

Helsinki *bulletin*



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THE PRIDE PARADE – ‘VIOLENCE CULTURE’ AND THE OFFENSIVE FROM THE RIGHT

Serbia has been destabilized by organized crime, extreme calls for a Greater Serbia from militarist organizations and enraged sports fans who resemble their striking fist.

Having been announced for a long time, Belgrade's first Pride Parade was finally held on October 10th, 2010, followed by varying assessments and comments. The attempt to hold the parade one year ago had failed due to obstructions from right-wing groups and the Internal Affairs Minister's unwillingness to give security guarantees. This year's Parade was also identified as a high-risk event; however, this time the police had got up the courage to accept responsibility for securing the event. Around 5000 police officers were guarding all important institutions throughout the city, including foreign embassies (especially the US Embassy) and parts of the city where participants of the Parade were gathering.

However, this event served as an excuse for protesting against the Government's pro-European orientation, its foreign policy U-turn and Serbia's European perspective. The organized dispersion of violence on the streets of Belgrade was well prepared in advance. The fact that 80 persons out of the 100 injured in the

event were police officers, as well as the fact that the offices of the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia were targeted is testimony that this was also an attack on the establishment, and above all, on the Government's European orientation.

It is evident that the violence was thoroughly prepared in advance. Police reports point to the fact that 60% of perpetrators came from inner Serbia and that they acted in coordinated teams with the aim of attacking specific institutions and symbols. As always, young people were instrumentalized, sports fans above all others, who took advantage of the outbreak of violence not only for destruction but also for theft. The same masterminds are in the background of both the torching of foreign embassies following Kosovo's proclamation of independence and behind the violence which erupted in Belgrade on October 10th.

Apart from a fragment of the Serbian Orthodox Church which is seriously threatening to divide the Church, the background hides many others – various right-wing groups, political and other figures. The interview given by Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović prior to the Pride Parade is indicative of this. Not only does he

qualify homosexuality as a mortal sin, but he also claims that 'organizing the so called Pride Parade in the region faced with the impending Euro-American civilization represents a sign of its demise'¹.

The Serbian society is homophobic, whereas a different sexual orientation is socially unacceptable and treated like an illness. This is but one of the attitudes and values Europe is expecting Serbia to change. However, the violence has exposed a much deeper level of intolerance. It has demonstrated that Serbian society still hasn't broached the topics of the wars of the 1990s, nor the radical nationalism which still seriously threatens Serbia's normalization. This 'violence culture' was the social setting for the upbringing of numerous generations.

In the current political context, this degree of vandalism, under any excuse, is a permanent attempt at destabilizing the state's political authorities. The Government had not responded promptly to the preparations of violence, especially given that a large portion of the protesters were brought from inner Serbia.

The State Informational Agency (BIA) bears responsibility for a deficient analysis of the situation, which also raises the question of the Agency's internal structure and the balance of power within this institution.

The essential question is why haven't the 'hooligans' who have continuously led such riots been arrested in order to prevent future violence on the streets of Belgrade. Last year, their impunity was the topic of the B92 television show *The Insider*, produced and presented by Brankica Stanković. Instead of an adequate response by the judiciary, Brankica Stanković was exposed to numerous threats, resulting in continuous police protection.²

1 Pečat, October 7, 2010

2 The trial for the murder of Brice Taton is



The nationalist opposition, led by former Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica, observing the violence in the streets, had only words of support to the perpetrators. However, it is concerning that young people coming of age after the regime change in 2000 haven't contributed to easing of tensions. On the contrary, the 'second-generation thesis', according to which participants of war are succeeded by an even more radical generation, has been confirmed once again. Mladen Obradović, the leader of Obraz, stresses that 'the state's bodies can reach decisions to erase us from the registry of citizens associations, but they will gain nothing simply

another indicator of the atmosphere of the Pride Parade. This trial is being unjustifiably stalled. Testimonies from all witnesses still haven't been taken since April 2010, whereas the hearings are postponed because the witnesses failed to appear (failure of the witnesses to appear provides for a fine of 100.000 RSD and can be grounds for apprehension). Out of seven witnesses, six haven't shown up at the hearing scheduled for September 2, 2010. Only the medical technician who was in Obilićev venac at the crime scene had made an appearance. According to Mirjana Ilić, President of the Court Chamber, before hearing his testimony the chamber should have heard the testimony of Mirjana Čubrić, the emergency doctor at the scene, who had failed to appear before the court because she was on vacation. Three French citizens, Brice Taton's friends, have also failed to appear because they haven't been served a subpoena. The witness Žarko Milekić wasn't served as well because his address is not known to the court. The witness A2 under witness protection also hasn't made an appearance, and the court was informed that he was contacted, but said that he was doing temporary work in Montenegro and that he was returning to Belgrade in early November.

because Obraz operates in a much more complex way. Obraz surpasses scope of legal regulations at the current regime's disposal. Merely erasing our organization from the registry will not suppress it, it will continue to exist.³

THE 'PARADE' DEFENDED BY THE STATE

The Pride Parade, apart from being the first successful parade in Serbia, was also a manifestation of homophobia in the Serbian society, whereas deeply entrenched patriarchy and conservatism, typical of the entire region, were visible in most of the citizens' reactions. The state has clearly announced that it will provide security for this year's protest, which was done successfully, as the rally was guarded by 5600 police officers. Statements given by the state's representatives were in line with this decision, as there was a lot of pressure from the EU and the US for the Parade to be held.⁴

On October 10, the march itself proceeded without incidents. Around 800 participants had marched down Belgrade's streets to the

3 *Pečat*, September 17, 2010.

