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# **EXTREMISM**

**RECOGNIZING A SOCIAL EVIL**



Helsinki Committee  
for Human Rights  
in Serbia

34

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**EXTREMISM**  
RECOGNIZING  
A SOCIAL EVIL

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# Contents

## I – EXTREMISM IN SERBIA

### **Sonja Biserko**

Extremism: A Follow-up to the Greater Serbia Project ..... 9

### **Srdan Milošević**

“Anti-fascism” According to Serbia’s Right Wing..... 19

### **Srdan Barišić**

Legitimization of the Extreme Right-wing..... 31

### **Pavel Domonji**

Autonomists, “The Red Flag Of Communism” ..... 53

### **Jelena Višnjić**

The Right-Wing on Women, The Women of the Right Wing ..... 65

### **Ivana Stjelja**

Hate Crime and Hate Motivated Incidents ..... 79

## II – HELSINKI BULLETINS ON EXTREMISM

### **Helsinki Bulletin No.38/Sept. 2009**

Ethnic Minorities in Serbia:

A State Of Permanent Tension..... 93

### **Helsinki Bulletin No.44/Oct. 2009.**

Radicalization: A Constant Threat to Democratic Forces ..... 101

### **Helsinki Bulletin No.52/Dec. 2009.**

Hooliganism Spills from Political onto Sports Terrains..... 109

### **Helsinki Bulletin No.69/Oct. 2010.**

National Bosniak Council Election: Test for Serbian Government..... 119

### **Helsinki Bulletin No.92/March 2013.**

Temerin: Administration of Justice Novi Sad Courts – double standards ... 141



I

# **EXTREMISM IN SERBIA**





Sonja Biserko

# Extremism: A Follow-up to the Greater Serbia Project

From a historical perspective the extreme right-wing and Serbia's right-wing ideology in general are outcomes of the structural changes taking place in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's disintegration. The 1990s wars waged for rearrangement of the Balkans – and motivated by the Greater Serbia concept – as documented in the infamous Memorandum of the Serb Academy of Arts and Sciences, are parts of the body of ideology the right-wing thinking has been living on since. Characteristic of this ideology (considering the historical background of the post-socialist era, Europe's mushrooming anti-communism, and chaotic changes marking Serbia's failed transition) are: the idea of ethnic homogenization (Milosavljević: 2001), the plan for blending ethnic and state borders (Gellner: 1987), anti-communism, denial of anti-fascism, growing traditionalism and authoritarianism, Eastern Orthodoxy as superior to other religions and religious communities (especially those of Croats, Muslims and Albanians), resistance to the ideas of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, open chauvinism and animosity for “new” (LGBT population) and traditional minority groups (Roma).<sup>1</sup>

What all right-wing movement invoking extreme Serb nationalism and leaning on fundamentalist interpretation of Eastern Orthodoxy have in common are unconcealed Islamophobia and hostile attitude towards anything Islamic.

There are several currents of ultra-right wing options and organizations in Serbia. Often their activism is described as „hooliganism” or „extremism,”

1 The so-called new minorities are also characteristic of Europe's right-wing: hostility towards them grows in parallel with public visibility of these vulnerable minority groups. This perfectly suits the idea about “the purity of nation” advocated in Serbia by National Front /”Nacionalni stroj”/, a branch of the international neo-Nazi organization, *Stormfront*. The Constitutional Court banned the National Front in October 2008. See more, <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/saopstenja.html>.

the terms that by themselves sweep the actual state of affairs under the carpet: and that is ideologically founded violence.<sup>2</sup> The hookup between right-wing political parties and these organizations is evident in the former's assistance to the latter, and in their „ideological” intimacy (e.g. the Kosovo issue, advocacy for secession of Republika Srpska, close relations with the Serb Orthodox Church, etc.). As for political parties this includes the Serb Radical Party or the „ex-radical” Serb Progressive Party, the New Serbia and the Democratic Party of Serbia. Their ideological closeness rests on the structures that survived the 1990s and are either incorporated in today's administration or in the opposition, as well as on the new right-wing strata that blends the logic of free market capital and nationalism (under the „both Europe and Kosovo” slogan).

For over a decade Serbia has not managed to distance itself from its nationalistic past. Nationalism still prevails in all spheres, true, having taken a different, non-violent form: from foreign policy (statements such as “Some have seas, but we have history”), through the media to education system and culture. All key institutions are still promoting nationalism as the only ideology. This is the sociopolitical climate that gave birth to extreme right-wing organizations among other things. Wherever politics had to step down under the pressure – from the EU in the first place – right-wing organizations continued implementing the Greater Serbia project by other means and by fueling the delusion about its sustainability. Formally, the government gave up the plan for territorial expansion and establishment of an ethnically pure state; but this is what these organizations are doing instead with reliance on the Serb Orthodox Church /SPC/: through their programs and activities they advocate unification of all Serb territories and Serbia as a state of Serb people solely.

Instead being a religious institution, SPC has positioned itself as a political one, wholeheartedly supporting the Serb leadership (Milošević) and

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2 The Pride Parade 2010 was in the sign of such discourse. The names of the groups threatening to lynch the participants in the Parade have never been revealed. However, the common knowledge is that this refers to „Obraz” (Honor), Serb Movement 1389 and „Naši” (Ours) that have not been banned yet. Some of them have become political parties in the meantime (“Srpski sabor Dveri”) thus securing legitimacy for their actions. Institutions' failure to react against thier activism testifies of the state's inability to confront the extreme right-wing (including the right-wing protagonists in the administration itself).

providing theological justification for the warring policy. It became even more important in public and media spheres after the change of regime in October 2000: and, hand in hand with right-wing organizations (such as Dveri, Obraz, etc.) it filled the vacuum left by Milošević's ouster. Since SPC and extreme right-wing groupings think as one about many issues it is only logical to conclude that clericalization of the society boosts right-wing extremism.

Besides, Serbia's deficit in the rule of law perfectly suits right-wing organizations and their generally beyond-the-law actions. Institutions supposed to ensure the rule of law do not function while permanent campaigns against human rights organizations and their leaders have turned the concept of human rights senseless.

Avoiding earmarking the right-wing organizations as threats to constitutional order and often drawing parallel between them and human rights organizations, decision-makers practically sail in the same boat with them. Holding the right-wing extremism and the struggle for human rights as equals not only fans the flame of the former but also creates the climate of lynch of all those opposing their ideology in public.

Extremism in today's Serbia is the legacy of the state ideology for unification of all Serb „lands” and establishment of an ethnically pure state. In 1990s two political parties were most prominent in the right-wing spectrum: the Serb Renewal Movement (SPO)<sup>3</sup> and the Serb Radical Party (SRS);<sup>4</sup> in 1994 the Democratic Party of Serbia /DSS/ joined the club. Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia also banked on populism although it was perceived as a

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3 “Within its present borders Croatia cannot be in the confederation as long as the autonomous region of Srpska Krajina including Baranja, and parts of Slavonia, Kordun, Lika, Banija and Northern Dalmatia is not established, and autonomies for Istria and Dubrovnik guaranteed...However, if Croatia secedes from Yugoslavia the autonomous region of Srpska Krajina will be within the Serb State.” “Radicalization of the Society in Serbia,” SPO Program, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 1997, p. 152.

4 In its political activism SRS used fascist methods of Dimitrije Ljotić and his “Zbor.” The Radicals' program sets Serbia's western borders by the model of SPO. “We will not be satisfied with destroying communism only. We are after questioning, day in day out, Yugoslavia's administrative division imposed on us by Broz so as to keep apart the Serb nation by deriving from it some artificial nations such as Macedonians, Montenegrins or Muslims. We will crush this down. Our Serbia is not bordered by the Drina River. Drina is a Serb river flowing through the heart of Serbia,” said Vojislav Šešelj. Svet, May 30, 1990.

left-wing party at the time. Milošević himself was also after Serb domination in Yugoslavia but in a different form.<sup>5</sup> He had deftly played on the masses' emotions claiming he was saving Yugoslavia, while SPO and SRS were advocating the ethnically pure Serbia within the borders that had been on the agenda more or less throughout the entire 20th century. The Memorandum of the Serb Academy of Arts and Sciences – SANU – publicized in 1986 incorporated the project „Homogenous Serbia” drawn by Stevan Moljević, members of the Chetnik Movement. Milošević was skillfully using SPO's and SRS's extremism to announce his war goals.

### **Extremism after Milošević's ouster**

Following on Milošević's ouster Vojislav Koštunica, also a leader of a radical right-wing party, was elected the President. Although never actually supported by the masses he, in his capacity as the President, pursued Milošević's concept – the Greater Serbia or unification of all Serb territories.<sup>6</sup>

Extremist organizations mushroomed after 2000. They occupied a large portion of the media and public space and enjoyed the support from SPC and some political parties, from the DSS in the first place. After the assassination of Premier Zoran Đinđić the values they had promoted were practically incorporated in governmental policies and especially visible in the educational system. First as the President and then as the Premier, Vojislav Koštunica was skillfully equalizing radicalism of right-wing and left-wing organization at international level. According to him, the Serb Radical Party was, say, as radical as the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. He and the mainstream elites in general were „expaining” to the West that Serbia's civil sector arguing for civil and human rights were all leftists and remnants of the communist regime. So the right-wing obtained a democratic halo in way. On the other hand debates at the Belgrade Law School organized by the Nomokanon, the

5 “We must ensure a unified Serbia if we want to have the biggest and the most populous republic dictate developments,” said Milošević.

6 “The Serbs will not come to rest until they spread out on both banks of the Drina River,” said V. Koštunica while in visit to Kosovo in 1995; Reporter, May 23, 2001. Koštunica also said, “Our policy is the policy of separation of Republika Srpska and its unification with Serbia. This policy cannot and should not be given up.” Publicized at the DSS website in December 1996.

Dveri's activism at the Faculty of Philosophy, their overt opposition to the cooperation with the ICTY and glorification of war criminals such as Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić revealed their real faces. The great majority of Serbia's right-wing groups are anti-Western and closely connected with sister organizations in Russia. This particularly refers to the organization „Naši” (Ours).

In their extremist activity right-wing parties have always been close to the parties in power and the Church because these are the institutions that support their territorial aspirations on the one hand, and assist their advocacy of the basically anti-European and anti-modern value system.

Dr. Dušan Janjić, sociologist, distinguishes between two “wings” of extreme right-wing operating in Serbia and other Balkan countries. “One was in the service of Yugoslavia's disintegration and establishment of new states (Serb Radical Party and Croatian Party of Rights) while the other banked on developments in Europe and the crises of liberal economy and global economy,” he says.<sup>7</sup> “Neo-Nazi groups such as National Front, Serb People's Movement “Naši” or Serb People's Movement 1389 usually work in tandem with extremist football fan groups and are active in almost every town in Serbia. The state also manipulates them for its own under-the-table dealings such as drug trafficking and organized crime.”<sup>8</sup>

### **The incumbent regime and extremism**

Now Serbia has opted for EU integration. The promoters of this policy, former Radicals – now the Progressist – have changed their discourse in public. Their „old” role was taken over by right-wing non-governmental organizations and some smaller parties, especially the DSS. The Progressists have pacified some of the groups opposing the resolution of the Kosovo question. Since these groups used to be largely controlled by the Progressists themselves, that was practically a piece of cake. On the other hand, the Progressists still count on their „services” – and particularly so in Vojvodina where these groups advocate annulment of autonomy.

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7 <http://www.dw.de/desni-ekstremizam-prijeti-zapadnom-balkanu/a-15540466>.

8 Ibid.

Extremist groups are most active in Vojvodina – dedicated to its „safeguard” and opposing any form of the province’s autonomy. Many of these organizations also operate in Bosnia-Herzegovina advocating for Serbia-Republika Srpska unification. They are also promoting the value system established at the time Vojislav Koštunica was in office. The cabinet of late Premier Đinđić made the biggest breakthrough in the domain of education; however, all the reforms he had launched have been annulled since. Despite some pockets of resistance, the educational system is now disintegrating, while radical groups are imposing their values on the society through the media, public appearances, websites and politicians’ statements. All this creates a social climate resistant to all values of the modern world.

As for economy, extreme right-wing groups practically have no well-argued economic programs, pursuing their policies along the lines of nativism, authoritarianism and populism. Actually, economy is not on their priority agenda. Their economic programs, if any, are basically nativistic and rely on economic nationalism and a chauvinistic welfare state – which prioritizes their nation rather than all the citizens without exception.

Though advocating a mono-ethnic state community extremists are in practice after ethnocracy. For them, democracy is sustainable only in a truly nation state living on perpetual national homogenization (whether against any threat to the nation and corruption or in the matter of war crimes) and external exclusivity. For the sake of refreshing our memory, Serb nationalistic elites had overtly supported „the exchange of population” and even genocide (in Bosnia). It could be said that the masses and elites alike had advocated „ethnic democracy” – the guiding idea of the 1990s that has not died out yet. It was just the turn towards EU that opened the prospects for liberal democracy – although in the long run.

A major trait of extremist groups is also their advocacy for ethnic culture (such as was the case of the appropriated Cultural Center in Novi Sad). Minorities can adjust themselves to the state, they take, but there should be only one culture – ethno-culture. They negate multiculturalism and advocate „national” culture as top priority. And, between the lines, they stand for assimilation – though veiled in a milder term such as integration.

For extremists, freedoms are based on order. Every society, they claim, should be structured by strict rules and the rule of law is imperative. This implies that the state crucially decides on „basic values” such as authority, law

and order, etc. Most of these groups take great care not to cross the distasteful line. And yet, they argue that today's democracy is weak and incapable of countering domestic threats and challenges. They insist on „uncompromising struggle against crime.” Serb Progressive Party actually won the elections in 2012 and 2104 on that slogan.

Extreme right-wing organizations are well-organized and mutually connected. Many of them operate under spiritual and financial auspice of the Serb Orthodox Church. While Europe's neo-Nazism and neo-fascism are politically and racially intolerant to foreigners, migrants in the first place, those phenomena in Serbia are ethnically and religiously based. What marks the ideology of Serbia's contemporary fascism is reinterpretation of national “tradition.”

“Serb National Sites” – an umbrella website of practically all extreme right-wing and fascist organizations – exemplifies how well organized there are. These organizations are either openly or silently supported by governmental institutions, rightist parties, the University, SANU, the Serb Orthodox Church, etc. This is why anti-fascist organizations and initiatives are so marginalized in Serbia.

### **Activity of extremely radical organizations in Vojvodina**

The Province of Vojvodina is high on the agenda of extreme right-wing organizations where they have been most agile in the past couple of years advocating annulment of any form of autonomy. In this sense these organizations have taken over the activities of political parties that used to negate Vojvodina's autonomy until lately.

The government ignores, let alone condemns, their permanent campaigning against Vojvodina's autonomy; on the contrary, the government uses these campaigns to prove that Vojvodina itself is against autonomy and to present autonomy advocates as communist recidivists. However, the fact remains that in the past two years the government has been after the ouster of Vojvodina's democratically elected government and in this operating in tandem with right-wing groupings – some of which had participated in provincial elections either as citizens' associations of political parties such as, say, the Third Serbia.

As a prominently multiethnic community Vojvodina has been the target of Belgrade's chauvinistic policy ever since the 1990s. The most brutal form of the 1990s policy for Vojvodina was the so-called humane resettlement (for instance in the village of Hrtkovci). At the same time, by mobilizing young people from minority communities for the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, Belgrade practically improved ethnic cleansing. As a result, young people from minority communities left Serbia never to return after the 1990s wars.

The legal frame for minority communities established after 2000 generally corresponds to EU norms and standards. However, implementation of these laws in everyday life further segregates minority communities. Instead of developing a policy for inclusiveness the state just cemented the concept of segregation, in particular of bigger minority communities.

Such attitude towards the concept of multiethnicity only logically radicalized some communities – aspiring to autonomy for the time being, the autonomy that further undermines specificities of the region of Vojvodina. The state, I am afraid, welcomes these aspirations as they only justify its persistence on Milošević's centralism.

This is most evident in Serbia's Constitution passed in 2006. Serbia will have to amend it if it really wants to pursue along the European course. The great majority of citizens of Vojvodina had voted 'no' on the referendum on the Constitution, which only testifies of their wish for a larger autonomy for the province.

The case of Scotland and the outcome its referendum on independence demonstrated the trend inherent to globalization. This trend was not recognized in the case of Yugoslavia because it disintegrated in violence. Therefore, this is something times call for, and this something should be duly recognized and solved by compromise incorporating principles and values that take into account interests of both sides: in our case, these of Serbia and Vojvodina, but of minority communities as well.

This is why the issue of Vojvodina and its autonomy is crucial for Serbia and its attitude towards the spirit of times and modern understanding of statehood. The fear of decentralization and democratization only fuels opposite trends – and lays bare Serbia's deficient democracy.

Serbia is a notably divided community along many lines – ethnic included. Overcoming these divisions calls for well-thought-out governmental policy for confidence-building between minority communities and the



majority nation, the policy that would heed plurality and differences. For, Vojvodina has always been a unique region in Europe, known for its multi-ethnicity and coexistence.

### **The state's attitude towards the right-wing extremism**

Governmental institutions generally tolerate extreme rightist political goals.

Not even bans on some (Obraz and National Front) had not undermined in any major way the position of these organizations. Although banned they quickly adjust themselves to new circumstances, reappear under some new name and continue their activism.

Legal proceedings, protracted as a rule and without legal epilogues as a rule, and the state's disinterestedness in or even leniency for these organizations unavoidably further fascisize and radicalize the society. They are often compared with extreme leftist organizations. And, often, human rights organizations are treated as leftist – communist recidivists. General ideological confusion (revisionism of the 20th century, promotion of the Chetnik movement as the right-wing anti-fascist one, etc.) only adds to the popularity of rightist organizations.

The state's attitude towards the recent Pride Parade was most conspicuous. On the one hand, it did all in its power to prevent violence (deploying 7,000 policemen in uniforms and probably as many those in plain clothes) and, on the other, it cynically tolerated the rightists parading on the same day to “cleanse” Belgrade. The message the state and right-wing organizations put across was devastating: that was a message of intolerance of and hatred for everything standing for the values of civil society.

The state does not perceive the right-wing extremism as a threat. This is evident in governmental institutions' response to their growing activism. The ban on two organizations only decriminalizes the others while investing their ideology with political legitimacy.

Neither the state nor the society have paid much attention to campaigns against fascism and extremism in Serbia. As it seems some structures are more concerned with connecting their political opponents with the right-wing than

with countering fascist phenomena. It is only understandable since extremists organizations have often been in the service of some parties in power.

Analysts believe that countering most radical forms of right-wing extremism, actually neo-Nazism, is in store for Western Balkan countries; these societies have not touched bottom of economic crisis yet. Dušan Janjić takes that neo-Nazism may easily rise in the entire region. “In next three or four years the Balkans will join the European trend of growing rightist extremism,” he says.

### **Conclusion**

The right-wing political extremism negates the fundamental values of a democratic state based on constitution.

Extremists proclaim absolute truths, their doctrines are always axiomatic, they are ideologically intolerant and like making scapegoats for social situation. They recognize not the fundamental ethos of human equality.

More subtle versions of right-wing extremism can easily undermine democracy. They are even more dangerous than overt extremism: they are not so easy to be identified as social threats, especially in countries undergoing transitional pangs, because they use “political mimicry, verbal camouflage the confusion game” of patriotism.

A state can counteract right-wing extremism only by taking comprehensive, preventive measures, primarily in education, the media, governmental institutions and the judiciary.

SRĐAN MILOŠEVIĆ

# “Anti-fascism” According to Serbia’s Right Wing

## Introduction

The body of anti-fascist writings is by far smaller than the literature on the ideology that provoked anti-fascism in the first place. Anti-fascist historiography, especially the tematizing the ideas, social and cultural record of anti-fascism is scarce.<sup>9</sup> About the same is the situation of sociologist, political and philosophical writings the small body of which can hardly compensate for works on activism. This – along with different interpretations of the term of anti-fascism – calls for touching on several theses on which making the foundation of this study.

From historical point of view, anti-fascism belongs to the left, to the radical left-wing in the first place. The body of values anti-fascism has stood for and still symbolizes has been developed by strong resistance to the ideology of fascism, as testified by the term itself. First steeled in street fights against fascist groups, this resistance has also been grouped for more efficient physical confrontation with fascism as the most radical annihilation of the ideas of humanity. Even the followers of the fascist ideology admit that their biggest enemy was the left. Most remarkable in this context is the explanation of neo-fascist movement *Movimento Sociale Italiano*’s transformation into a right-wing party: the collapse of socialism marked the end of the conflict between fascism and anti-fascism, argues its leader Gianfranco Fini.<sup>10</sup> This did not put

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9 Nigel Copsey, „Communists and the Inter-War Anti-Fascist Struggle in the United States and Britain,” *Labor History Review*, Vol. 76, No. 3, 185.

10 Roger Griffin, “Interregnum or Endgame? The Radical Right in the Post-Fascist Era,” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2000, Vol. 5, No. 2, 163.

an end to resistance to facism by liberally or conservatively minded people: claiming the contrary would be a wrong assumption.

Traditionally leftist historiography argues, more or less openly, that facism is most precisely dissected from a clear-cut anti-fascist stand. Facisms contradicts basic values of humanity so much that being value-neutral about it equals value-neutrality about the foundations of human civilization: and that would be a nihilist rather than a scientific approach. In other words, everything we have learned from sociologist, politicologist, psychological, historiographic and other studies on facism obliges one to take anti-fascist stance.

However, in the context of the realities between the two world wars anti-facism had to demonstrate its activist and fighting component – or, the principled, adverse attitude towards facism had to be stronger than theoretical disagreement with political systems established in Italy and Germany and their ideological derivatives, as historian Olivera Milosavljević puts it.<sup>11</sup>

This author shares the view that anti-fascist attitude, to be genuine, had to imply at least a clear political belief against fundamental illegitimacy of facist ideologies, the same as it had to imply at least intellectual revolt against policies of facist states, along with awareness that one had to fight this universally illegitimate order by fair means or foul.

As a post-war ideological paradigm, anti-facism has been especially fostered by socialist countries; more or less it has become a constitutive part of the newly established socialist regimes. In some such as the Democratic Republic of Germany or the socialist Yugoslavia, anti-facism was a mJOR ideological tenet. On the other hand, in liberal democracies pre-war criticism of facism and the war against the facist coalition also remained deep memories, the same as the humanist dimension born from Holocaust: this brought closer the two paradigms (leftist and liberal-conservative) as what they had in common was antifascism despite all differences.

However, contemporary discourse – academic and lay – extended the term facism to various movements and ideological paradigms not necessarily built up by facist models or proclaimed themselves followers of facist tradition, but with elements of political discrimination of the “Other” and understanding of their nation’s (or race’s) progress as its renewal. This refers to Griffin’s “minimal” definition of facism. For Griffin, this facist minimum is reflected in the ideas about a nation’s renewal, in the theory of *palingenetic*

11 Olivera Milosavljević, *Savremenici fašizma*, 1, Belgrade, 2010, p. 14.

*ultranationalism*.<sup>12</sup> In this context the very notion of anti-fascism should be also perceived as any form of resistance to those allegedly “renewing” values and policies based on them, but also as a effective resistance in times of fascist threats. So both terms (fascism and anti-fascism) have become parts of political discourse of the societies sensitized to all forms of inequality and discrimination in the name of a nation (or race). It should also be noted that the *fascist nature* of some actions or stands taken by individuals or organizations is referred to with good reason, although these organizations or individuals need not be totally fascist or followers of fascist movement: however they are close to them in some aspects. This semantic extension of the term fascism only logically led to the extension of the term anti-fascism.

In broadest terms anti-fascism has two “lives:” the end of the WWII marks the end of the first and the beginning of the other. In other words, the term indirectly denotes the period between two world wars, as well as the post-WWII ideological components and their contemporary implementations. Depending on context the meaning of the term changed throughout this period of time: from 1920s till the end of WWII from denoting pacifist movements, through belligerency, it evolved into war operations. And then, after WWII, it evolved again into pacifism and a moral stance against revival of fascist ideology and various forms of discrimination. However, this second “life” of anti-fascism has been “split” till the fall of the Berlin Wall. Anti-fascism, especially in the Soviet Bloc, became a lasting monument and legitimizing tradition.<sup>13</sup> Having undergone changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall

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12 Roger Griffin u knjizi *Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991, str. xi) daje „minimalnu definiciju” fašizma za koji kaže da je „a revolutionary form of nationalism, one that sets out to be a political, social and ethical revolution, welding the ‘people’ into a dynamic national community under new elites infused with heroic values. The core myth that inspires this project is that only a populist, trans-class movement of purifying, cathartic *national rebirth* (palingenesis) can stem the tide of decadence”.

