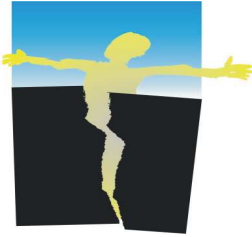


HELSINKI Bulletin



Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

Rige od Fere str. #20, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia
tel./fax +381 11 30 32 408; e-mail office@helsinki.org.rs ;
www.helsinki.org.rs

Nº 52 • December 2009

Hooliganism Spills from Political onto Sports Terrains

Ex-Yugoslavia's bloody disintegration advanced violence into a way of life. After October 5, Vojislav Kostunica, the Serb Orthodox Church and scores of various organizations were preoccupied with rounding-off an ethnic state and hence reshaped the Serb nationalism. Kostunica's two premierships were marked by numerous assaults against minority communities (mostly in Vojvodina in 2004-05) – and that resulted in internationalization of the Vojvodina issue. Policy of impunity practically enthroned the model of violence on which new generations were brought up. The value system was distorted and social tensions became a constant. Serbia's present phase of state-building along the lines of European values faces strong opposition mostly from the groupings that have been particularly active at the time of Kostunica's premiership. These groupings at still acting along the same lines: legitimization of nationalistic goals.

Commenting on Serbia's extreme rightist groups, Vojislav Kostunica recently said, "There has never been fascism in Serbia or pro-fascist sentiment among the people, not even at the time when fascism ruled in most parts of the world and our country was under fascist occupation. Saying that there is

fascism in Serb nation and the Serb society is a dirty lie."¹



Rehabilitation of the Tchetnik movement is a part of the strategy for denial of fascism in Serbia – in present times and during the WWII alike. At the same time every occasion is seized to point a finger at the Ustashi movement in the WWII Croatia and massive killing of Serbs in the Jasenovac concentration camp. This is primarily meant to justify the developments in 1990s. For the same purpose Serbia has filed a counter-charge against Croatia for genocide of Serbs in 1991-95.

Amnestying collaborationism and the Tchetnik movement plays into the hands of today's followers of these

¹ *Pečat*, October 2, 2009. Vojislav Kostunica is known for having written for the *Obraz* magazine, "The main idea behind inter-republic borders of the second Yugoslavia was to make Serbia as little as possible and other republics bigger than they actually were." (*Helsinki Povelja*, No.127-128, January-February 2009)

ideologies – as it prevents the society as a whole to distance itself from them. These people are the strongest opponents of a European Serbia and best mouthpieces for the conservative bloc that has more or less moderated its rhetoric in the meantime.

In 2009 the ruling coalition placed the struggle against violence high on the list of its priorities – and some results are already visible. Anyway, that was among the preconditions for giving Serbia the “white Schengen visa regime.” Violence in Serbia culminated with the murder of young Frenchman Bruce Taton – ever since the authorities have not been fighting violence by words only but taking actual measures instead.

Tchetnik movement promoted as anti-fascism

After October 5, 2000 the thesis that the Tchetnik movement was a rightist anti-fascist one has been skillfully and systematically promoted – actually the thesis about two anti-fascist movements in Serbia: a right-wing and a left-wing one. In the meantime, however, the partisan movement has been sidetracked and all historical dates related to it erased from collective memory, including October 20, the day of Belgrade’s liberation in WWII. Anti-fascism was thus so degraded that it was considered no more a part of “collective identity.”



Anti-fascism was equalized with communism – and not only in Serbia but in almost all East European countries under Soviets after the WWII. In all these countries anti-communism was used to disparage anti-fascism. When the Berlin wall fell and East European countries

consequently joined the European Union it was at their initiative (Baltic states and Poland in the first place) that EU adopted a declaration equalizing communism and Nazism. Hence these countries deny May 9 as Europe Day and treat it instead as the day on which they were occupied by USSR. Russia responded to this by accusing post-communist countries of revisionism.



Moscow, Russia 2006, "НЕ ГЕЙ ПАРАД"

In this context, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev used the opportunity of his visit to Belgrade to send a message about historical revisionism worldwide. And it was only on the account of his visit that October 20 was restored to collective memory as the day when liberated by partisan and the Red Army.