4 As support, the Pride Parade was attended by: Minister Svetozar Čiplić, Čedomir Jovanović (LDP), Head of the EU's Delegation to Serbia Vincent Degert, Head of OSCE Mission to Serbia Dimitrios Kypreos, Council of Europe's Permanent Representative to Serbia chief Constantinos Gerokostopoulos, Member of the European Parliament Mariah Kornelise, as well as representatives of several political parties. The LGBT rally was strongly supported by the Minister of Internal Affairs Ivica Dačić, stating in June 2010: 'As a politician supporting European values and democracy, I support the Pride Parade, whereas it is my duty as the Minister of Internal Affairs to ensure the safety of its participants' (RTS, July 10, 2010).

Students Cultural Center (SKC), where the manifestation came to an end.

The police have been attempting to control the attacks by hooligans and right-wing groups for hours. It is estimated that there were roughly 6000 perpetrators. Apart from police forces who were under attack, the headquarters of the Democratic Party were torched, the headquarters of the Socialist Party of Serbia were demolished, the offices of the Liberal Democratic Party were stoned, windows on the building of the Serbian Broadcasting Corporation (RTS) were smashed, as were windows on stores, busses and parked vehicles. During the riots in Belgrade, the perpetrators have torched a makeshift shack in the Roma settlement near Belville in the district of Novi Beograd. Total damages are estimated at around one million euros. There were over 120 injured persons, out of which 80 police officers and two participants in the parade. On the same day, the police apprehended 249 people, out of which 54 were minors. 131 persons, out of the adults apprehended, remained in custody. These events have cast a shadow on the Parade.

Before the beginning of the march, the entrances of the Manjež park (in central Belgrade) were under strict control. At the very beginning of the event, around 10 am, it was clear that the police didn't have control over all main streets (which was expected given that the first larger groups of sports fans and fascists started gathering throughout the city from Autokomanda to Terazije). As a result, many haven't been able to reach the Manjež park, which was closing at 11 am, as part of the planned security measures. This has cut off some of the participants leaving them outside the park, as the gendarmerie would not allow them to join the Parade. One Swiss citizen suffered a concussion and one participant of the

Parade suffered minor injuries. The media reported that the Swiss citizen was targeted because he had 'publicly declared his homosexuality at a restaurant'.⁵ Namely, the attack took place at the restaurant 'Majdan' in Belgrade's district of Zvezdara, when two attackers entered the restaurant, assaulted the group and beat up two participants of the Parade. The attackers appeared only one minute after the group had left the police vehicle used to drive participants from the Parade and when the participants came into the restaurant for shelter.⁶

Before the Parade, the State had arrested leaders of right-wing groups in order to prevent their activity. Mladen Obradović, the leader of the clero-fascist organization *Obraz* was arrested on Sunday, before the Parade started. The other suspects are Miloš Popović (22), Marko Lazarević (27), Dušan Ilić (36) and Dobrica Radonjić (18). The investigation also includes Skinheads leaders Igor Marinković (33), Nikola Vidović (32) i Srđan Savović (33). All except Obradović are charged for throwing stones at police officers and are facing a possible prison sentence of up to 12 years. According to the prosecution, Mladen Obradović had used two cell phones for calls and text messages to

5 *Blic*, «Zasuli su nas kišom kamenica i cigli», We were pelted with stones and bricks October 13, 2010

6 After the Parade had ended, a party was announced in the Student Cultural Center, however, a conflict eruption was feared and the Center was quickly evacuated. The plan was for the participants of the Parade to be driven by police vehicles to safe locations in the city – for security reasons, these were to be police stations in different parts of the city. However, most of the participants were not taken to police stations but only as far as certain destinations in the city. This information was disseminated by the media throughout the day. Of course, this increased the risk of attacks, considering that the police were still trying to control the hooligan attacks while members of the parade were being driven to safe locations.



organize the attacks in coordination with the other suspects. Obradović was found to have a list of members of *Obraz* and their leaders in cities in Serbia (mostly Vojvodina), who were supposed to be in charge of organizing the attacks in Belgrade.

A source from the Ministry of Internal Affairs states that: 'Obradović was the main field operative, whose goal was to usher as many of his followers throughout Serbia to the streets of Belgrade. It is clear, however, that he is not at the top of the pyramid for running this operation as well as other right-wing operations, and that they are under the control of other persons, organizations and institutions operating from the shadows'.⁷

The question is why haven't the police and

7 According to the latest information, the High Court in Belgrade has prolonged custody for Mladen Obradović for another month. He is facing criminal charges for violent behavior in a public meeting. 124 persons were apprehended to the High Court in Belgrade on charges of causing riots before and during the Pride Parade. The detention period of one month was set for 118 persons.

security agencies responded earlier to these preparations for violence, especially given the statements by leaders of *Obraz* and the SNP movement NAŠI 1389 that 'events will lead to consequences which could not be controlled', and the distribution of posters stating: 'We are waiting for you' and 'Belgrade's streets will be flooded with blood, there will be no gay parade'.

The State did not hold accountable the members of the Serbian People's Movement 1389, *Obraz*, Naši and other right-wing organizations for calls for a lynching of the LGBT population during the preparations for the Pride 2009. The same individuals who were marked as the 'ring leaders' were not called upon for making death threats in 2010. At the same time, the Constitutional Court, which is to discuss outlawing these organizations still has not reached a decision (since September 2009, when the request for outlawing these organizations was filed).