13 U tom smislu posebno je interesantan slučaj Demokratske Republike Nemačke, u kojoj je upotreba antifašističkog narativa bila najviše razvijena. Vid: Kurt Finker, *Zwischen Integration und Legitimation. Der antifaschistische Widerstandskampf im Geschichtsbild und Geschichtsschreibung der DDR*, Leipzig, 1999; Sigrid Meuschel, “Legitimationsstrategien in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik”, u: Christoph Kleßmann et al. (ur.), *Deutsche Vergangenheiten – Eine gemeinsame Herausforderung. Der schwierige Umgang mit der doppelten Nachkriegsgeschichte*, Berlin, 1999, str. 115–127; Bernd Faulenbach, “Die DDR als antifaschistischer Staat”, in Rainer Eckert and Bernd

the countries of the former Soviet Bloc adjusted their anti-fascist narrative – if any and if prevalent – to “European model” so much burdened by layers of anti-communism that it sometimes makes no difference between fascism and anti-communism.<sup>14</sup>

As for Europe, although invoking anti-fascist tradition its ideological anti-communism has leveled the two “totalitarianisms,” whereby it actually diminished the consciousness about anti-fascism. This example probably best testifies of the significance of historical context for any analysis or discussion of fascism and anti-fascism.

### **Historical context and contemporary interpretations**

Although the stage for war developments had been already set in the period between the two world wars, the WWII as a crystallization point of anti-fascism.

Undisputable is the anti-fascist character of the People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia the Communist Party of Yugoslavia /CPY/ organized to liberate the country but also for the sake of a political and social revolution. The Chetniks – the royalist and legitimizing movement – were major rivals to the partisans, but the rivals complicit with the aggressor while struggling against the partisans. Having defeated both the “foreign” and domestic enemy the CPY came to power in the aftermath of the WWII.

In addition to this sketch of historical context, the author takes that historiographic researches not focusing on the Chetnik movement in the context of anti-fascist coalition are by far more convincing; here the author takes into account that the Chetniks’ complicity with the aggressors and mass crimes on ethnic and anti-communist grounds were of such nature and scope that the Chetnik movement cannot simply be perceived as anti-fascist though initially established to fight the aggressor.

However, many in Serbia argue fiercely that the Chetnik royalist movement had been anti-fascist; these advocates make up several groups the

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 Faulenbach (ed.), *Halbherziger Revisionismus. Zum postkommunistischen Geschichtsbild*, Munich, 1996, p. 47–68.

14 Rajani Palme Dutt; source: Nigel Copsey, Andrzej Olechnowicz, *Varieties of Anti-Fascism: Britain in the Inter-War Period*, London 2010, xx.

arguments of which vary. Where are the origins of the belief that the Chetnik movement that has not actively opposed the aggressor (except in the very beginning, till the fall of 1941) and, moreover, cooperated with the aggressor, was anti-fascist at all?

It was obvious long ago that anti-fascism fell *en bloc* victim to denial of the ideology established after the WWII in Yugoslavia.

In the Yugoslav context the international component of anti-fascism was more important than anywhere else because of the country's ethnic complexity. *Brotherhood and unity of Yugoslavia's peoples* was the guiding principle of Yugoslav anti-fascism.<sup>15</sup> The Yugoslav state actually rested on this principle. As the leader of the partisan struggle, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia derived it from communist internationalism and the adverse ethnic experience of the pre-war state. The principle of ethnic equality and equality of all people is the fundamental value of anti-fascism the same as discrimination is the fundament of fascism. Harsh legislation also exemplifies the importance attached to this principle; so the provisions of the Law against Incitement of National, Racial and Religious Hatred provided among other things death penalty for incitement of ethnically motivated execution.<sup>16</sup> Fascism – the final outcome of nationalism – cannot be defeated by ethnically motivated hatred and crimes against other nations, and that was exactly what the Chetniks had been doing apart from fighting the People's Liberation Army.

Today's revisionism in Serbia simply had to negate this cosmopolitan component of anti-fascism; and having crossed this border it has been minimizing and misusing anti-fascism by *nationalizing* it. In other words, not only is the struggle against fascism denied and criticized but anti-fascism itself is nationalized. In Serbia this misuse of the very notion of anti-fascism began on the eve of Yugoslavia's disintegration, at the point the decades-long *brotherhood and unity of Yugoslav peoples and national minorities* ideology was dumped. Formal heirs of this ideology – actually the pioneering demolishers of the

15 See more: Drago Roksandić, "Bratstvo i jedinstvo' u političkom govoru jugoslovenskih komunista 1919–1945", *Tito – viđenja i tumačenja*, ed. Olga Manojlović Pintar, Belgrade, 2011, p. 28–43. In the context of other departures from the principle of national equality, the Germans should be set apart in the first place for "collective guilt." However, this "collective guilt" was perceived neither as inherent nor was it racist implying execution of all the Germans just because they were Germans.

16 The Law against Incitement of National, Racial and Religious Hatred and Discord,, Official Gazette of Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, No. 2/46.

socialist order and the values it rested on – were the first to revise and relativize the notion of anti-fascism.

Nothing less powerful and, in the long run, even more influential nationalization of anti-fascism was simultaneous, starting with promotion of the “one and only,” authentic Serb anti-fascist and anti-communist movement, the Chetnik movement of Dragoljub Draža Mihailović. The anti-communist component of this nationalized anti-fascism was at that time of actually the first, mass rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement was by far stronger than the anti-fascist one, which was hardly noticeable except for some anti-German sentiments. Anti-communist was in fact an “ideological umbrella” of this “epochal change of collective consciousness” honoring Draža Mihailović as a Serb nationalist and anti-communist by far more than an anti-fascist. Apart for few exceptions – and declarative in most part – things have hardly changed till this very day. Moreover, after the change of regime in October 2000 “the Chetniks’ anti-fascism,” as opposed to the true history of the WWII – holding even hard to trace down there was only a trace of the latter, was in traces, won the day as genuine anti-fascism.

### **Typology of Serbia’s denial of anti-fascism**

Revisionism born out of vindictive anti-communism in 1990s and in full swing after 2000 totally relativized and turned into absurdity the value system based on anti-fascism the socialist Yugoslavia had developed.

This was accomplished in several ways. One of them could be called *nihilistic*: once the a clear-cut distinction between fascism and anti-fascism was erased and the two notions proclaimed anachronous, the values of anti-fascism, badly needed in today’s Serbia, were so depreciated as if they were not universal.

In the second group come the narratives that openly deny anti-fascism and foster a genuine anti-anti-fascism.<sup>17</sup> It brings together two extremes: *fascist groupings* on the one hand, and *pragmatists* on the other. While fascist orientation implies denial of anti-fascism for the sake of the idea of fascism,

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17 Todor Kuljić, *Prevladavanje prošlosti*, Belgrade, 2003; *Ibid*, “Anti-antifašizam”, *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju 1–3* (2005), p. 171–184; O. Milosavljević, preface to: *Savremenici fašizma*, 1, Belgrade, 2010.



the concept of its pragmatic counterpart is somewhat different: ideologically it also belongs to the right, but denies anti-fascism and the struggle against Axis Powers for some allegedly pragmatic reasons; the heavy toll of human lives would not be that heavy were it not to this opposition.

The third group is made of *quasi-anti-fascists* or those seeing themselves as respectful followers of the anti-fascist struggle but who are actually far from being that. This group is the most complex of all. It entails two tendencies at least. One is exclusively *pro-Chetnik*. For it, anti-fascism is something that it certainly is not, and that is the Chetnik movement led by Dragoljub Mihailović; it ignores or even openly negates what anti-fascism is, meaning the partisans' liberation war. The quasi-anti-fascist narrative revises and undermines anti-fascism in most innovative way promoting the model of *reconciliation*. It proclaims both movements, the Chetniks and the partisans, anti-fascist. And there are two currents in the model of national reconciliation of all the Serbs – one that acknowledges the Yugoslav character of both movements and the other, the most extremely nationalistic that monopolizes the notion of anti-fascism by declaring both movements *exclusively Serb anti-fascist movements*, while giving the upper hand to the Chetniks.

Finally, each one of these tendencies has recently crystalized yet another division: into pros and cons of Serbia's accession to EU. In this context and apart from other aspects, these orientations are today imbued with ideology and are in the service of politics. Namely, considering anti-fascism's internationally recognized ideological context, its contemporary use reflects the dynamism of the attitude towards Serbia's international position and its integration into the EU. The advocates of Serbia's two different anti-fascist movements disagree about the relationship between Serbia's allegedly exclusive anti-fascism and Europe's anti-fascist legacy. For the advocates of Serbia's membership of the EU, Serbia's anti-fascism generally – but especially the Chetnik one as anti-communist – is a ticket to the EU as it adjusts Serbia to Europe's prevalent paradigm.

More interesting, however, is the case of the opponents of European integrations, grouped at the extreme right-wing: for them, it is Serbia's anti-fascism that sets the country apart from the centers of contemporary fascism in Brussels.<sup>18</sup> Today's right-wing in Serbia considers the EU policy fascist,

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18 Boško Obradović, "Evropski fašizam i srpski antifašizam", July 1, 2010, <http://www.standard.rs/evropski-fasizam-i-srpski-antifasizam.html>. Articles publicized at the *Dveri*

while perceiving contemporary followers of fascism as those opting for European integration. Serbia's contemporary right-wing not only admits collaboration /in the WWII/ but justifies it. On the other hand it harshly criticizes today's "collaborationists" or, as they put it, Euro-unionists. So it happened that today's promoters of national, gender and religious inequality, extreme nationalists and obvious clericalists proclaimed themselves "genuine anti-fascists." This grouping will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

„Anti-fascism” of the right: the Dveri case

This section dissects stances on fascism and anti-fascism taken by an extreme right-wing grouping in Serbia –the *Dveri* movement. This is an interesting organization because, among other things, it traveled the road from "direct heirs" of the ideology of Serb collaborationists in the WWII to self-proclaimed anti-fascists.<sup>19</sup> Besides, it stands for the biggest and best organized right-wing grouping, closely related to diaspora and circles in SPC, and perceived as a "normal" organization although in some aspects its propaganda hardly differs from extreme national-conservatism.

Anti-fascism, a negatively intoned term for the movement's founding fathers, became the organization's favorite ideological verticals, although the *Dveri*, neither now nor at the time of its emergence, had nothing in common with anti-fascist values – tolerance, internationalism, neutralization of individual identities (national, gender, religious, etc.) as *politically essential*. Extremely nationalistic and hence deprived of basic contents characteristic of anti-fascism, supporters of this movement grotesquely insist on their anti-fascism.

The Dveri emerged in 1998/99 as a student movement inspired by the ideas of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. Having declared Eastern Orthodoxy, monarchism, nationalism (renamed patriotism later on), anti-communism and anti-globalism its fundamental principles, the *Dveri* located itself as an extremely conservative movement while trying to be perceived as "non-partisan" grouping. Demonstrating their despise for political pluralism,

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website often allude to or openly equalize the EU with fascist ideology. See, for example, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr-CS/dverjani/nikola-marinkovic/dan-evrope-ili-pobede-nad-fasizmom.php>.

19 See, Srđan Milošević, „O jednoj desnoj reviziji pogleda na antifasističku borbu u Srbiji”, in *60 godina od završetka Drugog svjetskog rata – Kako se sjećati 1945?*, Sarajevo, 2006, p. 37–54.

democracy, internationalism, atheism and everything without a “national” prefix, the founding fathers of the movement were focused on the cultural scene and advocated “cleaning” of the Serb culture from all foreign influences, and permeated with Eastern Orthodoxy instead. The Dveri has never abandoned the stance about nation being the only legitimate frame for creativity and Eastern Orthodoxy inseparable from the identity of the Serb nation. In its political platform developed later on the organization strongly opposed Serbia’s integration into the EU and called for its reliance on Russia.

The exclusiveness of the national component earmarks the *Dveri* ideology. Paying lip service to tolerance for other nations, religions and cultures,<sup>20</sup> members of the movement have openly appealed to Serb student to stick to Serb cultural and historical tradition and “never to wash their faces in a foreign mudhole.” Should they not revert to “God and themselves,” they warned, the Serbs would expose themselves to the danger of “ghoulish foreign darkness” that befell Dositej Obradović, Vuk Karadžić or Jovan Skerlić, the pioneers of “foreignness” in Serb culture.<sup>21</sup> Though meant as a warning against embracement of any forms of foreign culture, the very metaphor “mudhole” reveals cultural racism, while the empty words about tolerance remained as empty as they could be. This mechanism became paradigmatic of most right-wing groupings calling themselves tolerant and non-violent, while marking off ruthlessly the area in which they are entitled to free expression and advocacy for a lifestyle and identity-building. This is most important for understanding the right-wing groupings’ attitude towards all relevant issues given that the said mechanism rests on conceptual voluntarism. And when it comes to the followers of the *Dveri*, they understand in their own way the notions of justice, law, culture, tolerance, nation, facism, as if the meaning of these terms is not self-explanatory or well-known at least. This particularly refers to the use of the term anti-fascism.

For the sake of a proper analysis, one should revoke the developments of some ten-odd years ago. Speaking of their attitude towards the past, especially

20 „We do not hate other nations but love ours; we do not hate other religions but love ours; we despise not heritage of others but cherish ours. Everything noble in others belongs to us, the Christians, said St. Justin the Philosopher back in the 2nd century.” <https://web.archive.org/web/20020605025519/http://www.dverisrpske.com/autoportret/autoportret.htm>.

21 <https://web.archive.org/web/20020410171855/http://www.dverisrpske.com/brojevi/bilteni/bilten1.htm>.

the WWII, members of the movement have embraced Bishop Velimirović's interpretation from the very start, and the latter's perception of major players such as Dimitrije Ljotić, Milan Nedić, Draža Mihailović, Tito, the partisans and the Chetniks. The said interpretation can be summed up in the Bishop's appeal to the Serbs to pray for "their three martyrs" – Dimitrije (Ljotić), Milan (Nedić) and Draža (Mihailović). On the other hand he was venting his spleen on the communists, the partisans, Tito and Yugoslavia – and so are his epigones. This credo about the past is more than evident in the manifest adopted by the "first assembly of Serb Eastern-Orthodox-national youth," saying, "We do not differentiate our national, anti-communist and monarchistic forces by the developments in the Second World War; may all those who gave their lives for the Fatherland rest in peace, as St. Nikolaj of Žiča said."<sup>22</sup> The manifest did not even touch on anti-fascist ideology, although (needless to say) neither of the three "martyrs" Velimirović was praying for had been killed in a battle for "the Fartherland" against aggressors, but all the three for dishonorable collaboration.

The following testifies that fascists, the aggressors, had not been seen as a threat to national identity: by setting the collapse of the "national idea" in 1945 (rather than in, say, 1941) the *Dveri*, the Eastern Orthodox student movement, underlined "the painful fact that the Belgrade University has been neither Serb nor national for more than half a century" but turned into "a leading non-national institution of the anti-Serb state of Yugoslavia." Seeing nothing problematic about the period 1941–45 the founding fathers of the student movement made no bones when saying, "The communist occupation of Belgrade in 1944 and the ensuing communist reign of terror put the free Serb University down in bloodshed."<sup>23</sup> To establish continuity with this "free Serb university" "the Eastern Orthodox national youth" called its assembly in 2001; after the blessings the organizers opened the assembly by reading out the text dating back in 1941 and titled "The Symbol of Serb Youth's Faith." Having historically intoned the assembly this writing "bridged over"

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22 <https://web.archive.org/web/20020605025519/http://www.dverisrpske.com/autoportret/autoportret.htm>.

23 Pet pitanja za Dveri srpske, <https://web.archive.org/web/20020410171855/http://www.dverisrpske.com/brojevi/bilteni/bilten1.htm>.

the 60-year-gap “the revolutionary communist violence in 1991–44” opened among the Serb national youth.<sup>24</sup>

Here is how the *Dveri* perceives the violence following “the communist occupation,” “And the entire country, the entire planet, and the entire universe were spilled onto a variety of Serb names, while the Serbs, with their names, spilled onto the entire universe; and everything was brimming with life, shining, flowering, budding. Imagine now more than 200,000 Serbs with such names, imagine them all in one place. A feast for the eyes! You feel like leaping for joy and, as our great poet Njegoš put it, dance around the church. But, no! Unfortunately, on this occasion, my brothers and my sisters, I cannot speak about a feast for the eyes or dancing for joy because those 200,000 Serb who have been spilled onto the universe are no longer with us. They died of a fatal disease. They died of the ‘red plague.’ And that ‘red plague’ kills people differently, it has methods of its own. Its murdering capacity has grown out of all proportions. It kills one’s spirit and body. It kills one’s spirit with lies – as lie is its second nature – and kills one’s body with a shoot in the back, by bisection, decapitation and tearing one’s eyes...It puts a victim’s legs and arms into boiling water. It saws people alive, it butchers them, it throws them into pits. It chops them. It has chopped more than 200,000 Serbs during and after the WWII. Its name is communism.”<sup>25</sup> It goes without saying that neither the organization’s website nor its books published anything similar about the crimes committed by aggressors, let alone touches on terms such as fascism or collaboration. All the linguistic “heavy artillery” target the partisans equalized with communists.

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24 *Prvi Sabor pravoslavno-nacionalne omladine srpske na Beogradskom univerzitetu posle 1944. godine*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20021021220756/http://www.dverisrpske.com/sabor/sabor.htm>.

25 B. Nešić, *Antikomunizam*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20020802034144/http://www.dverisrpske.com/sabor/antikomunizam.htm>.



**SRĐAN BARIŠIĆ**

# Legitimization of the Extreme Right-wing

After several decades of atheism of the Yugoslav society the Serb Orthodox Church (SPC)<sup>26</sup> made a comeback in the period of stalled social transformation and it was only after October 5, 2000 that it established institutional ties with the state. The processes marking its comeback were politicization of religion and religionism of politics: national interests, those of the political elites and the Church and its dignitaries were often treated as the same, and discriminated sometimes. The state labeled itself secular from the very beginning of social transformation (transition); however, in the process of democratization launched after October 2000 it was often criticized for developing nonconformist relations with the majority Church – actually for desecularization and even clericalization of the Serbian society.<sup>27</sup>

It was as early as November 2000 that the SPC and the state established direct communication following the Synod's request for introduction of religious training into public school curricula. Courses of religious training<sup>28</sup>

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26 This paper treats SPC as a church organization the doctrines and sociopolitical stands of which are advocated by its highest institutions and dignitaries (Synod, the Patriarch, bishops, priests, etc.), and the very notion of the church from the sociopolitical rather than theological or metaphysical angle.

27 The term clericalization usually denotes not only a religion's growing significance and influence – in this case the significance and influence of the majority religious organization of the Serbian society – but also the church's ever stronger involvement in political and national affairs.

28 Introduction of religious training in the educational system was “counterclockwise” to the legal procedure: first came the governmental decree on religious training as an alternative course in elementary and secondary schools, then the Law on Churches and Religious Communities and finally the Constitution. The influence of theological discourse on the laical educational system of the secular state culminated when Ljiljana Čolić, the minister of education in the Vojislav Koštunica cabinet, tried to eliminate Darwinism from curricula by the means of a “private decree.”

and priests delegated to military institutions<sup>29</sup> by the end of 2000 marked the beginning of close state-church cooperation.

The SPC's strong symbolic and normative presence in the public sphere after October 5, 2000 grew to the proportions of considerably social responsibility; it predominantly shaped ideological and value-based structures of secular institutions and organizations, which entailed not only strong influence but also responsibility. In the identity vacuum of the blocked transition it monopolized the "historical role" in the safeguard of national identity contributing to national homogenization with its powerful ethno-confessional imprint. Hence, it became a benchmark for other social processes. Reestablishment of a forcefully broken tradition and continuity with the pre-communist era reshaped social relations, especially in the sacred-profane context, reaffirming Eastern Orthodoxy as a source of military morality and restoring religious training, religious holidays as national holidays, sanctification ceremonies in secular institutions, etc. Seeing police cars decorated with Christmas symbols or pictures of saints hung on the walls of municipal and national institutions, schools named after saints or public institutions marking the days of their patron saints became nothing unexceptional. At the symbolic level also, national emblems of the Republic or, say, the number of sacral elements at coats of arms of Serbia's towns and municipalities were indicative enough of the change.

It is only logical to assume that the ideology and value system Serbia's majority church promotes endorsed mostly by mushrooming and clamorous "patriotic" organizations with strong national and religious identity. Known as (extreme) right-wing organizations they differ hardly from their also mushrooming European counterparts. What tick them off are the overemphasized sacral (clerical) elements of their identity.

So, for instance, *Srbski Obraz* (Serb Honor) uses Christ's monogram as its identifying mark (Emperor Constantine Cross: crossed "psi" and "rho" of the Greek alphabet, with "alpha" on the left and "omega" on the right side; the colors are red, blue and silver white "as basic colors of Christianity and

<sup>29</sup> In late December 2000 the Department of Morals of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army organized a round table advocating "delegation of Eastern Orthodox priests to the Army." In almost no time SPC appointed a bishop for cooperation with the Army, while military visits to the monastic community of Mount Athos and other Eastern Orthodox monasteries, and collective baptisms of officers and privates became an ordinary practice.



Serbia's Eastern Orthodoxy.”)<sup>30</sup> Self-proclaimed “an Eastern-Orthodox patriotic movement” the organization stands for the spiritual and nation-building renewal of the “Serbhood” by the model of St. Sava teaching. This fully explains its sacral emblems. As for the *Dveri*, its logo associates a mother and her child – actually the shepherds of Christianity: the Virgin Mary with baby Christ.

Contours of the Russian icon of the Virgin Mary of Vladimirsk, the patroness of the Russian people emphasize the symbolism of the Virgin Mary with the child.<sup>31</sup> Basic principles of the organization's program (now a political party) – or, “foundations of /our/ policy” – derive from the article “Bishop Nikolai: A Lecture on St. Vitus Day 1940,” quote the organization's website.<sup>32</sup>

Further on, emblems of the *Srpski Sabor Zavetnici* (Serb Pledgers) picture the White Angel and Miloš Obilić, the medieval Serb knight, denoting “the unity of sacred and profane struggle for freedom.” In the center of its coats of arms in a shield from the period of the Nemanjić symbolizing “a strong, proud and free state.”<sup>33</sup>

“Piety and patriotism” are basic tenets of the *Srbski Obraz*, given that “Eastern Orthodox piety and patriotism are preconditions for the very existence of the Serb people and its rich and strong state of Serbia...A sound Serb society cannot be without a sound Christian spirituality.”<sup>34</sup> Its maxims are as follows: “Eastern Orthodox piety rather than atheism and sectarianism;” “Nationalism based on St. Sava teachings instead of ungodly mondialism;” “The honorable cross rather than the demonic red star;” “Schools teaching religion rather than advocating atheist lies;” “The God-blessed state instead of a civilian republic;” “A Christ-loving ruler instead of power-greedy partisans;” and, “Serb unity rather than anti-Serb democracy.”<sup>35</sup>

For the *Serb People's Movement 1389*, “Eastern Orthodoxy” is second on the list of tenets, after “patriotism,” while “the struggle against sectarianism”

30 For more information, see [http://www.obraz.rs/?page\\_id=380](http://www.obraz.rs/?page_id=380).

31 Dveri, October 2, 2011, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/program/temelji-nase-politike/2630-ko-je-pokrovitelj-i-zastitnik-dveri.html>.

32 Dveri, June 28, 2013, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/program/temelji-nase-politike.html>.

33 Zavetnici, [http://zavetnici.rs/?page\\_id=23](http://zavetnici.rs/?page_id=23).

34 Srbski Obraz, [http://www.obraz.rs/?page\\_id=396](http://www.obraz.rs/?page_id=396).

35 Srbski Obraz, [http://www.obraz.rs/?page\\_id=398](http://www.obraz.rs/?page_id=398).

takes the ninth place.<sup>36</sup> The “friends” section of the organization’s website provides a link to the website of the Serb Orthodox Church.<sup>37</sup> The first and the second tenets of the *Serb People’s Movement “Naši”* /Ours/ are the same – patriotism and Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>38</sup> As for many other movements, the *Serb Movement Free Serbia* stands for “the defense of St. Sava teachings” while its followers oppose “any reforms whatsoever resulting in schism or movement towards Vatican.”<sup>39</sup>

An open letter to “patriotic organizations and outstanding individuals” the *Srbski Obraz* circulated on the occasion of early parliamentary elections exemplifies sacralization. It quotes that the time has come for “Eastern Orthodox Serb nationalists whose breath of life and struggle is honest and unre-served service to God and their loved ones to proudly and resolutely break out the flag of St. Sava unity, and pledge themselves to God, /national/ harmony and procreation... Only thus will the One and Only God take us, proud and unpunished, under His auspices... Only thus can we be worthy of the support of both the Heavenly and the Earthly Serbia!”<sup>40</sup>

What all these organizations also have in common, apart from elements of sacrality, is the principle of unity, as “a time-tested decision-making” procedure, opposite to parliamentarism that has been in crisis for long.” Hence the *Srpski Obraz* calls itself a “unifying political movement” rather than a political party because we do not believe in pluralism of interests among Serbs but in their unity, their common value system and shared destiny for all the Serbs.”<sup>41</sup> “Unification” is the most concretely ties the Serb Orthodox Church and some of the organization of the above-mentioned “patriotic” group.