However, the act itself hardly changed the predominant attitude towards revival of Nazism and fascism. The Tchetnik movement and its Greater Serbia ideology, as well as ideas of collaborationists Ljotic and Nedic remain sources of inspiration for all rightist groupings at Serbia’s social scene.

Instrumentalization of football fans

The phenomena often referred to as hooliganism or extremism (terms veiling the real state of affairs) are actually ideologically based violence. It makes no difference when perpetrators are under age since their actual or informal leaders, masters and bosses come from some political circles (and circles close to the Serb Orthodox Church), have clear-cut goals and ideologically channel young people’s violence. Minister for Sports and Youth Snezana Markovic-Samardzic says, “Generally the police

makes arrests but courts of law dismiss cases. Only 2.4 percent of perpetrators have been sentenced...Some extremist sub-groups are probably closely connected with football fans. As I see it, some ideologists are behind all this. Ideologists of violence. Of course, they may be political ideologists advocating certain ideologies such as, say, Nazism or chauvinism, but they may also be ideologists of some heavy conservative stuff.”²



Investigative journalist for TV B92 Branka Stankovic opened the question of the character of “hooliganism” in Serbia in her “Insider” show. She presented scores of information about sports clubs, football fan groups, their mentors, incidents involving them, criminal records of their “leaders” and the background of all these incidents. After the show she received a number of threats, including death threats. Governmental bodies responded with releases in which they condemned the threats, the police arrested several persons they identified as present at the stadium and the public prosecutor filed the proceedings for the ban of extremist groups of football fans of Partizan, Crvena Zvezda and Rad clubs.

Ever since late 1980s when nationalism exploded violence has been spiraling at sports grounds. But when groups of football fanatics and sports terrains became strongholds of the regime and para-governmental segments of the system the model of violence begun reproducing itself – and it is still here. (It is open to doubt, however, whether the model has been reproducing itself or has been

reproduced by interest groups in politics and tycoon circles.) In 1990s groups of football fans were already deep-rooted: fans of the Partizan club known as “Grobari” /Gravediggers/ who imitate the cheering of Chelsea fans, and fans of Zvezda, “Delije” /Strongmen/, who found inspiration in Italian fans in the first place.

As a rule, these fan groups are aggressively nationalistic – and they are instructed by nationalistic actors either from the regime or the opposition. At football games at home or abroad they established close ties with similar groups from other countries (for instance, Delije became close to Russia’s Spartak fans and Greece’s Olympiacos fans, even closer on the account of the shared Eastern Orthodoxy). Today, new generations of football fans are by far more violent than those in 1990s, and the most violent among them are those assembled in United Force – the group the members of which are connected with the gravest crimes committed at football games.



On the other hand, there are self-organized groups with no visible “mentors” and solely acting along the lines of their own racist beliefs and outlooks. However, one cannot but suspect that they must have some “shadow” lords the more so since they have not been banned so far. The Nationalni Stroj /National Front/ organization has not been banned (the procedure for its ban now depends on the decision by the Constitutional Court). Its leader, Goran Davidovic called Furer was freed from the charges of spreading racial, religious and national hatred on the grounds of his complaint about all documents used in the proceeding being written in Latin alphabet.

Mladen Obradovic and Misa Vacic, leaders of Obraz and 1389, have not been charged for their threats to LGBT

² *Vreme*, October 29, 2009.

population all media had carried for months before the scheduled Pride Parade.

Profiles of extremely rightist groups

From the angle of ideologies and actual actions, extremely rightist and neo-nazi organizations in Serbia can be divided into two currents. One overtly propagates Nazism and its program, tenets and methods are clearly racist (Nacionalni Stroj and Krv i Cast /Blood and Honor/). The other glorifies Eastern Orthodoxy and is anti-communist: it advocates fascism by demonizing Serbia's anti-fascist legacy and its international and multi-religious character.³ This current includes organizations such as *Obraz*, *Srpski Narodni Pokret 1389 /Serb National Movement 1389*, and *Nasi /Ours/*, but also *Dveri /Gates/*. Dveri presents itself as a genuinely patriotic organization and its members distance themselves from any nazi propaganda. However, they have no dilemma when it comes to standing up for their neo-nazi colleagues. "This tragic even threw a shadow on our people's reputation, though we take that those who committed this crime are not entitled to present themselves as Serbs...We appeal to public servants and the media to use not this situation for an ungrounded hunt against members of national and Eastern Orthodox organizations, a hunt against football fans and their treatment as hooligans," said the organization's release.⁴