ORGANIZING THE VIOLENCE

The hooligans in Belgrade's streets acted like one, they moved in an organized manner, their attacks on the police were directed by precise commands. They carried bricks, gas masks, and 'the injured sought treatment in private infirmaries so that they would not be reported to the police'⁸. Within the group, it was evident who the leaders were and who was in charge of gathering information and keeping in touch with the 'collaborators' dispersed throughout the city.

An outstanding level of logistics and coordination of the hooligans and right-wing groups whose intention was to break up the gay Parade on October 10 speaks in favour of the political background of the event. Čedomir

⁸ *Blic*, October 11, 2010

Jovanović, leader of the LDP, openly accused right-wing political parties (SNS and DSS) for being responsible for the riots: 'The police are well aware of the organizers of yesterday's events in Belgrade... the movement Naši, 1389, *Obraz* and others are supported by parts of security structures, the anti-Hague lobby and certain parliamentary parties'⁹. On account of this statement, Jovanović was accused by Aleksandar Vučić of being the regime's spokesperson and servant.¹⁰

The Minister of Justice Snežana Malović stated that the hooligan rampage on Belgrade's streets was well organized and synchronized: 'The slogans that they yelled out and the attacks on headquarters of political parties indicate that the violence was politically inspired. We cannot tolerate statements given by certain representatives of the Orthodox Church, some politicians as well as the reporting of certain media which increased tensions on the eve of the manifestation'¹¹.

Security services and the Government presented their interpretations of the logistics of the attack. The Security Information Agency (BIA) stated that the Agency had informed the Chief of Police Milorad Veljović about the number of attackers and the junctions which will be attacked during the Pride Parade on October 10.

⁹ *Blic*, October 12, 2010

¹⁰ *Kurir*, October 13, 2010

¹¹ A scene: 'As TV Studio B reports, the police cordon had let a group of fifty 'Pride Parade opponents' led by a priest pass through Takovska street and had escorted them to an intersection of Resavska street and Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra. There, they were joined by a larger group of young men from the park Tašmajdan, many of which wore hooded sweatshirts and scarves wrapped around their faces. Then they pelted stones at members of the gendarmerie who were passing opposite from them. The gendarmerie did not respond at first, but then it had set up a cordon in front of the Ministry of Economy in the Bulevar' (*Vreme*, October 14, 2010)

This estimate, according to this source, was so precise it's as if it were written on October 11: 'The information from beforehand contained over 90 per cent of events which occurred'. The Chief of Police responded that they were familiar with these assessments and that they responded accordingly by placing police forces on these locations.¹² However, the Minister of Defense Dragan Šutanovac gave a statement a week later saying that he 'doubts that the State knew that the headquarters of the Democratic Party would be attacked on October 10, when President Boris Tadić, Serbia's Government and the country's European path' were targeted'. Šutanovac commented on the police not being too harsh on the hooligans adding that 'Serbia has enough police forces but it didn't have authorization to react with repression, but rather only in case of conflicts, which lead to police officers being injured'¹³.

Zoran Dragišić, a docent at the Faculty of Security Studies, gave an assessment that these were by no means spontaneous outbursts of rage: 'All the values which our society rests upon and which are guaranteed by the Constitution were under attack. The question who is behind this and why is this happening should be addressed to the Security Information Agency, and you can draw your own conclusions on how they do their jobs'¹⁴.

According to criminologist Dobrivoje Radovanović, the right-wing groups' leaders are well known and there is no excuse for the behavior of authorities: 'The leaders have been identified, these are individuals with criminal records and this problem needs to be addressed. Things are very simple. The State knows this as well, but why nothing is being done – I do not know. We can only assume that there would be many scores to be settled.'

12 *Blic*, October 14, 2010

13 *B92, TANJUG*, October 21, 2010

14 *Blic*, October 17, 2010

RESPONSES BY STATE OFFICIALS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THE VIOLENCE

The Parade hosted some government officials and some representatives of the international community in Belgrade (the EU, OSCE, the Council of Europe), as well as representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations, who addressed the audience. The head of the EU's Delegation to Serbia Vincent Degert stated that this was a very important manifestation and reminded that Serbia has good legislature regarding human rights, including religious freedom and freedom of sexual orientation. Svetozar Čiplić, Minister of Human and Minority Rights, emphasized: 'We are here to show that there isn't a single problem which would prevent any citizen of Serbia to be free and to express his/her freedom'. Organizations fighting for the rights of the LGBT population asked the Government to define and implement a 'National Strategy for Fighting Against Homophobia, violence and discrimination of LGBT persons'¹⁵ Majda Puača (Queer Belgrade) emphasized that clero-fascists led by a priest of the Serbian Orthodox Church dispersed the first Pride in 2001, and no one was held accountable. Marko Karadžić, former State Secretary at the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, stated that this is a sad day after all, because it shows that citizens of a different sexual orien-

15 A group of Non-Governmental Organizations for the protection of Human Rights posed some of these questions to Serbia's Government. Their press release states: why weren't Human Rights Defenders protected before the Pride Parade and how were the break into the offices of the Women in Black as well as the attacks on their activists possible; why was Mladen Obradović from *Obraz* arrested as late as the very day the Pride Parade; why were the police not defending themselves from the hooligans during the first hours of the Parade, does the Government approve of the statements given by parts of the political elite which blame the participants and organizers of the Parade for the large number of injured police officers and the enormous material damages?'

tation can only exercise their rights if guarded by 5000 police officers.¹⁶

In his response to the riots, Serbian President Boris Tadić stated that 'the State is fully prepared to deal with vandals and hooligans who are threatening the safety of Serbian citizens. We will ensure that human rights are exercised regardless of differences between people and attempts to violently deprive them of their freedom will not be tolerated'¹⁷. The Serbian Government announced that freedom of expression is being defended in Serbia and that violence cannot go unpunished.

