



VOLUNTEERING AS PROTEST: AGAINST STATE FAILURES, OR THE STATE ITSELF?

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Abstract

Although the Czech Republic (CR) is not a favourite destination nor even a transit country for migrants through Europe, the refugee crisis has materialised into a strict state policy of rejection. The CR rejects proposals for European solutions and detains and imprisons immigrants, most of whom are inadvertently arrived there. This preliminary refusal strategy is peculiar to both the political and media spheres (and public opinion) and is described in the opening sections of this work. However, the CR, is also a country in which the tally of immigrants is less than the number of Czechs citizens travelling beyond their national borders to help refugees congregating along the “Balkan Route”, where they frequently outnumber volunteers from other countries. This paper goes on to describe the development of these grassroots Czech volunteer organisations and activities in 2015. From the beginning it was characterised by spontaneity and a lack of hierarchy, with the Internet and social media playing a vital role during mobilisation and organisation. The methodological section defines how this sample was analysed and the manner in which it was dealt. Section five summarises the most important findings of the case study: 1) the results of a questionnaire survey among volunteers, 2) the results of a qualitative content analysis of their communication in social networks. Besides basic mapping steps (features of volunteer’s participation), the analysis attempts to capture motivations for volunteer’s participation. Comparison with selected motivation typologies emphasises the protective (later the normative) motivation, on which the hypotheses are based regarding the dispute about the national identity of volunteering as an ideological, and therefore foreseeable, dispute.

Keywords

Volunteering, mobilisation, social media, nationality, Czech Republic, refugee

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When thinking about the wider theoretical frameworks of our study it is good to notice the specifics of the case – in 2015 voluntary assistance for refugees in the Czech Republic took on the features of radical-protest activism, confronting first of all the inactivity or directly repressive steps of the state apparatus and the hegemonic anti-refugee mood in the media and public discourse.

Due to the extraordinary complexity of volunteer participation (whether we are talking about domestic opposition to hegemony, or guerrilla forays on ‘foreign missions’), the altruistic motivation of volunteers will be taken for granted here, and the study can focus more on the second type of motivation, self-interest/egoism. Our case seems ideal for an illustration of the new type of volunteerism, for which the intensive use of new network media is typical, in particular because of its individualisation, internationalisation (globalisation) and its reflective formula/nature (Hustinx, Lammertyn 2003). Regarding intensive use of the new media, another typical feature of new volunteering, we shall also put aside aspects of its affordance and instead highlight the dynamics and social praxis of the media (Boyd 2011).

The contrast between the ‘refugee discourse’ in mainstream media and the discourse of monitored social media refers to reflections on the ‘digital democracy of the counter-public’ - that is, the practice of forming activist and protest platforms outside the mainstream media, which remains unavailable to volunteers (Mouffe 2000). Instead of a deliberative concept of democracy, our study can develop reflections on agonistic democracy, as evidenced by the relatively closed nature of the Facebook discussions we monitored, as well as the type of participation therein. Rather than affordance dynamics or an emphasis on rationality and debate, we focus on participation as assistance, which is (at least partly) motivated and experienced affectively (Rahimi 2011; Gerbaudo 2012).

The Official Policy of the State: A provisional rejection strategy

The Czech Republic is not and for the past few years has never been in great demand as a target country for refugees. The small number of asylum seekers in recent years¹ contrasts with the numbers at the turn of the millenium², as does the overall number now resident in the country. Despite this the Czech Republic, unlike many Central and Northern European countries, which approached immigrants with provisional acceptance (taking them as essentially good, until proven otherwise), adopted a strategy of ‘provisional refusal’ (i.e., taking them to be essentially bad, until proven otherwise). This is primarily reflected by the high number of migrants detained - during the first five months of 2015 the police detained about 2,500 refugees. After tightening controls on the 17th of June the following month saw a further 1,500, a figure which does not include detentions on the ‘Green Border’ with Slovakia³. Despite this, only four

1 A total of 1156 people asked for asylum in 2014, of this 82 people were granted asylum and a further 294 received so-called subsidiary protection for 1-3 years. Both categories were dominated by people from the Ukraine (25 people gained asylum, 119 subsidiary protection), only one refugee from Syria gained asylum (another 71 gained subsidiary protection). The number of people applying for asylum in the Czech Republic in the first half of 2015 was 784, again about half were Ukrainians (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy: International protection in the Czech Republic - annual statistical overview 2014; www.mvcr.cz/soubor/cs-stat-2014-pdf.aspx; 15.1.2016)

2 2000: 8,794 requests, 2001: 18,094, 2002: 8,484 requests, 2003: 11,400 applications (ibid.)

3 “The trend of the last few weeks has been seizures of illegal migrants, in particular long-distance road transport in buses and in international train services,” said Police Presidium spokesman Jozef Bocán.” (http://zpravy.idnes.cz/pocet-zadatelu-o-azyl-v-cesku-vzrostl-nejvic-jich-je-z-ukrajiny-pvu-/domaci.aspx?c=A150617_172400_domaci_san;15.1.2016)

refugees applied to stay in the Czech Republic, all the rest wanted to leave as soon as possible, their fate to be developed elsewhere.

In the better case, roughly half of the detainees were immediately returned on the basis of readmission agreements, if the last transit country (most often Hungary) accepted them. The second half were incarcerated, a practice unique among the countries along which migration routes pass through or touch upon. Only the Czech Republic decided to imprison the refugees, thus for the other half of the detainees (typically individuals or families who had bought tickets in Hungary, for long-distance transport to Germany through the CR instead of Austria) transport in handcuffs to one of four detention centres (Bělá-Jezová, Vyšší Lhoty, Drahonice, Balková) awaited. Their mobile phones and money were confiscated and the refugees were forced to pay for their incarceration.⁴

Despite criticism of this policy from the Minister of Justice Robert Pelikán that ‘the facilities for refugees are worse than prison’⁵, from the Czech ombudsperson Anna Šabatová⁶ and even the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein⁷, it is still practiced without any major revisions. This government policy had generated extensive coverage, though is rarely critically questioned by local media and so the practice continues.