A common ideology of the aforementioned organizations can be summed up as anti-democracy, anti-

liberalism, anti-communism and authoritarian nationalism (with racist elements in the case of National Front and Blood and Honor). Whatever their share in ideological terms they are also sharing when it comes to methods.

Dveri is an extremely rightist organization mostly focused on propaganda activism – it publishes a magazine under the same name and runs the project Movement for Life campaigning for homophobia and against abortion. Dveri is among the founders of organizations such as *Srpska Mreza /Serb Network/*, *Sabor Srpske Omladine /Assembly of Serb Youth/* and *Svetosavska Skola /St. Sava School/*. Serb Network encompasses a number of Eastern Orthodox organizations including those announcing to smash the Pride Parade in Belgrade. The Ours organization has directly threatened LGBT population for months before the announce parade. The organization is also known for the incident it provoked in Arandjelovac when its activists broke into the book launch organized by Pescanik. Another Pescanik's launch was disrupted by some ten members of Dveri on March 2008 in Pancevo. A founding father of Dveri, Branimir Nesic, is the editor of the Serb Orthodox Church's magazine *Pravoslavljje*, whereas members of the organizations such as Bosko Obradovic and Lidija Glisic are on the magazine's staff. *Nova Srpska Politicka Misao /New Serb Political Thought/* promotes Dveri by placing the magazine's articles at its website.⁵

Its releases Dveri emphasizes that the era of "empty-worded patriotism and national self-suppression" is gone and "the time comes for Christian renaissance and national discipline." "We must take reins in our hands and separate the truth from lies and friends from enemies," says the organization.⁶

Similar calls mark its releases dealing with Vojvodina's statute. "The Serb Vojvodina was established as an autonomy of Serb people in Austria-Hungary with a single goal: survival of Serb nation...The actual regime follows Tito's policy for disintegration of the Serb state...Concrete actions against the

³ Anti-communism is a common trait of the two currents, while *Obraz* and 1389 endorse elements of conventional fascism.

⁴ *Pecat*, October 2, 2009

⁵ (<http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/elementi-ideologije-homoseksualizma.html>)

⁶ *Pravoslavljje*, www.pravoslavljje.org.yu

separatist regime in Novi Sad stand for the only serious politics at this point.”⁷

In its program, **National Front** calls for the safeguard of superiority of the Aryan race. “The foreign policy of the Serb national state will be in the service of our country and people, as well as in the service of the white Europe. We take that race provides a foundation for European unity and advances European civilization...We shall advocate endorsement of eugenic program securing progress to human race and shall forbid any form of racial mixture. Maintenance of one’s own race and heredity does not imply subjugation or destruction of others but only a natural right to one’s own racial identity.”⁸



Blood and Honor, a branch of its international namesake, was established in 1995. Many of its members were at war in Kosovo and Bosnia with the mission of “propagating the revolutionary idea of national socialism without a compromise.” On June 28, 2009 50-odd supporters of the organization partook in the so-called St. Vitus Day March and went to Kosovska Mitrovica and Gazimestan (in Kosovo). According to the release issued by Dveri, anyone registering himself in the offices of 1389 could join the march. Apart from domestic rightist, Eastern Orthodox and nazi organizations, Russian Obraz, Young Russia and activists from Greece and Poland applied.⁹ Dragan Petrovic-

⁷ December 1, 2009.

⁸ E-novine, February 15, 2009.

⁹ **Vidovdanski March /St. Vitus Day March/** is a traditional pilgrimage organized by Serb National Movement 1389. This year it was organized for the third time with the blessing of

Bajba, leader of the organization’s branches in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, was arrested in October 2009 in Prague.