The State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice Slobodan Homen reminded that the punishment for committed crimes was eight years in prison: 'The State's response to riots and attacks on the police and property will be fierce. There are cameras throughout the city. Some of the perpetrators have already been apprehended, but we will not stop until justice is served... According to our information people who were at the DS headquarters at the time of the riots were under gunfire'¹⁸ The State's Prosecutor's Office announced that the 'legal system, public order, peace and security will be preserved' adding that all key events have been filmed and that surveillance videos will serve as evidence in the upcoming criminal proceedings'¹⁹.

Differing opinions coming from the Government and the opposition about the background of the riots could be heard on the same day. Aleksandar Tijanić, Director General of the Serbian Broadcasting Corporation stated: 'My only fear is that this could be a dress rehearsal for something more serious'²⁰. Reflecting on the

16 B92, October 10, 2010

17 Blic, October 11, 2010

18 Ibid.

19 Tomo Zorić, spokesperson for the Serbian Prosecutor's Office (B92, October 10, 2010)

20 RTS, October 11, 2010

riots, the Mayor of Belgrade Dragan Đilas said that Belgrade was demolished and destroyed and the police could not have done more because the groups who were smashing the city were so well organized. At the same time, he added that nothing good will come out of the Parade for those who organized it: 'in spite of their rights, they should not organize events with such consequences'²¹.

World media (Western media in particular) had been announcing Belgrade's Pride Parade as a test of Serbia's readiness to become an open and modern society, as well as a test for the Government to make more decisive steps towards EU membership. The BBC Television Service had highlighted that 'homosexuality is still largely a taboo in Serbia' and that this year's parade represents a test of how far the country has come from 'the intolerant and violent 1990s'²².

The spokesperson for Catherine Ashton, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, stated that Serbian authorities supported the Pride Parade in Belgrade and 'have taken all necessary measures to protect it', which the EU sees as anti-discriminatory and as a 'confirmation of the freedom of expression'²³.

21 Blic, «Đilas: Parada neće doneti ništa dobro organizatorima» (elektronsko izdanje, 10. oktobar 2010). (Đilas: The Parade Will Not Do the Organizers Any Good', electronic edition, October 10, 2010)

22 The British Independent pointed out that Belgrade's Parade has shown that 'it is only when Europe is vigilant that official attitudes even start to shift in the right direction' (<http://www.independent.co.uk> October 11, 2010)

23 The United States Embassy in Belgrade welcomed the professionalism and restraint shown by the Serbian Interior Ministry and the police on October 10: 'The participants of the Pride Parade have the same rights of expression, and freedom from any form of discrimination, like all other citizens of Serbia, and we are encouraged by the fact that they were enabled to exercise these rights'

Jelko Kacin, the European Parliament's Rapporteur for Serbia, has strongly condemned the violence during the Pride Parade, stating that a very bad message was sent from Belgrade out to the world, which could have a negative impact on Holland's decision on Serbia's further progress towards the EU: 'The message that is being sent out from Belgrade today may only have a negative impact on the decision of the Dutch government and parliament on Serbia's further steps in the process of European integrations'²⁴.

VIOLENCE IN THE STADIUM IN GENOA

Only two days following the Pride Parade, a similar scenario was organized by Serbian sports fans in Genoa at the football match between two national teams from Italy and Serbia. This violence is, above all, a reflection of the situation in the Football Association of Serbia, but it also doubled as a message to the Government and the world. The message being sent to the Government was that it should not attempt to control groups capable of 'exporting' skilfully organized violence across borders.

The football match – a European Football Championship qualifying game between Italy and Serbia was immediately interrupted. Serbian fans have attacked the goalkeeper Vladimir Stojković before the game started. As RTV B92 reports, the fans had travelled together from Belgrade, reaching the national football team's bus as the team was about to enter the stadium. 30 fans approached the bus and 5-6 of them entered the bus, propelled a torch and attacked the goalkeeper. They were stopped by the remaining fans. Following the conflict with the Italian police forces in Genoa's streets, the fans continued the rampage inside the

stadium. They were armed with saws and metal poles, holding a placard stating 'Kosovo is Serbia'. The match was delayed and then cut short 7 minutes into the game.

The incident at the Genoa Stadium was caused by a group of fans led by Ivan Bogdanov, who is the suspected leader of the riots. However, whether Bogdanov, who was displaying Nazi symbols (symbols on his clothing, displaying skull imagery, tattooed number 28 – a symbol of the neo-Nazi group 'Blood and Honour', Nazi salutations) is only the group's leader or whether he is also an organizer remains unclear.

Bogdanov is also one of the leaders of the 'Ultras Boys' fan group, an extreme fan group of the Crvena Zvezda Football Club. The State Prosecutor Slobodan Radovanović had singled out subgroups of Crvena Zvezda, Partizan and Rad, registered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and filed for their prohibition to the Constitutional Court. He identified the Ultras Boys, Belgrade Boys, Alkatraz, Anti-Roma, Padinska Skela Lunatics as the subgroups which have committed criminal acts, estimating that there are several dozen of them. Radovanović emphasized that all State bodies were resolute in confronting the violence in the most efficient way, whereas prohibiting subgroups and restricting their most extreme members from attending sports matches is the first step. The proceedings before the Constitutional Court are still under way.