*Dveri* – the organization emerging from round tables and launches of the national culture and social issues magazine “Dveri” – has been attempting

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36 „Program Tenets,” SNP 1389, August 30, 2010. [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85).

37 SNP 1389, January 1, 2009. [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=72](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=72).

38 SNP Naši, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/program-3/>.

39 Srbski pokret Slobodna Srbija, <http://slobodna-srbija-nis.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html>.

40 *Srbski Obraz*, January 29, 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=940>.

41 “*Srbski Obraz*, [http://www.obraz.rs/?page\\_id=394](http://www.obraz.rs/?page_id=394).

from the very beginning to revive “unification of the youth” so as to “contribute to successful cooperation among Serb youth.”

### JOINED IN A FRONT

*Announced for September 20 in Belgrade the so-called Pride Parade, actually a shame parade, a parade of Sodom and Gomorrah, only justifies the saying “He who has no shame before the world, has not fear before God.”...Does not the witless incitement of lust between two men or two women undermine the sacred secret of matrimonial love now and forever?...And a fruitless tree is cut to pieces and thrown into flames. Is a fruitless love, love at all? And such is the gay-lesbian love that will never see Heavenly Kingdom as it is barren and unproductive, while its Eros leading to death and suicide equals death...The psychic Church of God cannot and shall not acknowledge perversion as normalcy, sin as virtue, mindlessness as rationality, anti-humanity as humanity, self-destruction and derogation of love, the holiest sphere of life, as joie de vivre and justifiability...It can neither accept nor approve the shame parade as the pride parade, the more so since it is being imposed on us, and violates all the thinking people in public; the more so since such a parade is being staged in the town the patron saint of which for centuries has been the Blessed Virgin Mary. Wise men wear their horns on their breasts, fools on their foreheads...” (Metropolitan Amfilohije, September 2009).<sup>42</sup>*

Unlike the Pride scheduled for September 20, 2009 and then cancelled by the authorities, the October 2014 Pride was staged despite the hue and cry raised by conservative groupings. Except for SPC, Serbia’s “traditional” churches and religious communities released well in advance they would refrain from commenting on the Pride. According to the *Danas* daily, the Office of the SPC Patriarch said the SPC stance on the event had not changed and the last year’s release by Bishop of Bačka Irinij, the spokesman for the SPC, was still “undisputed.” Namely, on September 18, 2009, the Bishop

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42 September 16, 2009, <http://www.mitropolija.com/%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D1%81%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%98%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%99%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D1%82%D0%B7%D0%B2/>.

released at the SPC website, “The Serb Orthodox Church and traditional churches and religious communities oppose the right of public expression of one’s sexuality or any other proneness, especially if such manifestation violates citizens’ right to privacy and family life, and offends their religious beliefs and undeniable personal dignity.”

Throughout 2012 – before the police banned the Pride once again – SPC dignitaries were defaming homosexual marriages, homosexuality, etc. In his Christmas address Metropolitan Amfilohije labeled homosexuality “a suicidal and self-destructing urge.”<sup>43</sup> At the culmination of the campaign against the Pride Patriarch Irinej said in an interview, “I do not condemn those people but pity them deeply. That’s probably something they cannot suppress. That’s a deviation of human nature to be seen nowhere else in the nature. I think that’s a disease and those people need help to overcome their abnormality... The Church does not condemn a sinner but a sin...Such parades insult morality of the absolute majority not only Christians but also other believers, and should not be allowed. I respect everyone’s freedom but the freedom that leads not towards anarchy.” Referring to scenes of violence regularly accompanying all attempts at organizing the disputable manifestation, he said, “No violence, no matter by whom, can be justified. I do not stand for violence in this particular case. If some priests had their hand in it, they did not act with the Church’s blessing...In my view, an efficient way for citizens to express their objection is to bypass the street in which /the manifestation/ takes place, should it take place at all.”<sup>44</sup>

Commenting on the announced Parade in 2013, Patriarch Irinej said the Church opposed the manifestation, adding that SPC and the state should take action to stimulate birth rate, as well as “spiritual and moral renewal of the Serb nation.” He told the *Nedeljnik* weekly that his stance on the Pride was “as bad as it could be.” Asked what was it he would tell those young LGBT people planning to parade Belgrade streets, the Patriarch answered, “Wise men wear their horns on their breasts, fools on their foreheads.”<sup>45</sup> By far more condemning by tradition was Metropolitan Amfilohije who said the ban on the Pride was a wise decision and he hoped Montenegrin authorities

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43 *Danas*, April, 16, 2012.

44 *NIN*, October 4, 2012.

45 *Politika*, September 26, 2013, <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Drustvo/SPC-je-protiv-gej-parade-neophodan-podsticaj-nataliteta.lt.html>.

would also decide so about the Pride Parade scheduled for October 27, 2013 in Podgorica. Everyone has the right to live the life he chooses but not the right to impose his lifestyle on others, he added. "Pride parades in our region are results of the West's propaganda. It's pathetic that the EU also wants the Pride to be organized."<sup>46</sup>

On the eve and after the Montenegrin Pride, Jelko Kacin, the European MP, strongly criticized Metropolitan Amfilohije for hate speech against LGBT population. Having argued that not only demonstrators but also their mentors should be punished, Metropolitan Amfilohije organized "St. Peter procession for Montenegrin pride, dignity, the holiness of marriage and child bearing" in turn. Responding to Kacin's criticism, he said, "I might be rough but I must say that Mr. Kacin and people like him behave and speak about our integration into Europe as if saying, 'Montenegrin, take down your pants to be integrated into Europe.'"<sup>47</sup>

## KOSOVO – EU – NATO

*For motives and interests of its own, and the need to spread further to the East and undermine Russia, the international community sits on its hands in Kosmet. (Bishop Artemije, September 2007).*<sup>48</sup>

*Gentlemen, who paid us a visit riding tanks in 1914? Europe! Who came here in 1941? Was it Europe? We shall be liberating ourselves from such Europe for another two centuries. We shall still have rebellions over here. (Bishop Atanasije Jevtić, February 2004).*<sup>49</sup>

For Metropolitan Amfilohije a US-EU conflict will be another crucifix for the Serbs. Also interesting is his observation that the Serb Church and society are challenged by "the children born in the hideous marriage of a radically

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46 *Večernje novosti*, September 29, 2013, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/planeta.300.html:456344-Amfilohije-Crna-Gora-da-se-ugleda-na-Srbiju-i-zabrani-Prajd>.

47 *Večernje Novosti*, October 25, 2013, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:460668-Amfilohije-Skrnave-mrki-brk-Mandusica-Vuka>.

48 *Pravda*, September 25, 2007

49 *Vreme*, February 19, 2004, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=368709>.

secular consumer mentality – with NATO as its iron fist – and spiritually disastrous communist-Bolshevik atheism.”<sup>50</sup>

SPC’s anti-Europeanism resting on the thesis that Serbia has to sacrifice Kosovo and Metohija for the membership of EU, manifested during the months-long “barricade crisis” in Kosovo (2011) became a point of dispute between the Church’s and the State’s programs for Kosovo. While governmental officials, especially President Boris Tadić and Head of Negotiating Team Borislav Stefanović, were appealing to the Serbs to remove barricades, SPC dignitaries were overtly encouraging them to persist. The Synod warned “all the players of the Kosovo and Metohija drama not to allow its turning into a tragedy,” messaging the President of the Republic and the government that the Church hoped they would not “abandon the Serbs in the Old Serbia for the sake of the Chimera called EU candidacy.” A release penned by Bishop of Bačka Irinej quoted, “For a responsible governance and political elites there is no alternative to Serbia and the Serbs as a whole, while there is one to everything else including the idealized and mythologized EU.”<sup>51</sup>

Several months before the SCP had also argued for the thesis about “no alternative to Kosovo.” In his address during his “historical visit” to Jagodina the Patriarch said that Serbia would be faced with a hard choice as the offer to join Europe entailed “a terrible cost” – renouncement of Kosovo and Metohija. “If we have to sacrifice Kosovo and Metohija for joining Europe, we shall say ‘no, thank you’ to their kindness and love. They should let us be, spare us from their noble deeds, and just let us keep our Kosovo,” he said on the occasion. “We cannot and should not renounce our Holy,” he added thanking “our once friends for their friendship that takes away from us our most precious and holiest place.”<sup>52</sup>

However, the SPC is less reserved about the EU – especially in the Kosovo context – than about NATO. During the strategic military conference for NATO partners in June 2011 in Belgrade, Patriarch Irinej said, “It is unacceptable to have NATO, our arch enemy till recently, organize a conference

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50 *Danas*, May 30–31, 2009.

51 *Danas*, December 3–4, 2011; *Večernje Novosti*, December 3, 2011; *Pravda*, December 3–4, 2011.

52 *Danas*, October 17, 2011.

in Belgrade since the wounds it inflicted on the Serbian people have not healed yet.”<sup>53</sup>

Addressing a gathering in Belgrade on May 10, 2013, retired Bishop Atanasije said, “This trio in power are all traitors who trust NATO guarantees.” Ominously, he continued, “Dačić claims that he stands for mundane policy and is not interested in the celestial one; Đinđić was telling the same and only God can judge his doom... This government believes not in God but in the deadly mythologized EU... Earthly Serbia cannot be without a celestial one.”<sup>54</sup>

Blessing the reconstructed Church of Holy Trinity in Blatina nearby Kolašin, Montenegro, Metropolitan Amfilohije said, “NATO is the Fourth Reich: a follow up to fascism and the ambition for ruling the world.” In his view, the region should join Europe but not as a part of NATO. Referring to the situation of Kosovo which equaled “Murat’s tyranny,” he said, “Now it’s not only the tyranny of Murat but of NATO, the EU and the US as well, actually of all those following in the footsteps of the crusading, inquisitional, Napoleonic and Bolshevik tyranny... Our rulers should think twice. We need to join Europe but what Europe after all? This Europe of today – rascally, tyrannical and the one that tramples the poor – is that the Europe we need?”<sup>55</sup>

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Distancing itself from the deposed president of the Management Board Rade Ljubičić<sup>56</sup>, the Serb People’s Movement 1389 released, “SNP 1389 continues its fervent struggle against the puppet regime of Boris Tadić who leads Serbia towards the abyss called European Union and all those standing in the way of our struggle are siding with Serbia’s foes.”<sup>57</sup> At one time the organization announced charges against the EU activity in the territory of Serbia before the Constitutional Court.<sup>58</sup> Explaining their “third-ranking” goal fol-

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53 *Press*, June 15, 2011.

54 *B92*, May 10, 2013, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2013&mm=05&dd=10&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=712451](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2013&mm=05&dd=10&nav_category=640&nav_id=712451).

55 *Naše Novine*, July 1, 2013.

56 Rade Ljubičić was deposed in December 2008.

57 SNP 1389, August 9, 2010, [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=248%3A-1389&Itemid=82](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=248%3A-1389&Itemid=82).

58 *Blic* online, June 22, 2011, <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Hronika/261377/SNP-Nasi-1389--pred-zabranom>.

lowers of the SNP 1389 say they stand for “global integration of another type, for cooperation with the Russian Federation and BRIC countries in the first place, as well as with all those opposing, like we do, retrograde values of the New World Order; for us the New World Order denotes the EU, NATO and the IMF.”<sup>59</sup> The organization carefully observes the present Ukrainian crisis and claims that, Ukrainian neo-fascists are offsprings of the pro-European fascism to be chocked down as soon as possible. Developments in Ukraine testify why it is that Serbia should stay away from the European Union and NATO.”<sup>60</sup>

The *SNP Naši* takes that the beginning of accession negotiations with EU is “the last act in which the interest of the Serb people will be betrayed, starting from territorial destruction in Kosovo to economic devastation.” Like *Srb-ski Obraz*, this organization holds that “the myth of Serbia’s membership of EU has been fabricated with the sole purpose of destroying the Serb nation and society.”<sup>61</sup>

In the section of their program titled “For the Alliance with Russia” the Dveri argue, “No alternative to EU is a political mantra that has brought us to the edge of abyss and overall destruction; for years we have been subject to EU’s blackmail, the EU which is in deep economic crisis and, therefore, has no resources and free market for others.”<sup>62</sup>

The Party of Serb Unity – named the Caucus of Serb Unity till March 27, 2013 – will cooperate with the countries that have not recognized Kosovo’s independence such as Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa, says its leader Borislav Pelević. “We shall turn to our friends and say goodbye to Europe that wants us to renounce ourselves, to renounce Kosovo and Metohija as an integral part of Serbia. We do not want to see ourselves in such Europe.”<sup>63</sup>

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59 SNP 1389, August 30, 2010, [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85).

60 SNP 1389, June 5, 2014, [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=878:2014-06-05-13-15-09&catid=36:vesti](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=878:2014-06-05-13-15-09&catid=36:vesti).

61 SNP Naši, January 21, 2014, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2014/01/21/pocetak-pregovora-sa-eu-je-izdaja-interesa-gradjana-srbije/>.

62 Dveri, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/program/izborni-program/4948-za-savez-sa-rusijom.html>.

63 *Blic*, January 26, 2013, <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/364598/Pelevic-Stranka-srpskog-jedinstva-pocinje-da-radi-27-marta-partneri-ce-biti-Dveri-Obraz>.



## MOTHER RUSSIA

*We must resume the guiding values of our spirituality and history. Our faith has guided us towards the East. We must rope our little boat to the big ship of our great Slav brotherly nation to which we are connected by blood and faith.* (Patriarch Irinej, November 2012).<sup>64</sup>

While in visit to the Mileševa Monastery in company with Russian Ambassador Alexander Konuzin in October 2011 Patriarch Irinej said, “The Serb people had many friends, at least that’s what we thought, but many of them have sided with those who love us not and hate us...Our friends are few now, but we still have the best of all, the Russian people.”<sup>65</sup>

Strong ties between the SPC and the Russian Orthodox Church but Russia as well have been manifested and strengthened continually at various levels. In early February 2012 the SPC bestowed St. Sava Medal on a Cross on Ambassador Konuzin.<sup>66</sup> His predecessor Ambassador Alexander Alekseev was awarded the same high decoration in 2008.<sup>67</sup>

During his visit to Serbia in March 2011 Russian Premier Vladimir Putin was also given this highest SPC medal in recognition of “his love for the Serb Orthodox Church and precious support to the safeguard of Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia.” It was back in 2007 that at the request of late Patriarch Pavle the Synod passed a decree on this decoration. .<sup>68</sup>

During his first visit to Russia and Patriarch Cyril of Moscow and all Russia, Patriarch Irinej said that Serbia’s leaders were “under the influence of the West,” but “the Church does all in its power to raise their awareness about the powerful Russian history and the Russian Church.” At a meeting in Moscow Patriarchate he appealed to the Russian Orthodox Church and government to help Serbia safeguard Kosovo and Metohija.<sup>69</sup>

On the occasion of the above-mentioned visit to the Mileševa Monastery and decoration ceremony for Interior Minister Ivica Dačić, Bishop of Mileševa

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64 *Večernje Novosti*, November 26, 2012.

65 *Danas*, October 18, 2011.

66 *Kurir*, February 4, 2012.

67 *Politika*, February 8, 2012.

68 *Press*, March 24, 2011.

69 *Politika*, July 17, 2013, <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Drustvo/Poglavari-SPC-i-RPC-kritikuju-srpsko-rukovodstvo-zbog-Kosova.lt.htm..l>

Filaret said that no one could incite bad blood between Serbia and Russia, adding, “Europe, Europe, some plead, but Europe snatched our heart – Kosovo and Metohija.” “We want Russia, long live Russia!” he exclaimed.<sup>70</sup> The Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church have been providing ample assistance for the construction works on the St. Sava Temple. The September 2011 Moscow meeting between the Serbian delegation and Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeyev agreed that Russia’s should supply funds for the St. Sava Temple’s floor mosaic, a contract to be finalized in the following eight years. According to preliminary assessment the project will consume 30–40 million Euros. When he visited Serbia in turn Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeyev confirmed his church’s readiness to finance continuation of construction works and promised funds for 17,000 square meters of mosaic, adding the costs of one square meter amount to 2,000–2,500 Euros.<sup>71</sup>

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Over the election campaign the *Dveri* requested a standstill of “the lethal course to the EU” and movement towards Russia and Euro-Asian integration instead. Emphasizing the rationality of Euro-Asian integration, they argued, “We have better and more honest dealing with Russia than with the European Union...Not only because the Russians have never bombarded us and because we are kindred spirits, and historically and culturally close, but because of common sense by which Russia is in Serbia’s best interests.”<sup>72</sup>

Among its major goals, the *SNP 1389* quotes advocacy “for global integration alternative to pro-Western parties, primarily for cooperation with the Russian Federation and other BRIC countries.”<sup>73</sup>

The *SNP Naši* created a portal on Euro-Asian integrations at [www.evrozija.rs](http://www.evrozija.rs) to spread information about the Euro-Asian Alliance that is about a Euro-Asian geopolitical bloc in Serbia. “The SNP Naši is the first

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70 *Kurir*, October 7, 2011.

71 *Danas*, January 13, 2012.

72 *Dveri*, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/program/izborni-program/4948-za-savez-sa-rusijom.html>.

73 *SNP 1389*, August 30, [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85).

organization worldwide beyond the Russian Federation to develop and publicize a political program for Euro-Asian integration, and did it before Vladimir Putin's announcement of Euro-Asian integration as Kremlin's strategy in the *Izvestija* daily in October 2011," quotes the documents titled "Serbia's First Political Program of Euro-Asian Integration."<sup>74</sup>

Scores of "patriotic" organizations have been arguing for pro-Russian forces in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. So followers of *Srbski Obraz* organized a "cross procession" for killed Russians in Ukraine on May 11, 2014 in Belgrade,<sup>75</sup> while the "fatherland alliance" of Serb Radical Party, *Obraz* and *Naši* staged a protest in front of the EU Delegation in Belgrade under the slogan "Stop the Slaughter of Russian Children in Donetsk, Lugansk and Slavyansk."<sup>76</sup>

The *SNP 1389* has also been expressing its solidarity with the suffering of "our brotherly nation in East Europe" and wholeheartedly supporting "brothers and sisters fighting against the biggest evils of today."<sup>77</sup>

An initiative by the *SNP Naši* launched should also be mentioned here – actually an appeal to citizens of Serbia to boycott the Montenegrin summer resorts so as not to "finance the traitorous regime of Milo Đukanović and his butchers campaigning against the Serbian and the Russian people." "Montenegro's policy is not only anti-Serb but also anti-Russian, and its government has openly sided with longstanding enemies of the Serb nation, evident from its recognition of the false state of Kosovo to sanctions against the Russian Federation," says the *SNP Naši*.<sup>78</sup>

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74 *SNP Naši*, March 18, 2014, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2014/03/18/lansiran-informativni-servis-o-evroazijskim-integracijama-evroazijasrbija/>.

75 *Srbski Obraz*, May 11, 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=1265>.

76 *Srbski Obraz*, June 13, 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=1356>.

77 *SNP 1389*, June 5, 2014, [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=878:2014-06-05-13-15-09&catid=36:vesti](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=878:2014-06-05-13-15-09&catid=36:vesti).

78 *SNP Naši*, May 10, 2014, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2014/05/10/snp-nasi-poziv-na-bojkot-crnogorskog-primorja/>.

## TERRITORY

*The territories the Serbs had lived in for centuries and where they had been in majority before April 1941 when a quisling regime committed genocide against them, cannot pertain to any independent Croatia whatsoever but must be placed under the umbrella of today's Serbia along with all Serb provinces. (Patriarch Pavle, November 1991.).<sup>79</sup>*

*The spine cord of these united territories is already known, and is being shaped again – despite all hardship – by Serbia and Montenegro. Further these territories include Eastern Herzegovina, a considerable portion of Bosanska Krajina, then Srpska Krajina...Contours of these Serb territories have already become evident in all recent developments. Unfortunately Srpska Krajina's cry for help has been ignored in due time...(Metropolitan Amfilohije, April 1992.).*

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*Today the people and the Assembly of Republika Srpska are face-savers for the entire Serb Eastern Orthodox nation; and they are saving our dignity not with empty words and unprincipled compromise but with their blood and lives they have been sacrificing for the defense everything this nation holds holy and honorable, and for the defense of Eastern Orthodoxy for the whole world to see...Today in Bosnia-Herzegovina they are battling for the golden freedom and honor of Eastern Orthodoxy, for the soul of and justice in the entire word, for the holiness of human dignity. (Metropolitan Amfilohije, September 1994.).<sup>81</sup>*

*All of a sudden they all are peacemakers. And actually they've capitulated to AVNOJ borders. To AVNOJ tomb of this nation. Of this country. They've betrayed the Serbs in Macedonia, several thousands of them. They keep quite about them. One fine day they will be writing series of articles about it. They've betrayed the Serbs in Krajina, the Serbs in Montenegro, the Serbs in Bosnia. What will befall the Serbs in Kosovo, the Old Ras, the Northern Bačka? (Bishop Atanasije Jevtić, March, 2002.).<sup>82</sup>*

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<sup>79</sup> Pravoslavlje, November 1, 1991, No. 591.

<sup>80</sup> Duga, April 20, 1992.

<sup>81</sup> Pravoslavlje, September 1–14, 1994.

<sup>82</sup> NIN, March 20, 2002.

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The section titled “The Political State-Building Platform for the Liberation and Unification of All Serb Territories” of the *SNP Naši’s* program refers to “the entire territory of today’s Serbia and its provinces – Kosovo and Metohija, and Vojvodina – the Republic of Montenegro, the Republic of Macedonia, Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as the territory of the occupied Republika Srpska Krajina and Northern Albania.” For the movement, Serbia is “a territorially resurrected state encompassing all Serb territories occupied in the 1990s wars.”<sup>83</sup>

For its primary goal the *SNP 1389* takes “liberation and unification of all Serb territories.” The latter term lists the same, above-mentioned territories.<sup>84</sup>

Among its goals the *Srbski Obraz* quotes “liberation, unification and salvation of the Serb nation and Fatherland as the one and only geopolitical, state-building and spiritual space for all Serb Homelands, from the River Kupa to the River Vardar, from the Danube to the Adriatic Sea.”<sup>85</sup>

On the occasion of the anniversary of Montenegro’s unification with Serbia in 1918 the *Srbski Obraz* released, “*Srbski Obraz* strongly believes that the Serb people in Montenegro and all Serb territories can survive only by restoring the divine values of our Holy Ancestors, liberating themselves from all forms of domestic and foreign oppression, and unification of all Serbs in one and only Blessed State.”<sup>86</sup>

Also most indicative is the statement by the leader of the Party of Serb Unity. “We shall do all in our power to turn the Drina River into the spine of the Serb people, rather than a border, and make it possible for the Serbs at both banks to decide on a referendum whether they want to live in a one and only state.”<sup>87</sup>

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83 [www.nasisrbija.org/index.php/program-3/](http://www.nasisrbija.org/index.php/program-3/).

84 SNP 1389, August 30, 2010, [http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85](http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85).

85 *Srbski Obraz*, [http://www.obraz.rs/?page\\_id=394](http://www.obraz.rs/?page_id=394).

86 *Srbski Obraz*, November 26, 2013, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=816>.

87 *Blic*, January 26, 2013, <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/364598/Pelevic-Stranka-srpskog-jedinstva-pocinje-da-radi-27-marta-partneri-ce-bit-Dveri-Obraz>.

## SERB HEROES

*Like Vuk Karadžić who has guarded and protected our language, at this moment his namesake, together with Ms. Plavšić, our new Maiden of Kosovo, and Krajišnik, safeguard us all and our souls, as they set themselves this very night on the St. Lazar's course. Like Emperor Lazar they have opted for the Heavenly Kingdom. (Metropolitan Amfilohije, April 1993.)*<sup>88</sup>

The Serb Orthodox Church's – or, to put it precisely, most of its dignitaries' – support to ICTY defendants facing “The Hague tyranny” permeates the fierce, nationalistic discourse of the majority church. Once Serbia has fulfilled its obligations to ICTY – extradited all the accused – the SPC rhetoric no longer protected “national heroes who found refuge among their people” but began cherishing “the legacy of Serb heroes.” So, for instance, secular public raised a hue and cry about the launch of the book by Milan Lukić, the convicted war criminal, in the Parochial Home of the St. Sava Temple in Belgrade. The Humanitarian Law Center called relevant institutions and citizens to condemn glorification of a war criminal in a religious facility, and requested the Patriarch to name the priests participating in the launch and provide explanation for the event.<sup>89</sup>

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On September 25, 2009 the Office of Public Prosecutor demanded a ban on SNP „Naši 1389” and „Obraz,” quoting that on July 10, 2005 members of the SNP „Naši 1389” had assaulted the Women in Black commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre with tear gas while chanting “Knife, Wire, Srebrenica!”<sup>90</sup>

Soon after the relevant ministry agreed to have the AVNOJ Boulevard named after Zoran Đinđić plaques “Ratko Mladić Boulevard” were posted

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88 *Borba*, April 30, 1993.

