‘No Racism, thanks, we’re British. A survey of organized and unorganized right-wing populism in contemporary Britain’
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NB due to pressures of work there is no text of my talk. Should the conference proceedings be published I will write it up as a properly referenced article in the light of the other contributions and further research. What follows, therefore, is ‘work in progress’.

A The absence of a ‘neo-populist party’ in Britain

1 The absence of any British equivalent of a ‘neo-populist’ party similar to that of Haider’s FPÖ or Le Pen’s Front National.
2 The two neo-fascist parties which have attempted to operate within the British party-political system, the National Front and the British National Party. The NF has since its demise in 1979 withered to irrelevance and its most active members have moved into other forms of non-party-political and non-populist fascism: neo-Nazi cadre movement, Third Positionism, New Right.
3 The BNP has unsuccessfully attempted to turn itself from a neo-Nazi into a neo-populist party under the leadership of Nick Griffin, a bid symbolized by the new party paper Identity, and in the attempts to form a working relationship with Le Pen’s party a few years ago, an attempt brilliantly exposed by the TV investigative journalism on The Cook Report. Freedom preaches an anti-immigration position on behalf of Europe and Britain in `modern` differentialist terms. #1, #2, #3

B Structural reasons for such an absence

The reasons for the failure of such attempts are a combination of several factors:

a) The effectiveness of the British 2/3 party system combined with i) a ‘first past the post-system’ of voting and ii) a political cultural tradition of deep suspicion of extremes and an innate tendency not to interpret crisis as systemic and hence calling for radical alternatives.

b) There is also a deep tendency for the British to think of themselves as intrinsically tolerant, freedom-loving and anti-
racist, so that any party which makes overt appeal to racist sentiments is liable to be ostracized. Hence delusion, even at the heart of academia, that Britain somehow constitutes a special case, that racism begins in Calais. NB Adrian Favell, ‘Multi-ethnic Britain: an exception in Europe?’, Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2000 (special issue on multiculturalism and citizenship).

C Is the picture so rosy?

a) Britain/England is undergoing an identity crisis under impact of globalization and peculiar factors. #6, #7,

b) Also, a closer look at Britain today suggests that the rejection of the multi-cultural society and of economic refugees (asylum seekers) is as deeply engrained in Britain as it is anywhere else, but that it is mediated through officially non-racist channels rather than through protest parties: the right-wing of the Conservative Party (Anne Widdicombe); and the Labour Party (which has retained Britain’s draconian immigration laws intact). NB Stuart Millson # 5, John Townsend, Hague (last week): Searchlight see Labour Party as conceding to racism #4

c) Importantly, racism can also be mediated through non-organized racism, i.e. in ‘gutter press’ (#8, #9) and in non-politicized prejudice and hatred which may expresses itself in ways more subtle than outward violence (e.g. in the attitude to Third World poverty or Comedy stereotyping), particularly in the instinctive structural racism of social institutions (e.g. the police, education) and employers.

THE TEST FOR BRITISH RACIAL TOLERANCE: ASYLUM SEEKERS

D The implications of this analysis for comparative political studies

This analysis has certain implications for the comparative study of neo-populism in Europe, namely:

a) The importance of distinguishing between neo-fascist parties
which adapt racism to the post-war era (e.g. BNP) text 1 and ethnocratic liberal parties (sometimes called right-wing populist) text 2 such as le Front National, the Lega Nord and FPÖ?); which are not fascist and have no historical roots in fascism, yet explicitly or implicitly replace the democratic concept of citizenship with one based on ethnic criteria of identity, ius soli with ius sanguinis, or in some other way evoke nostalgia for an ethnically homogeneous society and axiomatically rejects multiculturalism as a threat to democracy and culture

b) The need to take into account in comparative surveys the way ethnocentric pressures are accommodated through mainstream parties, institutions, and legislation in a particular country. It is possible for ethnocentrism to exist in a society and substantially undermine genuine liberal principles of human rights and equality on grounds of racial discrimination without manifesting itself in a conveniently definable and studiable political movement.

c) In any case Britain has no right to criticize Austria for not ‘dealing with Haider’ when one of its former Conservative leaders recently supported Pinochet’s attempts to escape extradition for crimes against humanity, the government has surreptitiously removed ius soli, operates a clearly discriminatory naturalization procedure, and continues to have one of the most draconian immigration laws in the Western world.

d) Political scientists and politicians could do well to take into account the plays and speeches of such non-academis as Vaclav Havel and Salman Rushdie when dealing with issues of racism and populism: texts 3 and 4

Four texts:

Text 1 The Right to an Identity

When two hundred years ago the rights of man were solemnly declared, anthropology as a natural science was still in its infancy. Human rights are the creation of jurists and philosophers. The premise of their thinking was an isolating and speculative one: Man was abstractly conceived as an
individual: not as a man, or a woman, or a child, or as someone with ties to a family, an ethnic group [Stamm], a people [Volk]. The heterogeneous world which had grown up over centuries, and which even in the age of absolutism had started to become rationally organized, was now radically simplified.