Following the riots, on the same night, the Italian police apprehended 19 extreme fans, including Ivan Bogdanov.²⁵ Serbia's Ministry

²⁵ A hearing before the court in Genoa was held for Ivan Bogdanov, leader of Serbia's extreme sports fans, who gave a statement that the riots in the stadium were directed against the Football Association of Serbia which, according to him, does not allow for players of Crvena Zvezda to be in the

of Internal Affairs offered their assistance to Italy's National Police Force and the Ministry announced that the police are awaiting fan groups at border crossings and checking whether there are riot participants amongst them. Ivica Dačić, Serbia's Minister of Internal Affairs announced that the police, in cooperation with the competent prosecutor's office, was investigating the background of events in Genoa, as well as the details of funding of hooligans.²⁶

As daily *Politika* reports, 'according to the police' the majority of fans had travelled to the game individually, except for several groups from Kragujevac, Valjevo and Niš. Information about these groups was 'duly conveyed to the Italian police', and the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that they haven't been contacted by their Italian counterparts regarding the organized arrivals of fans, although it would have been common practice.²⁷

The Minister himself had given similar statements regarding responsibility of the Italian police: 'Serbia's Minister of Internal Affairs Ivica Dačić has confirmed that the Italian police has made a significant omission by not having prevented neither the assault on the visiting national football team in Genoa, nor the riots at the match'²⁸.

national football's team. He has apologized to Italy once again for the riots, explaining that he had arrived in Genoa one day before the game and that he had lost control over the situation (*TANJUG*).

26 According to information as of November 6, the Genoa court has dismissed the motion for the release of 4 out of 8 Serbian fans who were arrested following the riots during the match. The motion for their release was filed last week, and the 4 above mentioned fans are charged with resisting an officer.

27 *Politika*, October 14, 2010

28 'The intervention of the Italian police could have been much better. Entry to the stadium with all sorts of paraphernalia should not have been allowed'. (*Politika*, October 14, 2010)

According to sources close to the government, *Politika* claims that the funds used for organizing the violence belong to a 'suspect for smuggling cocaine and money laundering', whereas the investigation points to the leader of a 'criminal clan'. According to this version, 'over 200.000 euros were paid out to over 60 hooligans for organizing the trip, attaining paraphernalia and causing the riots'. Another version, also presented in *Politika*, interprets the riots as the outcome of the state of affairs in the Football Association of Serbia.²⁹

Boris Tadić asserted that 'we must never forget that organized crime utilizes extreme fan groups for destabilizing the State which puts mafia bosses to jail. Without a doubt, Serbia will prevail in this struggle.'³⁰

Analyst Zoran Dragišić assessed that these extreme groups are being directed by someone: 'Connections between the state's security services and groups of extreme fans have existed since the middle of the last century'.³¹ He said that the violence during the Pride Parade and the riots in Genoa had taken place so that the 'parapolitical underground' could send a message to the authorities and he added that the groups' sources of finance should be investigated. However, he doesn't think that the trail leads to Darko Šarić, one of the leaders of a criminal clan.

On the other hand, Verica Barać, President of the Anti-corruption Council maintains Homen's claim to be partially true – the links between tycoons, political parties and criminals are preventing state institutions from forming: These

29 *Politika*, October 16, 2010

30 *Press*, October 17, 2010

31 "Dragišić: Parapolitičko podzemlje poslalo poruku vlastima", 18. oktobar 2010 (<http://www.vesti-online.com>) 'Dragišić: The Parapolitical Underground Sent a Message to the Authorities' October 18, 2010 (<http://www.vesti-online.com>)

riots demonstrate that domestic institutions are problematic and that they operate under pressure and not according to the law; hence, two decades after the democratic changes these institutions cannot be expected to be stable and reputable. The abolishment of the Anti-Monopoly Commission is proof of my assertions'³².

The strongest criticism of the links between politics and football came from Milan Krkobabić, Deputy Mayor of Belgrade: 'Politicians, before saying anything about violence and hooligans, leave the boards of the clubs! Deprive them of your protection! The hypocritical lamenting of political parties over Belgrade and hooligans, while the frontmen of these same parties sit on boards of sports clubs directly blocking changes in laws, would be funny if weren't offensive.'

Serbia's Minister of Internal Affairs Ivica Dačić announced that the Serbian Government will confront with the groups on the far right which are trying to jeopardize the country's government, and that they are not strong enough to endanger the establishment. In an interview for the Associated Press, Dačić has said that those who have protested against the gay parade in Belgrade and the sports fans who interrupted the football match with Italy in Genoa belong to the same extremist groups.

32 Barać feels that the new composition of the Anti-Monopoly Commission wasn't elected in the National Assembly, rather it was selected under pressure from tycoons: 'The Commission's newest is a Law Faculty professor, who had authored a study claiming that Mišković's company was not a monopolist at the same time when the Commission had ascertained that Delta was in fact a monopolist after having taken over the 'C Market store chain'. ('Tajkuni i kriminalci vladaju Srbijom', 19. oktobar 2010, <http://www.vesti-online.com>). (Serbia is Run by Tycoons and Criminals', October 19, 2010 <http://www.vesti-online.com>)

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

There have been many statements regarding the political background of the preparations to subvert the gay parade. The ideological support of the Serbian Orthodox Church, political parties DSS, SNS, SRS, NS, the papers *Pečat*, the electronic edition of the *New Serbian Political Thought*, certain tabloids and analysts close to the opposition is beyond doubt.³³ The same scenario led to the torching of the US Embassy in Belgrade in 2008, and to Brice Taton's death in 2009. Answers to the questions as to why Ratko Mladić is not being arrested and in whose interest it is to slow down Serbia's European integration and subvert institutions should be sought in the background of these incidents.³⁴

