

## Populism into the Twenty-first Century

GHIȚA IONESCU'S HOMELAND IS ONE OF THE MOST TROUBLED NATIONS in Europe. Its wounded national feeling has produced the strangest ideological combinations, mixing freely a fascist past with nostalgia for Ceausescu, as is the case with the Vatra Romaneasca (Romanian Homeland) movement, or the editors of the influential journal *Romania Mare*, adept at denouncing the 'international Judaeo-Zionist-capitalist' plot. One of the main theoreticians of corporatism, as is well known, was Mihail Manoilescu, while another Romanian intellectual, Ilie Badescu, created the 'protocronist' school of sociology, bent on documenting cultural and scientific findings in Romania which had anticipated later Western European developments. This approach was adopted officially during the Ceausescu regime, and now inspires some extreme right-wing groups which espouse a radical nationalist ideology. One of them, the Party of the National Right, admits to not being democratic, but compensates for this by proclaiming its 'demophilia', that is, its love for the people, a concept created by Petre Tutea, an admirer of the Iron Guard interwar fascist movement.<sup>1</sup>

Coming from a country which had undergone so many tragic experiences of unstable civilian government, violent agitation from Right and Left, and dictatorial interventions, not to speak of the seemingly stable communist regime, Ghița could not help being intrigued by that awe-inspiring phenomenon, the people in the streets cheering fiery demagogues. Of course, he looked for relief across the boundaries of his native land, but found very little to comfort him. This is how, one may surmise, his interest in the comparative study of populism was born, leading to the editing,

<sup>1</sup> Ghița Ionescu, *Communism in Romania, 1944-1962* London, 1964, reprint, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1976; Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania*, Boulder, Co., Westview Press, 1990; Catherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991; Michael Shafir, 'Growing Political Extremism in Romania', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, 2 April, 1993, pp. 18-25.

with Ernest Gellner, of a collected volume published in 1969.<sup>2</sup>

A brief reference was made there to the North American and Russian nineteenth-century 'populisms', usually known by that name though they were really a different phenomenon. But the variety which concerns us here, and which was the main subject of that book, has been thriving, rather, since the interwar period, in the peripheral countries of Europe and among the less developed parts of the world. Will it survive into the next millennium? Most probably yes, but as a diminishing and somewhat changed entity.

### DEFINING POPULISM

Before proceeding, let us be clear about the meaning of the term, which is used in a variety of ways, and in recent years has become almost a by-word to imply irresponsible economic policies. Populist is a term also applied to conservative politicians who appeal to popular feelings and prejudices, and as such it has been attributed to such otherwise unimpeachably establishment leaders as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Though one should not quarrel about names, this exceedingly wide usage is not fruitful, because it can end by applying to almost any politician capable of winning an election.

On the other hand, fascism, whilst often adept at mobilizing the masses, is best considered as a different breed, though it has points of contact with what has been traditionally called populism. The latter concept, as it was developed in the social sciences during the postwar era, refers to political expressions which have a capacity to instigate large masses of poorly organized people into action against the privileges of the better-off, even if a section of the ruling classes often joins, or even creates or leads, the movement.

The better-known examples come from Latin America, especially Argentina (Peronismo), Brazil (Varguismo), Bolivia (Movimiento

<sup>2</sup> Ghița Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969. Regarding the prospects for change in the communist regimes, see Ghița's early and prophetically titled *The Break-up of the Soviet Empire*, London, 1965, reprint, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1984.

Nacionalista Revolucionario, MNR) and Mexico (the heirs of the Mexican Revolution, especially Cárdenas in the thirties), with a more democratic or liberal variety in Peru (Aprismo, founded in 1924 by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre) and in Venezuela (Acción Democrática). In Cuba Fulgencio Batista was another early practitioner, and no doubt Fidel Castro is an expression of the same type of personal relationship between leader and led, basing his appeal on a charismatic element – combined, of course, with important economic and social pay-offs, at least for a period – rather than on ideological considerations.<sup>3</sup>

Most other Latin American countries have also known similar experiences, which have become a lasting component of their political spectrum, the latest addition being Ecuador's Abdala Bucaram, who after being elected president in 1996 auctioned his whiskers, and listens to offers for singing on the national TV network, but also accepts money – admittedly, for worthy causes – in exchange for a pledge to shut up.

