



Politics against right-wing extremism in the Czech Republic

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1. The role of the state between prevention and repression

The Czech government and NGOs have been combating right-wing extremism continuously since the establishing of the democratic regime in the 1989-1990. In many aspects this policy is linked to the post-war repression against Nazis and collaborators and to the anti-Fascist legal norms of the communist regime. In the post-communist era mostly the activities of right-wing extremists against Roma have led to modifications of this policy. Conservative, liberal and partially also some other political forces are struggling to realize equal and comprehensive countering of right-wing extremism and left-wing extremism (however, mostly judges apply anti-extremist norms against communism and anarchism very rarely).

A part of non-governmental anti-racist sphere (mostly left-wing oriented) oppose this equal policy as well as the use of the term extremism as a shelter-term for anti-democratic and anti-constitutional activities and organizations. Contemporarily these NGOs prefer the hate crime concept. Some liberal and conservative NGOs, thinkers, journalists and politicians support the less repressive modifications of the Czech law (mostly in the field of hate speech propaganda). On the other hand, many NGOs (mostly NGOs of ethnic and religious minorities) take great pains to apply a strict and repressive use of the Czech law or to harder repression against right-wing extremism.

Important milestones in the development of the state policy against right wing extremism are included in the following table. In some cases also the activities of right-wing extremist are mentioned scene which have led to the state reaction and modification of the previous policy (see Annex 2: Milestones in the development of the anti right-wing extremist policy in the Czech Republic).

Mostly the Ministry of Interior, the Police of the Czech Republic (it has specialists in extremism at county and regional level as well as an anti-extremist section of the Office for countering organized crime), the Military police, intelligence services (Security information service - BIS, Office for foreign relations and information – ÚZSI and Military intelligence –

VZ), judicial and prison institutions form the contemporary repression system of the counter-extremism policy.

The most important conceptual document is the governmental document “Strategy for combating extremism”. Its first version was adopted in 2009. One year later it was amended.

The strategy is based on five pillars:

“1. The power of extremists is based on human ignorance. The only option to fight against their baiting propaganda is communication, openness, and the offering of alternatives;

2. Knowledgeable people are able to create defense mechanism against dangerous ideas. Schools are the institutions to explain advantages of democratic alternative;

3. Combating extremism is a matter that concerns not only the Ministry of the Interior and the police, but also other, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Extremists can be side-lined and left with the role of an unimportant political actor only through mutual cooperation;

4. Experts who fight against extremism must know what to do and must be given enough competence to carry out the required actions. Professionalism is more beneficial than universal repression;

5. Particular offenders of criminal activities need to be uncompromisingly sanctioned with the effective use of readily available means mechanism” (Ministerstvo vnitra 2009: 24)

Penal norms are included in the Criminal code. Paragraphs which are most frequently used against right-wing extremism are founding, support or propaganda of movements suppressing human rights and freedoms (§ 403), declaration of sympathy for movements suppressing human rights and freedoms (§ 404), disaffirming, disputing, approving and justifying of genocide (§ 405), defamation of nation, race, ethnic group or other group of persons (§ 355), initiating hate against a group of persons or restricting their rights and freedoms (§ 356), violence against a group of people or an individual (§ 352) and several specific norms related to hate motives of violent crimes (attacks on the victims due to their nationality, ethnicity, race, political and religious conviction).

Anti-right-wing extremist sanctions are included also in the Law about association in political parties and political movements (424/1991), Law about association (80/1990), Law about assembly (84/1990) Law about petitions (85/1990) and in various laws from media sphere. Activity in extremist movements is prohibited in the Law about professional soldiers (221/1999). Planning of governmental reactions to mass extremist riots or terrorist attacks

committed by the extremist spectrum are part of the crisis management system of the Czech Republic, including interconnected laws and conceptual documents.

Prevention policy is partially included also in activities of the Ministry of interior and the Police (including participation of policemen/policewomen in lectures and meetings with teachers and youth at various educational activities). The most important actor of the state educational policy is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. It released in 1999 also the document Methodic instruction to combating racism, xenophobia and intolerance (14 423/99-22). An amendment to the instruction is being prepared since 2009 in the context of the realization of the above mentioned Strategy for combating extremism.