33 The *New Serbian Political Thought* and the daily *Pečat* often convey the same articles. For the most part, they are filled with untruths, obsolete theories and calls to violence. We are conveying a citation: 'From the standpoint of survival of man as a species, and thus human society in general, as well as the commitments we have as moral beings, the world in which all or most of us would be homosexual, regardless of how this world would come about, is unacceptable. The rights of other minorities are not just minority rights, but also human rights; whereas the right of homosexuals to such sexual orientation is a minority and not a human right, because it cannot be justified from the point of view of the human race. It is justified and can be tolerated only as long as it is the orientation of a minority; the moment when the gay movement begins to promote homosexuality as a principally unproblematic attitude, such claims must be contested, and in the event that homosexuality becomes socially predominant, it must be suppressed' (NSPM, Homosexuality and the Pride Parade – a look from the left (I)).

34 The murders of soldiers at the military barracks in Topčider and Leskovac (2004-2005) are indicative: 'In the barracks in Leskovac, three soldiers have allegedly committed suicide in the period between 2004 and 2005. The CEAS has reported about these cases in detail in its report. In all three processes in the Leskovac case, it is clear that the claims of suicide are far-fetched. The experts who conducted the autopsies and exhumations never testified... The late soldier Ivanović used to brag about driving Mladić and Mladen Ćirović, the incumbent Deputy Chief of the Serbian Army's Headquarters. This was never denied

The ideology of Serbia's extreme-right and fascist organizations boils down to elements of classical fascism (anti-Judaism, anti-communism, racism, hatred towards the Roma, other ethnic peoples), but in most cases it also encompasses the glorification of war criminals, a promotion of Chetnik ideology, Dimitrije Ljotić and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Their mission is then perceived as a struggle against 'the enemies of the Serbian people', that is: against minorities ('religious sects', ie. small religious communities – specific to Obraz; ethnic minorities and advocates of cosmopolitanism – common to all), against the 'death culture' (the so called LGBT rights – characteristic of Dveri and all others); against advocates of universal human rights (epitomized in domestic NGOs and the broadcasting network B92 – in all) etc.

The attitude of the entire public towards the Parade, as well as the culmination of on the eve of and during the Parade, point to the conclusion typical of similar situations world-wide – that gay parades serve the purpose of uniting right-wing groups (in their respective country). Their main theses for the causes of violence are: to ascribe responsibility for violence to the Parade's organizers, the government is to blame; these are children and young people, not clero-fascists.

The largest opposition parties had placed blame on the authorities for the violence because of the mere fact that they allowed for the Parade to take place. There was also mention

nor investigated, nor has a statement been taken from Ivanović's father who persists with his claims. No one has ever taken statements from Srđan's army friends, and worse yet – no one has ever been held accountable neither for Topčider nor for these murders. Not even for the undoubted technical omissions. The state has not even attempted to deal with this, which indicates that it has some sort of a deal with these structures. This is defeating'. (Jelena Milić, CEAS, Monitor online, 'Training for a Coup', October 22, 2010) (Jelena Milić, CEAS, Monitor online «Treniranje puča», 22. oktobar 2010)

of the authorities acting as the EU's sycophants and of the abuse of the citizens' will. The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has condemned the violence, but has pointed out that the authorities carry responsibility for the incidents because these have led to a substantial number of dissatisfied people in Serbia. The NS agrees about the authorities being responsible and fears that these events could be misused as an alibi for a confrontation with opponents. At a press conference in Belgrade, Aleksandar Vučić stated that 'these young people' demand change in this country because they do not have any prospects for the future.

Emphasis on youth dissatisfaction for lack of a better future is an attempt of deflection. This is an infantilization of serious political conflicts with the aim of abolishing the masterminds behind the violence by placing blame exclusively on perpetrators who are mostly minors.

On the night of October 28, 2010, the members of the SNP Naši 1389 have desecrated the synagogue in Šabac, in Vlada Jovanović street. All Jewish symbols were removed from the facade, including the memorial plaque serving as remembrance of the Jewish community in Šabac. The building was covered with graffiti stating 'SNP 1389' and 'Leave Serbia to the Serbs'.

REACTIONS FROM THE RIGHT

The nationalist block stood to the defense of the perpetrators and their rampage in Belgrade's streets. Its media have commented on the Government's responsibility for violence, justifying the violence by the level of dissatisfaction in the country etc. Slobodan Antonić, a regular commentator for the weekly *Pečat* attacked the Government and President Boris Tadić for his 'capitulation before Ashton'. This capitulation, he added, had turned Serbia into a vassal state. He accused 'Tadić and

his 'company' of turning into bullies, who are running this country against the people's will. They have ceased being accountable to us and transferred their loyalties onto someone else.'³⁵

The editors of *Pečat* blame those who wanted to organize the gay parade forcefully, against the will of the majority of people for the riots: 'This accelerated the humiliation and dissolution of Serbia, and someone must be held accountable for this. And this would be, without a doubt, the current regime!'³⁶

On Facebook, a social network, numerous hate groups have mushroomed (many of them now count over 10.000 members), calling for a lynching of the Parade's participants. Branko Stamenković, head of the High-Tech Crime Department within the Higher Public Prosecution in Belgrade, states the Ministry of Internal Affairs is investigating various internet presentations. He explains that they have so far 'received several reports from the police, which discuss the perpetrators and criminal acts in question. The last item to enter the procedure was the identification of the accused Andrej Hadži Milić, who had threatened to attack police officers and state institutions on October 10. He has given a statement at the hearing and he was sentenced to detention.

