and livelihood... It may be supposed that behind bringing down Torgyan, there were more important strategic goals: to stir up trouble» [21].

The popularity of the Smallholders had been on the wane for long before they failed to register even 1 % of the votes in the 2002 parliamentary elections. Parallel to the post-2000 decline of the Smallholders, Csurka started targeting their voters in the weekly *Magyar Forum*, focusing on agricultural and other issues relevant to the peasantry.

The MIEP judgment on Fidesz-MPP politicians was rather ambiguous. Csurka regarded the policies of the «boys from the people» favorably and mostly supported them. The Fidesz-led government was not an enemy of Csurka, but his rival. MIEP supported two-thirds of all legislative proposals accepted by the Parliament, most of which were put forth by Fidesz-MPP. In the straggle for the control of the public service media channels, MIEP supported the government in its efforts to make it impossible for opposition politicians to sit on the media boards. In the meantime, MIEP secured key, influential positions at the public television and radio stations and were awarded a radio frequency which they used to broadcast the xeno-

phobic, racist programming of *Pannon Radio*. The «we speak each other's language» kind of cooperation of the two parties became apparent at the plenary sessions of the Parliament. According to official transcripts, Fidesz-MPP members often applauded a MIEP speech and often chuckled at Csurka's derogatory remarks at the opposition (consisting mostly of allusions to their real or imagined Jewish ancestry).

The essence of MIEP criticism leveled against Fidesz-MPP was that the latter, by coming to power, became part of the repressive caste and thus lost its authenticity. As soon as it ascended to power, it started to represent foreign (US, EU, NATO) as well as Hungarian interests. Csurka took aim at the politics of the new elite «from below», from the perspective of the man on the street: «The creation of a civic, middle class Hungary is a worthy goal. The ideal man of the middle class is well-fed, both physically and intellectually, a healthy, balanced individual, an honest taxpayer, who might be employing workers and paying them handsomely, one who can strike the right kind of balance between his acquisitions, work, investments and his civic duties and public obligations. However, two factors must be granted for the middle class to thus emerge: their existence cannot be surrounded by, on the one hand, the groans coming from below and on the other, a cynical laughter coming from above while a narrow, elite circle, also calling themselves middle class, drunk on power and passions, looks down on them in contempt. It is the time of Advent. This is the time when issues like these are dissolved in lovely acts of giving, but this is not the solution: it is the awakening of the middle class, its confrontation of the ruling elite and fundamental changes with the help of the politics of national radicalism and liberation» [22].

For Csurka, Fidesz-MPP was a party of the middle class but not a national radical party. Its goals he mostly shared, its successes he regarded half-baked, its methods he openly criticized. For not only Fidesz was after the MIEP voters - MIEP was also trying to seduce voters away from Fidesz. The informal cooperation of the two parties was calculated to withstand such events as criticism from Csurka and demonstrations of MIEP's identity as an opposition party. Significant divergences of opinion between the two parties were mostly to be found in the field of foreign politics, especially in the interpretation of the 1999 NATO intervention in Yugoslavia and the 2001 terrorist strikes in the U.S. While in the case of the latter event, Fidesz joined ranks with the U. S. «in defense of the

free world», Csurka showed understanding towards the terrorists and very early on spoke of America as «not an innocent» victim of the attacks.

«Foreign attacks», interestingly, are central to Mifip's thinking any time Hungary's interests seem to be upset. In the winter of 2000, the waters of the river Tisza were polluted with cyanide upstream from Hungary, in Romania. Csurka tagged it a «Romanian attack» against what he had consciously took from Nazi terminology and described as «Hungarian living space» (*Lebensraum*). He said: «The Romanian attack against the tributary basin of the Tisza is really an attack on Hungarian living space. It is a new kind of war with no shots fired in which the long-term endangerment of the living space is a deliberate or irresponsible but certainly reprehensible act aimed at annihilating a nation. It is a war of aggression!» [23].

In spite of the differences of opinion reviewed above, most of the moves by Fidesz-MPP and MIEP seemed to be coordinated especially on domestic issues, as voter expectations from both parties seemed to be pointing in the same direction [24]. In recent years, Fidesz-MPP attempted to make MIEP more acceptable and integrate it into the democratic public life. These attempts were upset by the MIEP interpretation of the terror attacks of September 11. Still, the difference of opinion regarding the terror attacks was regarded as a political one by Fidesz-MPP and not as an «alien-hearted» stance by MIEP or as the betrayal of the country's loyalty to its allies. This is conspicuous as the government was always willing to be much more scornful of other opposition parties in cases of such confrontations. This was the government's way to signal that as far as they are concerned MIEP enjoys a special status as an «opposition» party [25] as they can be turned to good use in supporting government initiatives in spite of its formally oppositional status. This resulted in the topsy-turvy situation by early 2002 which saw a party partly in support, partly against the system ranged closer to the Orbán government than the democratic opposition parties.