89 *NIN*, August 11, 2011.

90 *Blic online*, June 22, 2011, <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Hronika/261377/SNP-Nasi-1389--pred-zabranom>.

throughout the street: inscription on the lower part of the plaques ran the address of SNP 1389 website at [www.1389.org.yu](http://www.1389.org.yu).<sup>91</sup>

The authorities first gave their approval to a manifestation scheduled for July 11, 2010 in downtown Belgrade by SNP Naši and SNP 1389 under the slogan “Happy July 11, the Day of Srebrenica Liberation.” Later on they decided the ban it considering a change in its program.<sup>92</sup> In late hours of July 10 downtown Belgrade was covered with posters saying “Happy July 11, the Day of Liberation of the Serb Town of Srebrenica! [www.snp1389.rs](http://www.snp1389.rs)”.<sup>93</sup>

Following on the arrest of Ratko Mladić the website “Serb Nationalists” called citizens to protest in front of the parliament on May 29, 2011. SNP Naši 1389 appealed its activists and followers to join “the meeting of support for General Ratko Mladić and show “the treacherous regime that we are not afraid of its threats and repression, and are ready to stand for Serb heroes.” Messaging the administration, “May you perish, you dirty turncoats!” *Obraz* appealed to “all the Serbs knowing who General Ratko Mladić was and what the so-called Tribunal in The Hague stands for” to show up at the rally and thus prove “to ourselves and the whole world that Serbia is not Boris Tadić!” The *Dveri* – Movement for Serbia’s Life – invited citizens to a rally staged by the Serb Radical Party, reminding them that the organizers would want “all the freedom-loving citizens to show that Tadić’s regime is not Serbia, and that for Serbia to survive the West’s servants and underlings should not be in power.”<sup>94</sup>

The SNP Naši staged manifestations throughout Serbia to mark Ratko Mladić’s birthday anniversary. Its activists were busily posting posters, distributing leaflets and writing graffiti. In Belgrade, the “birthday party” was organized together with the Movement for Serbia. Parading down Knez Mihailova

91 *Politika*, May 23, 2007, <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Politika/t29105.lt.html>.

92 *RTS*, July 11, 2010, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/ci/story/134/%D0%A5%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0/736470/%D0%A1%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD+%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BF+%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0+%D1%83+%D0%91%D0%B5%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D1%83.html>.

93 *B92*, July 11, 2010, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2010&mm=07&dd=11&nav\\_category=12&nav\\_id=444782](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2010&mm=07&dd=11&nav_category=12&nav_id=444782).

94 <http://www.srpskinacionalisti.com/2011/05/pozivi-na-protest/>.

Street activists were carrying a large poster with Mladić's picture and caption "Happy birthday, General!"<sup>95</sup>

In January 2014 Srbski Obraz offered its congratulations "to all the Serbs and citizens Republika Srbska, especially its founding-fathers and war commanders, President Radovan Karadžić and General Ratko Mladić," on the occasion of St. Stephen Day and the 22nd anniversary of the "youngest Serb state." "Happy, saint patron's day, heroes!...We look up to God and pray that the Serbs from both banks of the Drina River would restore the spirit of their Ancestors and unite in one and only State based on St. Sava Teachings!"<sup>96</sup>

During the latest election campaign members of the Serb Radical Party, the Srbski Obraz and SNP Naši visited the village of Lazarevo, nearby Zrenjanin, to pay homage to Branislav Mladić, "cousin and famous shelterer of Serb hero General Ratko Mladić."<sup>97</sup>

### **"A DYING RACE"**

*If such low birthrate continues we shall be in minority in our own country. Not only are they taking Kosovo away from us, and that's what they are doing now, they will also take Serbia if Serb mothers bear no babies. (Patriarch Irinej, October 2011.)*<sup>98</sup>

In May 2013 the Synod supported the "physicians-believers" petition against abortion, except when medically justified. The SPC appealed to "the conscience of parents, educators, public servants and all those of influence on the society to do their best, despite economic crisis, to make celebration of life, God's most precious gift, alternative to "the senseless cult of death, in full swing in the Western civilization." In a release circulated to all the eparchies, the Synod recommends "establishment of funds to assist families with more children and work pro-actively, watchfully and therapeutically against

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95 SNP Naši, March 12, 2013, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2013/03/12/odrzana-proslava-rodjendana-general-a-ratka-mladica/>.

96 Srbski Obraz, January 9, 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=924>.

97 Srbski Obraz, February 24, 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=1097>.

98 Vesti Online/Beta, October 16, 2011, <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Srbija/171968/Irinej-Ne-smemo-da-zrtvuujemo-Kosovo-zbog-EU>.



the best of immorality, drug addiction, pornography and other pathogenic phenomena.”<sup>99</sup>

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The Studenica Charter the Assembly of Serb Youth adopted in 2005 calls upon all member-organizations to respect this “declaration on sanctity of human life, the document alerting of biological dying out of our nation because of the low birthrate, which is a direct outcome of spiritual decline.” The declaration developed by Dveri and the Association of Eastern Orthodox Medical Officers “Vitez” /Knight/ illustrates the present campaign against the low birthrate (termed “white plague” in Serbian). According to the declaration the most efficient way to uproot “the elements of the culture of death” or “the spiritual and bodily monster,” abortion, drug addiction, pornography, etc. is “to strengthen Christian virtues and St. Sava mindset.” “The Family, the Church and the State are three pillars of spiritual and bodily health of the Serb nation,” quotes the declaration.<sup>100</sup>

Addressing the ceremony marking the anniversary of the First Serbian Uprising, a representative of Dveri said presenting a platform for the 21st century, “We, the Serbs, are a dying race. Each year Serbia’s no good mothers kill about 200,000 unborn babies...Regardless of its financial resources, every Serb family should try to sire three to four children at least. Settlements will come with man power. And with settlements victorious battles will come, and the Serbs will have Prizren as their own once again.”<sup>101</sup>

A section of SNP Naši program is titled “Fighting Declining Birthrate.” Here the organization refers to a “strategy for overcoming the demographic crisis” meant to “safeguard the Serb nation.” “Today some economic groups are after decrease of the country’s population, and that is an overt threat to our sovereignty and statehood.”<sup>102</sup>

99 Danas, June 5, 2013, [http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/drustvo/povratak\\_u\\_srednji\\_vek.55.html?news\\_id=262015](http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/drustvo/povratak_u_srednji_vek.55.html?news_id=262015).

100 The Fifth Assembly of Serb Youth, the Studenica Monastery, August 2005, <http://pravoslavje.spc.rs/broj/923/tekst/sabor-srpske-omladine/print/lat>.

101 Vreme, February 19, 2004, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=368709>.

102 „Program”, SNP Naši, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/program-3/>.

Syndromic connection between all the above-mentioned theses is probably best exemplified by the “second basic tenet” of Srbski Obraz, named “Srpska Srbija” (Serbian Serbia). It runs as follows, ‘Serb state-building space has been dwindling, while our spiritual and physical existence has never been so threatened as it is today. Today, Serb national question is, ‘Will there be Serbs at all or shall we wiped out, murdered by Shiptar terrorist, Islamic fundamentalists, Ustashi and NATO usurpers? Will there be Serbs at all or shall we vanish into the melting pot of the New World Order for the sake of democracy and the so-called human rights? Will there be Serbs at all or shall we and our children be completely destroyed by abortions, sects, crime and narcotism? Faced with the biggest challenges still to come, the Serbhood can win and survive only in the God blessed national state of its own – in Serbian Serbia that will liberate and unify all the Serb homelands.’<sup>103</sup>

### **“BIGGER CATHOLICS THAN THE POPE”**

In 2013 following on the St. Vitus Day the SNP Naši appealed to SPC to excommunicate Ivica Dačić, Aleksandar Vučić and Tomislav Nikolić for having signed the Brussels Agreement on Kosovo, and for the “anti-Christian and anti-Serb” actions by the incumbent regime. A part of the organization’s request to Church dignitaries is most intriguing. Namely, it quoted that “should dignitaries take pictures with disputable individuals, shake hands with them or hug them, SNP Naši would not keep their mouth shut but would tell people that the Church has turned into a blessing of anti-Christian policy and abandoned its St. Lazar heritage.” Should it welcome “Belgrade’s NATO soldiers” SPC “would no longer be either Serbian or Eastern Orthodox, it would be no longer be a church at all, let alone the one of St. Lazar or St. Sava.”<sup>104</sup>

It also requested the Synod to call an extraordinary session and tell the Serbs and the entire public whether in the months to come it would become an accomplice of the regime’s unconstitutional and illegal policy for Kosovo. To better explain its demands, the SNP Naši reminded that SPC had

103 “Basic Tenets,” Srbski Obraz, [http://www.obraz.rs/?page\\_id=396](http://www.obraz.rs/?page_id=396).

104 SNP Naši, June 29, 2013, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2013/06/29/snp-nasi-ponovili-zahtev-da-se-dacic-vucic-i-nikolic-iskljuce-iz-spc/>.

condemned signing of the Brussels Agreement but that later on Patriarch Irinej participated in its implementation by appealing to Kosovo Serbs to cast ballot in “illegal and unconstitutional election.” It also reminded that some Bishops had openly criticized the Patriarch’s appeal on behalf of SPC, as well as the Church’s complicity in “lawlessness and injustice” against Serbia and the Serbs in Kosovo.<sup>105</sup> Consequently, the SNP Naši was infuriated with the news that Patriarch Irinej was about to bestow the Order of St. Sava on Aleksandar Vulin, head of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija and minister without portfolio, in the Dečani Monastery. “When is he /the Patriarch/ going to decorate posthumously Sultan Murat and Adolph Hitler?” Patriarch Irinej was labeled “the key person of the implementation of NATO plan for the change in the Serbs’ mindset” and “the mastermind of unpatriotic model of Serb heroes.” The organization even called for his resignation – it wanted his to withdraw so as to “prevent further derogation of the Church and smearing of the holy tradition of Serb patriarchs who have served their people and God rather than political parties and politicians.”<sup>106</sup>

The St. Nikolaj Day, the patron saint of the Srbski Obraz, was besmeared by Bishop Milutin who bestowed the Order of St. Sava on President Tomislav Nikolić, “the man who betrayed everything he used to pledge – from God, through Kosovo and Metohija, to his shackled best men, Vojislav Šešelj,” released the organization. “Regretfully, this is not an isolated act of shame since the orders of St. Sava, St. Bishop Nikolaj, St. Emperor Constantine and other have been bestowed by the bushel on most infamous traitors.”<sup>107</sup>

Commenting on the celebration of St. Vitus Day in Gazimestan in 2014, Dveri criticized organizational arrangements for this traditional manifestation. The organization argued that politicians in power had misused the memorial, adding, “people attending it remained doubtful about the hookup between the authorities and their actions, and the Church.”<sup>108</sup>

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105 SNP Naši, November 20, 2013, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2013/11/20/snp-nasi-patrijarh-irinej-je-pogazio-ustav-republike-srbije/>.

106 SNP Naši, November 23, 2013, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2013/11/23/snp-nasi-pitaju-patrijarha-kada-cete-odlikovati-murata-i-hitlera/>.

107 Srbski Obraz, May 3, 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=1280>.

108 Dveri, July 2, 2014, <http://dverisrpske.com/sr/dveri-na-delu/5604-sa-gazimestana-bez-svetla-medija.html>.



**Pavel Domonji**

# Autonomists, “The Red Flag Of Communism”

## 1.

Several years ago the Committee for Security of the Vojvodina’s Assembly asked the police to submit it a report on extremist groups in Serbia and Vojvodina and their activism. The said report mentioned some organizations – “Nacionalni stroj” /National Front/, “Krv i čast” /Blood and Honor/, “Racionalisti” /archaic term, Racionalists/, “Obraz” /Honor, free translation/ and “Pokret 64 županije” /64 Counties Movement/ – and said that characteristic of them were nationalism, ideological exclusiveness, devotion to Radovan Karadžić, anti-Westernism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and animosity for liberal values.

I am not sure whether the number of such organizations grew in the meantime, but that is not exactly important. What matters is that Vojvodina has an infrastructure that occasionally generates chauvinism and violence, the infrastructure used to incite, control, mete out and channel outbursts of violence.

When peace marchers in the Novi Sad protest “Stop to Fascism” were assaulted in 2007, the media ran ideologically hued stories about groups of disoriented youth not even knowing the meaning of fascism, and which, therefore, should not be taken seriously. It maybe that somewhere, say in Britain, children take that Hitler was some football coach, Auschwitz an amusement park, and Holocaust a celebration marking the end of the WWII. But what about those who know, whose duty is to know? Why do they trivialize?

I think that media trivialization is not just coincidental but testifies of the convenience of fascism. Whether these groups will be demonized,

incriminated, banned or trivialized by the media depends on what suits the bigwigs. In the above-mentioned case by calling fascist the disoriented youth they wanted to belittle extremism threatening not only fundamental values (freedom, equality, safety, etc.) but persons and organizations known for their strong criticism of nationalism and insistence on facing the past – and which are presented in a negative light for their advocacy.

Serb nationalism has run its course – from intellectual affectation in the Writers' Club to barbarism in the field. Instead of harshly criticizing it today's society tries to disburden nationalism of the horror it has produced. Disburdenment cannot be a one-way process: when some are disburdened others are burdened. If fascists the just the disoriented youth, then autonomists are nothing but perfidious destroyers. If the former go too far occasionally in their nationalistic zeal, the latter, deprived of national sentiments, fail all the time. If the former act in the best interest of their nation, the latter act cunningly in the interest of someone else. Maybe the former are ignorants but they belong to their nation with all their hearts. And that can hardly be said for the latter.

I did not bring face to face fascist and anti-fascists, but fascists and autonomists for two reasons. First, Vojvodina's autonomists insist consistently on anti-fascism. Second, anti-fascism divides a nation, and by insisting on it autonomists have been keeping these divisions alive. For them national reconciliation is something like a reactionary Utopia.

Given that from the anti-fascist standpoint there can be no national reconciliation, reconciliation has been approached from the stance opposite to anti-fascism. Hence we witness rehabilitation of the Chetniks and mushrooming of extremist groups. In the new memory order the Chetniks are no longer collaborationists but anti-communists.

However, neither are autonomists what they used to be: once advocates of a high-level of regional self-administration (regional self-determination) became a *disease, anti-Serbs, anti-culture and ideological successors of communism*. Unlike scores of intellectuals seeking refuge from their nationalism and capitulation to communism in nationalism, autonomist took up cheerfully the role of a *red flag of communism* missing no opportunity to remind all and sundry that it was in that totalitarian, communist regime that Vojvodina was in heyday and began regressing when Serbia turned to nation, Eastern Orthodoxy, tradition, myths and redefinition of state borders.

## 2.

Now I will dwell on two phenomena: requests for the annulment of Vojvodina and the label of extremism on autonomists.

It was not in early 2013 that the first calls for Vojvodina's annulment came when the Progressive Club requested Serbia's MPs to take the initiative in this direction. Other organizations had already made the same demands. For instance, the Serb Radical Party once designated Vojvodina's annulment its program goal. Later on the Serb People's Movement "Svetozar Miletić" suggested calling a referendum on the province's autonomy. Two years ago the *Dveri* announced a campaign for its annulment.

And why is it that Vojvodina should be annulled? For the followers of Svetozar Miletić the autonomy was justified only at the time Vojvodina was a part of a foreign empire. They argue that during the rule of communist and autonomists, as their heirs, autonomy was turned into something anti-Serb and anti-culture and, rather than integrating the Serbs, it divided and antagonized them.<sup>109</sup> Vojvodina should be annulled, claims he Progressive Club, because it undermines the rights of the Serbs in Serbia's north and makes them unequal to minority communities in Vojvodina and other regions.<sup>110</sup> For the *Dveri*, a Serb autonomy within Serbia also makes no sense: it only multiplies the bureaucracy and devalues productive enterprises. Besides, as they put it, advocacy for autonomy has become a profitable political business from which citizens of the province, unlike the political class, derive no benefit whatsoever.<sup>111</sup>

Requests for the annulment of Vojvodina's autonomy should not come as a surprise, at least not to anyone in Vojvodina. They are a faraway echo of the populist policy Vojvodina once resounded with, the echo of the policy the Eight Session (of the League of Communist of Serbia) had launched under the veil of "anti-bureaucratic revolution:" Vojvodina had to be disciplined

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109 More about the movement's stance on autonomy in the collection of papers („The Book about the Movement) by writers, academicians, historians, university professors, etc. The publication is available at <http://snp-miletic.narod.ru/start.html>.

110 Vidi: [http://www.napredniklub.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Pismo\\_poslanicama\\_APV\\_27\\_01\\_13-Napredni-klub-CIR.pdf](http://www.napredniklub.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Pismo_poslanicama_APV_27_01_13-Napredni-klub-CIR.pdf).

111 See: <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/nas-stav/2401-10-razloga-za-ukidanje-autonomije-vojvodine.html>.

and subordinated to Serbia. The “revolution” replaced Vojvodina’s cadres with supporters of Slobodan Milošević, reduced Vojvodina’s autonomy and debuted a new collective hero – the people.

The communist nomenclature was deposed under the pretext of having bureaucratized, distanced itself from the people and become insensitive to their problems. Strongly supported by the masses, instrumentalized media and the apparat made of persons loyal to the new leaders, Serbia amended the Constitution. Whatever the balance of power made impossible to change in the system was changed through factors beyond the system. The official propaganda named the mass clamor the popular will; the legitimate foundation of the communist regime was discarded – a new one came in its place. Vojvodina’s autonomy was nothing but a façade, while Serbia, once “made of three parts,” was finally a whole. While choking ethnic minorities, tentacles of the bureaucratic octopus were reaching beyond Serbia. The attempt to achieve similar results elsewhere through the “export” of anti-bureaucratic revolution turned to be a half-baked scheme: the Montenegrin leadership was ousted but not the Slovenian which strongly resisted the “exports.” However, federal relations were ruined beyond repair.

Though finally “a whole,” Serbia would not renounce the votes from Vojvodina and Kosovo in the SFR Presidency. With the helping hand from the Montenegrin member of the Presidency it controlled fifty percent of the vote and hence could veto anything it deemed contrary to its interest. It was obvious that the anti-bureaucratic revolution was not after the ouster of “fauteuil-holders” and callous bureaucrats but after political opponents to constitutional amendment, Serbia’s sovereignty over the entire territory and rearrangement of federal relations. Now, three decades after the anti-bureaucratic revolution, we see that the processes of turning Serbia into “a whole” and sovereign ended as a historical fiasco: Kosovo is a part of Serbia no more, while Vojvodina autonomists would not reconcile themselves to a façade autonomy. Some of them – now within political parties – want even more: Serbia’s federalization and Vojvodina as a republic.



### 3.

And what about citizens of Vojvodina? The semantics of Serb nationalism denotes them as threats to Serb identity. They are problematic because they “decrease” the Serb population and are perceived as some new, artificial nation that will call for a state of its own sooner or later.<sup>112</sup>

This obscure project, claim nationalists, will be implemented in several phases. The first will insist on essential autonomy and demand judicial, executive and legislative powers; the second will call for Serbia’s federalization; and, the third will be after secession and establishment of an independent state.

For some time now nationalists have been warning against “the Montenegrin scenario” in Vojvodina. To avoid it, they say, Vojvodina should be simply annulled. However, the problem is that annulment could not be realized peacefully, without any resistance or and internationalization of the Vojvodina issue. Experience teaches us that simple and easy solutions often turn into costly and traumatic ones.

### 4.

If citizens of Vojvodina and autonomists bother so much nationalistic ideologists, what about the sociological construct we usually call the common man whose normative horizons are shrinking as years go by, and who struggle to have the ends meet?

If in the 1990s the answer to the question “Why are we so poor?” was something like because of Slovenians, Croats, Albanians, America, Vatican,

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112 “Ever since the Dresden Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1928 new nations have been fabricated busily, the same as senseless autonomies, just to break the backbone of the Serb nation,” says Dragan Nedeljković, president of SNP “Svetozar Miletić.” “For this purpose schools were misused for smashing the ancient consciousness and fabrication of a new one.” That Nedeljković is not isolated in this opinion testifies a petition signed by a group of intellectuals. Petitioners argue that the Vojvodina Academy of Arts and Sciences has been entrenching a specific Vojvodina identity and now only has to construct the Vojvodina language and church to round off a new nation. See: <http://www.dveri-novisad.com/index.php/p-ici-vnih-licn-s-i-z-u-id-n-u-n-i>.

communists and just name it, now this answer holds no water. Telling a person that his or her living conditions are so bad because of Vojvodina and autonomists would insult the intelligence of anyone. And not because citizens of Serbia have internalized the picture of those in Vojvodina as honest, hardworking, peaceful and loyal people, but because that would be a wrong answer. Today citizens of Serbia fear by far more poverty, loss of job and illness than citizens of Vojvodina and autonomists. But, if autonomists and Vojvodina are not perceived as threats and a threatening identity against which the nation should homogenize and insist on ironclad ethnic unity, why is it that autonomists are presented as extremists, separatists and traitors?

First, over here a nation is perceived as an organic community the members of which are united by language, religion, tradition, origin and collective memory. To such a nation one belongs by birth rather than by free choice; its crucial integral part is not the right but culture in general terms. It's only logical then why it is that nationalists denounce the advocacy for autonomy not only as a *monstrous anti-Serb attitude* but also as *anti-culture* acting against the consciousness and ethnics of the modern Serb nation. "More than a century /intellectuals/ have been writing and thinking about this modern Serb nation for all the Serbs,<sup>113</sup> while autonomists now turn their back on all this wishing to make senseless all the efforts of those great men, patriots, poets and writers who have been demonstrating their loyalty to the Serb nation." Being an vehement autonomist, says Dragan Nedeljković, is the same as being against Sava Tekelija, Dositej, Sterija, Branko, Zmaj, Laza Kostić, Đura Jakšić, Crnjanski, Pupin, Paja Jovanović and Uroš Predić – in other words, being against culture, literature and art the Pannonian soil had germinated.<sup>114</sup>

And then, given that their "senseless anti-Serb policy sacrifices culture and national dignity," autonomists must be stopped short and given a resolute "no" so as to reestablish the undermined Serb unity. Autonomists stand in the way of pan-Serb unity, spiritual renewal and moral rebirth by invoking some Vojvodina nation and fabricating differences between the Serbs on the left and the right banks of rivers Sava and Danube.<sup>115</sup>

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113 <http://snp-miletic.narod.ru/knjiga/19.html>.

114 "We should not allow a handful of losers deprive us of the very essence of our being," says Dragan Nedeljković. See, <http://snp-miletic.narod.ru/knjiga/16.html>.

115 As they court Europe autonomists are trying to show and prove that they have been integrated in it for long and are totally different from their countrymen south of the

Finally, autonomists should be checked to make it possible for nationally pronounced cultural elites to safeguard their position and role among the people which is “crushed, confused and mistakenly educated, with distorted feelings, blurred consciousness and butchered morality.”<sup>116</sup> To prevent “national catastrophe and state-building disaster” national consciousness must be built up, people taught their true, clear-cut national identity and those renouncing this identity or undermining it denounced.

Against such backdrop autonomist can hardly avoid extremization. They need it to get deligitimized; the deligitimization is being implemented at three levels: cultural where they delegitimize themselves as anti-culture; national and national policy for being called anti-Serbs fabricating some new nation; and, at the level of the state for being treated as separatists planning to secede from Serbia nothing but the region that gave birth to philosophy, ethics and self-consciousness of the Serb nation. So extremization and deligitimization end up in essentialization of autonomists: everything negative and unwelcome from a national standpoint, all the odium decent and, as nationalists like to say, cultural European nations have for those who renounce their own nation was politically concentrated in autonomists. To nationalists’ eye, autonomists are living proofs of the saying “Serbs are their own worst enemies.”

## 5.

Calls for Vojvodina’s annulment and extremization of autonomists as separatists and traitors are not unrelated: rather than separate these are two well-planned and synchronized processes.

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Sava and Danube rivers,” says historian V. Krestić, adding that autonomists are after strengthening a special identity of Vojvodina citizens that would differ from the Serb identity and even confront it. See, <http://snp-miletic.narod.ru/knjiga/6.html>.