Not all countries have had lasting phenomena of this kind, however, and the most notable exceptions are Chile and Uruguay. On the other hand, Brazil, a land of classical populism, has seen Varguismo disappear from the scene, replaced by a host of conservative and centrist parties, plus the radically leftist Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT). Headed by metallurgical trade unionist Luis 'Lula' da Silva, the PT is a very tightly organized structure, bearing more relation to a West European labour or communist party rather than to the populist experiences in its own backyard.<sup>4</sup> As for Argentina, Peronismo, though still thriving, and in power since 1989, has adopted a 'neoliberal', that is, neoconservative, economic programme of privatization and deregulation, which, good or bad for the country, is certainly miles away from the traditional populist package. And there is no sign that it might be replaced by another rival populist movement, though it may lose votes, and maybe power, to a newly built centre-left coalition.

So there are omens of change, though one should keep one's fingers crossed, especially given the bad shape of the economy in

<sup>3</sup> Michael L. Conniff, *Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> See Moacir Gadotti and Otaviano Pereira, *Pra qué PT: origem, projeto e consolidação do Partido dos Trabalhadores*, São Paulo, Cortez Editora, 1989.

most countries of the region, which breeds discontent, and possibly populism. Admittedly, discontent can help to build a solid Left, which though also appealing to popular sentiments, is another kind of fish. It is also quite different from Fidel Castro's recipe: if at all, the leftist parties which may emerge, or are in the process of emerging in several Latin American countries, look more like local versions of the European working-class parties at early stages of their development, when they were not yet reconciled to the vitality of capitalism. But this is also changing quickly, so perhaps we will have politics back to 'normal', or rather, to a West European, Australasian or Japanese type of political normality. This would entail a polarization between a basically moderate Right and an equally moderate Left, with a small Centre in between, admittedly including a residual radical Left, and occasional intrusions from nationalist or religiously inspired rivals.

These latter newcomers to the European scene, by the way, though often branded populist, should again be put in another category, because they are not aimed against the dominant groups but rather against underprivileged ones they see as threatening. They do appeal to parts of the native working class, and they antagonize the liberal bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, but their enemies are not to be found mostly among the upper classes. In fact, they are nearer to fascism, but in order not to resort to terminological terrorism they should be branded rather 'radical nationalists' or 'radical Right', as the case may be. Anyway, they should not be confused with the populist phenomena mentioned earlier, which combine sharp anti-status-quo attitudes with a leadership basically derived from disgruntled and insecure minorities from the dominant strata.

Populism, thus, tends to take the place of what would be a social democratic or labour party – or the American Democratic Party – if cultural and economic conditions were more mature. In a developing country social tensions are likely to create a very determined, often desperate, section among the upper tiers of the pyramid, including of course the military and the clergy, which is in search of new ways to cope with its predicament. Its very strategic presence in the popular coalition does make a difference with the social democratic or labour patterns (though not with the American Democratic Party model). In fact, the heterogeneity of populism may be a cause of future divisions, once social conditions change

and become more similar to, say, those of some Mediterranean countries a few decades ago.

#### HOW EASTERN EUROPE IS LIKE LATIN AMERICA

Eastern Europe is in a similar position to Latin America, being on the periphery of a more developed region with which it has strong cultural and ethnic links (in Latin America this applies to the elites rather than to the masses). These links increase the level of expectations, and therefore of frustration, as well as the feeling of *déracinement*, on which a whole literature has been built. As a matter of fact, some observers maintain that Latin America – or the Latin America of recent decades, swept by military coups and populist praetorianism – may be the future of Eastern Europe, a rather pessimistic forecast, though for Yugoslavia it would have been a blessing.<sup>5</sup>