2. Public acceptance of right-wing extremism in the Czech Republic

The public acceptance of organized right-wing extremism in the Czech Republic is relatively low. A deeper problem consists in the acceptance of racist prejudices (mostly against Roma) within the society, including established political parties and a part of the media (mostly at municipal level). According to Zdeněk Ryšavý, an activist of the NGO Romea: “Gradually and stealthily, the rhetoric normally used by neo-Nazis is slowly starting to make its way into serious media in the Czech Republic. We have already grown used to seeing young Roma referred to on neo-Nazi websites as “litters of Gypsies”, blacks referred to as “niggers”, and to various slurs being made against Jewish and Vietnamese people“ (Ryšavý 2010). However, this criticism is related only to a part of Czech media, other journalists are politically correct.

The Czech youth is more affiliated with voting for the right-wing extremist parties than the rest of the population. It can be seen from the results of the so called student elections from 2010. They were organized by NGO People in Need. According to its press release: “Between April 26 – 28 the student elections were organized in 135 schools. Over 20 000 students participated in this event. The types of secondary schools participating in this event were grammar schools, secondary schools with a specialization and vocational schools. The rate of participation were 50,6%, 46,8% and 2,6% in vocational schools. The participation rates do not follow the real structure of the potential voters among the students, the scores were weighted according to the types of schools. The results were measured by Milward Brown research firm“ (Toužimská 2010). The Worker’s Party of Social Justice (DSSS) won in the students elections 7,14% of votes. It is a significantly higher number than in the regular elections in June 2010 when the DSSS received only 1,14% of votes (according to the Czech

law citizens over the age of 18 have the right to vote). On the other hand, there are also strong youth anti-extremist and anti-racist groups.

Broader population is not conformable with organized right-wing extremism. In 2009 the Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) carried out a survey about the relation of the public to the extremist parties. The results show that right-wing extremists are most frequently considered extremist political forces in the Czech Republic.

Which political parties are extremist?

Worker's Party (DS)	46%
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)	10%
National Party (NS)	7%
Republicans (SPR-RSČ, RMS)	6%
Nazis, neo-Nazis	5%
Nationalists	5%
Fascists, neo-Fascists	4%
Skinheads	3%
National Resistance (NO)	2%
Anarchists	2%
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	2%
Other parties	12
No party	4%
Don't know	22%

Respondents could name two parties, because of this the sum is higher than 100%. Source Veselský 2009: 2.

In the long-time comparison perspective the Assembly for Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ) was replaced by the Worker's Party (DS). The SPR-RSČ was in 1997 named as an extremist party most frequently (50%). It is also interesting that the number of people who named the KSČM as an extremist party is decreasing– in 1997 it was 18% (Veselský 3%). According to the survey of the CVVM 69% of the population support the ban of extremist parties, only 14% of respondents are against the ban and 17% are not of consistent opinion. The reasons for the ban and against the ban are shown in the following tables.

Why should be extremist parties banned?

Violence, riots, attacks against people, arson attacks, vandalism, hooliganism, aggression	23%
Threat to democracy, freedom, human rights, rights of minorities, struggle for dictatorship	22%
Harm to society, wrong impact on people, wrong impact on youth, they are without positive impact on society	14%
Racism, fascist tendencies, Nazis, they are celebrating Hitler	6%
Racism, racial hate	5%
Violation of law and constitution,	3%
They propagate wrong ideas, they have wrong program, perverse opinions	3%
Intolerance, hate (generally)	3%
Realization of evil	3%
Shame of society, what they are doing is against norms of good society	2%
Other answers	15%
Do not know	1%

Source: Veselský 2009: 4

Why should be extremist parties not banned?

We have freedom, democracy, it is impossible to oppress opinions, despite that they are wrong, they have freedom to say what they think	56%
They propagate good ideas, they solve real problems, respondents agree with them	11%
If they exist publicly, they are more under control, rather than in illegal underground	6%
Bans do not have effect, bans make from extremists martyrs, it is only publicity for them.	5%
Present law is sufficient, penalize violation of law, but not ban	3%
They are not important, they are not serious threat	3%

Respondents do not feel threatened, no problems, no reasons for ban	2%
It is important to beat them down politically, in the elections, not by state power	1%
Other answers	10%
Do not know	3%

Source: Veselský 2009: 5

3. Developing, networking, internationalizing of anti - right wing extremist organizations

The spectrum of “specialized” anti-right wing extremist non governmental organizations in the Czech Republic can be divided into four main categories. The first group (most important) are the “typical” NGOs with liberal humanist orientation, the second group are NGOs of ethnic religious minorities, the third group are left-wing extremist groups (with important communist and anarchist subcategories) (Bastl 2009) and the fourth group are the organizations of historical anti-fascist fighters from WW II and pre-war period. Also anti-communist organizations sometimes protest against right-wing extremism (in context of the general anti-extremist policy), however, their activity in this field is relatively weak.