The Media: The provisional rejection strategy again

All basic media content monitors reported growing attention of the refugee crisis in 2015 (Jůptner 2015; Zavoral 2015). A more detailed insight into this attention was brought by research from the Masaryk University, which, although it only focused on news programmes from the two most popular TV stations,⁸ it is very probable that the results can be related to all Czech mainstream media.

Analysis observed almost continuously growing media attention to the theme of refugees, with the most common *main theme* being refugee quotas (ČT 10.7%; Nova 9%). Three other large groups can also be discerned among the main topics. The first relates to current events in various European locations (in Hungary, Austria, Calais, etc. ČT 26.5%; Nova 18.5%), the second refers to political negotiations on the crisis, including the quota proposals (ČT 18.5%; Nova 24%). The third large group was the *police theme*: police checks, detention of refugees and the security of detention centres (ČT 15.7%; Nova 13.5%). None of the reports covered the causes of the crisis

4 About 9€ (242 CZK)/day - thus a month of incarceration came to about 1100 € for a family of four. When a refugee was released after it without funds, they received 15 € (CZK 400) to leave CR as fast as possible.

5 http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/domaci/jak...ich-pohlida-vezenska-straz_358658.html, 15.1.2016

6 “The situation for children and families with children in the Bělá-Jezová facility is so serious that there are violations of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children here live in objectively worse conditions than Czech prisoners... Prisons hold people who have committed a crime and were legally convicted for it. In Bělá there are people that have not been condemned by anyone and no punishment has been imposed on them. And the fact that hundreds of children have passed through these facilities is contrary to our concept of the Czech Republic as a civilized country.” (<http://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/tiskove-zpravy-2015/mimoradna-tiskova-konference-k-situaci-v-zarizeni-bela-jezova/>; 15.1.2016)

7 “The Czech Republic is unique in routinely subjecting these migrants and refugees that detention for 40 days, and reportedly sometimes even longer-up to 90 days-in conditions which have been described as degrading. According to credible reports from various sources the violations of the human rights of migrants are neither isolated nor coincidental, but systematic: they appear to be an integral part of a policy by the Czech Government designed to deter migrants and refugees from entering the country or staying there.” (<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16632&LangID=E>; 15.1.2016)

8 *Analysis of Media Coverage of the Refugee Crisis*, originated at the FSS MU and analysed 507 reports from the main news of the two most popular TV channels from 4 March to 30 September 2015. (Tkaczyk, Pospěch, Macek 2015)

in the refugees' countries of origin as their main theme. Thus, the absence of this perspective could give viewers the impression that the cause of the crisis were the refugees themselves.

As concerns the *impact* of the refugee crisis in the CR, the authors of the study note that 'the most frequent theme was the security of the detention facilities' (ČT 21.5%; Nova 20.5%). The topic of policing prevailed – besides the above-mentioned security at detention facilities, it concerned detaining refugees, police checks and the possibility of deploying the army (ČT 43%; Nova 37%). In the context of the situation in the CR, assistance for refugees was only mentioned marginally as the main theme (ČT 4.1%; Nova 5.5%).

Whilst monitoring *speakers*, the authors of the study noticed that it was mainly politicians that commented on the migration crisis in the news (ČT 42%; Nova 53%), there were, however, significant differences between them⁹. The second most numerous group were representatives of the security forces (ČT 10%; Nova 13%). In contrast, experts on topics of migration and integration had a very low representation (approx. 1% on both stations). This reflects the focus of the entire discussion towards issues of a security and administrative nature.

The nature of the *solutions* presented thus corresponds to the structure of the speakers and the overall framing of the issue as one of security-administration: the most prevalent proposals are security, control and redistribution.

The *refugees* themselves were most often *presented* as an administrative problem (ČT 51%; Nova 60.1%) and as the object of policing (ČT 31.6%; Nova 29.9%). The presentation of the refugees as a security threat was about the same (ČT 18.7%; Nova 22.7%) as the presentation of them as beneficiaries of aid or people who need assistance (ČT 18.7%; Nova 23.7%)¹⁰ (Tkaczyk, Pospěch, Macek 2015).

A strategy of preliminary acceptance and assistance

In stark contrast to these outputs from the political and mass media spheres, we can cite the voluntary activities to assist refugees which emerged in the Czech civil sector, relatively spontaneously and surprisingly at the end of summer 2015.

The first impulse came from the autonomous social centre *Klinika*, where a small collection of clothing and other necessities was made for the refugees detained in the Czech village of Bělá at the end of August. A crucial turn-around was the surprising response (see below) to the large collection of 1 - 3 September. As one of the collective's members later stated:

The Klinika suddenly become a coordinating centre and over the following weeks we had someone there 24-hours a day to receive or give out things. At the time we were sending four vans per day...Volunteer initiatives, which over time created a fully-functioning system, had yet to exist at the time, so we did it on our own using the available resources to identify where help is needed, what can help and where, how to react to the repressive bodies of various states ... simply everything that was needed, and we furnished the people willing to go there with items and information. The bank account received about 700.000 CZK (more than 25.000€), we handed over the money to the volunteer crews as a contribution to petrol or purchases, and also, due to the absence of bureaucracy, when

9 "While the Minister of the Interior made the most comments of all, the Minister for Human Rights only made a total of four comments for both stations and the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs made none." (Tkaczyk, Pospěch, Macek 2015)

10 "In each report the refugees can be presented in several different ways. Thus the percentages presented in this analysis do not give a sum of 100%." (ibid.)

there was no need to document anything and everything was based on mutual trust, we managed to send a large number of Czechs to the Balkans very quickly. It's difficult to put a number on it, but I would say that we helped out more than 150 cars, or vans¹¹.