An abstractly conceived being, Man, was recognized to have fundamental freedoms in 1789, but not to be a communal being. In those days nothing was known of genetics and the like. They were building on speculations about a noble savage, who was contrasted with the European who had been corrupted by his society. [..]

Man is a territorial being. That was not yet known in 1789. Every man strives to possess space to dispose of as he alone sees fit. These are the roots of the right to a home [Heimat]. But the right to a home can be found in no constitution which incorporates human rights. But if human rights are to mean anything, then the right to a home should be included in the list! [..]

Let us sum up: the human rights of 1789 were incomplete. The right to a home and an identity must now be added to them. The human rights of the Enlightenment are abstract, individual rights. If they are to be complete and to be implemented, they must include collective human rights, namely the human rights to home and identity! In other words, the human rights of the individual and those of the community should complement each other harmoniously. Every people has a right to its own identity. Whoever violates this right is playing with fire.


**Text 2  The Ethnocratic State**

The ethnocratic state rejects from its own organism all minorities as long as they refuse to be assimilated by the Romanian nation. Minorities transform themselves wholesale into a political problem by sowing discord and using blackmail against the state, thus bringing about situations which tend to compromise the image of Romania in the world. For this reason, the only guarantee of our survival is the ethnocratic state.

The ethnocratic state sanctifies the power of the Romanians within their Fatherland. Its foundation is nationalism. Nationalism and the national will to assert and defend itself: the land of our forebears, history, culture, religion, language and race. The ethnocratic state is the institutional and
material expression of Romanianism.

The ethnocratic state is fundamentally distinct from the democratic state. The democratic state is constituted for the entire population, irrespective of race or creed. The democratic state allows and fuels inter-ethnic tensions, it tramples on national dignity. In short, it is the generator of anarchy and misery. The basis of the ethnocratic state is will of the Romanian people. To defend the dignity of the Romanian nation, the National Right considers that all the functions of the state should be carried out only by native Romanians. Minorities who prove to be enemies of the ethnocratic state forgo their citizenship and are to be expelled.

Right-wing nationalism puts moral values before the material interests of the Nation. It therefore openly conflicts with the communist and social-democratic and liberal theories. In our concept the State is supreme. The State is the depository of ideals. Nothing can exist outside the state, nobody can be against the state, because the people is the body of the state, but the state is the spirit of the people. Outside the state man is nothing, within the state he is everything. Before there can be rights there must be duties. When man is born he has no rights.[...]

The rights of man, invented by some utopian thinkers such J ean J acques Rousseau, is no more than a slogan designed for the idle and the poor. Because people of this sort cannot aspire to the dignity of the hero, because people of this sort run away from sacrifice and are frightened of inequality and natural law, because people of this sort do not accept law and order, they are always demanding rights which they have not earnt. People can only have rights when they face up to their duties to the nation.[...]

[The National Right's Manifesto to the Nation, Noua Dreaptá, No. 1, 1993, 8-9]

Text 3  Homes sweet homes

The category of home belongs to what modern philosophers call the `natural world'. For everyone, home is a basic existential experience. What a person perceives as his home can be compared to a set of concentric circles or rings with his `I' at the centre. My home is the room I live in for a time, the room I've grown accustomed to, and which, in a
manner of speaking, I have covered with my own lining. I recall, for instance, that even my prison cell was, in a sense, my home, and I felt very put out when I was suddenly required to move from to another. The new cell may have been exactly the same as the old one, perhaps even better, but I always experienced it as alien and unfriendly. I felt uprooted and surrounded by strangeness, and it would take me some time to get used to it, to stop missing the previous cell, to make myself at home.

My home is the house I live in, the village or town where I was born or where I spend most of my time. My home is the family, the world of my friends, the social and intellectual milieu in which I live, my profession, my company, my work-place. My home, obviously, is also the country I live in, the language I speak, and the intellectual and spiritual climate of my country expressed in the language spoken there. The Czech language, the Czech way of perceiving the world, Czech historical experience, the Czech modes of courage and cow ardice, Czech humour - all of these are inseparable from that circle of my home.

My home is also my Czechness, my nationality, and I see no reason at all why I should not embrace it, since it is as essential a part of me as, for instance, my masculinity, another aspect of my home. My home, of course, is not only my Czechness, it is also my Czechoslovakness, which means my citizenship. Ultimately, my home is Europe, and my Europeanness, and finally it is this planet and its present civilization and, understandably, the whole world.


**Text 4: A love-song to our bastard selves**

Standing at the centre of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with just the sort great problems of hybridization and ghettoization, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are not of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. The Satanic Verses celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combination of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Melange, hotchpotch a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the
world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world I have tried to embrace it. The Satanic Verses is for change by fusion, change by conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves.

Throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who have claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought, havoc among mere mixed up human beings. Like many millions of people, I am a bastard child of history. Perhaps we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another, as a character of mine once set, like flavours when you cook.


Further reading on the concept of ethnocratic liberalism:
