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Cultures of Populism and the Political Right in Central Europe

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Patricia Chiantera-Stutte and Andrea Petö,
"Cultures of Populism and the Political Right in Central Europe"
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Abstract: In their paper, "Cultures of Populism and the Political Right in Central Europe," Patricia Chiantera-Stutte and Andrea Petö analyze the common points and differences in which imagined and mythologized histories are serving as a mobilizing force for extreme-right movements in three Central European countries, in Austria, Hungary, and Italy. The authors discuss how populist and right-wing political parties in these countries construct their conceptions of an alternative identity for the European Union. Further, the authors analyze the politico-territorial myths constructed by the three populist right-wing parties, the Freedom Party in Austria, the Northern League in Italy, and the Party of Hungarian Life and Truth. The programs of the three parties assert the equasion of the German concept of *Volk* with territory: the Freedom Party propagates a particular concept of Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*), the Northern League of Padania assumes to be the true "nation" of the reagion, and the Party of Hungarian Life and Truth builds on imagined and mythologized concepts of an ancient Hungary with a homogeneous society and culture. The authors analyze the construction of essentialist identities based on imagined historical communities and on the exclusion of the Other where anti-Semitism is a driving factor represent a sceptical ideology evident in the discourse of the said parties.

Patricia CHIANTERA-STUTTE and Andrea PETŐ

Cultures of Populism and the Political Right in Central Europe

The extreme right in Europe is constructing actively a counter discourse based in national histories in order to oppose the European Union's attempts to redefine notions of territoriality (see, e.g., Keating). The aim of the present article is to introduce and to analyze the common points and differences concerning the ways in which imagined histories are serving as a mobilizing force for the extreme right in three countries and the ways in which some extreme right-wing parties in these countries defend an alternative identity to that endorsed by the European Union. In our discussion, we focus on the processes of constitutions of collective identities through the usage of invented -- or imagined (see Anderson) -- historical traditions by the extreme rightist movements in Italy, Austria, and Hungary. In our definition, these countries are geographically but more importantly socio-culturally located in Central Europe (for a recent definition of Central Europe, see Tötösy de Zepetnek). Our selection of these three countries rests on their fascist or nazi legacies. In the case of Hungary, the legacy of communist rule complicates the picture and raises the question about the relationship between mainstream conservatism and the extreme right. In all three countries discussed, populist and right-wing political parties are well organized and have developed in the past few years considerable electoral support.

Populist parties have been increasingly successful on the political landscape in Central Europe as Jörg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria (FPÖ), the Lega Nord (Northern League), and MIÉP: Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (Party of Hungarian Life and Truth) in Hungary show. These parties have adopted not just a peculiar nationalistic attitude aiming at the preservation of national traditions of old; they also redefine the boundaries of current national territories. They appear to re-interpret national boundaries in order to appeal to an ethnic community and a territory which do not necessarily coincide with the borders of existing nation states. This new phenomenon is defined as a new form of "peripheral nationalism," a form of nationalism that deconstructs the category of the nation state based on the congruence between territory, people, and culture and reassembles it at another -- subnational -- level (see Soysal; Brubacker). In this definition, nationalism is understood as a heuristic category, "a system of institutionalized differences coupling a collectivity within a culture and a territory" (Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro 23). In the cases we examine, we show how the politics of collective identity work (see, e.g., Schmidtke), how they reshape the definition and the self-representation of a community by giving it new grounds for mobilizing and new boundaries. The claim of "distinctiveness" of the "nations" represented by the Lega Nord and the MIÉP and the defense of the "nation" of Austrians by the FPÖ involves a re-interpretation of the historical processes by essentializing the nation and its origins in a distant past and by constructing the state as a modern artefact imposed on the "true" nations.

The construction of new collective identities using models of imagined historical communities cannot be seen independently from the sceptical perception of a European unity shared by the Freedom Party, the Northern league, and the MIÉP. The European Union as denounced by these parties is explained as an example of the typical illnesses of European democracies where the lack of people's direct participation in the political process and in the structures of bureaucracy is criticized. Moreover, the said parties are not only anti-European: they share a common ideal of Europe, defined as a certain cultural and geographic area, whose integrity and development is felt as a necessity of preserving oneself against the penetration of other cultures who are thus pictured as threatening and dangerous. The ideal image of a culturally homogenous community is projected on their model of Europe: their Europe is a "community of destiny," a closed cultural unit which has to preserve its identity. This attitude towards Europe -- and that reflects a strong sense of ambiguity -- can be observed not only at the political level in the discourses of right-wing parties such as our examples but

also at a more "intellectual" level, as evident for example in the imagery produced by Andreas Mölzer (the "ideologue" of the FPÖ), Alain de Benoist (the founder of the French *nouvelle droite),* or István Csurka, the Hungarian politician for whom the enlargement of the European Union means the support of precisely those political and social tendencies he and his party is labelling the least desirable.