Potential violence, and doubts as to the loyalty of the armed forces, played an important role in the East European transitions. This fact, often understated, is brought into focus by a Latin American perspective, given the prevalence of military interventions to crush protest in that part of the world. Elemér Hankiss, the Hungarian dissident, asked himself ‘why didn’t they shoot?’, finding that this was due partly to fear of falling into the Ceausescu syndrome, and partly because it was possible for most of the elites to reconvert into capitalists, using their nomenklatura connections.<sup>6</sup> Romania, the only East European country where the end of communism was accomplished through violence, due to a change of loyalty of the armed forces, provides an almost Latin American scenario. The Iliescu regime, in fact, bears striking resemblances to that of Mexico, where the heirs of a revolution have been running the country for decades, controlling a number of intermediary associations, including official trade unions, but resist putting their popularity to the test through fair elections. In Romania this

<sup>5</sup> Melvin Croan, ‘Is Latin America the Future of Eastern Europe?’, *Problems of Communism*, 41:3, May-June 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Elemér Hankiss, *Hongrie: diagnostics. Essai en pathologie sociale*, Paris, Georg Editeur, 1990.

monopoly of power has apparently come to an end, which may soon happen in Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

The spectacle of miners coming down to Bucharest repeatedly in 1990 and 1991 to restrain the students was also strongly reminiscent of Latin American practices. For this weapon to be used it is necessary for the regime to have a solid backing among some popular sectors, not necessarily a majority of the population, but a significant and active part of it. Otherwise, it would have been more advisable to use the police, without running the risk of stirring up a crowd, often unpredictable in its temper.

The communist regimes of Eastern Europe were mostly not of a populist nature, having been imposed from abroad and highly bureaucratized. The main exception was Yugoslavia, where Tito came to power on his own, and his personal appeal to the masses was similar to Fidel Castro's, that is, of a populist kind, independent of ideology. Of course this is not to say that ideology is unimportant, as it provides one bond of association, at least for the building of the leader's entourage.

In Poland, Solidarity's day of glory reflected the creation of what was clearly a populist type of movement. It had a tightly organized nucleus, but if it could appeal to the rest of the country it was thanks to the Church's mediation, and to the rise of Wałęsa to national prominence, to some extent on the lines of Piłsudsky. Wałęsa's 'rightist' and Catholic connections do not detract from his populist character. Being culturally on the right is rather typical of populist regimes, which tend to connect easily with the psychological authoritarianism prevalent among wide strata of the population. What is important, for analytical purposes, is whether this culturally rightist authoritarianism is used as a weapon against the privileged classes or not. In the case of Wałęsa it was certainly used against the higher echelons in the communist era, but once the new regime was created, and the economy privatized, cleavage lines became confused. Apparently now the era of populism in Poland is finished, as the ruling alliance of the ex-communists with the Peasant Party,

<sup>7</sup> See Jerzy Wiatr, *The Soldier and the Nation: The Role of the Military in Polish Politics, 1918-1985*, Boulder, Co., Westview Press, 1988; Iván Volgyes, *The Political Reliability of the Warsaw Pact Armies: The Southern Tier*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1982; Condoleezza Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czech Army, 1948-1983: Uncertain Allegiance*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984; Daniel L. Nelson (ed.), *Soviet Allies: The Warsaw Pact and the Issue of Reliability*, Boulder, Co., Westview Press, 1984.

with a strong organizational backing, looks more like its purported social democratic model than anything else. Surprisingly, also, despite their past, those parties are now less culturally authoritarian than much of what used to be Wałęsa's entourage.

In several Balkan countries it seemed, at the beginning of post-communism, that some members of the nomenklatura, quickly changing their programmes and party names, could remain at the helm of affairs, adopting a nationalist profile, and only minor democratic reforms. This was certainly the case with Serbia, and also with Bulgaria and Albania, where transitions were being engineered from the old seats of power themselves. Thus in the early elections established leaders managed to retain a majority, but the system has not lasted, because the new democratic institutions, even without sufficient human rights guarantees, did include the vote. So also the Balkans are heading, somewhat haltingly, and with a few exceptions, towards a model based on two major parties, or rather coalitions, none of which can be branded as populist.