The main focus here, however, will be on Czech volunteers abroad. Since the days of trips with a bag from the *Klinika*, the coordination role has been taken over by the Facebook (FB) group 'I'm Going to Help in...' (the name varied depending on how the gates on the Balkan route changed over time). First the Hungarian station *Keleti* and the villages *Horgos* and *Rösztke*, then the Croatian *Tovarnik*, the Slovenian *Brežice*... but mainly *Berkasovo-Bapska*, a previously forgotten crossing between Serbia and Croatia, where, from 23rd of September to the 3rd of November, predominantly Czech volunteers more or less autonomously looked after a no-man's land.

In particular, the majority of the approximately 1,500 volunteers from CR left for *Berkasovo-Bapska*, their numbers fluctuated between about 20 to 130 at any one time, where they kept a 24-hour operation going over three shifts. The typical refugee at this point had travelled by boat from Turkey to Greece, from there to Macedonia, where they were transported by train to the border with Serbia (*Preševo* border crossing) and then taken to *Bapska*. Here in no-man's land, in field conditions almost without any infrastructure, the Czech volunteers cleared between three and seven thousand weary and disoriented refugees a day - giving treatment, distribution of food (water, muesli bars, bananas, apples, tea, usually purchased for around CZK 20,000 per day in the surrounding towns) and clothing (brought in from collections in the CR), providing a basic information service and organising groups for the bus journey from the Croatian side of the border to the nearby camp at *Opatovac*.

Although there is a number of other valuable activities that would be worth further attention, this case-study will only deal with 1) *Klinika* and 2) Czech volunteers abroad in the period of September and October 2015.

Analysis

Klinika's Facebook page¹², which to date has 13,317 followers (who "liked" the page), held 67 posts in September, then another 28 in October, 2015. At the time of writing the *Klinika* discussion group on the server *nyx.cz* is followed by 355 people and in September, 2015 it had 72 posts, with 52 in October.¹³

A Facebook group of Czech volunteers departing to help refugees abroad¹⁴ was set up on 5th September. In the main reference period (September and October 2015) there were 3,896 posts (September: 1,905, October: 1,991), both status updates and comments. At the end of the reference period, the group had the name 'I'm Going to Help the Refugees in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia' and more than 3,200 members.

In addition to these 4,115 posts (after the first phase of open coding it declined to roughly a tenth), I also included about another 200 from the following months, which retroactively

11 (http://afed.cz/casopisy/existence/Existence_1_2016.pdf; 15.1.2016)

12 <https://www.facebook.com/klinika451/>

13 <https://www.nyx.cz/index.php?l=topic;id=22638>. Nyx is a Czech pre-Facebook social network. In contrast to Facebook it is moderated by the registration itself at *nyx.cz*, the second phase (administering the rooms) is the same on Facebook and on *nyx.cz*.

14 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1646456048969925/>

reflected events in the main reference period (i.e., the collections and trips in September and October 2015, especially at *Berkasovo-Bapska*).

These posts were largely (95%) the statuses/posts themselves, or responses to comments. To a lesser extent, I also registered all of the volunteers' and other members' of the groups comments, which were published in other places on the Internet, and whose authors have placed a link to the monitored discussions (and consequently have been commented upon) – typically posts on personal blogs, articles on personal websites or press releases from voluntary groups or alternative/activist media¹⁵, which once again were posted and subsequently commented upon in the monitored groups.

All quoted posts were referenced the same, i.e. the author's name and the date when the text appeared in a debate on the monitored social media. In a sense, this gives written and copied posts (by the author or sympathizer) equal weight.

In the first stage of the analysis, this basic file was encoded with the basic set of variables (date, topic) so that the development of the monitored newsgroups' agenda was recorded over time, i.e. the development of forms and features of volunteering. The basic steps of the qualitative content analysis (i.e. selective and axial coding), were made in the ATLAS/ti software environment.

Within the Facebook group 'I'm Going to Help...' there was also a unique survey of the volunteers helping abroad. Its author, Blanka Havlíčková, gathered the answers from 192 volunteers and made this raw data available to the author of this article, together with the permission to publish it for the first time.

The results of both studies, the qualitative content analysis of the volunteers' communication and a quantitative survey among volunteers, will be presented together in the following sections.

Results I

According to the quantitative questionnaire, Czech volunteers consisted of 56% women and 44% men. As regards employment, the greatest percentage were university students (41%), followed by workers from the non-profit sector (19%) and the commercial sphere (18%), then freelancers (13%) and entrepreneurs (10%). The high proportion of students meant a high number of volunteers were in the lowest income group (39% of the volunteers with an income up to CZK 10,000), and so it is perhaps interesting that of the volunteers who went abroad, more than four-fifths receive less than the average salary in the Czech Republic¹⁶. And yet, almost half (48%) paid for their own transport, 26% were supported by public collections, 16% had it paid for by friends/acquaintances and 10% funded their transport in a different way.