The first activities of the liberal humanist non-governmental organizations against right-wing extremism were realized in 1990. The rise of racist incidents against Roma, Vietnamese and foreign tourists was criticized by former anti-communist dissidents (mostly from the Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee). In the first half of the 1990s the Czech branch of Amnesty International as well as NGOs Movement of Civic Solidarity and Tolerance (Hnutí občanské solidarity a tolerance – HOST) and Tolerance and Civic Society (Tolerance a občanská společnost) were founded. Important were in the middle of the 1990s the activities of the Documentary centre of human rights (Dokumentální středisko pro lidská práva). Mostly the HOST symbolized the anti-racist struggle in the 1990s, however, after the internal disputes and splits of several activists at the end of the 1990s its activity declined.

In the first decade of the new century the Tolerance and civic society occupied the most important role in monitoring of the right-wing extremist scene. Educational activities and anti-racist campaigns were realized by the organization People in Need (Člověk v tísni) and in the last years also by the new organization Asi-milování. The Czech Helsinki Committee (Český helsinský výbor – ČHV) deals with hate crimes and neo-Nazism. The new organization

(founded in 2009) In-Iustitia focuses on help to victims of hate crimes. Its director Klára Kalibová is very active in public discussions about hate crime and extremism.

Anti-RE activity at municipal and regional level is underdeveloped in the Czech Republic. The most important exception is the initiative V Ústí neonacisty nechceme (We don't want neo-Nazis in Ústí). It was founded in 2009 as a counter-reaction to the neo-Nazi rally in Ústí nad Labem and it is still active against right-wing activities in this north Bohemian town. It has inspired similar initiatives in Plzeň (V Plzni neonacisty nechceme) and Přerov (V Přerově neonacisty nechceme).

The spectrum of Roma organizations active in the anti-RE field is very heterogeneous in the post-communist era. Contemporarily a very active organization is the civic association Romea. Juridical advisory services for Roma are carried out by the NGO Zřvůle práva. Monitoring of right-wing activities is a task of the non-registered group Gypsy Radical. The most important Jewish organisation active against right-wing extremism is the Forum against anti-Semitism of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Prague. The League against anti-Semitism (Liga proti antisemitismu - LPA) has a broader spectrum of members. Countering Islamophobia is the main goal of the (mostly Muslim) NGO Libertas Independent Agency (Mareš 2010: 1-2).

Communist anti-fascism was propagated intensively during the whole communist era and after the fall of communism it is carried out by all the communist organisations, mostly by Patriotic Association of anti-Fascists (Vlastenecké sdružení antifašistů – VSA-Antifa). Its members are mostly former members of the Czech union of anti-Fascist fighters (Český svaz protifašistických bojovníků – regime organisation in the communist era), who did not agree with its transformation into the Czech Union of Freedom Fighters (Český svaz bojovníků za svobodu) after the fall of communism. Anti-Fascist propaganda is typical of several youth communist organisations, including Trotskyist small groupings (Trotskyist influence is strong in the organisation Studenti proti rasismu – Students against racism, for example, however, its members are also various young people from leftist and alternative spectrum).

Anarchist groups have been active in the fight against fascism since the beginning of the 1990s. They were involved in mass street wars against racist skinheads in 1991 and 1992 in Prague. In 1996 the Antifascist Action (AFA) was founded, today the most important group. It operates in educational, cultural activities as well as in violent attacks against right-wing extremists (Bastl 2009). Sometimes the AFA cooperates with official institutions (with Lidice

Memorial in 2008, for example), but very rarely. Several local anti-fascist collectives are also affiliated with the anarchist spectrum (Antifascist youth Zlínsko, for example).

The “veteran” organisation Czech Union of Freedom Fighters tries to keep the traditions of anti-Fascist fight from the first half of the 20th century. It criticizes contemporary neo-Nazi activities, however, it also considers countering of the alleged contemporary “Pangermanism”, “German revanchism” and historical revisionism part of the anti-Fascist struggle (Kobr 2008).

The deepest networking of the anti-RE organisations works between several liberal humanistic and Roma and Jewish organisations. Only some of these organisations sometimes have individual contacts with the AFA. Communists are isolated within the anti-RE spectrum. The Czech Union of Freedom Fighters works without stable interconnections with the above mentioned anti-RE groups. Humanist activists, Jews, Roma and leftist radicals demonstrated together at some anti-RE rallies (in Prague in November 2007 in the Jewish quarter in Prague, for example), however, within the anarchist spectrum it led to internal disputes (a. o. because of different views of Israel).