### THIRD WORLD POPULISM

If we now move to the more underdeveloped part of the world, in much of Asia and Africa, the breeding grounds of populism are alive and well, and likely to be quite prolific. True enough, usually there is not much to distribute, but the allegiance of the masses to symbols of national or religious identity, once created, can fly in the face of economic determinants. In much of the Third World religion and ethnicity function in a very special way, contrary to their role in the European experience, where they have been associated with the Right, built around Altar and Throne. In the Middle East both religion and ethnicity have pushed people against the dominant European powers, and thus into adopting a 'leftist', anti-imperialist cast of mind. This factor operates at all social levels, and thus brings a large number of members of the upper crust, landowners, merchants, bureaucrats, clergy, armed forces, to the anti-conservative camp. Admittedly, many in those strata fear popular mobilization, and thus demur from supporting a potentially dangerous political experience. But the minority that joins the forces for change is much larger than it would be if the religious and ethnic factors alluded to above were not present. No wonder 'Arab

socialism' has spread so widely, after being initiated by Nasser, with roots in Kemalism and other regimes. This 'Arab socialism' had, particularly during its early period, the military establishment as one of its main props. As these regimes do not submit to free elections, it is difficult to decide how popular they are. There is no doubt, however, that such men as Nasser were able to mobilize large masses in a solid bloc against the majority of the pre-existing ruling classes, or of their foreign backers, giving rise to populist processes. Something similar happens in much of Africa and Asia, with the main exception, up to a decade or so ago, of India. However, in that country, as development proceeds, some components of traditionalism are on their way up, not down. This is because education, communication, and other modernizing factors, have as their main effect the raising of the level of aspirations, and therefore of frustrations. These frustrations may lead to the secular Left, but more often than not to the half-way house of populism, or ethnic or religious nationalism, which are more readily understood by a semi-literate public.

Compared to the Latin American cases, these Middle Eastern, Asian or African regimes are more multi-class based. This is because of two factors, operating at the level of the elites and of the masses.

At the level of the elites there is the above-mentioned ethnic and religious push effect, which is much weaker in Latin America. Latin American elites do not experience intense ethnic or religious confrontation with the leading centres of world power, unless one were to count the cleavages between Catholic and Protestant, or between Latin and Anglophone which these days do not cut much ice in that part of the world. However, other factors occasionally operate, leading sectors of the military to populist, or otherwise anti-conservative attitudes. But this type of involvement of the military is on the way out, and was never very strong in Latin America, even if some cases stand out, notably the reformist regime of Peru (1968–79) and the formative years of Peronismo (started around 1944–45, as a mutation within a provisional government of the armed forces).<sup>8</sup>

The masses, on the other hand, in Latin America are much more urban and unionized, and therefore they are not so easily

<sup>8</sup> Abraham F. Lowenthal, *The Peruvian Experiment: Continuity and Change under Military Rule*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975.

incorporated into multi-class integrative parties. One of the main exceptions to this is the Mexican Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI); but this is because, when the Mexican Revolution started (1910), the country had a remarkably backward and numerous peasant majority, and a very irritating and humiliating history of confrontations with the United States, thus coming nearer to the Middle Eastern pattern than to those of Brazil or Argentina.

As the urban explosion proceeds in the Third World, conditions for populism will remain favourable. Admittedly, the existing, populist-oriented ruling elites have often deteriorated, and they have turned from being leaders of an anti-status-quo movement to functioning as representatives of the new privileged classes. But the frustrations, tensions, and revolution of rising expectations among middle layers will only become greater, thus generating all sorts of potential leaders of the masses – not least, according to recent experience, among the clergy, taking over the role of the military in an earlier generation.

In Latin America there does not seem to be much scope for religious fundamentalism as a basis of popular mobilization, for the reasons mentioned above. Nor is it likely that ethnicity will become a major rallying banner in most of the area, as it is counterbalanced by the heavy inter-racial mixture that has taken place for centuries. However, in some Andean countries or parts of Mexico and Central America, where important aboriginal groups with claims to ancestral lands do exist, the situation is different, and quite explosive. Peru's Sendero Luminoso and Mexico's Chiapas revolt may be, in that sense, harbingers of things to come, for which Latin American politicians and public opinion should brace themselves. It is also true that the urban explosion has not yet stopped, but it is less intense than in other parts of the Third World. One should also take into account that the region's longer experience with populist movements has given them time to become integrated into the political system, and thus they are likely to abandon mobilizational trappings to adopt those of a more reformist kind of politics, with the exception above of potentially separatist aboriginal movements.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cynthia McClintock, 'Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso', *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Oct. 1984; Herbert Klein, *Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-ethnic Society*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1982; Henk E. Chin and Hands Buddingh', *Surinam: Politics, Economics and Society*, London, Frances Pinter, 1987.