Members of the clerical-fascist organization *Obraz*, active in full swing since 1992, and the **Serb National Movement 1389**, maintain close relations with their Russian counterparts such as Russian Obraz and Russian National Front. The two organizations are often referred to as “patriotic.”

The program of the **Fatherhood Movement Obraz** /Face/ quotes, “The crucial question facing the Serb nation today is ‘Shall we all die from the hand of Shiptar terrorist, Islamic fundamentalists, Ustashi and NATO-occupiers? Will Serbs survive at all or shall we disappear in the melting pot of the New World Order in the name of democracy and the so-called human rights? Will Serbs survive at all or will abortions, sects, crime and narcotism totally destroy our children and us?’.” For the organization, arch enemies of the Serb nation are “Zionists /anti-Christian Jewish racists/, Ustashi, Muslim extremists, Shiptar terrorists, false peace-makers, party officials, sectarians, perverts, drug addicts and criminals.”¹⁰ The organization’s releases appeal to these groups, “Repent your crimes or else neither God nor humans will show mercy for you.”¹¹ Founded in 1990s the organization was firstly focused on publishing and cooperation with the Serb Orthodox Church. Its founding father and president, Nebojsa Krstic (1964-2001), was on editorial staff of many Church magazines such as “Svetigora,” “Monarhija,” “Pravoslavlje,” “Vojska,” etc. Patriarch Pavle bestowed the St. Sava award on him in 1991.



the Serb Orthodox Church (<http://www.dverisrpske.com/tekst/173985>).

¹⁰ <http://www.obraz.rs/index1.htm>

¹¹ Ibid.

Magazines of the extreme right

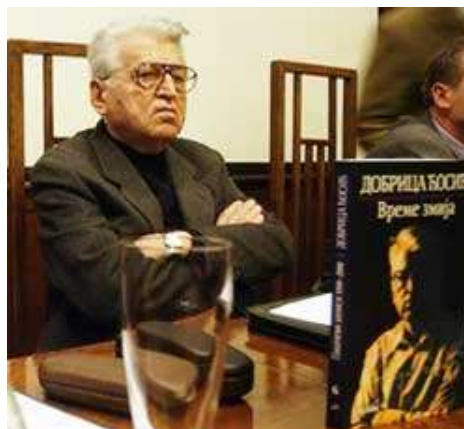
What all these organizations have in common is their antagonism towards the West and interpretation of the 1990s wars based on the West's conspiracy against Yugoslavia and Serbia, i.e. Serbs in particular. For them, sects and LGBT movements are also threats to "further dissolution of Serbia and Serbhood." According to them, sects and "gay lobby" worked together on Yugoslavia's disintegration in 1990s.

Ideologically closest to these organizations is the *Pecat* magazine. The magazine's rhetoric is about the same as the one used at the websites of the aforementioned organizations. The magazine issued by the New Serb Political Thought and the organization's website are criticize the West in about the same manner. Their aggressive nationalism veils anti-communism and aims at preventing any serious debate on the recent past, particularly the root causes of ex-Yugoslavia's disintegration. Anti-communism is just another form of nationalism – nothing is subjected to analysis but only off-handedly labeled. They are also marked by anti-anti-fascism – they alert the public to "urban gay activists," anti-fascist movement or "communist rats." They see any movement without nationalistic components as pro-Western: "supporters of the Other Serbia installed by the West and guided by dollars." They usually speak in terms of conspiracy theories and, therefore, fail to engage in constructive criticism of Western systems (for instance, they never target militant regimes but only value systems, modern life styles and multiculturalism). This is most indicative of their populism but also of the threat that their ideas might take deeper root.

Their usual "enemies" are Roma, homosexuals, NGOs and ethnicities (Albanians, Muslims and Croats). Whereas National Front and Blood and Honor openly propagate racism through their releases and actions, the other veil it skillfully – they never mention eugenics but actually advocate it in the form of cultural

racism: they picture in black and white their own nation and the rest. They glorify Serbhood, deny war crimes and demonize all those engaged in transitional justice and facing the past. "This year the Serbian media and politicians displayed a high level of respect for Muslim victims in Srebrenica, while totally ignoring some 3.5 thousand Serb victims in Bratunac and nearby villages," writes Milorad Vucelic, chief editor of the *Pecat* weekly.¹² To prevent any debate on the 1990s wars they usually speak only of figures /the number of people killed/ and never dig into overall context and chronology of events. Such relativization bottlenecks regional normalization.