In the interconnection of several humanistic, Jewish and Roma NGOs with governmental and academic sphere an important role is played by the TASK FORCE C. It is a platform created in 2009 for the cooperation between the governmental sector, academia and NGOs in the field of countering extremism (there exist also TASK FORCE A for intelligence community and TASK FORCE B for juridical sphere).

Several Czech NGOs have good contacts with foreign countries. For example, Tolerance and civic society with the People against Racism (LPR) in Slovakia or Never again! (NW) in Poland. Also the local initiative We don't want neo-Nazis in Ústí started partnership with anti-RE initiatives from Dresden. Foreign organisations as the Kulturbüro Sachsen or Europe-wide organisations as the European Roma Rights Centre are also active on the Czech territory. Several Czech NGOs are partners of European networks – the People in Need with the RAXEN (network of European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) and the Zřvůle práva with the ENAR. Leftist extremist organisations are interconnected with European networks and organisations according to their political conviction.

4. Conclusion

The Czech government realizes continuously the anti-right wing extremist policy in preventive as well as repressive way. The majority of Czech public supports active measures against right-wing extremism. This policy has also conceptual background in the document Strategy for combating extremism. Its part is also cooperation between the government, the NGOs and the academic sphere. The Czech NGO spectrum is relatively heterogeneous, but some organizations are very active, mostly at national level (only several local and regional initiatives exist) and partially also at transnational level.

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Annex 1: List of anti-RE extremist non-governmental organizations

Liberal-humanist anti-RE NGOs	Tolerance a občanská společnost (Tolerance and Civic Society)	Senovážné náměstí 24, 116 47 Praha tolerance@ecn.cz http://www.ecn.cz/tolerance/
	In Iustitia	In IUSTITIA, o.s., P.O.Box 15, 111 21 Praha 1 in-ius@in-ius.cz, http://www.in-ius.cz/
	Český helsinský výbor (Czech Helsinki Committee)	Štefánikova 21 150 00 Praha 5 sekr@helcom.cz http://www.helcom.cz/
	Amnesty International Czech Republic	Provaznická 3, 110 00 Praha 1 amnesty@amnesty.cz http://www.amnesty.cz/
	Člověk v tísni (People in Need)	Šafaříkova 635/24 120 00 Praha 2 mail@clovekvtsni.cz http://www.clovekvtsni.cz/
	Asi-Milování	Pekařská 44 678 01 Blansko asi-milovani@seznam.cz www.asimilovani.estranky.cz
Local anti-RE initiatives	V Ústí neonacisty nechceme (We don't want neo-Nazis in Ústí)	vustineonacistynehceme@gmail.com http://www.vustineonacistynehceme.cz/
	V Plzni neonacisty nechceme (We don't	mail@vplznineonacistynehceme.cz http://www.vplznineonacistynehceme.cz/

	want neo-Nazis in Plzeň)	
NGOs of ethnic and religious minorities	Romea	Žitná 49 110 00 Praha romea@romea.cz http://www.romea.cz/romea
	Zšvůle práva	Sekaninova 478/8, 128 00 Praha zvuleprava@zvuleprava.cz http://www.zvuleprava.cz/
	Gypsy Radical	gr@gypsyradical.com http://www.gypsyradical.com/
	Fórum proti antisemitismu při FŽO v ČR (Forum against anti-Semitism of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic)	Maiselova 18 110 01 Praha 1 http://www.fzo.cz/fpa_akt.do antisemitismus@email.cz
	Liga proti antisemitismu (League against Anti-Semitism)	ligapa@centrum.cz http://www.antisemitismus.wz.cz/
	Libertas Independent Agency	Podsedky 764/32, 625 00 Brno-Bohunice redakce@bezczury.org http://www.bezczury.org
Left-wing extremist NGOs	Antifašistická akce (Anti-Fascist Action)	http://www.antifa.cz kontakt@antifa.cz
	Studenti proti rasismu	info@protirasismu.net

	(Students against Racism)	http://www.protirasismu.net/
	Vlastenecké sdružení antifašistů (Patriotic Association of Antifascist)	Boučkova 17, 152 00 Praha 6
Anti-Fascist Organizations of WW Veterans	Český svaz bojovníků za svobodu (Czech Union of Freedom Fighters)	Legerova 22 P. O. BOX 54 120 49 Praha 2 http://www.zasvobodu.cz/

Annex 2: Milestones of development of the anti right-wing extremist policy in the Czech Republic