In our opinion it is advantageous to analyse these right-wing populist parties comparatively because they are located in the cultures of the former Habsburg empire and because of their way of constructing a collective identity and of mobilising the population by appealing to their presumed homogeneity as a *Volk* (people), thus essentializing its content. The category of *Volk* is used in the political discourse in order to produce the same result: a strong difference from and the exclusion of the Other (immigrants, Blacks, Muslims, Jews, women, gays and lesbians, etc.) in order to foster internal cohesion. The concept of *Volk* serves as an internally unifying and externally dividing category and therefore plays a pivotal role in the constitution of populist right-wing movements: their rejection of internal pluralism and difference -- all ambiguities and conflicts lie outside a strong identity (see Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro; Chiantera-Stutte). The link between *Volk* and territory -- evident in the speeches by most populist right-wing politicians -- is seen as something ancestral and related to old traditions and histories. This link is exclusive, that is, the territories are seen as strictly "belonging" to the people living in them and the relation between the *Volk* and the territory is seen as substantial. The nation's territory, its culture, and its collective identity constitute a whole, in which every element is related and is determined by every other (see, e.g., Kürti). In this way, the forms of territorialisation represented by the populist right-wing thinking constitute an example of attempts to constitute and emphasize transregional and transborder entities and therefore can be seen in their relation of congruence/incongruence with national principles. On the other hand, their idea of transregional territories has to be seen as alternative to the European Union's model of transitional co-operation, which of course is not based primarily on an exclusive idea of citizenship and on the sharing of imagined historical myths.

Overall, all populist right-wing parties share a similar political structure and patterns of discourse: 1) they distinguish two ideas of nations, a "good" one and a "bad" one, 2) they distinguish two ideas of Europe, and 3) they connect their historical and socio-cultural traditions to the notion of Central Europe. The "nations" of these parties represent true nations because they mirror the real traditions and identity of the people. Thus, they are the only truly democratic nations while the State is the untrue nation because it imposes an artificial language, it imposes foreigners in its bureaucracy, and it imposes the payment of taxes to finance people in other regions. In its first phase to 1990, the political agenda of the various leagues was based on the claim to form separate ethnic units, thus "nations." Indeed, the Northern League is the product of the fusion of various regional leagues were born in the 1980s. They saw themselves as "internal colonies" of the Italian State and Europe represented to them a crucial importance for the definition and the protection of their claims and rights. Not only did they seek recognition as "ethnic movements," they also saw themselves as "European" in opposition to the Mediterranean. Therefore, the defence of local language and culture was seen as a task for the preservation of a "European patrimony." From 1990 onward -- since the League of Lombardy and its leader Umberto Bossi gained leadership over other regional movements -- the purpose of the Northern League has little to do with Europe as understood in the concept of the European Union and this is evident in Article 1 of the Northern League's program of the second and the Third Federal Congress on 6 February and 5 March 1995: "aims at the peaceful transformation of the Italian State into a modern federal State through democratic and electoral means" (*Intervento del Segretario Federale* <http://www.leganord.org/pdf/discorsibossi/venezia2003.pdf>[inactive], our translation). What is proposed here is that the common identity is no more the ethnic one, but it based on social discourse and on European integration. The language of the League becomes less emotional and more linked to facts, economic problems, and interests. The people of the North -- the new geopolitical and cultural entity -- defines itself as a "same socio-economic fabric." The "sameness"