## HOW POPULISM THRIVES

Summarizing the cases and analyses above, populism may be defined as a political movement based on a mobilized but not yet autonomously organized popular sector, led by an elite rooted among the middle and upper echelons of society, and kept together by a charismatic, personalized link between leader and led, the result, in turn, of widespread social and cultural traits often found in the periphery, namely:

1. Structural dualism, due to the coexistence of particularly backward areas with modernized sectors.
2. Levels of urbanization and education which produce a larger supply of aspirants to high-status jobs than the economy can satisfy.
3. Intense internal migrations, and other forms of mass mobilization not accompanied by an equivalent experience of autonomous class organization.
4. Concentration of economic power in an alliance of foreign and local elites which often lack legitimacy, especially vis-à-vis the urban middle classes.

Depending on how these factors operate, different forms of populism emerge, mostly as a result of the type of anti-status-quo elites involved. Some of these factors are also present in core countries, but in the periphery they operate with far greater intensity. As a result, populist and national-integrative parties are typical, some of them being ethnically based. However, once social conditions turn towards a more urban, educated and secular pattern, populism may be expected to lose some of its breeding grounds, and to be replaced by social democracy, whether through an internal mutation, or by losing its electoral support to a new challenger to its left.

Parallel to the slow demise of populism, one may expect also a growth of self-proclaimed conservative parties, by that or any other name. Populism robs the Right of its potential clientele among some of the poorer strata of the population in rural or peripheral urban areas, and among regionalist-oriented middle strata and leadership cadres. This is somewhat strange, because populism is usually the main antagonist of the traditional conservative parties, which exist almost everywhere, even if they do not get many votes. Conservatism and populism can be said to have quite distinct core constituencies, among the majority of the well-to-do, and among the more urbanized

working class, respectively. Those two core constituencies happen to be also the same for modern conservative and social democratic parties. In between, a lot of intermediate sectors, often quite unsophisticated in their political attitudes, fluctuate. Traditional conservatism often lacks the capacity to coopt the middle classes, or sizeable sectors of the rural or urban poor. Thus, the middle classes go their own way, becoming the back-bone of centre parties, while the poorer strata remain available for populist mobilization from above. As society evolves, and what may be called political culture develops, associationist practices spread, creating alternatives to populism on the left. But this new potential centre of allegiance, if it is to appeal to the more sophisticated popular elements, needs to develop a type of organization, dilution of leadership, and rather complex equilibria between various centres of power, which are not understood by a large sector of the population. An opening is created, thus, for a modern conservative party to emerge from its ostracism, providing a rallying ground for some of the *disjecta membra* of populism, and for the middle classes.

#### LATIN AMERICAN COMPARISONS

In some of the developing countries conditions already exist for this polarization between a non-populist centre-left party or coalition, and a conservative one. This may happen, according to circumstances, in a poorer and more rural country, like Colombia, or in a more urbanized and highly educated one, such as Chile.

Chile provides the principal case in Latin America where political parties are strongly rooted, with high stability and participation, and a capacity to embrace a wide range of ideologies. In other words, it has a Western European-type system, and an almost total absence of populist experiences. The Right was quite strong before the Pinochet coup (1973), and in the 1970 elections it lost against Salvador Allende by a very small margin. After the Pinochet period, the political system has almost reverted to its former shape, though with a greater amount of moderation: the now reformist Socialist Party has replaced the communists as the main electoral force on the left. In Eastern Europe it is no surprise to find the Czech Republic as the country where a more clearly defined bipolarity has emerged.