Critique of the «caste democracy»

But let us get back to the original issue, the problem of semi-loyal parties. MIEP is critical of democracy, sometimes from the perspective of «true democracy», sometimes from the perspective of ethno-democracy. When in April 2002 elections, MIEP failed to reach the 5 % threshold necessary to get into the Parliament and to add insult

to injury, a leftist-liberal government came to power, Csurka had no hesitation to reject the results of the elections and declare that the new government is illegitimate. MIEP's definitions of democracy seesawed between the socially charged «true democracy» and ethno-democracy (which latter sees democracy as antidemocratic). There is a very conscious attempt to obscure these concepts for it is by this seesaw tactics that MIEP is able to address both those within the democratic consensus and those outside it.

Csurka often uses the term «caste», which is more than *class* but less than *race*: its purpose in his system critique is to strike a balance between Marxist class analysis and a racist approach regarded as Nazi speech. But from whichever direction he is approaching democracy, he is voicing deep dissatisfactions. He writes, «For ten years now we have been struggling with the nation-withering legacy of the old regime and still we could not get the better of it. The fight is between the man on the street, steeped in his own helplessness and the selfishness, treachery, meanness of a parasite caste bent on money grabbing and power madness. The helpless Hungarian populace, be it middle class, worker, peasant or professional is engaged in an unequal struggle against Big Money and Big Power. This democracy is but a quasi-democracy» [26].

MIEP's aim in confronting the existing «caste democracy» is the realization of its own conception of democracy based on social and national values. But they define «nation» on an ethnic basis and want to create democrats out of people through a social process of the «liberation of the nation». Csurka's democracy is exclusionist and anti-liberal admitting only the white, Hungarian, radical *petit bourgeoisie* because this can provide the raw material for the creation of the national (and also nationalist) middle class. Because today, democratic discourse is powerful and legitimate worldwide, even anti-democrats must speak its language. Even though the similarities between MIEP's vision and the middle-class-based definitions of fascism by Lipset and Hayek are haunting indeed, MIEP is not a fascist but an «ethno-democratic» party. It does not challenge democracy, but reinterprets its nature and boundaries and aims to gather influence on the society by traversing these boundaries to and from.

The assessment of MIEP's true social influence is no easy task indeed because its primary manifestation is not through votes. While the party shaped public discourse after its own frightful image, it lost its parliamentary mandate in the elections.

Public opinion polling firms had a hard time sizing up the party's popular support, because the MIEP faithful received instructions not to believe the polls and not to respond to pollsters.

MIEP's relative isolation may be a long-term one. Since April 2002 it is an extra-parliamentary «street» party. But the informal support of the recent years of the formally isolated party resulted in a situation where even though MIEP is no longer in the Parliament, those who are in the opposition benches display an increasing tendency to use their language. The mode of discourse employed

by this semi-loyal opposition group might take hold not only on the far right but on the center right as well. The true danger of MIEP lies not in their potential for coming to power but in their potential to fashion public discourse into an antidemocratic one after their own exclusionist concept of the nation [27].

In recent years, MIEP has proved to be a strange entity: while a latent and often lackluster ally of the government, it was in a semi-loyal opposition to procedural democracy. But it was the friends of liberal democracy they really opposed.

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15. Csurka I. Minden, ami van.- P.1093.
16. Transcripts of the Parliament, 21 March, 2000.
17. Csurka I. Minden, ami van.- P. 1362.
18. For a more detailed treatment see Bozoki A. Vazlat három populizmusról: Egyesült Államok, Argentína és Magyarország (Sketches of Three Populisms: The United States, Argentina and Hungary) // Politikatudományi Szemle.- 1994.- V. 3.- № 3.- P. 33-68.
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20. Csurka I. Minden, ami van (All That There Is) // Magyar Forum.- 1998.- 22 Jan.
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24. Such issues were those of the media board, the former Attorney General, the ombudsman for Data and Privacy Protection, the «Lex Repassy» and the (Hungarian) Status Laws. It is remarkable that Csurka was in no opposition to the 2001 December Orban-Nastase deal making it possible for (ethnic) Romanians to acquire work permits in Hungary, even though the eventual pact took a liberal perspective as compared with the original draft which emphasized ethnic differences.
25. The Fidesz-MPP Speaker of the House for instance had no intention to dissolve the MIEP faction when their numbers, after the departure of M.P. Lukacs Szabo, no longer reached the minimal required limit.
26. Transcripts of the Parliament, 29 November, 1999.
27. See for instance the anti-Semitic article published by Presbyterian pastor and MIEP M. P. Lorant Hegedus Jr., which was condemned by his Church superiors but condoned by his party president.

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ПАРТІЙНА СИСТЕМА І ПУБЛІЧНИЙ ДИСКУРС: УГОРСЬКІ НАПІВЛОЯЛЬНІ ПАРТІЇ

У статті здійснено аналіз діяльності напівлояльних партій, який ґрунтується на матеріалі угорської політики. Автори звертаються до такої проблеми: як розвиваються ті напівлояльні партії, які беруть повноцінну участь у демократичному процесі? Вони доводять, що, незважаючи на політичну маргіналізацію, напівлояльні партії мають суттєвий вплив на публічний дискурс.