of the North is perceived as self evident and based on common values such as democracy, work, participation, and civility, thus juxtaposed to the southern mentality. The so-called federal liberalism became at the same time the official economic ideology of the party and provided the grounds for an identification of the North: as Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro puts it, "the use and distribuition of economic resources was claimed not on the grounds of a neo-liberal agenda of more or less state, but as a matter of political rights, questioning the whole edifice of Italian state" (99). The internal sameness of the North -- understood in its historical development and as a mentality of efficiency -- was essentialized as the culture of the North and civic culture was essentialized as the main character of the Northern civilisation. This view found itself into Bossi's speeches as a "gene of politics" common to the peoples of Padania and of Central Europeans. The leaders of the former regional leauges agreed on the necessity to combine forces against the state based on a common interest and cultural formation (see Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro 99). And the third phase in development of the League, the so-called "secession phase" from 1996 to 1999, is characterised by the internal crisis of the party. Bossi radicalized his position through the "secession campaign" and reinforced the party's hierarchical and authoritarian model. The secession of Padania from Italy was proclaimed in the Parliament of the North -- an organ invented and founded by the League -- in 1996. The symbolic use of the Parliament of the North and the militarization of the party (lead by the two radical-right leaders Mario Borghezio and Erminio Bosso) were flanked by a strict internal control of the members of the party in order to avoid any form of criticism. For example, the Green Guards of the League, a paramilitary organization, were meant not only to control security in cities against immigrants and criminals, but mostly to control the members of the party. Ultimately, the strategy of radicalization was successful as the 1996 elections proved.

Interestingly, the concept of Padania is vague and does not appear to include a stable relation between a territory and a culture/religion/ethnos. It appears that for supporters of the League a number of concepts are associated with the notion of Padania including culture (11%), its people (21%), the nation (21%), and its territory (9%) (see Borcio). This state of affairs is related to the intensive role of Bossi's party as the producer of symbolic capital in categories of activity such as the foundation of the Padania Parliament, the creation of the Green Guards, the baptism of party members with water from the river Po, all symbols intended to reinforce the feeling of belonging to Padania. Accordingly, collective rituals play a central role for the mobilization of the population: examples include festivities organized for the independence of Padania, meetings of the parliament of Padania, or the march from the the river Po to Venice to mark the borders of Padania. The founding of the newspaper *La Padania* and the publishing and diffusion of books about the origins of Padania are part of this process of mobilization for the creation of the (imaginary) territory and concept of Padania (see, e.g., Borcio 94). As well, mythologies are used in various publications arguing that there exists a natural "otherness" and cultural superiority of the Padania and League intellectuals claim that the racial origins of the people living in Nothern Italy can be traced back to the Longobards and the Celts and that this civilisation has remained relatively "pure" in comparison with the rest of Italy. Some groups in the League use pagan symbols such as runes and other sets of symbols and notions available in extreme right-wing ideologies. With regard to religion, more recently a Roman Catholic movement has developed in the League, particularly after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and Bossi declared in an interview the superiority of Christian values over Muslims including their religion, for example (see Bossi <http://www.repubblica.it/online/politica/italiairaqundici/bossi/bossi.html>).

In its beginnings, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) included a strong right-wing stream, aiming at the reunion of Germany in a Paneuropa and connected to conservative exponents such as the son of the last Austro-Hungarian monarch, Otto von Habsburg, and to radical right-wing figures such as the ex-SS officer Hermann Ehrhardt (for an interesting discussion of Habsburg as a public intellectual, see Arens). This culture was essentialized and became a natural attribute of the party's program in 1985.

In the program, it is stated that it is *Volk* that unites through its origin and historical development characterised by common language and culture (for an analysis of Haider's political decisions and style and for his relation to the nazi past see Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer). This attitude was not marginal and has strong historical roots: German Paneuropeism was wide spread in Austria before and after World War II including many academics and the conservative elite. As recent as in 1990 Haider proposed to cancel the *Anschlussverbot* -- the legalized prohibition of Austria's annexation to Germany, as stated in Article 4 of the Austrian Constitution. Haider also proposed to cancel laws against the formation of Nazi and extra-right political parties and organizations (see Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer). In fact, the demise of the Soviet empire in 1989 represented an opportunity to German nationalism which saw the possibility of a Paneurope under a reunited and large Germany. And despite Haider's declaration in 1995 that "now we have to put an end to *Deutschtümelei*" (love of all things German) (qtd. in Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer 46., our translation), a declaration that resulted in his divorce from party ideologue Andreas Mölzer, in 1996 Haider declared that he was for the conservation of the German *Volkstum* (see Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer). In general, Haider moved from Pan-Germanism to Austrian patriotism in order to gain more votes. In order to expose the shortcomings of the existing political parties in Austria, the perceived or real misuse of power by the ruling party, and to "make a difference" with regard to all other political forces, he adopted cultural and ideological strategies, which "combine an eclectic and professionally mixed blend of global and Western mass culture with elements from the royal court and rural folk cultures of the Austrian past" (Gingrich 87). In Haider's concept *Volk* is a primary element in the party's program and it also asserts the values of Christianity: in the most recent program of the Freedom Party, Europe is conceptualized with a "common destiny" rooted in normative Christian and Occidental values (see Article 1 § 5) according to which the primary duty is to defend Christianity and its values against Islam's fundamentalism and against consumerism (see Article 2 § 5). Strategies and the concepts of the FPÖ include also (para)military traditions and symbols. For example, one avenue to enrol in the a party is to become a member in one of the *Burschenschaften* -- male-student fraternities established in the nineenth century -- with initiation rituals, strict honor codes, and duels. The FPÖ refuses the institutions of representative democracy and appeals directly to the people, considered as a whole and homogeneous *Volk* by declaring the party's legitimacy upon direct acclamation (see Bauböck 244). As Yves Mény and Yves Surel explain in their book *Par le peuple, pour le peuple* (2000), the claim to obtain political legitimacy through plebliscitary methods is a central feature in populist political strategies. Examples of the search for this kind of legitimacy is evident in the FPÖ's "Austria First" campaign in the 1993 referendum initiative against immigrants, in the campaign against a common European currency in 1997, and in the plebiscite on joining the European Union in 1994.