Ideologists of Serbhood



Homogenization of Serbs and mobilization for its defense begun in 1980s through a well-orchestrated propaganda spreading hatred for anything "different" – ethnically, religiously, sexually, etc. Mentors of that propaganda were the academicians behind the Memorandum with journalists as their "field workers." Interviews with academicians were run on front pages of the *Politika* daily and, as such, shaped public opinion. Not long ago, it was the *Pecat* weekly that reprinted an interview **Dobrica Cosic** gave in 1991. In this interview, Cosic elaborated the role other Yugoslav nations had in the integration of the Serb people in 1990s. "With secessionist and chauvinistic regimes in power in Slovenia and Croatia, and Albanians' decades-long aggression against Serb population

¹² *Pecat*, July 17, 2009.

in Kosovo and Metohija, unified the jeopardized Serb nation. The threat of the revived Ustashi movement in Croatia, state terror and the actual war against Serbs in Croatia – heroically defending itself today – resulted in renaissance of Serbs’ national consciousness, the consciousness about their fate to get united and form an integral national identity. Enemies of Serbs have made Serbs to act and think like Serbs. And today, Serbs need to be just Serbs any longer,” said Cosic.¹³

The war only further enthroned chauvinism as a predominant ideology on which Serbs throughout Yugoslavia were mobilized.

To this very day the same ideologist occupy the public scene – not only through their books and activities but also through the way they influence racist ideologies of extreme rightist groups in Serbia. This is best illustrated by the state’s rather passive response to violent incidents and other provocations by these groups. During Kostunica’s premiership their ideas were largely carried by the media and they themselves were acting under the auspices of the government, the army and the Serb Orthodox Church.

The Coalition for Europe – that won the 2008 parliamentary elections – made a breakthrough towards law and order once it decided to place membership of EU high at national agenda. Violence spiraling in the streets and public places (from kindergartens, though schools to families) and attacks at foreigners in particular (killing of the young Frenchman) triggered off governmental actions against criminal behavior.

The police tracked down the persons involved in the murder of the young Frenchman, as well as the leaders of the campaign against B92 who threatened with death its journalist Brankica Stankovic. They identified the

entire criminal network behind Taton’s murder and arrested football fanatics who had most brutally threatened Brankica Stankovic from stadium tiers.

However, followers of the aforementioned extreme rightist and neo-nazi organizations still freely operate. Bearing in mind that violence at sports terrains is a product of the propaganda and activity of football fans’ ideological mentors, it can be said that the state is more prone to respond to consequences than to causes

The Public Prosecutor has started proceedings to ban these organizations but no one can tell yet the outcome.¹⁴ Pressure from the “inside” and from EU is needed to make governmental bodies permanently engaged in the struggle against violence. Such orientation may be expected after the U-turn the government has made towards EU.

Since balance of power in the society is still uncertain the civil sector needs to be active in identifying all the developments caused by followers of extreme rightist organizations.

The law banning manifestations by neo-nazi or fascist organizations and the use of neo-nazi and fascist emblems was enacted on June 10, 2009. Under this law all the above-mentioned organizations must be either banned or put on trial.¹⁵

¹⁴ League of Vojvodina Social Democrats requested a ban on these organizations but the state failed to respond.

¹⁵ Article 3. Production, photocopying, storing, presentation, glorification or any other way of spreading propaganda material, symbols or emblems that incite or spread hatred or intolerance for citizens’ free expression, racial, ethnic or religious hatred or intolerance, and propagate or justify neo-nazi or fascist ideas or undermine law and order in some other way shall be banned. 4. Production, photocopying, storing, presentation, dissemination or any other use of symbols that propagate or justify the ideas, acts or deeds by the persons convicted for war crimes shall be banned.

¹³ Pecat, July 17, 2009.