After the initial process of qualitative content analysis of the volunteers' communications, the two-month period we monitored was broken down into a timeline of three phases; 'home phase' (pre-departure surprise period, tied in with the *Klinika*), the 'departure and working abroad phase' (bound primarily with the *Berkasovo-Bapska* border crossing), and the third 'post-return reflection phase'. These phases don't alternate, instead they are cumulative (i.e. even at the end of the period monitored, trips were being organised) and similarly both categories of communication accumulate and transform: helping volunteers and their sympathisers. This

15 A2larm (a2larm.cz), Existence (http://afed.cz/casopisy/existence/Existence_1_2016.pdf), Deník referendum (denikreferendum.cz)

16 Income: CZK 10,000 39% volunteers, CZK 10-15 000 15%, 13% up to 20 thousand, 13% from 25,000 to 30,000. 8%, over 30,000 and 13% volunteers. According to Czech Statistical Office, in the 3rd quarter of 2015 the average gross monthly nominal wage was CZK 26,072, the median coming to CZK 22,531. (Czech Statistical Office, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/cr/prumerne-mzdy-3-ctvrtleti-2015>; 4.12.2015)

phasing serves as an interpretative tool, in that it structures the story as each phase unfolds.

After the first phase of open coding, analysis indicated the significance of the code *Negativity*. The code *Negativity* proved very useful for an analysis of the volunteers' motivation, which is perhaps logical – if we are not primarily engaged in an altruistic motivation (positive setting), then we find motivation in a negative definition of something or someone. It seems at first glance perhaps paradoxical, but in the internal communication of people who do not know each other and are not connected by any formal/institutional links or motivated by profit, it is precisely the category of negativity that is unifying (and the individuals who, in the context of the Facebook group, present negativity aimed in any other direction, are immediately thrown out along with their posts). Analytically, the negativity code - defining oneself from external topics and actors - allows some of the motivations for volunteering to be broken down.

It is probably not too surprising that *negativity towards the media* (meaning traditional, mainstream) took first place. A possible explanation came in the first paragraph about the Czech media's output during the refugee crisis. This is complemented by the survey, where the question about the motivation for the trip, was answered nearly one hundred percent (96%) as a proclaimed effort to help as it 'makes sense/it necessary'; the second most common reason mentioned by the volunteers was the wish to get acquainted with the situation on the ground, instead of from the media, and to form one's own opinion (63%). In contrast, for the question of where they learnt about the possibility of making the trip, 58% replied through Facebook¹⁷ and 30% from friends while not one respondent said it was from mainstream media.

Negativity towards the media appears constant over time, though there is a distinction between Czech and foreign media¹⁸, which may be due to the fact that over the monitored period the foreign media noticed the Czech volunteers first and paid more attention than the Czech media¹⁹.

Very often the condemnation did not distinguish between the media, their public and their effects - the words 'Czech debate' or 'public opinions' include both those that are mediated and those that are not²⁰. From the analysis it is thus quite obvious that the volunteers assume a direct relationship between the Czech media's output and the Czech society's relationship to the refugee crisis, or the role of volunteers in the crisis. The reflection on this state changes over time, or it develops with the dynamics of volunteerism. The first phase can be described as a stage of surprise that 'We Are Not Alone'. Right at the beginning of the period monitored, immediately after announcing the collection, it is possible to see a series of posts which mingle surprise (from the fact that the negative media 'message' doesn't work 100 percent, or is even counterproductive²¹)

17 However, it should be borne in mind that the survey itself took place in the Internet environment

18 "The Western media show that the media can play this role, at least in part, and show the experiences of those who 'have nothing'. In the Czech Republic, however, we do not have anyone who would show the other side of the coin." (Robert Osman, 16.9.)

19 "Otherwise, just a minor technical note, the media didn't notice it itself, it did so after a two-week intensive barrage by our PR team:-)" (Michal Berg, 25.10.)

20 "For a long time it seemed that the dominant voice in the public space is the one that would keep all the refugees as far away from the Czech Republic as possible and often applying laws to them that deny general human rights" (Pavlásek, Rychlíková, 2.9.2015)

21 "I think that after long weeks of anti-refugee message a lot of people had a need to stand up to it in a practical manner... What I remember about meeting the people was a special sense of relief, that they can do something and that there's someone with whom they can share their opinion. Of course, we were also happy that Klinika was a light in the landslide of hate and anti-refugee hoaxes. Seeing Jeseniova Street crowded with cars with people from various levels of society, who could hardly fit into Klinika, so they could help the refugees in a hand-on way, it was a great lesson in

with enthusiasm (that so many people are able to actively help)²². This first phase can thus be labelled with the slogan, which, along with photos of the collection and volunteers, later appeared as a graphic theme: Faith in Humanity Restored. Later one of the *Klinika* activists even put this surprise in the context of the effects of the so-called ‘spiral of silence’²³.

The amazement and enthusiasm over sympathetic reactions of part of the public, along with the dynamics of the aid and its movement beyond the borders, later closes within the volunteering movement itself (volunteers are enthusiastic about themselves), or their actively communicating sympathisers (‘I’m excited about you’).

Final – post-return form of reflection on the relationship of volunteers vs mainstream media and public discourse, returns as ‘unresigned scepticism’. On the one hand there is the often cited use of non-media communication/awareness activity (discussions in schools and local communities) and alternative media communication (blogs, websites, social networks). According to the survey, 79% of all volunteers spread photos or videos of their activities on the Internet¹⁹. On the other hand, after their engagement 85% of volunteers were appalled by the xenophobia in the CR. To the question of whether they met with negative reactions from their surroundings (non-media, interpersonal communication), 60% of volunteers responded positively (19% yes, many times, 36% yes, occasionally, 5% yes, once), the other 21% No, but are aware that many in their surroundings do not approve of them. 15% responded No (i.e. everyone from their surroundings agrees with them), while 4% didn’t know about any reactions from their surroundings.