In the centre of the program of the Party of Hungarian Life and Truth are the revival, the reconstruction, and the protection of the Hungarian nation. Similar to the Northern League and the Freedom Party, for MIÉP Hungarian identity represents and is seen in the community of the *Volk* and in the socio-cultural as well as historical concept of *Kulturnation* (nation of culture; on the problematics of cultural identity in Hungary, see Marsovszky). The construction of this essentialist identity is based on anti-Jewish, anti-Roma, and in general anti-foreign sentiments. Historically, the intellectual heritage of the program is a revival of the cult of the so-called "national intellectuals" of the 1930s (the *népiek*) who were advocating independence for Hungary from Germany and the Sovietunion while at the same time advocating and supporting anti-Jewish legislation in Hungary. The party's strategies include symbolism such as a dress uniform -- the black *Bocskai* -- in reference to the gala dress of Transylvanian nobles and named after Prince Bocskai. Interestingly, the uniform was conveniently made to fit the changing gender composition of the party and for the party's one female member of parliament a *Bocskai* was tailored consisting of a skirt and the jacket. Among areas of essentialist identity construction including the mythologization of history, the origin of Hungarians takes an important position feeding on contradictory and controversial propositions and interpretations

of research. Significant elements in the party's program are mythologized historical concepts such as that of Carpathia with reference to the historical homeland of Hungarians (the "Carpathian Basin," in principle a geographical designation), the concept of Pannonia, another geographical and historical reference here to Roman times, and the concept of Hunnia with reference to the Huns of Attila but also stretching to include race-determined beliefs about the origin of Hungarians from the ancient Sumerians (see, e.g., Kolozsvári Grandpierre; Komoróczy).

The Party of Hungarian Life and Truth (MIÉP) was formed in 1993 after István Csurka -- a right-wing politician and public intellectual -- was banned from the MDF: Magyar Demokrata Fórum (Hungarian Democratic Forum). In the first election the party took part, in 1994, MIÉP gathered 1,6% of the total votes. In the next four years, the party engaged in building support by convincing prominent intellectuals, lawyers, physicians, teachers, etc., to join the party. The 1998 elections brought success to MIÉP on both the national and municipal levels of government. MIÉP is characteristic for its extreme activities such as submitting proposals and comments to the juridical process where the objective was to balance the ideology of the "protection of the nation" with professionalism in politics. Their most influential proposal was to deprive Stalin from the honorary citizenship of Budapest (Stalin's honorary citizenship was somehow not paid attention to in the past decades and more interedstingly after the fall of the Soviet empire and communism in Hungary (Varró 205).

Analyzing the discourse re the "enemy" in the speeches of Csurka, its racist contents are present as part and parcel of standard anti-Semitic and anti-liberal ideology. While MIÉP defends uncompromisingly the Hungarian minority living outside Hungary proper, other minorities living in Hungary such as the Roma are neglected. The main political enemy in MIÉP's and Csurka's discourse is the alien power. For example, in the case of the Roma Csurka points out that "one party of the Gypsies [Roma] is only a forerunner. These forerunners of alien settlers who want to force Hungarians out of their own country. They do not know that they will never get power because as soon as they executed the task of purge assigned to them by the liberals, they will be killed" (Csurka 1998; our translation). However, the results of the 2002 election when MIÉP did achieve the 5% threshold needed for official status in parliament is proof that despite the anti-Roma stereotypes accepted widely in Hungary, the political basis of MIÉP eroded. Yet, it appears that the legacy of MIÉP's racist ideology based on the dichotomy of "ours" and "theirs" and "us" and "them" remains a serious impact on Hungarian political life for the immediate future.

