

pluralist democracies, and that due to populism the rhythm of reconstruction and development, the rhythm of transition in particular, has been slower.

On the basis of recent history, I would like to refer to democratic populism starting from the above-mentioned indicators. As aforementioned, all former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe adopted, in their 1989 proclamations, general options in favour of private property, market economy, individual freedoms, the rule of the law, European integration. However, the effective commitment to such options and their concretisation in laws and institutions have been different matters. In fact, in this context **democratic populism** meant relativising the importance of private property and delaying the retrocession of properties, prolonging the prevailing role of the state in economy and in the public sphere and colonising it with private interest groups, along with favouring political unity on the expense of diversity and with the tacit consideration of political minority as circumstantial reality; interpreting globalisation as a threat to national identity; encouraging social critique to the extent to which it cannot disturb the structures of power and keeping social sciences as an ornament of the newly emerged realities; keeping decision-making within parties and resorting to mass mobilisation and manipulation as soon as structures are in jeopardy.

I wish to illustrate such democratic populism by referring to my country. In this particular case, in 1989, we had to deal with the most centralised system in the region, and, consequently, more rapid and deeper changes were expected in reaction. However, some Romanian political forces considered restoration of private property as a political matter rather than a lawful right and consequently opposed – in 1990, 1992, 1996 and 2000 – retrocession of properties, invoking the interwar cliché of the “return of the landowners“. When, in 1996, the alternative government of a democratic coalition initiated a more dynamic privatisation so that Romania should catch up on the already serious delay, an ample mobilisation – with the entire arsenal of institutions inherited from the regime before 1989 – opposed vehemently. Even at present privatisation is still slow and in fact delayed and restricted by social conditions that render them insufficiently attractive to serious investors. In the early ‘90s, when foreign capital investors should have been encouraged, the counterproductive slogan “we do not want to sell our country“ was launched. Establishment of the free market was restricted by the limiting and compensatory intervention of the state, which insisted on inheriting the mechanisms of the “distributive state“ from Eastern socialism. Free market continued to be considered by some leaders through the eyes of the socialist critique of the late XIXth century. Instead of making room for the creation of the public sphere in society – that sphere where citizens debate issues of general interest, escaping the pressure exerted by private interests and searching for solutions to everyone’s and public benefit – diverse measures were taken to populate that room with private groups and to control it. The effects of such attitude are visible even today, and the debate specific of the public sphere lingers. Political diversity has been rather accepted than systematically cultivated. Political minority fails to be considered a source of arguments – whose validity, obviously, does not depend on the number of people who share them – and is seen as an inevitable reality in the era of pluralism. The major political trend after 1989 cultivated the representation once used by Ceaușescu to gain notoriousness and support in 1968 – that of unconditioned sovereignty. When the structures of the power inherited from the previous regime seemed to be threatened by the pressure of the movement for democratisation, some leaders saluted the violent actions of the miners or resorted to mass mobilisation.

However, it would be wrong to consider democratic populism just from the perspective of leadership. This democratic populism has been a type of governance concretised in the official language, the outlook on the world, the interpretations of history, the organisation of the decisional framework, the structuring of institutions.