116 Crushed and dismembered Serbs are the most confused nation in Europe, says D. Nedeljković. “What contributed to their confusion was Tito’s ideology, especially its stance on the national question, socialist schools that mistakenly educated people, and the autonomy distorted as a senseless anti-Serb policy to which culture, historical truth and fundamental national dignity are sacrificed.” See, <http://snp-miletic.narod.ru/bilten/009/2.html>.

Annulment of Vojvodina would leave autonomists without an institutional stronghold, undermine their influence and probably downsize their supporters. That would only be logical, given that in a poor country individual interests come before ideological beliefs.

Nationalists see Vojvodina's autonomy as a relict of communism. It is a communist creation, they stress to point to its anti-Serb character. This is why the calls for an essential autonomy, autonomists have been insisting on, have always been placed in the political specter of dangerous, invasive project threatening the nation's unity and the state's integrity. Autonomist are not, therefore, just ideological opponents but enemies of the state. And they should be discredited and deligitimized as separatists, while Vojvodina annulled to prevent separatism.

## 6.

With Vojvodina abolished and autonomists neutralized the Serb nation would faster restore its authentic values curbed by the decades of the rule of communists and their atheistic materialism, claim nationalists.

They pay no heed to the most interesting fact that the autonomous Vojvodina, the communist creation, outlived communism itself. And by renouncing communism they have been renouncing the complex which – like secularism – is not authentically communist, but which communists have taken over from enlighteners. No wonder, therefore, that restoration of true and authentic values has taken the form of pathetic clericalization and the dogmata the church has been imposing on the society as value-based matrix for various social players, their activities and requests.

This is not (just) about the right to stage pride parades but (also) about autonomists' right to demand an essential autonomy<sup>117</sup> that, as nationalists alert dramatically, threatens with “yet another dismemberment and destruction” of the nation and the state. Only a strong national unity could eliminate all “artificial” divides and prevent further decadence. The institutions that legitimize these divides should be simply abolished – say, the Vojvodina Academy of Arts and Sciences because, reason nationalists and clerics, it has

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117 Commenting on the Vojvodina Statute the Synod expressed its fears of “further dismemberment and destruction of the already shrunk and incapacitated Serb state.

been working on the emergence of the Vojvodina nation – while the individuals and organizations insisting on these institutions or deepening the existing divides with their “feeble-minded” requests should be exposed and defamed.

Public stigmatization is more than an ideological triage sorting into groups healthy or loyal sons of the nation and those ill or degenerate. As it precedes violence public stigmatization is used to justify it. It is meant not only to disgrace a political opponent but to channel all the accumulated anger and frustration towards him. So it happened that priests’ cloaks, academician’s gowns and the fist of the disoriented national-socialist youth united in common concern for the future of the nation. While the first were burning incense and invoking Holy Spirit, the second writing and signing medleys, the third were deriving ultimate conclusions from the theses proposed by national mandarins and demonstrating in everyday life how to protect the threatened national values and act against those questioning them.

## 7.

One should not fall for right-wing extremists’ promises about achieving their goals in a peaceful and political way without the use of violence. In the nationalistic division of labor they are not in charge of the academy but the street, not tasked with moralistic rhetoric but curses, they are not supposed to wear elegant shoes but brogues. They are not expected to be theoreticians but national practitioners who perfectly understand national ideologists but despise their academicism and inefficiency. Violence is inseparable from extremism, since violence – and not only brochures, leaflets or pamphlets – is the way extremists communicate their beliefs.

There are many ways in which to confront extremists – we can demonize them in the media, condemn their morality, prosecute them, report them to the police, isolate them from the society and even ban their organizations that act against key social values and the Constitution. But the law can neither ban the economic crisis, the crisis of the national identity, disintegration of morality, protracted and failed transition, authoritarian tradition, war defeats, deep changes in social tissue, blighted hopes, poverty, frustration, insecurity nor fear. The same as the law cannot ban the feelings of a Belgrade

secondary school student who said, “We are living like rats in a country that has no future.”

All this suits extremists perfectly. The rise of the right wing in neighboring countries and in Europe also plays into its hands. What handicaps extremists, however, is the fact that they’ve been left without an influential political patron in the parliament, the patron that would, like in 2007, buffer and redirect the odium their violence hand cause towards political opponents, and open them the doors to the media and financial resources.

## 8.

Violence is universally understandable way of communication – leftist and rightists, extremists and moderates, those in the majority and those in the minority, and not people only but plants also they say, perfectly understand it. But speaking about violence let me point out to several phenomena. Some of these phenomena have to do with Vojvodina’s ethnic diversity.

First, not every act of violence between members of different ethnic communities is ethically motivated as a rule. People may be violent for hundreds of other reasons.

Second, the media hardly lessen tensions when qualifying each and every act of violence as ethnically motivated. Ethnically motivated incidents attract public attention, and this is why one should note the difference in media coverage of the incidents involving Serb victims on the one hand, and, say, Hungarian, Croat, Roma, etc. on the other. By far more coverage is given to the incidents in which victims come from the majority nation.

Third, every ethnically motivated violence should be condemned morally and prosecuted. Most importantly, a local community a bully comes from should condemn his or her behavior, distance itself from him or her, and make no bones about not tolerating such acts and attitudes.

Last but not least, let me refresh your memory: Ištvan Pastor, president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, said that in 2003–04 incidents had been politically “inflated” since the election campaign had been built on the thesis about the threatened Hungarian community. Incidents come handy in politics, they homogenize groups and mobilize their support to ethnic elites once led by Jozsef Kasa and now by Ištvan Pastor.

There is yet another phenomenon not to be ignored – either from moral or political standpoint. Namely, intra-ethnic incidents are taking place in the shadow of interethnic violence. In a TV show addressing interethnic incidents in Temerin, anchorwoman Marina Fratucan gave the floor young Hungarians who spoke about hostility their peers from the Hungarian community subjected them for being on friendly terms with young Serbs. This testifies of a high level of chauvinism among young Hungarians. As well as among young Serbs.

The cases of intra-ethnic incidents are not rare, especially in the communities undergoing identity crisis. A community's identity-building is not a non-conflict process. Identity-building borders are being drawn to those "outside" as well as to those "inside," to those who are ethnically different as well as to those who are "ours" by birth but would not politically integrate because of that. They weaken us, undermine and dilute, and should be eliminated this way or another, claim nationalists.

Long is the list of persons in Serbia who have been smeared, assaulted, demonized and discredited as someone with "burnt consciousness," traitors or mercenaries. The lists of anti-Serbs publicized from time to time could really make lives difficult to those named. Such lists are constitutively important to extremists; however, their real targets are not the listed persons but the anonymous majority. This is the majority to which they put across the message that autonomy – individual or territorial-political – is harmful and absurd.

Opponents to autonomy are not only those who fetishize the state but also the ones who, like domestic fascists, want individuals to think twice whether his or her decision contributes to national interest. If not, the individual should give up his or her preferences; for, the life is meaningful and dignified only if one unconditionally belongs to a nation. And it goes without saying that, in such a case, the nation is unified and inseparable, an organism as a whole rather than a set of autonomous individuals.





**Jelena Višnjić**

# “Look at Me, You Unfaithful Wife:” The Right-Wing on Women, The Women of the Right Wing and the Serbia Case

*In today's world one of major tasks is to redefine, reconstruct, review and rewrite the very concept of politics and/or of things political. All all this should imply plurality as it relates to all the complexities of the life itself; it relates to hard decisions to be made, and the uncertainty of their effects; the plurality is in play every time I and the “other” come face to face.*

—Jelisaveta Blagojević

## **1. Contextural Background, the Rise and the Growth of the Right-Wing in Today's Serbia**

Deep crisis evident in all areas of social life has been shaking Serbia over the past two decades. Serbia is a “destroyed” (Bolčić, 1994) system in transition, trying to establish and define new economic, political and cultural standards. Conflicting ideologies, objectives and predominant matrixes have been destabilizing individual and collective efforts for the establishment of a more just and democratic order. Institution-building and policy-making are under the burden of the legacy of the 1990s and the tragic policy of the Milošević regime. All this stalls reform processes in the state with seemingly fast changing social context that, in fact, remains stuck in “the permanency of myths and inertia of conservatism” (Kolakovsky 1989, 20 and traumas of historical mistakes and corrections.

What earmarks today's Serbia are undeveloped political institutions, rudimentary parliamentarianism with all the power in the hands of political parties, high level of corruption and citizens' growing passivity about policy-makers (quote, Milivojević 2006, 82). We are living in the times of militarism, growing violence, the predominant nationalistic discourse, traditionalism and provincialism, and the growing influence of extreme right-wing and fascist groups on public and media discourse. Extreme right-wing groups became major players at Serbia's political and social arena back in the 1990s. "While in the wars in the territory of the former SFRY extreme right-wing group operated mostly as paramilitary formations, today's right-wing organizations, against a different backdrop, continue spreading national, racial and religious hatred, and provoking violent incidents" (Stakić, 2013).

The rise of the right-wing extremism in today's Serbia has some of most important determinants of the new European right-wing such as economic, political and national/identity crisis but is also determined by local specificities, especially the 1990s wars, glorification of war criminals and the aggressively destructive nationalism of the 1990s in the former Yugoslav territory. A map of the factors that awakened the right-wing in Serbia shows the following social points: "normalization of nationalism, the rise of anti-fascism, disputability of the secular state and deficient rule of law" (Stakić 2013, Kuljić 2002). On the other hand, the state's failure to impose regulations and norms, and a political "comeback" of retrograde, nationalistic parties (the Serb Progressive Party in the first place) actually generate a form of alliance between rightists and the state.

Facts indicate the past and what happened in the past, and indicate how discouraged these right-wing groups were when parties that had promoted the policy of war and participated in it came to power. Activists of the Serb Radical Party and formations close to it – White Eagles, Tzar Dusan the Great and many other groups today merged with political parties – have not only participated in armed operations but also committed war crimes. These various right-wing groups – now putting across a variety of political messages – reveal their readiness to put on uniforms on short order, and take up arms like in "1991-92 and in 1998-99" (Kandić, 2013).

Right-wing organizations active in today's Serbia's social and political life are the outcomes of the continual "ethnic conflict" (Stakić) in these areas. "Apology of war crimes, obsession with national humiliation and

victimization, and advocacy for national revanchism are key segments of their ideology” (Stakić, 2013). Although this is paradigmatic of it, there are differences in this ideology. So, there are two factions at this moment: the right-wing organizations of Christian orientation like *Obraz*, *Dveri*, *SNP Naši* and *SNP 1389* on the one hand, and neo-fascist groupings like *National Front* and *Rationalists* on the other.

Right-wing groups are growingly involved in social and political life, active at the public scene and are its recognizable players. The media and the the Serb Orthodox Church are creating the climate propitious to their legitimacy. The media (especially the tabloids that have occupied the public and the media sphere) have been supporting the ruling structures and generating xenophobia, homophobia and hate speech through authoritative promotion of lay stands, prejudice, “traditional Serb values,” both religious and moral. On the other hand, transformations of the social system after the collapse of socialism redefined Serbia’s public sphere that is more and more under the influence of the Serb Orthodox Church – a key promoter of the traditional discourse and opponent to social modernization, but also a powerful player “not only in the sphere of culture but also in political and even economic decision making” (Perica 2011, 37).

As of the early 1990s the Serb Orthodox Church /SPC/ was no longer just a religious institution – it imposed itself on the public sphere as a political factor too. Its role in the wars in the ex-Yugoslav territory was infamous: it sided with the Serbian regime and secured theological justification of war crimes (Đorđević 2001, Stakić 2013). The attitude toward war crimes, LGBT population and Pride Parades, territories and Serbia’s fictitious borders is common to some church dignitaries and the right-wing ideologists: hence, the society is being clericalized in parallel with ever growing influence and visibility of extreme right-wing groups.

SPC has been taking these groups under its wings no as sinners to be saved but as energetic, young believers ensuring its future against the tide of satanic atheism and secularism.

The situation is about the same when it comes to football hooligans: stadiums have been turned into hotbeds of intolerance, homophobia and hate speech. There, rightists are celebrating and congratulating one another. They are gloating over the fact that the state continues forming new and new commissions to cope with the problem of hooligans the hoods of which hide drug

dealers, pickpockets from social margins and false protectors of sports, sport clubs, family values and whatever else (Jakšić, 2014).

Governmental policies for these groups – or non-application of penal policy, no trials in the cases of violence, unwillingness for systematic curbing of their activism and unreadiness for banning extremist groups – “contributes to the establishment of right-wing extremism as a legitimate frame of political views and actions” (Stakić, 2013). In the absence of clear-cut political will to punish/ban them we shall witness all-inclusive fasticization of the society as the aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, fear of any “otherness” and fear of all those of other religion have been revived in public and media discourse.

Destruction of social order and rehabilitation of patriarchal, provincial, parochial culture initiates various social processes including the reconstruction and redrawing of women identities – but of their bodies too, turned into social and cultural products “instead of social, political, cultural and geographical notions” (Elisabeth Grosz). Comprehensive re-traditionalization of the 1990s revitalized traditional, patriarchal stereotypes about women’s roles and duties in the public sphere. This process put a stamp on the everyday life of women whose bodies and identities are turned into a political expression – “in the service of the community’s cohesion” (Iveković 2000, 10).

Women as such are non-existent apart from the economy of symbolic goods wherein women’s faces and bodies confirm the order. They stand for lineage, family, nation, race, religion, etc. (exactly for the community) and are in the service of securing the symbolism of social capital. Of course, this capital does not belong to women. In this context, in advertisements or in political propaganda women are what we see at first glance (a picture of a woman) but a picture of patriarchal order, a picture a social construct wants for itself (Iveković 2000, 10).

Although our fundamental rights (to vote, work, to education, abortion and divorce) seem available and unquestionable today, the system keeps confiscating again and again the territories we have already occupied, and indicating how instable our position and regenerative capacity of patriarchy are. Along with racism, xenophobia and ignorance of other cultures, the right-wing recognized this potential, used it and built a symbolic capital that pictures women as “others,” as figures reflecting mainstream social relations, usually inferior ones, unwelcome and of minor importance to mainstream ideology/ideologies.

## 2. "Vaginal Manipulation:" Women in the Right-Wing Nationalistic Ideology

*"MPs and your beads, stay away from my ovaries!"*

The militant, nationalistic discourse of the official policy and general relapse into traditionalism in the past two decades have mapped the borders of female body meant to reaffirm its reproductive potential and thus contribute to identity-building and revitalization of the traditional community. The draft law on population policy in 1990, repressive measures of the republican legislation and resolutions, aggressive statements by SPC and its Synod, continuous promotion of birth growth, raising the question of another ban on abortion – a ban on a fundamental human/women's right, the reproductive right – make the foundation of nationalistic projects whereby the state and the Church appropriate female bodies as their own territories.

"We call upon our spiritual daughters to give birth to children rather than kill them in their wombs under the pretext of family planning. Poverty is no excuse for not having children; true, children are demanding, but money cannot buy what they need most – and that is family love and peace" (Patriarch Pavle).

Development of new conservative ideologies – not an exclusive issue in Serbia but the one coinciding with the rise of right-wing all over Europe – implies instrumentalization and naturalization of women identities (women's roles and symbolic representation of these roles).

Subjugation of women and female bodies in nation-building processes results in two interdependent forms of violence against them: the highly restricted identity of patriotic command (no abortion) to women in a community, and extreme violence as rapes (identity-plowing of territories, author's remark) (Papić 2001, 22).

"Women are above all perceived as mothers and normative femaleness in thus construed. It is also construed through pro-natality policies and supporting argumentation" (Broz, 2011). In other words, strengthening of "reproductive capacity" is insisted on (Papić 2001, 21) to fortify the potential of national identity. This potential invested women with the legitimacy of instruments of community renewal since, perceived only as bodies, they really symbolized continuity of family line and reproduction. Hence, women are positioned in their "vaginal zones" rather than as active participant in social sphere

holding relevant views on political, cultural, economic and social developments. “Women’s absence from public sphere is in itself a hallmark of Serb patriarchal culture and policy. Women are not even discussed in public except in the context of nation (Papić 2001, 23). Patriarchal strategy for production of manipulable women was replaced by the strategy for production of invisible women. What and who are to be ignored, who is to be favored, deconstruction of various levels of participation and suspension – all these are methods of an oppressive system (Višnjić, Lončarević 2011, 22) Serbia’s official policy has been using continually.

Against the backdrop of constant political tension and decision-making on deep socioeconomic crises and establishment of new historical frames, the women’s issue is placed at the margins of the political agenda. Actually, all we can speak about is a snail-paced progress in the position of women or the loss of acquired privileges. It is the denial of their right to decide on their own bodies and choices – a paradigm of the conservative, nationalistic policies, but also the value matrix of the right-wing, common to various social systems – that disqualifies women at public scene. In 2013 the issue of abortion was back once again at parliamentary agendas in Spain, France and Macedonia.

Despite strong public protests, the Macedonian Parliament passed the Law on Termination of Pregnancy providing restrictions to abortion. Precisely, in Macedonia women shall be allowed to one abortion per year, and allowed the second one only if medically confirmed that their lives were in danger or that a child would be born with grave physical or mental disabilities, or in the cases of rape or incest.

On January 20, 2014 several thousands of people in Paris protested against abortion on the eve of parliamentary consideration of a draft law providing more liberal terms for termination of pregnancy. Organizers of the protests were religious, right-wing groups and homophobic activists. The protest was inspired by the December 2013 amended legislation in Spain the conservative government of which, under the pressure from the Catholic Church, gave green light to the law banning abortion except in the cases of rapes and endangered lives of future mothers. In December 2013 MPs from right-wing and extreme right-wing of the European Parliament in Strasbourg voted against women’s right to contraception, abortion and artificial insemination in EU.

All this testifies of strongly traditional and conservative societies we live in. This is, in the case of Serbia, a direct outcome of militarism, nationalism, wars and the growing influence of the Church, while in the case of Europe the outcome of the increasing right-wing ideologies and conservative parties' participation in parliaments. This is what we have in common. On the other hand, a concept of universal women's experience, common policy and technology of resistance has not been developed. "Resistance to instrumentalization can start up disintegration of the deep-rooted patriarchal system. If each of us invests her own history and practice with a subversive character to be reflected in continuous reconsideration of internal and external borders" (Višnjić, Mirosavljević 2008, 241), if we build strategic partnerships and alliances for interventions we want to have in this context, we shall be building "feminism, which is a political issue, and in the countries of the region that needs not imply only the old slogan 'personal is political' but also that feminism, anti-militarism and anti-nationalism are political" (Višnjić, Mirosavljević 2008, 241).

### 3. "Women's Manifesto" in Rightist Interpretation

*"In municipalities or parts of municipalities with negative population growth, a woman who has given birth to tri or more children, cared about them and raised them properly, has accomplished the most important state task and, therefore, should be entitled to national pension when she turns sixty. An adoptive mother should be entitled the same, under the same conditions. These pensions should not be subject to taxation"* (excerpt from the program of the Serb Radical Party).

In Serbia's parliamentary elections of March 16, 2014 conservative parties of rightist orientation did not pass the election threshold. Dveri (and its leader Boško Obradović) won 72,303 votes, the Democratic Party of Serbia 152,436 votes and the youngest of the three, the Third Serbia (emerged from the Movement for Life in 2013) 16, 206 votes. This outcome does not testify to citizens' emancipation and democratization, given that the "transformed" and "modernized" Serb Progressive Party, raised on the ideology of the Serb Radical Party and the Greater Serbia program, won 1,736,920 votes and 158 seats in the parliament. Although most political parties have

women executives, women's participation in decision-making, their influence and real power are meager. Women are discriminated against in all domains, politics included, which "makes the gender difference a political difference on the basis of which women are excluded from the domain of political power" (Pateman, 2000).

European rules on gender equality transferred to national legislation are effective only in de iure and de facto application. In all other cases women are instrumentalized in the ostensible process of democratization. Governments of the Republic of Serbia (in the period 2000-2012) were establishing institutional mechanisms of gender equality and strengthening of women's position in the society, and passed sets of laws and strategies wherein women's participation was purely decorative and resulting from pressure rather than from the mainstream value system. One of newly emerged institutions is the Women's Parliamentary Network established on February 14, 2013. It assembles 82 women parliamentarians from Serbia. MP Marija Obradović of the Serb Progressive Party was elected its first coordinator. However, neither the network nor the number of women parliamentarians (Serbia's ranks first in the region, and is among top ten countries by women politicians in Europe's parliaments) stopped the shutdown of the Gender Equality Department once the new cabinet was formed. The act itself testified that at this point gender equality is not at the priority agenda and that the ruling majority was either unaware of or insensitive to the difficult situation of women at labor market and the decline in their social position.

Recognition of women's bad situation as an opportunity for mobilizing them to join their ranks and turning them into advocates for rightist ideologies was an opportunity right-wing parties seized. Their crucial political concept implies women's "return" to the sphere of privacy, where their main roles are those of mothers and wives. It was this construed division into private and public that subordinated women in the first place. No doubt that this renewed perception of a woman (solely) from the angle of her anatomic mission and motherly role will reestablish anew women's subjugation in "private" and "public" spheres. The Dveri Movement has the section "For Serb Woman" whereby the party openly excludes women citizens of Serbia who are not of Serb origin from participation in public life.

*False feminism has placed women in unnaturally difficult situation: being identified with men, working from early hours in companies, and then*



*performing all family duties waiting for her at home, a woman is subjugated rather than invested with rights.*

*The Dveri organization takes that a Serb woman should be more privileged as a mother, an employee and an employer.*

*Accordingly, a woman should work normal hours so as to be able to dedicate herself to her family.*

*The Dveri claims, "Serbia is of feminine gender!"*

*The Dveri drew a law guaranteeing women paid pregnancy and maternity leaves, and four working hours for women with small children (in the election campaign program in 2014).*

"The fundamental stance of the Dveri movement is that women need not more of the so-called human rights neo-liberal capitalism has been fooling them with to turn them into slaves of the inhuman ideology of market, but what they need are more motherly benefits to enable their self-realization in all of their natural social roles" (Alečković, 2014). "Hence, women and men alike, each within clear-cut frames of their feminine and masculine roles, are duty-bound to work for the safeguard of their nation/race" (Jarić, 2013, 82). The policy of the Dveri reconstructs the matrix whereby a woman is tied traditionally to her home and family, without taking into consideration many obstacles a woman faces at the labor market, which make her unequal with her male partner. On the other hand, neither is her engagement in her home valued, which stresses out her inequality with a man in the sphere of privacy. One of the answers to the idea about benefits rather than rights is that "women with small children and pregnant women would tire out in the conditions of flexible working hours, and hence forced to quit their jobs... Most of them would be left to family customs advocated by all the religions, from Islam to the rest: give birth, obey your husband and do all the chores in your home!" (Festini, 2014).

The promotion of patriarchal values – neo-conservatism – implies the discourse of motherhood solely within a heterosexual family.

"The status of a traditional family should be renewed. Marriage as an institute bringing together a man and a woman into a longstanding union should be clearly defined, and procreation as the main purpose of any marriage reaffirmed. Single parents should be given assistance, but all the measures for them should be directed towards the establishment of traditionally

big families. A family should be the foundation of moral and economic life” (an excerpt from the program of the Third Serbia).

However, the right-wing organizations reveal their true attitude towards women whenever faced with a woman opting for some different course of action, making her living beyond the traditional role of a mother (or motherhood within a heterosexual union), active in the public sphere and participating in policy. For instance, on May 11, 2012 the Women in Black staged a protest against the judicial rehabilitation of war criminal Draža Mihailović. Across the street followers of the Ravna Gora movement and members of the fascist organization, *Obraz*, were also demonstrating. They were hurling insults at Women in Black, such as:

“Ustashi whores! Shiptar whores! Communist whores! Whores in black! Thachi’s whores! Better give a blow job to Haradinai! The way you look, no man would want you! Step up, I will myself tie a red scarf around your necks! Foreign mercenaries and traitors! How much do you get from Washington and Brussels? Fags in black! Raise your hands, you who have not AIDS! Drug addicts!

Violence of the right-wing groups makes no difference between men and women: it targets women, lesbians, Roma women the same as men in the “world of strict patriarchal structures and narrow patriarchal minds unwilling to recognize the Otherness and the Other” (Iveković 2001, 25)

#### **4. “Ready and Willing for the Leader:” Women of the Right-Wing**

“Radical right-wing movements, extremist movements either racial, religious or nationalistic, use women to invest themselves with a human face, to picture themselves as humane. This was testified by the findings of a survey on women members of Ku Klux Klan and women in fascist Italy. However, this needs not be so. There is a catch in such interpretations. According to them, women are manipulated and used as decoration. But they are not. They are very much autonomous and aware of what they are doing. Some women can have what they want only as members of nationalistic and radically right-wing movements only” (Šipić, 2011).