The European Union is a reality for Austria and Italy and an objective to be realized for Hungary in 2004, with participation in the monetary union still several years away. In this section of our paper, we discuss the ways of how imagined histories are constructed for a definition of Europe in populist and right-wing political movements. Historically, the use of imagined history occurred in several phases. In the first phase to 1990, the "ethnic" phase, Europe was defined by the Northern League, for example, as an institutional promoter of minorities for recognition and at the same time as a civic model of politics. Europe was the source of identification of these new ethnic nations of Northern Italy stressing their difference from Mediterranean cultures to the south. In this concept Europe had an institutional dimension and a symbolic function: institutional for the recognition of the region and symbolic for an identification with a homogeneous culture (see Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro 67). In this constellation, after 1990 their definition of Europe has acquired a meaning as a promoter of competition and of internal division: in the Eurozone formed by economically strong countries only the North -- which shared a common socio-economic background and culture -- was considered to be part of it. For the League, the idea of Europe is conceived as a source and promoter of differentiation in Italy but where the difference is not between a plurality of ethnic nations but between economic-social and geopolitical regions (see Miglio). After the elections of 2001 when the League won in a coalition with Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale, Umberto Bossi has begun to criticize and attack Europe gradually. Bossi argued the the European Union would mean the end of national sovereignty and a

new "colonialism" of Bruxelles and Strasbourg bureaucracy. In Bossi's understanding, the European Union is equated with economic disaster because of the high cost of paying subsidies to poor countries in the Union and because the central government of the European Union is stacked by the foreigners in turn depnding on corrupt people who control finance and industry (e.g., Bossi <http://www.leganord.org/a_2_discorsi_pontida_17062001.htm>[inactive]).

There is a striking and growing similarity between Bossi's position and statements and Haider's attitude and pronouncements against the idea of a unified Europe and the European Union. Interestingly, Haider's success had an impact on the re-constitution of the idea of *Mitteleuropa* (Central Europe) with regard to a socio-cultural and economic community here including North Italians, Austrians, and Hungarians along other Central European countries. The Austrian Freedom Party appears to follow the same path as the League, namely from supporting the European Union initially to assuming a position of adversity. At the same time, it is of note that the Freedom Party has never had a movement for ethnic autonomy nor did it take a secessionist stand. On the contrary, it was to function as a reserve of German nationalists aiming to reunify Germany and Austria. Officially, the Freedom Party was favourable towards the European Union except when the Austrian vote whether to join the Union was taken. This paradox becomes clear when we observe that Haider's refusal of the European Union occurred just before the Austrian vote for joining the Union when the Freedom Party switched to an anti-European strategy. Haider's political campaign of 1994 was structured to oppose the dominance of capitalist interests in and of the European Union as well as to suggest conspiracy in order to eliminate Austrian sovereignty in the Treaty of Maastricht. After Haider made great gains in the elections and after the ensuing sanctions against Austria by the European Union, Haider depicted Austria repeatedly as isolated unjustly and as exploited by the European Union.

The question begs whether Haider has ever been a supporter of a unified Europe. The Europe outlined by Haider is the Europe of *Völker* (Fatherlands), a Europe of differentiated and "pure" ethnic and socio-cultural populations (his idea corresponds to the Ethno-pluralism advocated by authors such as Alain de Benoist in France and to the idea of a Europe of ethnicities of Guy Héraud). Haider argues that Europe should be based on differentiated communities whose homogeneity should be preserved by *jus sanguinis*: cultural entities, linguistic and ethnic fatherlands, and small states in Europe such as Bavaria, Saxony, or Carinthia, should be preserved with the support of a "real" European politics (see Haider 1993). Haider's stress on cultural uniqueness does not mean that culturally similar regions, in particular German ones, should not cooperate: if the main idea is the *Volk* -- defined as belonging to a supposedly homogeneous *Kulturnation* -- it can at the same time constitute a *Volknation* (see Haider 1996). This ideaology with its political agenda was exemplified, for example, in the case of South Tyrol: the Freedom Party did not vote for the termination of negotiations between Austria and Italy and some exponents of the party assert the necessity of creating an autonomous region of the Tyrolian lands from both Austria and Italy.