Registered clero-fascist organizations, *Obraz*, *NAŠI* and *SNP 1389* (now united as 'SNP NAŠI 1389') persistently called for the dissolution of the gay parade. Threats on the movement's website were being published from the day the event was announced until it took place. At the same time, the movement *NAŠI 1389* was active on Belgrade's streets and throughout Serbia. The Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that all threats will be sanctioned in due time. The movement's leaders, who were publicly known, cited in the media and accessible to the State's

35 *Pečat*, October 13, 2010

36 *Ibid.*

competent bodies, were arrested prior to the Parade.

SUPPORT OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TO RIGHT-WING GROUPS

The role of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) was more than just ideological. Mirko Đorđević, a sociologist of religion, stated that the SPC bears responsibility for the violence in the streets, because the Church hasn't clearly distanced itself from the extreme organizations: 'Representatives of the Church could be seen among the hooligans. Dragan Davidović, formerly monk Antonije from Crna Reka, stood out the most. Although not a monk anymore, he still wears a cassock, and he is part of the fraction supporting the ousted bishop Artemije. There are several fractions in the Church and there is a lot of resistance to their patriarchal attitudes.'³⁷

The speech of Metropolitan Radović before the event undoubtedly served as support and impetus for the Christian Orthodox believers who were protesting on the streets the day before the Parade. The statement given by the leader of *Obraz* in the TV B92 show *Insider*, (episode 'Violence with a Blessing') is testimony about the direct link between the SPC and the clero-fascist organization *Obraz*. He declared that this organization's activities are not carried out without the support from the SPC.³⁸

Other sources present a more precise depiction of the clergy in the riots: 'St. Marko's Church had opened its doors to the rioters who were running from the gendarmerie and entering the church when they needed to. It is my personal impression that St. Marko's

37 *B92*, October 13, 2010

38 *B92, Insajder*, November 15, 2010 *B92 Insider*, November 15, 2010

Church served as some sort of headquarters yesterday.³⁹

Jovan Byford, a social psychologist at the Open University, United Kingdom, claims that Obraz 'was formed within the Orthodox missionary school during the 1990s, adding that representatives of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) occasionally cooperated with members of Obraz'⁴⁰

A debate about the funding of these organizations has started in the media. 'Our sources do not exclude the possibility of Obraz receiving support from kindred extreme organizations from Russia.'⁴¹

THE ROLE OF RUSSIAN RIGHT-WING GROUPS

The connections between right-wing groups in Russia and Serbia are an important part of the background of every violent event in Serbia. Evidence about the cooperation between pro-fascist organizations in Serbia and Russia comes from these very organizations. In late 2009, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights has published the following: 'The members of the clero-fascist organization Obraz, which has been operating unhindered since 1992, and the Serbian People's Movement 1389 have been maintaining close contacts

39 Radio Slobodna Evropa, 11. oktobar 2010 (http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/Dan_posle_ulicnog_rata_Flert_sa_ekstremnom_desnicom_/2187475.html). (Radio Free Europe, October 11, 2010 http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/Dan_posle_ulicnog_rata_Flert_sa_ekstremnom_desnicom_/2187475.html)

40 B92, Insajder, 15. novembar 2010. B92 Insider, November 15, 2010

41 According to current findings of the Prosecution, Obraz and Obradović haven't received significant sums of money before. However, as of lately, prior to the riots, there has been a significant inflow of funds to the organization.



with Russian fascist organizations like the Russian Obraz and the Russian National Front. Both organizations are frequently qualified as 'patriotic'.⁴² It is not a secret that **Russia's Ambassador to Serbia Aleksandar Konuzin supports Obraz** and is present at events organized by this group.

So far, Russia has prohibited over 160 different gay manifestations, and Moscow's Mayor Jurij Luskov has prevented a parade from being organized in Moscow. He was supported by extreme nationalist organizations (some of Russian right-wing organizations: Great Russia, Movement Against Illegal Immigration, Northern Brotherhood, National Bolshevik Party). The dissolution of this year's gay protest by the police and the arrests of over 20 activists are indicative of the rise of nationalism, as well as the congruence with some retrograde stances of the Russian government.

The daily *Blic* published the information that Serbia's Prosecution will soon initiate an investigation about the funding of Obraz and

42 <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/HB-Br52.pdf>

similar organizations: 'All of Serbia is plastered in posters, which is expensive. During the riots on Sunday, they hired motor bikers to film the police; they also utilized other methods which require money, or rather, financial support. All of this is quite expensive and the origins of the money will be looked into because the detainees include minors and young adults without permanent income – the Prosecution says.'⁴³

Gregor Meyer, a researcher of neo-Nazi movements and activities in countries of Southern and Eastern Europe, including Serbia, emphasizes: 'In many cases, the extreme right is successful because no one stands up to it. For, if the majority in the society is apathetic, then everyone will be outvoted by idiots, and 'normal' people will start to follow the idiots. However, we should also bear in mind that the extreme right has the most success when the governing political caste loses credibility, when it becomes corrupt and cynical. At that moment, the right-wing extremists find it very easy to convince people that their politics represent the right 'solution''.⁴⁴