Constant reexamination and reconsideration of realities, but also criticism of all deep-rooted schools of thought, feministic included, are basic

postulates of feminist theories and policies, and were paradigms of women's struggle for their rights and better position.

The women who actively advocate right-wing policies, are in the membership of right-wing parties and movements, speak for traditional women's role in the society, promote resumption of gender-based oppression and reestablishment of men's superiority are unaware that their position and presence in the public sphere, access to education and political participation are the rights the longstanding feminist struggle had secured for them.

The new stance of the right-wing, including the extreme one, implies "putting women on lists, according to which even the party beyond the cultural frame of the mainstream right-wing - Jobbik (the Movement for a Better Hungary) had a woman on its list in the elections for the European Parliament in 2009. That woman was Krisztina Moravi, a successful lawyer with feminist track record" (Begić, 2014). For years now a women corps is present in Poland's parliamentary elections.

Marine Le Pen's extreme right-wing party, the National Front, won 25.85 percent of votes in European elections of May 25, 2014 (more than the right of the center UMP and President Hollande's Socialists) and hence obtained 24 out of 74 French seats in the European Parliament. On its elections list for the European Parliament the Croatian Democratic Union /HDZ/ also had women politicians, Marijana Petir and Ruža Tomašić, known for their homophobia and sexism.

The growing trend of women's participation in radical and extreme right-wing parties indicates that these parties have resorted to 'polished discourse' acceptable to their mainstream surrounding" (Begić, 2014). Nazi groups are using similar methodology of having women in their ranks to picture themselves as "normal." In Germany, men have been dominating the neo-Nazi scene by tradition. However, more and more women have been attending radically right-wing meetings as of lately. In their book "Girls' Business: Women in the Neo-Nazi Scene" the authors Andree Röpke and Andreas Speita write, "a young mother with children in her arms wins the sympathy of potentially new members easier than a built-up and tattooed skinhead bellowing racist slogans."

Extreme right-wing groups in Serbia began recruiting young women. "Women compatriots of the right-wing ideology" are less visible in the public

scene than their male leaders but their numbers are growing anyway. They have attended all violent right-wing rallies like the one at the Belgrade's Republic Square when activists of "Obraz" and "1389" are usually turning up at peaceful demonstration the Women in Black have been staging to mark the anniversaries of the Srebrenica genocide. The rights mostly target the Women in Black, the anti-militaristic and feminist group. The last protest against them was staged by the Serb Assembly "Pledgers" manifesting their support to the released spokesman of the Anti-terrorist Unit of the Ministry of the Interior, Radomir Počuča, who had called for their lynch at this Facebook profile. The "Pledgers" demanded enactment of a law by the model of the one passed in the Russian Federation providing that all non-governmental organizations receiving assistance from Western embassies shall be treated as foreign agents (in their view, the Women in Black are among such agents). Their spokeswoman is Milica Đurđević who advocates unification of all organizations opposing the membership of EU and Kosovo's independence. "We fight to change the way the country is being governed: to change the regime and turn Serbia toward Russia and against EU membership" (Đurđević, 2013). She is preoccupied with territorial integrity and "hegemonistic aspirations," while Nikolina Gligorić of the SNP 1389 is focused on the issue of "smearing Serbia's pure tradition and family."

"I, as a mother, a wife and a sister, am saying publicly that there will be no Parade: no to Parade in the healthy Serbia and in the Eastern Orthodox Serbia! If you conduct a survey now that the Parade is not in the focus of public attention you will see that 90 percent of interviewees share my view! So, sue us all!" (Gligorić, 2011).

The use of nationalistic and clerical-fascist discourse legitimizes women solely as mothers and glorifies war crimes, nationalistic ideas and goals, racism and xenophobia, thus mapping ideologically the position of women rightists in today's Serbia.

The phenomenon of women-rightist has to be carefully studied to properly design the modes of resistance to their policies, make alliances and develop strategies against right-wing extremism. To start with, it should be insisted on constitutional ban on all extreme right-wing organizations.

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Ivana STJELJA

## Hate Crime and Hate Motivated Incidents

A hate crime is a bias-motivated crime against a victim's personal trait. Serbia's Criminal Code provides that if a crime is committed against someone because of his/her race or religion, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, a court of law shall consider it an aggravating circumstance and decide on the punishment consequently.<sup>118</sup> A hate crime can be bias-motivated for other reasons as well, but Serbia's law recognizes only the above-mentioned seven.<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, the Anti-Discrimination Law provides more sanctions for discrimination: discrimination bias-motivated by race, skin color, predecessors, nationality, ethnic or national origin, language, religious or political beliefs, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, financial status, birth, genetic traits, state of health, disability, marital or family status, deprivation of liberty, age, mien, membership of political, trade union or other organization and other actual or assumed characteristics of a person. This does not put an end to the list: bias-motivated discrimination may be committed on some other personal characteristic.

The Law on Amendment of and Supplement to the Criminal Code enacted on January 1, 2013, introduced hate crime into domestic legislation under Article 54a providing:

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118 Criminal Code (*Official Gazette No. 85/2005, 88/2005 – amended 107/2005 - amended 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012 and 104/2013*).

119 See, Ivana Stjelja, *Civil Society against Hate Crime*, Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights – YUCOM, Belgrade, 2014.

*Special circumstance for deciding on the punishment  
for the crime motivated by hatred*

*Article 54a*

*If a crime is bias-motivated by hatred of other person's race and religion, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, the court of law shall consider it aggravating circumstance except if this circumstance is not denoted as a crime.*

The rise of violence bias-motivated by hatred and intolerance, frequency of discrimination and assaults on vulnerable social groups in Serbia, as well as general need for prevention and struggle against such unsocial behaviors, are the main reasons why hate crime must be punished under domestic legislation. Hate crime always targets vulnerable groups and affects negatively not only a crime victim but also all members of the group this victim belongs to. It undermines fundamental values of a modern society and passes across a message to the entire community.

It is important to differentiate bias-motivated incidents and bias-motivated crimes. Namely, incidents motivated by hatred are physical acts involving bias and stereotype but cannot be labeled crimes. Though not always crimes they may, nevertheless, often precede hate crimes or place them within a context. As they may precede serious crimes, the society should fight them adequately.<sup>120</sup>

Bearing in mind that hate crime is a crime committed because of hatred/discrimination and as such a serious social danger, cases of hate crimes should be recorded carefully so as to provide deeper understanding of the problem and help prevent it.

The instrument for efficient prevention of hate crimes and hate-motivated incidents has to be a systematic, harmonized and comprehensive mechanism of compiling information about such incidents that would raise citizens' and authorities' awareness about the proportion of the problem and the threat it poses. Detailed records are not kept and governmental bodies are not duty bound to keep it.

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<sup>120</sup> See, Ivana Stjelja, *Zločin iz mržnje – godinu dana od uvođenja u krivično zakonodavstvo*, Tužilačka reč, No. 26, Association of Prosecutors, Belgrade, 2014.



Hate crimes are not isolated from other hate-motivated incidents – often they either precede or follow them. Some incidents do not stand for crimes but are hate-motivated and are highly dangerous to the society.

The chapters below will focus on the Law on the Ban on Neo-Nazi or Fascist Organizations and Associations and Prohibition of Neo-Nazi or Fascist Symbols and Emblems, and present findings of the survey on its implementation.<sup>121</sup> The purpose of the Law is to prevent and punish hate-motivated incidents the perpetrators of which are usually extremist organizations or their followers.

### **Survey on the implementation of the Law on the Ban on Neo-Nazi or Fascist Organizations and Associations and Prohibition of Neo-Nazi or Fascist Symbols and Emblems**

The Law on the Ban on Neo-Nazi or Fascist Organizations and Associations and Prohibition of Neo-Nazi or Fascist Symbols and Emblems was passed in 2009. The draft has been submitted to parliamentary consideration by the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats /LSV/. Parliamentarians were at odds about the purpose of an act as such. Some representatives of parliamentary caucuses /SRS, DSS, NS and SPS/ argued that the law was not a priority, that there was no fascism in Serbia, that its provisions should be reconsidered, and even that the law as such is senseless and unnecessary; MPs from other parties did not share such views. All in all, the above-mentioned law was adopted on May 29, 2009.<sup>122</sup>

The Law bans neo-Nazi or fascist manifestations, symbols and emblems, as well as any other activity of neo-Nazi or fascist organizations. The latter refers to activities that, this way or another, violate citizens' constitutional rights and freedoms. The Law also provides sanctions in the case of breaches.

Hence, it prohibits manifestations, symbols or emblems or any activity by members and followers of neo-Nazi and fascist organizations that propagate their ideas. If a relevant authority decides that a registered organization acts contrary to the Law it shall initiate proceedings for erasing it from the register of organizations.

121 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 41/2009).

122 See more at <http://www.otvoreniiparlament.rs/2009/05/28/49586/>.

Further on, it prohibits production, photocopying, storing and dissemination of propaganda material, symbols or emblems that incite or spread hatred for or intolerance to free affiliation of citizens, racial, national or religious hatred, while propagating or justifying neo-Nazi and fascist ideas and violating in any way the constitutional order.

It also bans production, photocopying, storing and dissemination or use of symbols that propagate or justify ideas or acts of persons sentenced for war crimes. This provision is interesting in itself considering the initiative by NGOs from Serbia and the region for proclaiming denial of war crimes and genocide a crime. Since the Law provides such a breach, propagation or justification of ideas and acts of convicted war criminals is punishable in Serbia. And the provision itself could be often implemented bearing in mind the situation of Serbia's media and public scene, and frequent actions undertaken by organizations that justify and support actions of war criminals.

The Law further provides that any organized or spontaneous public event inciting or spreading hatred or intolerance to persons of no matter what ethnic origin, ethnic minority or religious community shall be considered a manifestation by supporters of neo-Nazi and fascist organizations and associations.

Online dissemination of symbols, emblems or propaganda material with neo-Nazi or fascist characteristics shall also be treated as incitement, encouragement and spread of hatred or intolerance.

As propaganda material the Law specifically emphasizes banners, badges, emblems, drawings, graffiti, phonographic recordings, songs, photos, slogans, uniforms or parts of uniforms.

According to the Law neo-Nazi or fascist organizations or associations are those the statutes or programs of which affirm or spread neo-Nazi or fascist ideas and actions.

The Law provides fines for misdemeanors. A natural person participating in a manifestation, holding symbols or emblems, or acting in any way as a supporter or follower of a neo-Nazi or fascist organization or association, propagating their ideas or actions shall be fined from 5,000 to 50,000 RSD. Punishment with fine for organizations ranges from 100,000 to one million RSD if a natural person in its membership has breached the law. The said for a legal person is proscribed in the following cases:

Production, photocopying, storage, presentation, glorification or any other way of spreading propaganda material, symbols or emblems that incite, encourage or spread racial, ethnic or religious hatred, propagates or justifies neo-Nazi or fascist ideas or violates constitutional order in any other way;

Production, photocopying, storage, presentation, dissemination or any other way of using symbols propagating or justifying ideas, actions or acts by persons specified under Article 4 of the Law.

The Law also provides a protective measure of appropriation of the object used in the breach of the law.

A survey on the implementation of the Law was conducted to serve the purpose of this paper.<sup>123</sup> A request for access to information of public interest was submitted to all misdemeanor courts in Serbia, so as to get insight into the number and outcome of misdemeanor proceedings initiated under the Law in the period June 10, 2009 (the date of the Law's enactment) – May 1, 2014. The request was addressed to 43 misdemeanor courts in Aranđelovac, Bačka Palanka, Bečej, Belgrade, Valjevo, Vranje, Vršac, Gornji Milanovac, Zaječar, Zrenjanin, Jagodina, Kikinda, Kosovska Mitrovica, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Lazarevac, Leskovac, Loznica, Mladenovac, Negotin, Niš, Novi Pazar, Novi Sad, Obrenovac, Pančevo, Paraćin, Pirot, Požarevac, Požega, Preševo, Prijepolje, Prokuplje, Raška, Ruma, Sremska Mitrovica, Senta, Sjenica, Smederevo, Subotica, Sombor, Trstenik, Užice, Čačak and Šabac. Considering the expected results, the request was not submitted to the Higher Misdemeanor Court.

Forty-one misdemeanor courts answered the request, out of which 38 provided information within due period of 15 days, and three with couple of days delay. No answer whatsoever came just from misdemeanor courts in Vranje and Pančevo. It could be said in conclusion that most misdemeanor courts acted in accordance to the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance.<sup>124</sup>

Each court responding to the request for access to information of public importance claimed that not a single case has been processed before it under the Law. It means that the Law has not been implemented even once for five

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123 The survey was conducted with the assistance of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights – YUCOM.

124 The Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance (Official Gazette No. 120/2004, 54/2007, 104/2009 and 36/2010).

years since its enactment. Hence, the very purpose of punishment for misdemeanor has not been met otherwise implying citizens' respect for the legal system and refraining from breaches of the law.<sup>125</sup>

The reasons why the Law has not been implemented yet may be various: the lack of political will, the quality of text of the Law, social circumstances, institutions' readiness for its implementation, and so on. But what is most probable is that those authorized to initiate proceedings have failed in their duty. The Article 88 of the incumbent Misdemeanor Act<sup>126</sup> provides that misdemeanor proceedings shall be initiated and conducted at the request of an authorized body or a damaged party, or on the basis of a misdemeanor warrant issued by the authorized body in accordance with this Law.

Besides, the previous misdemeanor act<sup>127</sup> in force till the enactment of the new one and in force at the time of the Law's adoption provided under Article 154 that misdemeanor proceedings shall be initiated on the basis of a relevant request submitted by an authorized body or a damaged party. Considering the nature of misdemeanor proceedings, non-implementation of the Law could be caused by the ignorance of the Law of those authorized to initiate proceedings that being the police in the first place. To make sure why the Law has not been implemented even once requires, nevertheless, additional research. In any case, having a legal act passed in the parliament, investing time and money in its drawing and enacting, and not having it implemented even once testifies of dissonant functioning of governmental institutions.

The paragraphs below present an overview of the Constitutional Court's decisions dealing with the ban on extremist organizations, and of some selected criminal proceedings against leaders of these organizations.

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125 The Misdemeanor Act (Official Gazette No 65/2013), Article 5.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid. (Official Gazette No. 101/2005, 116/2008 and 111/2009).

## **Decisions by the Constitutional Court and activism of extremist organizations**

To better understand the context of extremist organization's activism in Serbia one should take a look into relevant decisions by the Constitutional Court. These are the decisions dealing with the Fatherland Movement "Obraz" and the National Front in the first place.

In 2009 Serbia's Public Prosecution submitted a request for the ban on the Fatherland Movement "Obraz" to the Constitutional Court on the ground of its activism against the constitutional order, guaranteed human and minority rights, and incitement of racial, national and religious hatred. In 2012 the Court decided to ban the movement for violation of the guaranteed human and minority rights, and incitement of national and religious hatred, and ordered its removal from the Register of Citizens' Associations.<sup>128</sup>

The Court's decision quotes that "members of Obraz misused the rights to assembly and freedom of expression" and that "the organization's acts and activities emanate views that fundamentally discriminate citizens on the ground of their personal traits through hate speech, harassment and humiliating treatment – all of which meant to violate citizens' constitutionally guaranteed rights, the principles of the rule of law, and the basic tenets of democracy and European values on which the constitutional order of Serbia rests."

The Court decided that Obraz advocates a social model based on discrimination against some minority groups through hate speech, harassment and humiliating treatment, equal to the use of violence as means to reach a goal. "The Constitutional Court had in mind that has recently undergone a difficult period of its history, burdened by wars incited by national and religious frictions among regional nations. The Court also found that the measures taken by authorized failed to prevent the activism of Obraz, aimed at violation of guaranteed human rights and, therefore, decided it imperative to pass the most rigorous sentence in the domain of restriction of the freedom of association."<sup>129</sup>

A year before – precisely, in June 2011 – the Constitutional Court made a decision banning the clandestine organization National Front. Back in 2008

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128 Case No. VIIU-249/2009.

129 [www.ustavni.sud.rs/page/view/sr-Latn-CS/88-101638/ustavni-sud-doneo-odluku-o-zabrani-rada-udruzenja-graana-otacastveni-pokret-obraz](http://www.ustavni.sud.rs/page/view/sr-Latn-CS/88-101638/ustavni-sud-doneo-odluku-o-zabrani-rada-udruzenja-graana-otacastveni-pokret-obraz).

the Public Prosecution suggested to the Court to ban this organization. On the grounds of this suggestion, the Court decided that the National Front was a clandestine organization the activism of which was prohibited by the Constitution; it forbid its entry into the Register of Citizens' Associations; and it prohibited the organization's functioning, promotion and spread of its goals and ideas, deciding that governmental bodies and other authorities were duty-bound to take measures for the effectuation of its decision.<sup>130</sup>

The decision itself is most significant to judicial practice given that it not only the Front's entry into the Register considering the organization's goals, but also before having passed its judgment the Court had proclaimed that the ban on unregistered organization had not been under its jurisdiction.<sup>131</sup> Namely, it had turned down the Prosecution's suggestion for the ban on fifteen "extremist subgroups of citizens' associations or beyond them" such as ULTRA BOYS, BELGRADE BOYS, ULTRAS, BRIGATE, ALKATRAZ, LUDACI /LUNATICS/ - PADINSKA SKELA, ANTI-ROMA, SOUTH FAMILY, HEAD HUNTERS, IRRIDUCIBILI-NBG, SHADOWS, EXTREME BOYS, ČUVARI ČASTI /DEFENDERS OF HONOR/, BRAIN DAMAGE and UNITED FORCE 1987. The Court explained then that an organization should be registered if it was to decide on banning it, and that otherwise "it is in the Prosecution's jurisdiction to prosecute such groups, as under the Constitution it is authorized to take steps against the actions of individuals and groups as such, which would be efficient and in accordance to relevant legislation."<sup>132</sup>

In December 2011 the Parliament adopted the Law on Amendment of and Supplement to the Law on the Constitutional Court. The Article 81a of the amended law provides that acting on a suggestion for a ban on a secret organization the Court shall decide whether or not the Constitution prohibits activity of such an organization, and can decide on necessary measures against its activism. The provision solved the dilemma about the Court's jurisdiction in the case of clandestine organization's activity. It should be noted, however, that the provision came into force when the National Front had already been banned.<sup>133</sup>

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130 Case No. VIII-171/2008.

131 Case No. VIII-279/2009.

132 Case No. VIII-279/2009.

133 See, the opposing view in the case No. VIII-171/2008 by Justice Olivera Vučić.

The difference between the Constitutional Court's decisions on bans on the National Front and "Obraz" is that it had not banned the latter's entry into the Register under the organization's proclaimed program and name. So the Fatherland Movement "Obraz" changed its name into the Serb Obraz and duly registered itself as such. Be it as it may, the Court's decisions stand for models of good practice in the struggle against extremist organizations. On the other hand, without other measures – preventive measures in the first place – these decisions are ineffective since other extremist organizations keep operating and propagating their goals.

### **Criminal proceedings against members of extremist organizations**

Some assaults by extremist organizations drew much attention of Serbia's media and public sphere. Criminal proceedings were initiated against members of these organizations. So Mladen Obradović, the leader of the Serb Obraz, was prosecuted for incidents preceding the announce Pride Parade in 2009. In the first instance in 2012 Obradović was punished with 10-month imprisonment for inciting hatred and threatening persons from LGBT population. The Public Prosecutor and the lawyer for the defense appealed against the sentence in the first instance. Belgrade's Appellate Court decided that in passing the sentence the lower court had violated the provisions of the Criminal Code, abolished the sentence and ordered a retrial.

In the second trial in 2013 Obradović was sentenced to eight months in prison for spreading racial and other forms of discrimination. An appeal was lodged once again, and the Appellate Court changed the decision made by Belgrade's First Court sentencing Obradović to four months in home detention. As alleviating circumstances the Appellate Court quoted, in its explanation, the fact that Obradović was a student and had a wife and a child.<sup>134</sup>

Obradović also stood trial for organizing riots during the Pride Parade in Belgrade in 2010. He was sentenced to two-year imprisonment. In its decision the court quoted a crime provided under Article 344 of the Criminal Code – violent behavior at sports event or public meeting. The paragraph 3 of the said article provides a minimal punishment of 3 to 12-year imprisonment for

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<sup>134</sup> For more information, see, *Primena standarda pravičnog suđenja u pravosudnom sistemu Srbije, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Belgrade, 2014.*

a leader of a group having committed this crime. So Obradović was given the sentence lower than a minimum. In February 2013 the Appellate Court annulled this sentence and ordered a retrial explaining that the lower court had violated the provisions of the Criminal Code, passed the decision that was hard to understand, and failed to provide a clear-cut explanation. The first hearing in the second trial before the Higher Court in Belgrade was held in April 2014. The Higher Court scheduled another four hearings but none has been held so far. The trial was postponed for an indefinite period of time.<sup>135</sup>

The Obradović case and shortened sentences to perpetrators of hate-motivated crimes are nothing unique in Serbia's judiciary. The trial for the murder of Bruce Taton, the French citizen, in 2009 and the course of criminal proceedings remained rather blurred. Over the trial defendants have been changing their statements and the court decided that eyewitness had been intimidated. In 2011 the Higher Court finally sentenced the accused to years-long imprisonment for the crime of capital murder.

After lawyers' appeal against the decision, the Appellate Court changed the initial sentence by reducing considerably the sentences passed to all the accused. The Appellate Court reasoned that too much significance had been given to aggravating circumstances while alleviating circumstances had not been taken into proper consideration or not considered at all. It decided that the young age of the accused, their being students, working men and had not been sentenced before, etc., stood for alleviating circumstances. Their sentences were reduced again by one-fourth in 2012 under the provisions of the Amnesty Law.<sup>136</sup> In February 2014 the Appellate Court decided that two defense lawyers' appeals against the denied retrial were justified and ordered the Higher Court to reconsider their request. The Higher Court, however, overruled further consideration. In September 2014 the Appellate Court announced that it had annulled the initial decision by the Higher Court.<sup>137</sup>

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135 For more information about the case, see, *Primena standarda pravičnog suđenja u pravosudnom sistemu Srbije*, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Belgrade, 2014.

136 Ibid.

137 [www.blic.rs/Vesti/Hronika/497985/Sud-Novo-razmatranje-zahteva-da-se-ponovi-sudjenje-za-Tatona](http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Hronika/497985/Sud-Novo-razmatranje-zahteva-da-se-ponovi-sudjenje-za-Tatona).



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The mentioned cases clearly indicate that state bodies should act by far more appropriately in suppressing hate-crimes and hate-motivated incidents, and implement consequently the existing legislation. Last but not least, in its Serbia Progress Report in 2013 the European Commission called the activities by extremist organizations serious challenges Serbia was faced with, saying that the increased activity of extreme right-wing organizations caused anxiety.<sup>138</sup>

### **The ban on “clandestine association” National Front**

Serbia’s Constitutional Court decided to ban the “clandestine organization” National Front. Back in October 2008 a ban on this neo-Nazi organization was suggested to it by the Republican Public Prosecution. The Court forbade the National Front to operate, and promote and spread its program goals and ideas. It also prohibited the entry of the organization – known for its notorious public actions – into the Register of Citizens’ Associations.

The Constitutional Court decided that the National Front was a secret organization the activity of which was prohibited under the Constitution. Before making this decision the Court had postponed proceedings on May 19 so as to have some facts crucial for consideration collected.

The Prosecution stated that the National Front was a grouping operating as a clandestine organization the activities of which were meant to incite national and religious hatred contrary to the Constitution. The release on the 23rd session of the Constitutional Court presided by its President Dragiša Slijepčević on June 2, 2011, states the following:

“The Constitutional Court decided that the organization National Front is a secret association the activity of which is constitutionally prohibited. The Court banned its entry into the relevant register kept by authorized bodies under the name of any association or political party with programs goals of the above-mentioned organization. The Court forbade the said organization to operate, promote and spread its program goals and ideas. The Court

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138 [www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu\\_dokumenta/godisnji\\_izvestaji\\_ek\\_o\\_napretku/izvestaj\\_ek\\_2013.pdf](http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/izvestaj_ek_2013.pdf).

decided that governmental and other bodies and organizations are obliged, within their jurisdictions and authority, to ensure that this decision is effectuated.”

In November 2005, fifteen activists of this unregistered organization stormed into the anti-fascist round table at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Novi Sad University assaulting its participants both verbally and physically. Reacting to the incident the Assembly of Vojvodina decided in December 2005 to request the government of Serbia to ban all neo-Nazi, racist and clerical-fascist groups and organizations in the territory of the republic.

In November 2006 the Novi Sad District Court sentenced first accused Goran Davidović, a.k.a Fuhrer, to one year in prison for spreading religious, national and racial hatred. Before his admission to prison, Davidović-Fuhrer fled from the country. He first went to Italy and then to Germany where he was arrested on Interpol warrant. He was extradited to Serbia on April 29, 2010 and transported immediately to the Sombor Penitentiary to serve his one-year sentence.