The Europe outlined in the current program of the Freedom Party is characterised by a stable and closed community, with a culture that has to be defended against other, foreign, influences. The program, in general, contains the following propositions: 1) the assertion of specific values understood superior or against other cultures, 2) the necessity of the defense of these values and of Europe's (socio)cultural integrity, 3) the stress on the diversity between European peoples but which belong to the same community of destiny, and 4) opposition against European Union institutions and against both "communist" and capitalistic powers (see *FPÖ* <http://www.fpoe.at/bundneu/programm/dafuer_programm.html>[inactive]).

In the Party of Hungarian Life and Truth there is a rhetoric that suggests a serious division between Europe and Hungary. In the party's conceptualization Europe is defined foremost as a financial system, one that is not sensitive to the social and economic problems of Hungary and that imposes "alien" standards on the nation (see Csurka 1999). Thus, economic policy is one of the main foci of the party: in this focus, the disorders of the economic system are interpreted as as the surest signs of the

crises of the global market and capitalism (Csurka 2002). The "nation" as a homogeneous socio-cultural unit is contrasted with the Europe of globalisation. It appears, the leaders of the party mobilize suspicion with regard to an alleged Europe-wide conspiracy where the party's discourse is built on perceived tensions between the Christian and a mythologized ancient-Hungarian value system. In the party's interpretation Hungary is a country in transition and driven by forces out of control: the process of transition from a colonized state in the Soviet empire to the European Union is understood as driven and controlled by strictly financial and economic interests. The subtext of this proposition is that these financial and economic interests are US-American, that is, "Jewish" and *per definitionem* enemies of Hungarians. Examples of the party's and its supporters' interpretation include the case of the 2001 cyanide and heavy-metal pollution of the Tisza river by a Romanian-based Australian mining company: the party blamed not only globalisation but at the same time the criminal inefficiency of the European Union to be able to handle environmental disasters. And this interpretation is of similar argumentation to Haider's with regard to the Temelin affair (see Szymanski <http://www.worldpress.org/Europe/434.cfm>). The party used also the nationally-inscribed injustice suffered by Hungarians, namely the Trianon Peace Treaty after WW I when Hungary lost the territory of Transylvania to Romania and where the mine is located. Independently from the personal histories of the party's members, the anti-communist rhetoric is an important aspect of the party's program and discourse including public demonstrations with a reference to the "enemies" of "real" Hungarians. In this concept, the European Union is a cosmopolitan, free-masonic conspiracy against the "real" European.

The three political parties discussed in this paper share similar characteristics in that their proposed alternatives to the European Union are formulated and based on re-interpretations of and a mythologization of history. The features of this "other" Europe can be read in the political programs of these three parties and it is evident that a similar ideology emerges. In this concept Europe is defined as a "destiny" with conservative Christian values and based on the exclusion of all foreign. One's own culture is essentialized and one's own community is seen as a homogeneous living organism where other cultures become abstract concepts whose existence could and would destroy the natural organism of the community. However, there are differences between the three political parties discussed: although Haider and Bossi share a similar view regarding corruption in the European Union and the necessity to close the borders against immigrants, their projects for the future of Europe diverge. And Hungary as a target country for migrants both as a transit country to the West and as a desired location for Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, controlling migration represents a burning issue. In Hungary, the much debated Status Law defined "good and desirable" Hungarians -- who are welcomed as temporary workers, and member of parliament István Csurka suggested to solve the demographic decline of Hungary by inviting young Hungarian families with children from Romanian Transylvania to settle in Hungary. In turn, Bossi is more interested in the fragmentation of nation states than in the constitution of a united *Mitteleuropa*: his Europe is the Europe of small homelands rather than the Europe of *Völker*. The difference can be explained by the different genealogies of the Norther League and the Freedom Party: the former was born out of small autonomist movements striving to achieve a control of economic resources and a cultural autonomy of the region, while the latter originated in the old traditions of German nationalism trying to re-construct an empire dominated by the German *ethnos* and culture. The concept of the Party of Hungarian Life and Truth is closer to that of the Freedom Party in this context, namely to resurrect the Greater Hungary of pre-1919. At the same time, despite some differences in opinion, approach, and discourse, the three parties represent in our opinion a serious regression in the history of Europe, politically, socially, and culturally.

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