Year	Right-wing extremist activity	Governmental action	Legislative	Juridical decisions	NGO's sphere
1990-1991	Rise of skinheads violence against Roma and immigrants. Rise of popularity and mass demonstrations of the SPR-RSČ	First specific internal police orders and manuals against extremism. New intelligence services deal with extremist issues.	Amendment of the Penal Code (mostly in the field of prosecution of communist and fascist propaganda)		First protests of intellectuals (mostly former anti-communist disidents) against racial violence
1992	Success of the SPR-RSČ in the parliamentary			Constitutional court of the CSFR clarified	Big anti-fascist (mostly anarchist) violent demonstrations(1 st)

	elections (5,98%), parliamentary representation; Strong violent skinheads racist gangs			criteria for definition of movements, which aimed against human rights and freedoms	May in Prague)
1993	Intensive racial violence, several racial murders. Registration of right-wing extremist civic association (a.o. VF). Establishing of the Bohemia Hammerskins	First conceptual material program of the Ministry of Interior against extremism			Founding of the HOST (Hnutí občanské solidarity a tolerance)
1995	Brutal racial murder of Roma Tibor Berki in Žďár nad Sázavou by racist skinheads	First report on extremism in the Czech Republic	New more strictly norms and sentences in penal code (direct reaction on the Berki- murder)		Medial and public discussion about report on extremism (mostly because it included some environmental NGOs)
1996	Biggest success of the SPR-RSČ (8,01%) Rise of Blood			Court decision in Hradec Králové that Roma are the same indo-	Establishing of the Anti-Fascist action (AFA) within the anarchist

	& Honour Division Bohemia			European race as Czechs and crime against them committed by Czechs cannot be racially motivated (strong criticized)	spectrum
1997	Murder of Sudanese student Hassan Elamin Abdelradi by right-wing extremist				Mass demonstration (mostly with students participation) and political engagement of several politicians against right-wing extremism
1998	SPR-RSČ dropped out from Parliament; Establishing of neo-Nazi civic association National Alliance Establishing of National Resistance				

1999		Ministry of interior warned the VF and the NA that their activity is against the law			
2000					Unsuccessful attempt to start process of the ban of the SPR-RSČ by some anti-racist activists
2003	First congress of the Workers' Party	New definition of extremism in the Report on extremism issues			
2004	First cells of Autonomous Nationalists			Decision of Constitutional Court in case "Mein Kampf" (intention of publisher to propagate Nazism was not proved)	
2006		Strict use of penal law against some neo-Nazi concerts		Decision of the Supreme court of the Czech Republic	

				which clarified many terms and paragraphs in the Criminal Code	
2007	Neo-Nazi rallies	Strict use of assembly law (dissolution of the nazi-demonstration in Brno, prohibition of nazi-demonstrations in Prague)		Decision of the Supreme administrative court of the Czech Republic which clarified the assembly law (it is possible to ban an assembly if the announced aim is a cover for the anti-legal aim)	Biggest NGO anti-Nazi demo in the post-communist history – Jewish City on November 10
2008	Rise of neo-Nazi activism, cooperation between DS, NO and AN; Mass riots in Janov	First governmental proposal to ban the DS			Ministry of interior created TASK FORCE C for combating extremism (platform for cooperation of government with NGOs and academia sphere)
2009	Arson attack in	Adoption of	New	First decision	Public solidarity

	<p>Vítkov</p> <p>Activities of Protection corps of Workers Party in Northern Bohemia</p> <p>State funding for Worker's Party (after 1,07% in European election)</p>	<p>the first Strategy for countering extremism</p> <p>Mass police operation after Vítkov attack</p> <p>Mass police operations (Power, Lotta, White Justice) against neo-Nazi movement</p> <p>Second governmental proposal to ban Workers Party</p>	<p>Criminal Code (40/2009) with several strict norms against hate speech and hate crime (similar to norms in previous Criminal code)</p>	<p>of Supreme Administrative Court in the case of Workers Party (rejection of the proposal, lack of evidence, more precise criteria for ban of party)</p>	<p>with the victim of Vítkov attack (Natálie Siváková)</p> <p>Established civic association In-Justitia (main goal is help for victims of hate crime)</p>
2010	<p>Decline of neo-Nazi activities</p> <p>After the ban of the DS transfer of members to the new DSSS</p> <p>DSSS won in Parliamentary elections</p>			<p>Second decision of the Supreme Administrative Court in the case of DS (party banned);</p> <p>Decision of Constitutional</p>	

	1,14%			Court in the case of the DS (confirmation of the ban)	
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