In late 2009 while their leader Davidović-Fuhrer was in Italy, followers of the neo-Nazi National Front identified their Lebernsraum in the citizens' association named the New Serb Program /NSP/. A release a certain press service of the said organization issued, and some media carried, quoted that Davidović-Fuhrer had been appointed the NSP Secretary General. The NSP, also a neo-Nazi organization, was founded on May 24, 2009 in Novi Sad as its seat. NSP program is after establishing a legal neo-Nazi party in Serbia, based on the ideas of the illegal National Front. This neo-Nazi company used to have the functioning website carrying information about the new confluence of Serb neo-Nazis. At present, the NSP website has only a modest page titled “Forum of Serb Patriots” with a picture of Davidović-Fuhrer. The internet address of the site has been non-existent so far, just in case.<sup>139</sup>

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139 <http://www.abrasmedia.info/arhiva/node/7248>

**II**

**HELSINKI BULLETINS  
ON EXTREMISM**



# Ethnic Minorities in Serbia: A State Of Permanent Tension

Adoption of a minority law was a major precondition to FR of Yugoslavia's (Serbia's) admission to the Council of Europe after the change of the regime in October 2000. Ever since the position of ethnic minorities in Serbia has been constantly supervised by international factors such as EU, OSCE and Council of Europe, foreign embassies, as well as by domestic non-governmental organizations. What marked the past nine years were numerous ethnically motivated incidents and the state's basically inadequate minority policy.

Since the "new" political elite persevered in constituting an ethnic state, the situation of national minorities remained high on the agenda for observers of developments in Serbia. Due to a deficient legal frame – – but also due to non-existent will for changing the overall social climate – minorities are still not satisfied with the manner in which the state and the society treat them.

Nations began to ethnify in all post-communist states after disintegration of socialism and its value systems. In all those countries majority nations are laying claim to sovereign rights to self-determination and statehood. Such perceptions are mirrored in their constitutions the preambles of which lay them down as states of majority nations and "other citizens." Such perceptions give rise to distrust and tension between majority nations and minorities.

The minority issue is among major indicators of a state's ethno-nationalism and ensuing ethnic intolerance. A state constituted on ethnicity can hardly cope with minority problems in a democratic manner and, as a rule, treats its minorities as "factors of disturbance." In such climates minorities try to solve their problems through various forms of autonomies and special statuses. In this context, solution of the Serb question in neighboring countries – – such as Dayton Accords, Ahtisaari plan or Ohrid Agreement applied

to Albanians in Macedonia – serves as a model. However, requests based on such model incite doubts about minorities' loyalty and strengthen beliefs that ethnic pluralism is a burden one should get rid off. This is why the process of establishment of legal frame for minority issues is so slowpaced and always obstructed.

Serbia's political elite and some expert circles prioritize individual, civil rights over collective. However, Serbia is still far from becoming a civil state and expecting that minorities' justified anxieties deriving from the developments in the past two decades could be removed through a system of individual rights would be quite unrealistic.

In 2009, two laws crucial for implementation of minority rights were passed in Serbia: the Anti – Discrimination Law and the Law on National Councils. The former guarantees citizens' equality, whereas the latter creates preconditions for overcoming the impasse national councils of minorities have found themselves in once mandates of most of them expired. The former law was also among preconditions for “white Schengen” for Serbia, whereas the latter enables minority selfgovernment.

The Law on National Councils was adopted seven years after the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities providing that election of national councils shall be regulated by a separate law. The seven-year “vacuum” slowed down the process of passing minority legislation. Basic laws to regulate certain areas have still not been passed despite binding constitutional provision.

The existing laws are either not implemented or implemented selectively. According to Provincial Secretary for General Administration Tamas Korhec, laws are implemented only when their implementation serves personal, group or partisan interests of a ruling elite.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, provisions of some laws are contradictory – what is guaranteed under one law is excluded by another. The manner in which information sphere is regulated can serve as a typical example. Namely, provisions of the Broadcasting Law (2004) and the Law on Local Self-government (2007) are mutually exclusive when it comes to the right of local self-governments to establish broadcast media in minority languages. And, at the time it was passed the Broadcasting Law was not in conformity with the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of

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140Dnevnik, July 17, 2009.

National Minorities (2002).<sup>141</sup> Tensions within the Bosniak Community Unlike at the time of the Bosnian war when Bosniaks in Sandzak were subject a state-orchestrated repression (expulsion, many individual or group murders, etc.), today's tensions in Sandzak are consequences of official Belgrade's policy. That is a policy, which – at the bottom line – prevents the Bosniak community – burdened with problems of its own and with poor human resources – from getting constituted. Apart from the rivalry between two Bosniak political parties, permanent presence of various “services” only fuels the existing tensions and results in violence in the Bosniak community. In January 2009, three persons were injured in incidents that broke out due to rivalries between the two parties and the two Islamic communities. The Islamic Community of Sandzak has been constantly on the carpet as a key factor for constitution of Bosniaks' national identity. Besides, the Islamic Community of Sandzak recognizes Sarajevo as the only pivot of Islam in the Balkans. That is why it has been torn from outside – divisions have been encouraged by Belgrade.

The Sandzak question was internationalized when local tensions began threatening regional stability. The visit by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu was obviously meant to appease the two sides. Turkish Deputy Reis Ulema Mehmed Gormez visited Novi Pazar at the same time in the attempt to reconcile the heads of the two opposing Islamic communities.

The official Belgrade assessed the visit by Reis Ulema of Bosnia – Herzegovina Mustafa Cerić a high-risk one. Moreover, the police banned a meeting at the central square in Tutin where he was supposed to address citizens and believers. This decision only testified that Belgrade was “managing” the situation in Sandzak all the time.

During his visit Reis Ulema Cerić spoke of violation of human rights of Sandzak Bosniaks. The Serb Ministry of Religions strongly reacted to his statement, calling it “a fabrication” and accusing him of negating the existence of Serb nation in Bosnia. Therefore, he /Mustafa Cerić/ “does not deserve a welcome in our country,” released the Ministry.<sup>142</sup> Tensions between the Ministry of Religions and the Meshihat of the 3 *www.mv.sr.gov.yu* Islamic Community in Serbia also mirror Belgrade-Sandzak relationship. Mustafa Cerić's visit made it crystal-clear. In an interview with the “Sedmica”

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141 Article 17 of the Law provides that the state may establish special radio and TV stations to broadcast programs in minority languages.

142 *www.mv.sr.gov.yu*

/"Seven"/ magazine Muamer Zukorlic described the relationship as "a special war." Through a group of imams, intelligence services, criminal circles, Ugljanin's policy and the Ministry of Religions, the regime is trying to destroy the Islamic community and has allowed, beyond the law, legalization of a parallel Islamic community, he added.<sup>143</sup> South Serbia The regime's continued policy of nonintegration of minorities into Serbia's political community in 2009 not only provoked minorities but also radicalized their demands for territorial autonomies.

This particularly refers to territorially concentrated minorities such as Albanians in South Serbia and Hungarians in North Vojvodina.

Governmental officials' visits to South Serbia usually boil down to tours of gendarmerie posts, says Ragmi Mustafa, mayor of Presevo. "State leaders have never ventured in municipal halls in the South. They have been totally ignoring local self-governments as if they were occupied territories," says Mustafa.

According to him, Police Minister Ivica Dacic – who have repeatedly toured South Serbia – "met with people from the Security information Agency /BIA/ and gendarmerie only" and never paid a visit to legitimate representatives of the Albanian people.

The treatment of the Albanian minority community in South Serbia is closely connected with Kosovo and Belgrade's attempts to extort its partition.<sup>144</sup> Pacification of South Serbia in 2001 was not followed by political and economic integration of ethnic Albanians.

Status of Hungarians The Hungarian community – the biggest and the best organized in Serbia – closely connects its status with the status of Vojvodina. Namely, the community has been developing two options for its status for years – a status within Vojvodina or a territorial autonomy. Which option will prevail depends on Belgrade's attitude towards Vojvodina's position in Serbia.

In this context, Belgrade's reaction to the fact that the Hungarian community invited Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom to the ceremony to mark the anniversary of the Hungarian revolution (1848) was most illustrative. Through diplomatic channels Belgrade messaged the Hungarian President that his visit to Vojvodina could have an adverse impact on the solution of

<sup>143</sup>[www.islamskazajednica.org](http://www.islamskazajednica.org)

<sup>144</sup>See Helsinki Bulletin No. 36



the status of the province the statute of which has been under discussion. For Hungarian politicians in Vojvodina, such a gesture was a litmus test for the extent to which Serbian authorities ignore Hungarians' national interests in Serbia.<sup>145</sup> Position of Roma Despite the fact that from July 2008 till June 2009 Serbia presided the Decade of Roma, the progress made in improving their overall position was rather poor.

Over the year of Serbia's presidency, the government adopted the Strategy for Improvement of the Position of Roma.

Besides, Serbia's economic crisis affects Roma the most – and mostly those earning their living on recyclable materials, who make up almost 70 percent of total Roma population.

The effects of the Strategy for Roma population are uneven. They are most visible in the domain of education,<sup>146</sup> and worst in the domain of housing. There are some 600 Roma settlements with population of 160,000 in Serbia. Out of that number, 40,000 people live in extreme poverty. Osman Balic, coordinator of the League for the Decade of Roma, says that the same as the former Ministry of Infrastructure today's Ministry for Protection of Environment and Urban Planning has been hindering other authorities willing to improve Roma's housing.<sup>147</sup> Numerous incidents marked Belgrade authorities' action of dismantling Roma hovels in slum areas.

Ill treatment to which they were exposed during Belgrade Universiade this summer – when their settlements in New Belgrade were surrounded by wire fence and some torn down without due notification – was notably dramatic. Revolted by such actions, Roma tried to prevent them in various ways. Having failed, they blocked the main street and protested in front of the City Hall. Residents of the Boljevac settlement also went for a blockade but to prevent mounting of containers to house Roma families. Having blocked the road leading to their settlement, they “threatened to set containers on fire, even the people should they show up.” Marko Karadzic, state secretary in the

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145 6 Dnevnik, March 11, 2009.

146 Measures of affirmative action have been taken in the domain of education. When they finish elementary school Roma students are accorded 30 „stimulative” points, whereas secondary school graduates need not pass exams to be admitted to faculties.

147 There are exceptions to the rule. „Vice – Premier Bozidar Djelic and ministers Rasim Ljajic and Svetozar Ciplic have different attitudes but lack adequate support,: says Balic. Danas, April 8, 2009.

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, called the protest in Boljevac racist. “We went there but saw not a single church, people from the Red Cross or a resident. None of them even bothered to bring in some sandwiches for children,” said Marko Karadzic, adding that no one offered any help to Roma spending night in the open.

According to Ombudsman Sasa Jankovic, the very act of dismantling Roma hovels, despite of all formalities, was unjustified since no alternative housing had been secured beforehand. He takes that all this indicates that relevant authorities are incapable to systematically solve the problems of most vulnerable categories of population. “You cannot solve the problem of Roma settlements with bulldozers or attain the goals of the much advocated Decade of Roma,” said Jankovic.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, city authorities “solved” the problem of the Roma slum in New Belgrade by moving its residents into containers placed at several locations in the outskirts of the capital. What is important, however, they took the occasion to enroll Roma children in appropriate schools, which is crucial for their social integration.

**Other Minority Groups** The parliamentary debate on the Antidiscrimination Law laid bare the Serb elite’s autism and xenophobia, and testified that homophobia was deeply rooted. According to the Gay-Strait Alliance’s survey about human rights of LGBT person, 67 percent of interviewees disapprove LGBT population, 22 percent are undecided or neutral about it, whereas only 11 percent have positive attitudes. Over one-half of interviewees have nothing against having LGBT persons in Serbia, but by far less of them would like to have LGBTs as people next door. One out of two interviewees holds homosexuality dangerous for the society and the state responsible for its suppression. Out of ten citizens, seven see homosexuality as a disease.<sup>149</sup> Gay parades are unwelcome for some threefourths of interviewees.<sup>150</sup> Hate speech against

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148Danas, April 3, 2009.

149In May 2009 and with 18-year delay, the Serb Medical Society accepted the WHO’s decision that homosexuality was not a disease. People making up Serb political elite generally take homosexuality as something abnormal. For instance, Tomislav Nikolic, leader of the Serb Progressive Party, says, „Everything contrary to God and Nature is immoral, which means, say, having sex with animals, persons of the same sex or even with objects. That is abnormal.” And Dragan Markovic, leader of the Unified Serbia, says, „If homosexuals should take Serbia to Europe, we should better stay in Serbia and tend sheep.”

150Danas, March 10, 2009.

all persons who have stood behind the Anti-Discrimination Law and advocate promotion of human rights goes hand in hand with homophobia.

Effect of Crisis on Minority Position Economic crisis seriously affects minorities as well. For instance, out of 43,000 citizens of Presevo /South Serbia/ 17,000 are emigrant workers, whereas only 3,000 have jobs in the territory of the municipality. Kosovo's independence declaration burdened the economic cooperation with the area bordering on it and with Prishtina. In Novi Pazar, 22,000 people are jobless and economy has collapsed.

National councils will be less subsidized because of economic crisis and the cuts in the budget. It goes without saying that this will negatively affect functioning of minorities' representative bodies and implementation of the Minority Law in key areas such as education.

As some minority representatives indicated, the planned measures for rationalization of the educational system could have a negative impact on education in minority languages. They fear that removal or merge of classes would reduce their rights on the one hand, and fuel assimilation on the other.

The Center for Development of Civil Sector released that relevant governmental authorities should take care to justly distribute the burden of economic crisis so as not to place a heavier burden on minorities than on others.

Conclusion Serbia's homogenization continued even after Milosevic's ouster.

Actually, that was a strategy of Vojislav Kostunica's cabinet – the strategy reflected in the position of minorities.

Kostunica has never given up Milosevic's strategic goals. Kosovo's and Montenegro's independence put an end to ex-Yugoslavia's dissolution but Serb elite would not accept this new regional reality. Their non-acceptance affects relations with neighboring countries, which keep oscillating and are far from being in the best interest of Serbia but of other countries in the region as well.

The Minority issue has always had its foreign-policy dimension and called for tactful decision-making. Most minorities have their mother countries in Serbia's neighborhood. However, many small minority communities that lack capacity for getting constituted are constantly exposed to assimilation.

Serbia's constitution-makers have tried to bypass some legitimate demands for regionalization and decentralization. Territorially concentrated

minorities are those that will (or already do) place selfdetermination on the agenda. No constitutional project or engineering can possibly avoid it no matter how skillfully devised. Therefore, Serb political elite needs to be more flexible while deliberating possible solutions and take into account minorities' anxieties that are only logical after two decades or more or less repressive treatment.

Everything indicates to the need for a public dialogue about the role of nations in the system of modern states: a dialogue that takes into account tectonic changes in international relations.

**Helsinki Bulletin No.44/Oct. 2009.**

# Radicalization: A Constant Threat to Democratic Forces

In the second half of 2009 violence in Serbia was among key topics prevailing in the media and political circles alike. Despite the fact that neo-Nazi and “patriotic” organizations, wellorganized groups of football fans and other movements ideologically close to them are here both main promoters and executioners, the public discourse often turns a blind eye to those clearly defined actors and refers to “extremists” or, generally, to “violence” as such and “the violent character of the Serbian society.” Given that no relevant researches have dealt with the activities of afore-mentioned organizations so far, the only relevant insights into the phenomenon of violence can be obtained from media reporting and actions taken by governmental authorities on the one hand, and reports by domestic NGOs and international human rights organizations on the other. Speaking of the state’s actions against violence, one cannot but note that fascist phenomena are being relativized, a clear-cut critical stance absent and extreme rightist ideologies by certain intellectual circles propagated without reservations.

In addition, a number of violent incidents never reach the general public since the media show no sensibility for such cases. For instance, repression against Roma is rarely tackled by the media except in the flagrant situations such as the one marking the Belgrade Universiade (July 2009). The same refers to homophobia. The LGTB population is not only exposed to verbal violence but also to brutal, physical assaults and abuse by neo-Nazi groups. And, one cannot but be concerned over the fact that every second woman in Serbia is subjected to either psychological or physical violence the perpetrators of which are men in 90 percent of all cases.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> According to the Statistics Bureau, family violence in 2008 has triples when compared with 2004, and its victims are usually women. Minister of Labor and Social Policies

The general public inclines towards stereotypes stemming from the predominant concept of “national unity” that excludes any diversity (sexual, religious, ethnic and even political).

The roots of violence

In 1990s several generations have been raised by the model of unpunishable violence. Sociological roots of violence – characteristic of transition and the wars in 1990s – indicate several relevant factors that have been in play in Serbia simultaneously and continually: poverty of a considerably part of the society, social disorganization, omnipresence of fire arms and inefficient fight against crime.

Though largely responsible for the wars in 1990s, the state of Serbia has been denying its involvement in them since. Such attitude firmly established an opportunistic model of social behavior – avoidance of any responsibility whatsoever. The continued violence in the public sphere – which became “legitimate” and normal behavior as time went by because it met no critical response or punishment – practically desensitized the society about violence as such.

National institutions such as the Serb Orthodox Church and political parties promoting ultra-conservatism provide the backdrop against which extremely nationalistic groups such as Obraz, Nacionalni Stroj (National Front), Dveri, Krv i Cast (Blood and Honor), National Movement 1389, etc. are mushrooming.

The Obraz (Face) Fatherland Movement is an extreme rightist organization that – the same as the Serb National Movement 1389 – stages threatening actions and issues lynch calls against persons of different ethnic, religious or sexual affiliation. Declaratively, it advocates the values of Serbhood, national homogeneity and “return” of all Serb lands, “Serb togetherness instead of anti-Serb democracy” and “Eastern-Orthodox piety instead of atheism and sectarianism.” Both organizations reveal their fascist characters through close cooperation with their Russian namesakes.<sup>152</sup> The “Friends” page at the Obraz

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Rasim Ljajic presented the official statistics on violence against women at the press conference on September 18, 2009, in the Media Center, Belgrade.

152 Organizations protesting outside the Embassy of Serbia in Moscow on October 5 demanding liberation of Mladen Obradovic and Misa Vasic. During the protest aiming at, as they put it, to support all nationally and racially conscious activists, the followers of the two organizations were carrying posters saying, „Serbia to Serbs – Stop to Repression.” <http://www.ns-russia.org/news/7>

National Movement's website provides a link to the Russian National Front (a political/educational organization with blatantly racist statutes focusing the safeguard of the white Aryan race.)<sup>153</sup>

Activism of the said organizations came into public focus when their followers – together with “football fans” and some dignitaries of the Serb Orthodox Church – physically assaulted participants of the first Gay Parade in Belgrade in 2001. When another Gay Parade (officially Gay March) was announced for September 2009, *Obraz*, 1389 and *Pokret “Naši”* (Movement “Ours”) promptly reacted with threats to participants in the parade. The leader of *Obraz*, Mladen Obradovic publicly warned that the very attempt to stage such a parade was directed against major sanctities of the Serb nation – religion, Church and family. “Everybody knows what’s going to happen if the parade takes place. All the responsibility for whatever might happen will be on organizers. They cannot poke their fingers into the eye of the Serb nation, said Obradovic. As for *Obraz*, it let all and sundry know, “We do not invoke violence, we just warn that Serbs will get into the streets and, the same as their Russian brothers, scatter that satanical meeting.”<sup>154</sup>

Articles penned by Boško Obradović (secretary of the Management Board of *Dveri*, a non-governmental organization actively advocating homophobia and supporting neo-Nazi groups) are available at the website of *Nova Srpska Politicka Misao* (New Serb Political Thought), a magazine for “political theory and social research” edited by a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Belgrade University. Promotion of “Serb identity” is preconditioned by denial of the rights of those allegedly jeopardizing it.<sup>155</sup>

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153 <http://www.ns-russia.org/statute>

154 *Kurir*, June 15, 2009.

155 „The so-called protection from discrimination of any minority way of thinking and lifestyle was planned as the first step of the long-term strategy for deconstruction of national identity of the Serb people. Criminal proceedings against any public advocacy of any way of thinking and lifestyle opposite to those that are now protected under the law and privileged would be the second crucial step. In everyday life, this means that promoters of homosexuality are now not only given a free hand to influence the Serb society but also legally protected against any opposite stand, which will be prosecuted draconically as hate speech and discrimination under the long-term strategy for deconstruction of Serbs' national identity.” Boško Obradovic, [www.nspm.org.rs](http://www.nspm.org.rs)

The MP from the Nova Srbija (New Serbia) party, Aleksandra Jankovic, known for her homophobic propaganda and stereotypes about a gay-lesbian lobby, said, “The parade is advocated for by the gay establishment, which aggressively sacrifices the rest of homosexual population for its own needs and financial objectives, and which has its investors in various centers. Many gay people wonder how come that some unrepresentative organizations are entitled to stand for them. Many gay activists are not actually gay – they just follow a modern, but most profitable trend.”<sup>156</sup>

### **Pride Parade – a challenge for the state**

In the general atmosphere of fear on the eve of the planned Pride Parade, Republican Prosecutor Slobodan Radovanovic called fascists’ threats “polemic overtones” and said he saw no reason for his Office to react. “We cannot react at news stories, we can react only at their factual consequences,” he said. In addition to the state’s irresponsible reaction, many media outlets, notably tabloids, carried the messages the said organizations were sending to the gay-lesbian community. Actually, this made a part of the campaign for cancellation of the Parade. Some circles of the Serb intelligence society certainly had their hands in all this. Namely, a weekbefore the planned Pride Parade, highcirculation dailies such as Politika and Vecernje Novosti, were carrying stories that, without any reservation, called for the lynch of the gay population on the set date. The stories expounded the strategy for assault, quoted messages by *Obraz* and 1389, and carried “recommendations” by anonymous sources from security services.<sup>157</sup> All this created the atmosphere meant to mobilize those groups to brutally scatter the announced Parade on the one hand, and to force state authorities to officially ban it on the other. And all this, taken together, was meant to show that the incumbent government was too weak to have any situation under control.

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<sup>156</sup>Kurir, June 15, 2009.

<sup>157</sup>„Serbia’s security agencies estimate that on September 20 leftist organizations, parents’ associations and football fans will jointly try to prevent the Pride Parade by the use of force unless its organizers give up on the meeting in the meantime.” *Politika*, September 15, 2009.



Just before and immediately after the ban on the planned Pride Parade, followers of the extreme rights ideology attacked several foreign nationals. The most tragic of all – when on September 17, 2009, a group of some 20 young persons brutally attacked with metal rods three French citizens – ended in a death of one of the three, Bruce Taton /28/, who succumbed to the injuries in a hospital several days later.

Here is one of the reactions dealing with the latest wave of violence: “Violent behavior of football fans is used as a pretext for violence against patriotic groups, organizations, parties and intellectuals. Foreigners and Serbia’s Euro-Atlantic politicians are worried over the potential of the cooperation between football fans, nationalistic organizations and patriotic forces on the one hand, and growingly embittered victims of a failed transition and the global economic crisis on the other.”<sup>158</sup> Social poverty and working class are being instrumentalized through the propaganda identifying masses of hooligans and aggressively chauvinistic parties as natural allies of impoverished citizens.

### **Reaction by the state**

The Ministry of Justice initiated the ban on *Obraz*, 1389 and some football fan groups before the Constitutional Court.<sup>159</sup> *Nacionalni Stroj* – a Nazi organization as it declares itself – has not been banned yet and its case is still under consideration. On the grounds of information submitted by the Public Prosecutor the Constitutional Court decides on the ban on these organizations. Oliver Antic, professor at the Faculty of Law, takes that the authorities could misuse the law should *Obraz* and 1389 be banned, and calls a possible

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<sup>158</sup>Pečat, Branko Radun, October 9, 2009.

