A moderate Europe? Radicalisms in Central European cultures

Volume 53 of the journal *Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa / Nationalities Affairs* will be devoted to the rise and fall of different waves of radical movements in Central Europe.

The image of a bridge connecting opposites is a topic strongly present in the political and philosophical thought of many Central European nations. Many of them have a dream of becoming a bridge between two different religious, political and cultural realms. This enables them to think about their culture as moderate and mild. The Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz expressed this idea when he wrote that the Polish nation values “Simplicity and hospitality, / Despising violence and cruelty”. To sum up this attitude, he coined a well-known catchphrase: “We like village songs and peasant frolics. / We Slavs like idylls. This is not bucolic!” (*Forefathers’ Eve*, Mickiewicz, 2016).

This diagnosis leads us to the question of the presence of different forms of radicalism, seen as the reverse side of the bucolic image of Central European political and social reality in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We would like to propose an approach in which various radicalisms are viewed not only as a destructive force for the public sphere but as a culture-making impulse. Since there are many definitions of radicalism, we would like authors to approach it as a dispute about the public sphere and political rules, leading to fundamental changes. Etymologically, radicalism is connected to the Latin word “radix”, meaning “roots”. Therefore, radicalism points at the source of things. Owing to the rhizome-like nature of radicalism, then, the stream of brave radical visions unveils roots of various phenomena.

If we want to search for the roots of “radicalism” as a fully-fledged idea, and not as a term from the vernacular language, we will find them in the age of Enlightenment. As an
intellectual current, the Enlightenment, with its conviction about the necessity of changing fundamental rules of social life, could also be described as radical. In 1843, the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham argued against the popular opinion that radicalism is dangerous, pointing out that it could be seen as a remedy for social pathologies and injustices. Thus, radicalism became a synonym for socio-political or even moral transformation (“Radicalism not Dangerous”, 1843). This mindset could be confronted with one going back to the “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” by Karl Marx (1844). What emerges in this work is the belligerent version of radicalism, with its Romantic concept of an uncompromising struggle against any kind of enslavement. Although both philosophers agree that radicalism is a way of overcoming inequalities, the tools they propose to use in the struggle against them are different.

Reflection on radicalism expanded during the twentieth century, when the question about far-right political extremism was formulated for the first time (“The Radical Right”, Lipset 1955), and the problem of radical movements became apparent. The 1960s saw the beginning of a dispute on the susceptibility of certain social structures to radicalism. Considering all these discussions, we want to ask whether radicalism can be ascribed to a particular region or culture. In other words, we want to examine whether – in the light of contemporary area studies – there are any geocultural preconditions for radicalism.

Yet, we do not intend to start another discussion about the meaning of Central Europe, since this subject has been discussed and re-discussed in different contexts at least since the emergence of Mitteleuropa in the early twentieth century. Instead, we would rather propose trying to understand Central Europe through the phenomena that occur in this region.

We encourage interested authors to seek answers in the spirit of epistemological rupture postulated by Gaston Bachelard. We would like this thought experiment to lead to the description of Central European radicalisms. Volume 53 of Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa / Nationalities Affairs would be an attempt to seek answers to questions such as:

• Are Central European radicalisms historically determined by tensions between the West and the East or cultural myths such as the idea of “a bridge” or “the bulwark of Christendom”?
• At the time of national revivals, were the ideas of states and nations conceptualized as reformist or revolutionary?
• What totalitarian political concepts (including those concerning various utopias and dystopias) emerged in Central Europe?
• Can we view radical social movements in Central Europe as a response to various dysfunctions of political systems?
• What are the local stories of different “-isms”, such as class radicalism, racial radicalism or gender radicalism?
• Are there any Central European intellectual radicalisms, and if so, do they manifest themselves in extreme engagement or radical retreat?
• What are the ways of performing local radicalisms in the borderlands of Central Europe?
• Does the radical thought in Central Europe contribute to the modes of expression of marginalized communities?
• Is there a place in the region for a spiritual radicalism rooted in the Manichean clash between Good and Evil?
• Could radicalism in Central Europe be attributed only to progressive thought or also to a conservative mindset?

*Spray Narodowościowe. Seria Nowa / Nationalities Affairs (SNSN)* is the leading Polish journal devoted to nationalism and ethnicity, publishing articles in humanities and social sciences. The aim of the journal is to provide a platform for transdisciplinary research on nationalisms and ethnic issues, especially in Central Europe. The subject area in focus is the empirical and theory-oriented study of nationalism and ethnicity, pursued with a view to making a contribution to the development of Central European area studies. The *SNSN* is different from other journals in the field owing to its firm focus on Central Europe, understood as a constellation of ideas which is embodied in space. This concept of Central Europe includes both Slavic countries and their non-Slavic neighbours (e.g. Albania, Austria, the Baltic States, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Romania). This approach to Central Europe requires the examination of reciprocal relations with cultures in relatively close geographical proximity, which were often the source of ideas proliferating in the region (e.g. Germany,
Italy, Scandinavian countries, Turkey). Likewise, it does not exclude Russia as the most influential neighbouring state. The journal is listed in CEEOL, DOAJ, EBSCO, ProQuest and Crossref databases. It is included in the Polish ranking of academic journals of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education; the number of points awarded for published contributions is 20.

Contributions should be submitted in English.

We invite articles by representatives of various research areas and methodologies. A typical article/paper for this journal should not exceed 40,000 characters (including spaces). This limit includes tables, references, figure captions, footnotes, bibliography and an abstract of 150 words. Articles in excess of the maximum limit will be returned to the author(s). Please consult APA style guidelines for references, available at: [https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/)

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