These numbers supplement another theme, which appears at the end of the period monitored – confiding problems and traumas after returning, supplemented by the offer of interventional psychological help.

The second actor that became the object of negativity for the volunteers, were the *large humanitarian organisations*. Unlike the media, however, this situation is formed over time. While in its initial phase this relationship is neutral, odd comments and expressions of surprise²⁴ when travelling abroad, this changes into a minor and later quite a comprehensive negativity, mostly

solidarity.” (http://afed.cz/casopisy/existence/Existence_1_2016.pdf; 15.1.2016)

22 “Along the way I met a lot of people with bags, who were headed in the same direction, and when I arrived there and saw the queue and lots and lots of bags full of necessary things ... I nearly burst into tears with emotion. I’m really proud that there are so many people among us who do give a damn about the fate of others.” (Angioletto, 3.9), “The same feeling that so many people from the outside reflected solidarity. Maybe it really isn’t as fucked up as I thought...” (Heinzz, 3.9). “Yesterday’s collection for refugees far exceeded anything we could have even dreamed of. Two floors of the house are packed to the roof with stuff, we couldn’t get in even an extra nappy, please don’t bring any more!” (Vykotalena_, 4.9)

23 “Thus Klinika allowed some of these people to express a solidarity that was not visible, but did exist and it didn’t take much to take full effect. In this context sociologist Elisabeth Noelle Neumann talks about the so-called spiral of silence, which means that when people feel that their opinion is overlooked and not heard, they tend to remain silent. On the contrary, people who feel that their opinions are the most prevalent in society are heard the most and thus various crackpots get to be heard.” (Arnošt Novák, 16.1)

24 “A social worker from the detention centre in Bělá came for the things along with the Czech representative of the UNHCR. For me it was quite a strong experience. Both were very surprised that there is someone who wants to help the refugees, and it seemed that at the time we were the only ones of all the organised groups that also had some sort of tangible space available doing so. I realised that if the UN representative and the social worker working directly with migrants had to travel to squats for clothes, then something is not working.” (interview with a member of the collective, Existence)

towards the Red Cross²⁵ and sometimes the UNHCR²⁶.

Further changes between the first and second phases of the period can be observed among the volunteers themselves (their self-concept), in which surprise (we're not alone) changes into consideration of the motives and meaning of help (we do it for something). Although the first reflections on the motivations of volunteers to depart, mention escaping²⁷ (e.g. from shame) or an indebted duty²⁸ (egoistic/individual/selfish motivations), during the second phase a more complex and broader articulation of the motives can be seen – we help not just because of the help itself, or to help the needy (as in the first phase), but also we compensate, balance, redress ('someone's guilt for someone').

The first hypothesis can be thus made: that the stay outside of the CR (and the simultaneous Facebook group communication with sympathisers in the CR) developed compensation for the national/state policy. And even if we find a compensatory relationship among sympathisers at home and volunteers abroad, the predominant recipient is someone else. This atones for the guilt of the political representation - all Czechs. It doesn't however, make up for Czechs/the Czech Republic, but for someone/something else: refugees and Europe/the world.

In contrast to the refugees (who until then may have had no awareness of the Czech Republic²⁹ or its political representation³⁰), the volunteers' relationships to the world is considerably more general and more abstract³¹. Typical of this moment in time is the relationship to Europe³² and indeed the only official communiqué of the Czech voluntary group abroad was phrased as the

25 "Dear Red Cross... I'd like to take this opportunity to say what a useless, unequipped, poor managed, disgusting, and self absorbed aid agency you call yourself are! Throughout my entire experience in several Refugee Camps, I personally witnessed how useless you are, you are without a doubt the most funded International Aid Agency in the World but manage to do so little as compared to volunteers. You Red Cross, in return are perhaps the most cruel, cold blooded people I have ever witnessed in these efforts..." (Abraham Teran, 4.11.), „Yeah, I've heard that already several times..." (Tereza Lokajickova, 8.11.), „Experienced that from paid members of Red Cross in Hungary as well.“ (Tatiana Thanaa, 8.11.), „Well I was working with the author of this article in Slovenia and I completely agree.“ (Chromjak , 9.11.)

26 "The large organisations there have several passive people, who are in their stalls decorated with nice logos, and when I went around, they were having fun. There is a big difference between the performance of volunteers on the one side and the Red Cross or the UNHCR on the other. Again it is the volunteers who stand in for the activities of the state and the largest humanitarian organisations. But I'm not surprised that they don't have dozens of people there. I was more surprised that they didn't provide us with their resources. They didn't explain why, they didn't talk to us. Although the following days there wasn't a problem because our activities put them in the background." (Jan Piňos, 22.10.)

27 "The discussion on the refugee crisis and the snowballing attacks on people who chose to express solidarity, caught up with me in Lisbon. In the reality of a highly multicultural society, the Czech arguments seemed utterly absurd to me. After returning this feeling was compounded, I had a feeling to turn on my heel and disappear again. Go and do something with my own hands, even if it was the bare minimum, given the extent, it helped me to face it." (Radka, Existence)

28 "Pavel was 13, when his parents emigrated from socialist Czechoslovakia to Holland. I'm not an activist, says the 52 year old, he just feels that it is his duty to be here." (Pavel Přeposlán, 26.10.)

29 "Where are you from?' they asked us. – From the Czech Republic, we replied. – It must be a beautiful country!, they said when they thanked us for the minimum we gave, which is called information, soothing, understanding, listening, a smile, the return of dignity" (Margaret Nešlehová 5. 11.)