The economic crisis provides the social background for these movements. *Stratfor*, the US agency for strategic research, estimates that there is a risk that political authorities will resort to compromise instead of strengthening institutions: 'The economy is facing collapse. The average salary is now lower than in neighbouring Albania, which, in the eyes of Serbia, represents the collapse of civilization. This makes fertile ground for extremism. The greatest danger for Serbia is not the collapse of the state, but the possibility that some political factors in the country will decide firmly that it is simpler to compromise with the extremists than to continue the painstaking path towards

43 Blic, October 14, 2010

44 <http://globus.jutarnji.hr/hrvatska/>

hrvatski-neonacisti-su-tigrovi-od-papira?onepage=1.

strengthening the state in spite of international and domestic obstacles.'⁴⁵

CRIMINAL CODE CHANGES

One of the Government's first moves was to amend the law. In December 2009, Slobodan Homen stated that the fight against violence and hooligans is the Government's absolute priority and that amendments to the Law on Prevention of Violence in Sports events, the Law on Misdemeanors and the Criminal Code, which provide for more strict penal policy and more efficient court proceedings, have been adopted. According to these amendments to the Criminal Code, the punishment provided for criminal acts committed in a group is 2 to 8 years in prison, whereas the ringleader faces between 3 and 12 years in prison. In addition, the sports clubs will be obliged to pay for and install video cameras in stadiums, which will be at the police's and the prosecution's disposal at all times.

The latest amendments to the Criminal Code, which include amendments given by the LDP, have been adopted by urgent procedure. They provide that the maximum period of detention in summary proceeding be increased to 30 instead of 8 days. 130 Members of Parliament voted in favour of the amendments.

The Minister of Justice Snežana Malović announced that the State will not tolerate any form of violence, adding that it will respond decidedly and continue the efficient fight against violence in all public meetings and sports matches. Malović said that amendments to the Law were made by urgent procedure in order to prevent further negative consequences for the country's security,

45 Blic, 17. oktobar 2010.

functioning of state bodies and the actualization of citizens rights.

During the parliamentary debate on these changes the President of the League of Social Democrats Nenad Čanak expressed his opinion that the state should not preoccupy itself with the perpetrators, or rather hooligans, but with uncovering the masterminds, ideologues and financiers.⁴⁶ The spokesperson for the Democratic Party Jelena Trivan stated that the amendments to the Law on Criminal Procedure can contribute to the fight against organized crime, as well as to the fight against violence in stadiums and in sports events. According to Trivan, the prosecution and the police should be given a longer time period for investigation, especially given that these are cases of organized groups and not individuals, therefore they must be treated as a group in order to uncover the financiers and masterminds behind the operation.⁴⁷ Aleksandar Martinović, a Member of Parliament representing the Radical Party finds the suggested changes in the Code rigorous because the problem with hooligans, extreme groups and certain NGOs cannot be resolved by increasing state repression: 'In the European Commission's Progress Report on Serbia for 2010, you will not find that sports fans and hooligans are the state's crucial problem, nor is it the fact that the Restitution law has not been

adopted, nor is the apprehension of the two remaining men accused of war crimes wanted by the Hague Serbia's main obstacle regarding its European integrations; rather it is a high degree of corruption'⁴⁸.

Velimir Ilić, head of the parliamentary group of New Serbia (NS), suggested during the debate that representatives of parliamentary parties visit the detainees of riots on October 10: 'The Minister of Justice Snežana Malović adopted our suggestion to visit the young people apprehended on October 10 in prison and to determine their condition and how they are being treated'.⁴⁹

Amendments to the law came into force the same day when the Red Star – Partizan Derby took place. The Derby was regarded as a high-risk event. Safety measures were at the highest possible level, engaging 5.000 police officers. The match passed without incident. There was no disturbance of public order, as the police found several containers filled with stones prior to the game, and detained 34 suspects in Belgrade's Central Police Station. Minister of Internal Affairs Ivica Dačić expressed his satisfaction that the Derby passed without incident adding that it was the right decision not to postpone the match as was originally announced.⁵⁰

46 "Skupština Srbije o izmenama Krivičnog zakonika", 20. oktobar 2010, ('Serbia's National Assembly on Amendments to the Criminal Code', October 20, 2010)

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 *Blic*, October 22, 2010 (electronic edition)

50 *Blic*, October 24, 2010

CONCLUSION:

The violence culture has been a characteristic of the social and public sphere for the past several decades and it is the result of the politics of wars during the 1990s, impunity and unwillingness of authorities to distance themselves from these policies.

Violence towards opponents and reform forces in society was prevalent as long as the political arena was dominated by political forces epitomised in Vojislav Koštunica, followed by parties on the right and informal structures and institutions with key roles in formulating the Serbian national interest.

The State, or rather the incumbent government suffered an attack when it made a U-turn in its foreign and internal politics. This dramatic shift is epitomised in Serbia's application for Membership of the EU, as well as in the joint Resolution on Kosovo which was presented at the UN General Assembly. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's independence was a key event which directed Serbia towards the EU.

With great support of the Russian right-wing forces, Serbia's right is continuously targeting the fragile consensus on Serbia's pro-European orientation. This calls for providing necessary support to the government's proclivity towards both the EU and other international organizations. The international community should also support the authentic pro-European orientation within the (civil) society in order to strengthen its impact on Serbia and support it on its European course.

The frequent manifestations of violence in Serbia represent a serious warning to the Government, the society at large, as well as to the international community, that social frustration is vast and that the messages being sent from such events are radical and anti-European. This calls for serious deliberation of the value system of the society, a radical reform of the education system and active participation of the media in promoting the new value system.