In most consolidated democracies there are conservative parties, by that or another name, or semi-permanent alliances capable of winning elections or at least blocking extreme measures by their opponents. It is only natural to expect a similar pattern to evolve in the new Latin American and Eastern European democracies, and also to argue that the lack of strong conservative parties or coalitions is a serious component of the weakness of consensual politics in those countries.<sup>10</sup>

Given the nature of these societies, a strong conservative party or alliance is very likely to have a sizeable sector with authoritarian tendencies, reflecting the attitudes dominant among its constituency. Nevertheless, it performs a positive role in democratization, precisely because it provides channels of expression for those sectors, are forced to mingle with others of their basic conservative persuasion, but are more prepared to engage in consensual politics. It would be almost tautological to say that a strong conservative party, if fully sharing democratic values, would perform a positive role in maintaining them. The less obvious hypothesis is that even a not very democratically-convinced party can perform that role, because of the way it channels and blends basic class interests and feelings into the political arena. Similar considerations apply to the Left: it is a generally confirmed fact that when it has an ample electorate it tends to moderation, even if it usually includes a minority of authoritarian elements.

In Argentina the electoral Right is very weak, and divided into several factions, in sharp contrast with Chile. It is often said, after President Menem's reorientation of his economic policies in a 'neoliberal' direction, that Peronismo after all is a conservative movement, maybe a popular-conservative one, and that it has shed its populist elements. I believe this is a wrong assessment of the situation, as it confuses structural traits with instrumental economic policies, common also to social democracy in Europe. If Peronismo had been simply a popular conservative force, it would not have generated so much resentment, for almost half a century, among the dominant classes. Admittedly, Perón might have had in mind a popular conservative, or even a fascist model when he launched his

<sup>10</sup> For contrasting views on the role of conservative parties, see Douglas Chalmers, Atilio Borón and Maria do Carmo Campelo de Souza, (eds), *The Right and Democracy in Latin America*, New York, Praeger, 1991.

movement in the early 1940s, but this was not the result he achieved. However unintentionally, he, an enemy of the class struggle, spawned a party that was the protagonist of the most intense experiences of class confrontation in recent times in that country.

The demise of the Argentine dictatorship made it obvious that the military were not good keepers of the interests of the dominant classes, even in moments of stress they might be necessary. Already Peru, not to speak of so many African and Asian countries, showed that the military might suffer unprecedented mutations in their political loyalties, or act blindly in defence of their corporative interests. On the other hand, even with loyal armed forces, the Cuban and Nicaraguan *ancien régimes* showed the dangers of continued and intensified repression. So the necessity to search for transitions and rely on a healthy party system became evident.

## CONCLUSION

A political system capable of channelling the tensions existing in any economically developed democracy needs at least two mechanisms of interest articulation and aggregation. On one side, a party where the entrepreneurial classes will feel comfortable, knowing that it will defend their points of view and can occasionally win an election, on the other, a party linked to the trade unions and other popular sectors.

Generally the former can be called the 'party of the Right,' and the latter the 'Left' or 'popular party.' These terms can be challenged, as the popular party will often have many conservative traits (as is typically the case with Peronismo and with Poland's Solidarity), and the party voted for by the entrepreneurs may also get the support of the intelligentsia as a mutual second best. But under whatever names, the expression of those two sets of interests, the entrepreneurs and the working class, is necessary for the consolidation of democracy, once a certain level of economic and cultural development has been attained. Populism should be seen as a rather crude form of expressing those interests, under conditions of generalized social primitivism.

A strongly and freely organized working class can become, with the passage of time and the accumulation of experience, a bulwark of social stability, while retaining reformist aims, attuned to what is

possible in terms of the current distribution of power, national and international. In the long and often tortuous process of becoming such a participant in a democratic system the popular party can perform destabilizing roles, especially if it has a populist disposition. In due time it may be replaced by a more advanced form, but, as Peru's Haya de la Torre used to say, a politician has to build with whatever elements are available in his society, and in a large part of the world that means living in a permanently turbulent environment. However, the demise of militarism in Latin America and of communism in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union has increased in an unprecedented manner the comparative evidence, that is, the number of 'relevant others' whose experience can be used as a guide to what to do or what to avoid while we continue under the curse of living through 'interesting times'.