30 "Help as a kind of apology - our Government is shit, but not all of the people in the Czech Republic are like that, so I'm sorry, and here's a cup of hot tea" (Michal Berg, 8.11.1974)

31 "Come on in! Don't be discouraged by the malevolent, timorous selfish people, you're amazing! Let's show the world that humanity and compassion still exist in the Czech Republic" (Nela Kratochvílová, 29.9.11: 29)

32 "It's just the volunteers and donors who are giving us a good name as they understand that to be a part of Europe does not only mean receiving hundreds of billions to build lookout towers with. But Europe's solidarity with us has probably ended" (SmieskoBebic, 25.9.2011)

open letter, *Dear Europe*³³

Dear Europe,

You may have been listening to the declarations of our politicians and thinking that we are a little hypocritical and that we do not appreciate our EU membership. It may seem to you that we have forgotten our painful past, in which our fellow citizens had to involuntarily leave the country... When did Czechs become so indecisive, skeptical, and cowardly?.. Don't panic! We're not really that bad. That's just the impression our political representatives are giving... We are Europeans who are disappointed with the slipshod approach of our government...

Dear Europe, don't lose patience with us. We assure you, we are capable of doing a lot!

*With thanks and best regards,
Citizens of the Czech Republic*

If we want to identify some of the volunteers' motivations by analysis, then classically we first break down the typology of motivation into two branches - altruistic and self-centred.

In our case we took the altruistic branch for granted, even before any analysis.

The analysis then sets off along the second branch - self-interested motivations tied to the volunteer. For example, we've identified the motivation of *Understanding*³⁴ in the introduction (in contrast to media opinions – "I want to form my own opinion"). It is no problem to find other motivations in the texts, according to the VFI questionnaire,³⁵ and put them in the analysis (*Enhancement*³⁶ and, in particular, the *Social function*³⁷), others do not appear explicitly in the texts, though it can be identified in a few of those communicating (e.g. *Career*³⁸) (Clary et al. 1996; Mlčák, Šamajová 2013).

Here, however, I have come up with the hypothesis that for an analysis of the texts of the second and third phase (and finding the motivation in them); value and, in particular, *protective motivations* are pivotal. Fulfilling values through one's conduct and especially the protective function, that is apart from escaping from negative feelings there are also attempts to reduce the feelings of guilt and protect one's self-image (Clary et al., 1998). Our second hypothesis therefore is directed to the fact that the motivation of the second and third phases can be captured in the texts of a consistent order of values, or 'one's self-image' directly as the internalisation of an ideology - here in the sense of a consistent discourse over time, but in the same instance bound to a group within which there is an emerging discourse/ideology being realised and reproduced.

33 This later transformed into Europe, please act! An Open Letter to the Governments of Europe, signed by over 150 European voluntary NGOs (<http://www.europeact.eu/>)

34 Understanding: people volunteer to experience new opportunities to learn or to improve their knowledge and develop their skills (Mlčák, Šamajová 2013; Clary et al., 1996)

35 VFI – Volunteer functions inventory (ibid.)

36 Enhancement: volunteering serves as a space for personal development and as a means for enhancing self esteem (ibid.)

37 Social: volunteering gives people the opportunity to be with friends and establish new interpersonal relations (ibid.)

38 Career: volunteering allows people to gain experience and skills for their future career (ibid.)

In the third phase, the onset of negativity (though this word is exaggerated compared with the other objectives of negativity) is typical for some volunteers (one group) towards another group. The following paragraphs can therefore be read through the lens of these two hypotheses (the importance of the protective function and its effectiveness within their “own” camp), i.e. as confirmation/verification of them (rather than negation/falsification).

Results II: Czech Team

Discussions and disputes about the ‘Czech Team’ may have roiled a few days after the main period being monitored (8th November), nonetheless, it does relate to two months, from the first trips in mid-September. Retrospective debates about the emergence of ‘Czech Team’ lack hard data and finding them in the sample resembles an almost archaeological effort.³⁹

In the online debates Czech Team (‘český tým’, in Czech) started to be used in the second phase, after the first trips to *Röszke*⁴⁰ in Hungary or to *Nickelsdorf* in Austria. It is used as a practical descriptive label (people who speak the same language), a state symbol (e.g. flag) is sometimes also used to mark a meeting point.⁴¹

Moving further south, reflective vests, the unofficial uniform of volunteers, bore the name (on the front) and later the nationality (Czech), followed by the label Czech Team (written in English and with capital letters). This label started popping up often in the discussions on the Facebook group and, mainly, in the press releases. It arose unofficially at first from the PR-section and was used both in their headlines (‘Czech Team presents...’) and their closing words (‘That’s us - Czech Team’).

For a better semantic understanding it is probably necessary to add that the jerseys of the Czech national sport teams often bear the words “Czech Team” instead of the sometimes clumsy Czech Republic⁴². National sports teams are good illustrative examples of the kind of representation when a small group (team) performs on behalf of a whole (nation) – representing the best the nation has to offer. A direct example of the use of such descriptions in the press, applied to both athletes and volunteers, was in the headline of the article entitled ‘Called Nagano Bapska: One Czech Act of Heroism’⁴³.

The presence of the analytical code Czech/Czechness strongly binds to the related codes *pride* and *heroism* and here it is important to note that in the Czech language this two words – ‘hrdost’ and ‘hrdinství’ - have the same root. Although these codes/expressions are sometimes

39 This also explains why there was such a large initial sample for the first step of the analysis

40 "Whoever goes to Röszke, finds lots of Czechs gather around the tent with clothes by the toilets, a short distance from the tracks from Serbia." (Josef Tajovský 12.9., caption for a photo of a tent with the Czech flag)

41 “ATTENTION!: The new camp in Austria, Nickelsdorf. According to info from local physicians, the situation is critical, and requires a great deal of help from volunteers. Czech Team (“Český tým”) will be there from the morning, we’ll be at the field kitchen, the exact place is still not clear, we will try and set up the Czech flag to make it easier to find” (Lucie Slováková 14. 10.)

42 The Czech Republic does not have a single-word, officially used name.

43 Nagano called Bapska. One Act of Czech Heroism. The name of the article refers to the modern Czech myth – the victory of the Czech Team at the hockey tournament at the Winter Olympics in Nagano in 1998 (Bačo, M. (2015): Nagano jménem Bapska. O jednom českém hrdinství. In: Magazín Reportér, 28.10.2015, <http://reportermagazin.cz/nagano-jmenem-bapska-o-jednom-ceskem-hrdinstvi/>)

rejected (we don't play at heroes⁴⁴) or are used subversively (a Czech proud of Germans⁴⁵), in its dominant use it bonds with sympathisers at home, volunteers abroad and volunteers who, having returned, publically expressing the national (Czechness) or state (Czech Republic) identity. 'Heroes' are not ordinary consumers of local media at home, but Czechs helping out abroad⁴⁶. Typically this is heard from sympathisers at home (those out there are heroes⁴⁷) through which pride is also constructed - not just being proud of the volunteers, but also of what they represent; 'I'm proud that I'm Czech'⁴⁸ or 'I'm proud of the state emblem in my passport'⁴⁹.

In the Facebook discussion 'I'm going to help...' there are photos of the national flag flying on a national holiday (for 'modern day heroes'), in the 'Czech part' of the migration corridor in *Bapska* and the Czech Team posters appeared together with national and Czech symbolism⁵⁰.

As the category *pride* binds to the category *heroism* so too does its opposite, the category/code of *shame*. Even though this code appears (again rarely) in phrases such as shame on you⁵¹ or an untargeted shame⁵², once again, it's possible to see a strong connection to nationality/statehood.

From the less abstract 'ashamed of the country's reputation'⁵³, 'ashamed of the Czech media and public discourse'⁵⁴ the 'political dirt' to being more specifically ashamed of 'our leaders'⁵⁵ or 'president'⁵⁶.

44 "All those helping... We're not playing at heroes... Post traumatic syndrome should not be underestimated... Here is a link for one of the possibilities to get help" (Zuzana Masopustová, 27.10.)

45 "I have something to be proud of as a European. The Germans. The way the Germans approach the refugee crisis, their top politicians, led by the president and the chancellor, artists, journalists, fills me with pride, as a European" (František Kostlán 13.10.)

46 "You are all great :-)) I think that what you're doing - and what you feel is way above any medals. You know yourself that you are not just ordinary people sitting at home and sighing at the television. You know that you can do more!!!!" (Lucie Hošková, 29.10.)

47 "Hi folks, during one of my utterances on the blog I took the liberty of calling you heroes. I realised that the word suits you. Hope it pleases (to compensate those tirades from xenophobes)." (Jak Česky, 22.10.)

48 "I've never been more proud of being Czech! I'm proud of you, gang!" (Jacob Kýr, 8.10.)

49 "I just gave birth, so unfortunately I can't go anywhere. I'm really sorry that I can't join you and travel and help. I was there in the summer, so at least believe me when I say you're in my prayers and once again a great big heartfelt thanks to you all. Thanks to you all I am once again proud of the state emblem in my passport and thanks to you I'm able to ignore the political dirt around us in the CR, as well as the other filth. Thanks, thanks, thanks!" (Hana Umm Kian, 5.11.)

50 "Oooh, it's a lovely poster, that wasn't there when we were there." (Olga Nováková, 2.10.)

51 "Their representatives came to take photos and then disappeared, they attacked the volunteers, refugees or acted according to a manual, rather than according to the situation, which caused problems. I see a far greater benefit from the volunteers (Czech Team) than these organizations. I got to the stage where I'm ashamed that I sent my CV to certain organisations asking for cooperation." (Kristýna, 6.1.)

52 "Can we stop being ashamed? (Lucie Poláková, 3.10.); "It is super, I'm less ashamed" (Kateřina Písačková, 7.10.)

53 "at least a slight saving of our country's dented reputation" (Jakub Dlohoš, 30.10.)

54 "I was really proud of you! ... when someone doesn't live in the Czech Republic and reads the Czech servers/which is terrible and often makes me cry/. it is you who are the hope for the future of the CR ... once again I am no longer ashamed of saying where I'm from ... THANK YOU!!!" (Evelyn Svoboda, 27.10.)

55 "From ordinary people, from us, with all my heart for the help they receive in Babska. We honour the Czech Republic there, we're trying to erase the shame that our leaders are doing in the world. You deserve respect, you who are helping, because without you we would not have anything to give away..." (Martina Janoušková, 12.10.)

56 "I am ashamed that we are ruled by an alcoholic who hates people" (Lukáš, 28.10.)

In contrast, shortly after the end of the reference period, *Klinika* 'rejoined the game' with an internationalist statement, impugning national or state identity and positioning itself completely outside the category of pride and shame. Its only official communiqué was published under the headline *Klinika doesn't Fly the Czech Flag*:

The patriotic enthusiasm of Czech volunteers should certainly not be confused with ethnic nationalism. If the Czech flag is to be a symbol of helping others, regardless of their origin, it is certainly better than when it is waved above the heads of fascists on Wenceslas Square. Despite this, we will not be flying the Czech flag at the Klinika. Our goal is not bailing out the reputation of the Czech Republic, but to help people in need and resistance against fascism. Patriotism of any type is quite a double-edged basis for this activity. Aren't the borders of ethnically defined states preventing those people fleeing from doing so freely? Isn't it this national identity that xenophobes draw on to divide us into "us" and "them"??...

We support cooperation to help refugees across the political spectrum, we don't want to poison the air with political moralising, but we want to stick to the good customs of the anti-authoritarian left: critical thinking is also part of critical practices.

The collective of the autonomous social centre Klinika.

If offered the option, it would have been possible to end the monitored period not with the closing of the 'Czech zone' on the *Berkasovo-Bapska* border crossing, but two weeks later, on the 17th November 2015, the anniversary of the *Velvet Revolution* of 1989, when weeks of massive popular demonstrations brought to a close 41 years of so-called "communist" rule in Czechoslovakia. On this day of national celebration Czech volunteers, alongside their friends and sympathisers joined *This Earth Belongs to All* demonstration, whether in vests with the inscription Czech Team⁵⁷ or under a banner 'Proletarians of the World Unite'. They marched together through the streets of Prague to protest against racism and isolationism⁵⁸ The march headed towards the rally organised by *Bloc Against Islam*, one of many held across the country that day, protesting against mass migration and the 'Islamification of Europe'. Speaking on the platform in support of the rally that day was Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, cheered on by citizens, members of Germany's anti-Islamic PEGIDA movement and Tommy Robinson, former leader of the similarly inclined English Defence League.⁵⁹

Conclusion

For the purposes of this study there would be little point in developing an analysis of discussions on national identity, the use of nationalist symbolism and associated ideologies in this tense internal polarisation. We would merely be monitoring the development of the old

57 "Czech Team: We'll meet at náměstí Míru. Czech team: the legend of humanitarian aid for the current wave of refugees heading through South-Eastern Europe... We cordially invite all who participated in this joint work: the volunteers, aid collectors, suppliers, sponsors and all other sympathetic ears. Czech Team-working together. We and you. Czechs." (Czech Team, 6.11.); "Don't make plans for 17 November, because we'll meet on náměstí Míru in Prague... we will once again have the opportunity to put on our reflective vests (Martin Berg, 6.11.)

58 "Within the Anarchist Federation we recognise it is best to support this demonstration and at the same time, we join the No to Racism! Initiative (INR) to create an anti-nationalist block, which emphasises our internationalist stance and demand the abolition of borders between people" (Existence, 7.1)

59 <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/11/17/eastern-europe-rising-czech-president-speaks-anti-islam-rally-pegida-leaders-tommy-robinson/>

arguments in a new, albeit unique, backdrop. So perhaps only one fleeting finding: labelling with the code of negativity regarding dispute about the Czech Team in relation to the others speaking was overly exaggerated by those volunteers discussing the issue, but almost all the more polemic posts began with an apology for Czech policy and, compared with similar, previous discussions, in this case which were more factual and undogmatic.⁶⁰

Secondly, the debate on whether the Internet is a new instrument for civil and political mobilisation of the people, or if it diverts people from more active forms of participation (Zúñiga et al. 2009; Weber et al. 2003) is also unnecessary. It is also no problem to categorise those who did mobilise into one of Frič and Pošpišilová's (2010) binary categories of normative and altruistic 'self-sacrificing' volunteers or the hedonistic and more individually focused 'slackers'. More interesting for is that, beyond the altruistic, egoistic and hedonistic, we see the development of the 'protective function' within normative motivations. This motivation to mobilisation in order to protect your own self-conception, is one I previously hypothesised as key for the emergence of the dispute about Czech Team.

If reflections on the impetus to volunteering, not bound to membership of an organisation (Inglehart 2003), are accompanied by reflections on reduced organisational loyalty (Hustinx, Lammertyn 2003; Rochester et al. 2010), then our results can be interpreted as implying that protective and normative motivations are strengthening loyalties to the Nation. This is despite of the dominance of negative representations of refugees in official state policy, mainstream media and the uncivil expressions of Czech civil society⁶¹.

One of the other moments that our case study indicated as potentially interesting for further development, is, of course, the progressing organisation, hierarchy and professionalisation of the volunteer community, in an environment of and with the contribution of new media, as well as the effectiveness of social media in promoting the cause beyond the volunteer community. Further, the 'counter-public' character of the monitored discussions leads to an interesting question in relation to traditional media. Volunteers were clearly resigned to the influence of mainstream news outlets but at the same time and without discussion, a PR-team emerged which churned out press releases without consulting the volunteering community in advance. Why did this phenomenon not become an online topic for debate amongst the volunteers and how contingent or accidental is it that press releases of the Czech volunteers emphasised the nationalist aspect?

Finally, though the discussion of contemporary Czech politics and the Czech media was to provide context to foreign readers of this article, the agreement between political and media power on 'preliminary refusal' found in this case, calls for serious investigation, debate and interpretation on wide ranging theoretical concepts, from accessed voices to ideological state apparatuses.

60 As one of the volunteers wrote: "it's such a sunflowery discussion here". The term "sunflower" is generally used as a derogatory label in Czech public discourse for people requesting and promoting aid for refugees.

61 A representative selection of attitudes of the Czech public (over 15 years old), conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre of the Sociological Institute, Academy of Sciences CR from 8 to 15. June 2015 (i.e. before the beginning of the volunteer activities in the Czech Republic!) came to the conclusion that 71% of the population of the CR rejected taking in refugees from Syria ("CR should not take in any"), 23% wanted to take in a few, 3% more, 3% didn't know. As for immigration quotas, 60% of respondents declared that they know full well or at least roughly what they concern. 79% of them disagreed with quotas (56% strongly disagreed, 23% disagreed), 18% agreed (12% agreed, 6% strongly agreed), 3% didn't know.

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