<sup>159</sup>It should be noted that the Ministry of the Police and the Public Prosecution have not done enough to prevent violence and overt threats. Leader of *Obraz* Mladen Obradovic was not arrested despite the fact that he should have been prosecuted ex officio under Article 10 of the Antidiscrimination Act, for his lynch calls against the LGBT population, as well as under Article 387 of the Criminal Code (racial and other discrimination). And when leaders of the two organizations were finally arrested, one of them, Misa Vasic, along with 34 of his comrades, was taken into custody for „disturbing public order and organizing a meeting despite police ban” and only after cancellation of the Pride Parade.

ban on football fans groups “senseless” (in saying that he quotes the murder of French citizen Bruce Taton.) “If an organization has a founding act or statutes that explicitly quote Gypsies or Jews as targets, that’s quite another story,” says Antic. “They are just children who like having a political idea or a political course of their own... See, they were marching to Gazimestan, actually doing what the Constitution provides. On the other hand, you have a gay activist advocating recognition of Kosovo’s independence... Such statement opposes Serbia’s territorial integrity and is contrary to the Constitution... Those kids from 1389 went after him because his statements were contrary to their political logic and Serbia’s constitutional provisions,” he adds referring to the organization 1389.<sup>160</sup>

When it comes to Serbia’s judiciary, the Venice Commission’s report for 2006 provides the facts that can explain court decisions. Namely, Serbia has no constitutional guarantee for independent judiciary – judges are appointed by the Supreme Judiciary Council the members of which are themselves appointed by the parliament. The court decision in the case Aleksandar Tijanic, director of the public broadcasting service RTS, vs. NGO YUCOM for “infringed copyrights” is indicative too. Namely, YUCOM has compiled Tijanic’s statements – given throughout his political and journalistic career – and published them in a book titled “The Case of Public Servant Aleksandar Tijanic.” YUCOM was mostly focused on the statements “telling of his overt misogyny, brutal defamation of political opponents, representatives of non-governmental organizations and some liberal intellectuals, which objectively make him unsuited for the office of the Director of RTS, the office to which he was appointed during Vojislav Kostunica’s premiership and which he still occupies.”<sup>161</sup> Though all the quotes have been qualified as legal by the Belgrade District Court, which dismissed Tijanic’s charge, the Supreme 10 B92, September 23, 2009. 11 [www.yucom.org.rs](http://www.yucom.org.rs) Court of Serbia ruled against YUCOM in a retrial. The decision was obviously politically motivated. The Supreme Court quotes in the explanation of the verdict, “Since the said quotes by the author (the plaintiff) have been taken out of context, the meaning of his authorial work was deprived of its major message, which was replaced by the one with quite a different significance, point and value.” In the section dealing with Serbia, including Kosovo, the Amnesty International’s report for

160 B92, September 23, 2009.

161 [www.yucom.org.rs](http://www.yucom.org.rs)

2008 speaks of continued discrimination against minority groups and impunity for ethnically motivated violence. The report also underlines that some information testify of illtreatment of prisoners of Albanian origin, as well as of the police's unacceptable attitude towards journalists and Roma.

### **Violence against religious communities**

State authorities also manifest irresponsible attitude towards the religious communities that are often targets of extreme rightist groups. This is usually about sects and non-traditional religious communities in the territory of Vojvodina, but also in other parts of Serbia (Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestants, Adventists, etc.). According to the Center for Development of Civil Society, about 90 percent of total religious communities in Serbia are not registered. Further, the NGO publicized that adviser to the Minister of Religions, Aleksandar Rankovic, misguided the OSCE Human Rights meeting in Warsaw on September 28 – October 9, 2009. Namely, Rankovic reiterated his Ministry's stance about all believers in Serbia belonging to traditional churches and religious communities. "The representative of the Ministry of Religions claims that believers of nontraditional protestant churches make up just 0.5 percent of total population of Serbia. That is not true given that census questions about religious affiliation are optional, that many interviewees were not asked at all whether or not they are believers and, in particular, that many Protestants hesitate to state their confession out of justified fear of adverse consequences," says the NGO in its release. The Ministry's representative also falsely presented the status of the Rumanian Eastern Orthodox Church.<sup>162</sup>

#### **Elite's contribution to rehabilitation of fascist ideology**

Right-wing intellectuals relativize the notion of fascism and contribute to rehabilitation of fascist ideology. A court's decision to have Dragisa Cvetkovic, Yugoslav premier on the eve of the WWII, rehabilitated marked a threatening trend in the society. Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjevic called Cvetkovic's rehabilitation "a step towards national reconciliation the Serb nation has crying for the entire century" and said he hoped the Serb public would realize the justice had been done.<sup>163</sup> Allegedly, Cvetkovic did not put

<sup>162</sup> [http://cdcs.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_front\\_page&Itemid=1](http://cdcs.org.rs/index.php?option=com_front_page&Itemid=1)

<sup>163</sup> Tanjug, September 30, 2009.

his signature under the Triangle Entente but only the Protocol on Yugoslavia's joining the Axis Powers. And, allegedly, there are documents testifying that Cvetkovic acted in the best interest of Yugoslavia since his signature under the Entente secured the "respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity." And last but not least, those circles claim that Yugoslavia did not take upon itself the obligation to provide military assistance to the Axis Powers or allow transfer of its troops through its territory.<sup>164</sup> So, the Institute for Contemporary History asserts that it was the coalition Cvetkovic-Macek government that actually signed the pact with the Axis Powers. Except for Minister of Interior Ivica Dacic no other official condemned the act of rehabilitation. The anti-Semitic character of Cvetkovic's cabinet and the relevant decisions it made long before signing the pact with fascist powers was hardly touched on in officials' statements and the media.

## CONCLUSION

Anti-communism planningly marginalized anti-fascism and promoted the Tchetnik movement as a rightist anti-fascist one. The partisan movement and its resistance to Nazi occupation was thus almost totally bypassed. Historical revisionism equalized executioners and their victims. The same relativization strategy is applied to the 1990s wars. Serbia has not yet articulated a proper response to neo-Nazi and neo-fascist phenomena. Therefore, one can only reasonably expect that racially, religiously and ethnically motivated assaults will spiral as long as state bodies – and the society as a whole – do not distance themselves from these phenomena. Against a backdrop as such, organizations and individuals speaking for the rights of vulnerable and discriminated groups are notably exposed to ill-treatment and assaults. Human rights defenders are perceived as major opponents when they advocate the interests of those who are most jeopardized – Roma, LGBT population, women, etc. The pro-European circles in the governance are doing their best to suppress violence. Whether or not they will manage to overpower the remnants of Kostunica's and Milosevic's times is still open to question.

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<sup>164</sup>Momčilo Pavlovic, director of the Institute for Contemporary History, *Vecernje Novosti*, September 29, 2009. New Serbian Political Thought shares his stands.

**HELSINKI BULLETIN No.52/Dec. 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 profascist 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."<sup>165</sup> 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 countercharge against Croatia for

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165 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)

genocide of Serbs in 1991–95. Amnestying collaborationism and the Tchetnik movement plays into the hands of today's followers of these 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 anticommunism 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. 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 clearcut 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 subgroups 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."<sup>166</sup> Investigative journalist for TV B92 Brankica 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 2 Vreme, October 29, 2009. reproduced by interest groups in politics and tycoon cir-

<sup>166</sup>Vreme, October 29, 2009.

cles.) 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 selforganized 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 Nacionalni 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 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 multireligious



character.<sup>167</sup> 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 neonazi 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.<sup>168</sup> 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 Nestic*, is the editor of the *Serb Orthodox Church*’s magazine *Pravoslavlje*, 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.<sup>169</sup> It its releases *Dveri* emphasizes

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

168 Pecat, October 2, 2009

169 <http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/elementiideologije-homoseksualizma.html>

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.<sup>170</sup> 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 separatist regime in Novi Sad stand for the only serious politics at this point.”<sup>171</sup> 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.”<sup>172</sup> 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.<sup>173</sup> Dragan Petrovic-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

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170Pravoslavlje, [www.pravoslavlje.org.yu](http://www.pravoslavlje.org.yu)

171December 1, 2009.

172E-novine, February 15, 2009.

173Vidovdanski 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 the Serb Orthodox Church (<http://www.dverisrpske.com/tekst/173985>).

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.”<sup>174</sup> The organization’s releases appeal to these groups, “Repent your crimes or else neither God nor humans will show mercy for you.”<sup>175</sup> 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.

### **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 anticommunism and aims at preventing any serious debate on the recent past, particularly the root causes of ex – Yugoslavia’s disintegration. Anticommunism is just another form of nationalism – nothing is subjected to

<sup>174</sup> <http://www.obraz.rs/index1.htm>

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

analysis but only off-handedly labeled. They are also marked by anti-antifascism – 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.<sup>176</sup> 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

<sup>176</sup>Pecat, July 17, 2009.

regimes in power in Slovenia and Croatia, and Albanians' decadeslong aggression against Serb population 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.<sup>177</sup> The war only further enthroned chauvinism as a predominant ideology on which Serbs throughout Yugoslavia were mobilized. To this very day the same ideologists 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.

## **CONCLUSION**

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, through 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

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<sup>177</sup>Pecat, July 17, 2009.

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.<sup>178</sup> 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.<sup>179</sup>

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

179 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.

**HELSINKI BULLETIN No.69/Oct. 2010.**

# National Bosniak Council Election: Test for Serbian Government

For the past two decades, Sandžak has been a crisis point which could rapidly be activated and come to the forefront. Belgrade policies served to radicalize the Muslim population in Yugoslavia ahead of the wars of the nineties. One of the theses used to justify them is that radical Islam brought Yugoslavia down<sup>180</sup>. Nor did that policy change after October 2000, despite the fact that Sandžak Bosniacs contributed to the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević (2000) and, later, to the establishment of a pro-European government (2008).

Democratic governments have not distanced themselves from the strategy which treats Bosniacs as a disruptive force, nor have they in any way or by any gesture showed regret for the events of the nineties. The trials for crimes in Štrpci and Sjeverin were superficial, and did not go into the responsibility of those who inspired the crimes.

Every attempt of the Bosniacs to formalise their status as a minority has been faced with a lack of capability as well as constant obstruction from Belgrade. The irresponsibility of local politicians has also contributed to the creation of a political vacuum which, with the support of the people of Sandžak, has been skilfully exploited by Mufti Muamer Zukorlić. He has built his legitimacy on the understandable dissatisfaction of the locals, Belgrade's obstructionism and the irresponsibility of Rasim Ljajić and Sulejman Ugljanin.

Zukorlić has become a legitimate political player in Sandžak. In the meantime he has succeeded in creating an infrastructure which includes various segments of society: from the university, the Bosniak cultural community, the National Council of Bosniacs and the Islamic community, which has

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180 That thesis, which historian Milorad Ekmečić advocated and elaborated, has been widely exploited by all media, both then and now.

the support of the Bosniac population. Now underway is the establishment of a new political party which should take the place of the SDA and the SDP.

The arrogance of Human and Minority Rights Minister Svetozar Čipčić in introducing new procedural rules for setting up the National Council of Bosniacs after elections were over has further contributed to the exacerbation of relations in Sandžak and revealed the attitude of the authorities to the Bosniac minority. This gesture was also partly prompted by the interests of the ministers from Sandžak who wield the power of blackmail, given that the governing coalition has a slender majority in the parliament. This special engineering has an additional impact on the loss of legitimacy of both ministers in Sandžak.

### **Elections for the National Council**

Elections for the national councils of ethnic minorities generated great expectations among minority populations because the direct elections were an opportunity to democratically resolve the problem of legitimacy of the councils and contribute to better integration of minorities into the political society. There were conflicting evaluations of the elections. Representatives of the authorities claimed the election procedure was irreproachable while minority representatives claimed that the way they were organised lacked seriousness, that there were “a million practical problems”, that the elections had left a bitter taste and that all of this was to the detriment of the state, because the elections are not only a minority issue.

Candidates for the elections for the National Council of Bosniacs stood on three tickets: the Bosniac ticket, Bosniac Rebirth and the Bosniac Cultural Community (BKZ)<sup>181</sup>. The greatest media attention was paid to the Bosniac Cultural Community headed by Sandžak Mufti Muamer Zukorlić. Zukorlić's candidacy was supported by the Council of the Islamic Community in Serbia.

Zukorlić explained his participation in the elections by his desire to help preserve the Bosniac identity, adding that this was his response to the “injustice done to Bosniacs” and his desire to change Belgrade's relationship with Bosniacs. He announced that he expected the state not to treat Bosniacs as a

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<sup>181</sup> The largest number of seats was won by the Bosniac Cultural Community with 17, then the Bosniac ticket with 13, while the Bosniac Rebirth won 5.



threat to the state, but to accept them as a positive resource, as a segment of Serbia's wealth and a factor for stability<sup>182</sup>. Zukorlić pointed out in his statements that “the regime in Belgrade is conducting a silent war against Bosniacs”, and that the feeling of insecurity and mistrust had forced him to sharpen his rhetoric<sup>183</sup> and dramatize the position of the Bosniacs and the elections for the national council. He presented the campaign as a special referendum in which the Bosniacs should decide between two concepts – authentically Bosniac and “pro-Belgrade”: the first, he said led to preservation of Bosniac identity while the second offered assimilation<sup>184</sup>.

His entrance onto the political stage was made possible by the local leaders of the two strongest Bosniac parties – Sulejman Ugljanin and Rasim Ljajić. They, he declared, wanted to put the Islamic community under their control and use it for party interests<sup>185</sup>. He also underlined their loss of political legitimacy in Sandžak, claiming that they were more representatives of the government in Sandžak than representatives of the Bosniacs in Belgrade<sup>186</sup>. He also disputed their contribution to the improvement of the status of Bosniacs<sup>187</sup>.

Zukorlić's candidacy has been condemned as unacceptable meddling by the Islamic community in politics and judged as a poor move. Adem Zilkić, the grand mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia (IZS) claims that the mufti (Zukorlić) has never been interested in religion<sup>188</sup>. Resad Hodžić, the president of the Sandžak Democratic Party (SDP), believes that the mufti's candidacy means that SDP could also found its own Islamic community<sup>189</sup>. Rasim Ljajić, leader of the SDPS, believes that this is not a good message and adds to the confusion, because it could occur to some politicians to put themselves

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182 “Belgrade regime conducting a silent war against Bosniacs”, *www.danas.rs*

183 “Belgrade regime conducting a silent war against Bosniacs”, *www.danas.rs*

184 “Bosniac referendum in Serbia”, *www.glas-javnosti.rs*

185 “Belgrade regime conducting a silent war against Bosniacs”, *www.danas.rs*

186 “Patience has bounds”, Arena, June 21, 2010

187 “Everything they have done,” said Zukorlić, “has been ineffective for these people”.

“Belgrade regime conducting a silent war against Bosniacs”, *www.danas.rs*

188 <http://www.vesti.rs/Vesti>

189 “SDP(S) in panic” <http://sandžakpress.net>

forward for senior religious office<sup>190</sup>. However, according to Minister Čiplić, the candidacy of Mufti Zukorlić is a predictable and permissible activity<sup>191</sup>.

Zukorlić summed the elections up as “a great step forward for Bosniacs and the state of Serbia”, because “in this campaign we were opposed by the machinery of two ministers, Sulejman Ugljanin and Rasim Ljajić, for whom Belgrade made all resources available. The closing stage of the campaign against us included even President Tadić who, during the pre-election media blackout, received a plaque from the Bosniac National Council for alleged contribution to the affirmation of the rights of Bosniacs<sup>192</sup>.

#### Constituting the Council

At the constitutive session (July 7) only BKZ representatives appeared, together with two representatives from the Bosniac Rebirth ticket. Mevludin Dudić was elected president and Samir Tandir chair of the Executive Board. The Minister of Human and Minority Rights, however, did not recognize the national council thus established and announced the holding of a new constitutive session and, failing that, new elections. In response to this, Zukorlić announced that the BKZ would not stand in new elections because Bosniacs had a representative body and regarded the matter as closed. He branded Čiplić and Ljajić an organised gang and accused Ljajić of concocting fraud and falsification and Čiplić of implementing it all with the help of his people<sup>193</sup>.

The basic problem with establishment of the National Council of Bosniacs was that the Ministry of Human Rights was unhappy with the fact that Zukorlić's team won a majority at the elections. Because of this, the day before the council was constituted, the ministry changed some of the rules. The rules were changed, claimed the ministry, in order to clarify some provisions: because of the particular nature of the Bosniac minority, a regulation was added about a qualifying majority. Minister Čiplić, as a reason for the change in procedure, also expressed “suspicion that the ministry would succumb to pressure from the BKZ ticket to accept a simple majority vote as sufficient for constitution of a national council. This concern was based on the fact that pressure has been applied to two members of the Bosniac Rebirth

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190 “Politics becomes a market”, *www.novosti.rs*

191 Čiplić: Mufti has the right to stand”, *http://sandžakpress.net*. The “Hungarian Accord” included four clerics – two bishops, one Orthodox bishop and a priest.

192 Danas, June 8, 2010

193 “Zukorlić: brutal insult for Bosniacs”, Danas, July 11, 2010

ticket to cross over to the BKZ. Because of this suspicion, members from two tickets did not appear at the constitutive session”<sup>194</sup>. Petar Antić, the assistant minister for human and minority rights, said that the regulation requiring a two thirds minority to constitute a representative body came directly from the Serbian Constitution<sup>195</sup>.

The Ministry representatives left the meeting, claiming that the conditions for establishing the national council had not been met, but the candidates present continued working and set up the new council. Faced with the breach of good democratic practice, the BKZ leaders described this move as yet more trickery by Belgrade<sup>196</sup> and said they would file criminal complaints against those responsible in the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights<sup>197</sup>.

Jelko Kacin, the European Parliament’s rapporteur for the Balkans, also drew attention to the problems in constituting the Bosniac council since, as he underlined, it violates the legal state because of discrimination and attempts to introduce new rules which did not exist at all. He emphasised that “after intervention by the ombudsman and with the help of the OSCE, the problems have begun to be solved, but that the job is not finished yet. Until it is resolved, until the Bosniac National Council is established, there simply must be warnings about it”<sup>198</sup>.

Nevena Petrušić, the commissioner for the protection of the rights of minorities, and Ombudsman Saša Janković, have ascertained that only in the case of the Bosniac council did the ministry change the rules on minority councils. Saša Janković announced that he would launch proceedings to investigate the legality of these moves by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. In an opinion submitted to the Serbian Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, the commissioner for the defence of equality, Nevena Petrušić, said that it was unjustifiable that the conditions for constituting the

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194 “Čiplić opens the doors to abuse”, Blic, July 30, 2010

195 “Simmering today, tomorrow it could boil over”, NIN, July 22, 2010

196 “Bosniac Council constituted anyway”, <http://www.b92.net>

197 LDP MP Kenan Hajdarević also sharply criticised the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights. He claimed that the ministry, by changing the rules, had distorted the electoral will of the Bosniacs and created a Bosniac National Council to suit the party and personal desires of the two Bosniac ministers in the Serbian Government. “BKZ constitutes, ministry challenges”, Danas, July 8, 2010

198 Radio Free Europe, October 10, 2010

National Council of Bosniacs were different from those for other councils of minorities and that this violated the principle of equal electoral rights for citizens. She added that the principle of equality had been violated by the adoption of new rules for the constitutive session of the national council of the Bosniac national minority on July 6, which stipulated that for constitution of the national council it is necessary to verify at least two thirds of the seats. She emphasised that “this rule is not in the procedures by which the national councils of all other national minorities are constituted. By introducing a special condition only for constituting the national council of the Bosniac national minority, discrimination was committed, which is prohibited by the Serbian Constitution, international agreements and legal regulations<sup>199</sup>”.

Non-governmental organisations have also pointed out that the change of election rules created problems after the elections. Aleksandar Popov from the Centre for Regionalism assessed the problems as being greater than they had been before the elections and said that dialogue was the only option for achieving a joint resolution of the problems<sup>200</sup>. The Centre for Development of the Civil Society warned that the situation “is becoming red hot” and that the problems were largely produced in Belgrade and not in the field, for which responsibility lay with those in power, the Government of Serbia and its relevant ministries<sup>201</sup>.

### **Reaction in Sandžak**

The declaration adopted at the sitting of the Bosniac National Assembly (BNS) – held just days after the constitutive session of the National Council – “sharply condemns the legal and political barbarism of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights”, and demanded the urgent replacement of Minister Čiplič<sup>202</sup>, further demanding the establishing of responsibility of those

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199 Kurir, August 14, 2010

200 “Authorities accused of providing ammunition to extremists”, Dnevnik, August 28, 2010

201 Ibid.

202 Minister Čiplič explained that the rule on a two thirds minority being necessary for constituting the National Council by the need to protect the electoral will of Bosniacs because, he said, there was a danger that there would be abuse of this will by the

involved in the falsification of the electoral will of Bosniacs. The Assembly's declaration called on candidates from the other two tickets to join the work of the Bosniac National Council. With the aim of affirming and resolving the status of Sandžak, the Assembly formed a Committee for the Restoration of the People's Council of Sandžak, and a special Committee for the Internationalisation of the Issue of Discrimination against Bosniacs. The Declaration proclaimed the Bosniacs a constitutive nation in Serbia, and demanded urgent discussions with the president of the republic and the government in order to resolve the issue of the constitutional status of Bosniacs.

The declaration was an additional demonstration of how the problems connected with the Bosniac National Council election had been complicated and exacerbated, as well as being expanded to include other issues. Muamer Zukorlić contributed to that exacerbation himself when he declared that "playing with Sandžak means trifling with this part of Serbia. The state is like a building within which the residents can like each other or not. If the majority of residents decide to set fire to one apartment, they're taking the risk of the whole building catching fire. Fire is not for playing with. Either things will be nice for all of us or there will be fires all the way up to the top. Only our house won't burn<sup>203</sup>."

Zukorlić's statements did not fail to draw a response. It was noted that they were irresistibly reminiscent of the rhetoric which in its own day could be heard at meetings of Serbs from Kosovo<sup>204</sup>, that Zukorlić, as a man of dangerous intentions, pathological vanity and frightening personal ambition, was playing with the fate of all of us, that he was exploiting the poverty and lack of prospects of people in the Raška region to literally call for a jihad<sup>205</sup>, that he was contributing to an incendiary atmosphere and that his calculated statements could provide a motive for terrorists and violence<sup>206</sup>,

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Bosniac cultural community. "Zukorlić diverts the political will of Bosniacs", Danas, August 23, 2010

203 "Zukorlić threatens Tadić with fire", <http://srb.time.mk> If nothing else, Zukorlić remains consistent. In an interview with Novi Sad's Arena, he said that he would always step up the rhetoric when confronted with injustice.

204 "About the latest events in Sandžak", Statement of the Centre for the Development of the Civil Society (CRCSD) [www.cdcs.org.rs](http://www.cdcs.org.rs)

205 See "Dangerous mufti and feeble state", [www.pressonline.rs](http://www.pressonline.rs)

206 "Zukorlić stirring up radical Islamism", [www.vesti-online.com](http://www.vesti-online.com)

that an atmosphere of chaos, incidents and the creation of parallel institutions would suit him<sup>207</sup>, that he was aiming to impose himself as an inviolable leader, a lord of life and death controlling work, education, hospital treatment, places in kindergartens and, in one word: survival<sup>208</sup>. In addition there were accusations that he was in breach of the Serbian Constitution, that he was attempting to usurp the Constitutional rights of Bosniacs and exploiting the national council as a body which would seek the federalisation of Serbia with Bosniacs as a constituent part<sup>209</sup>

### **Exacerbation of relations with the Islamic Community in Serbia**

At the end of July, the Serbian Government brought a decision which further exacerbated relations with the Islamic Community in Serbia (IZuS) which is headed by Muamer Zukorlić. By this decision, the government changed the membership of the Commission for Religious Instruction so that Muslims were now represented only by Grand Mufti Zilkić. Before this decision, both Islamic communities had their own representatives.

Mevludin Dudić<sup>210</sup> cites two factors in his replacement. First, in 2007, he refused to join the “para-religious formation” of the Islamic Community of Serbia (IZS, represented by Grand Mufti Zilkić) and, second, he had recently been elected president of the Bosniac National Council. In a letter to Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković, the Mesihat of the IZuS alleged that Dudić had been replaced without either informing or consulting IZuS. A letter was also sent to religious communities which have members in the commission in which it was underlined that the IZuS was not asked to propose one of its members, nor was it informed of the removal and the nomination of new members, but that everything was done without its knowledge. Dudić’s dismissal also drew a response from the Association of Islamic Religious Teachers which asked for this decision to be revoked and for a meeting with the

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207 Esad Džudžević, leader of the Bosniac ticket, “Džudžević: Atmosphere of chaos in Sandžak suits Zukorlić”, *Politika*, September 5, 2010

208 “Zukorlić: Setting Bosniacs against brothers and neighbours”, *Blic*, September 5, 2010

209 Minister Čiplič, “Zukorlić plays at divisions”, *Politika*, August 20, 2010

210 M. Dudić was a member of the Commission for Religious Instruction from its founding (2004)

Education Ministry. The Association warned that, if these demands were not met, mass protests of Imams and religious teachers would be organised<sup>211</sup>, parents and students would be called to boycott instruction<sup>212</sup>, and members of the Islamic community to civil disobedience, together with the organisation of other forms of peaceful protest<sup>213</sup>.

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- 211 Members of both Islamic communities scheduled protests, but these were not held. Rešad Plojović, the mufti of Belgrade and Novi Sad, said that the protest in front of the Government building was cancelled because the Association of Religious Teachers of IZuS did not want to fall into the trap of the problem created by the replacement of the IZuS member on the Commission for Religious Instruction being presented as a conflict among Muslims. We have, he said, a problem with the regime in Belgrade, and it's not about a dispute among Muslims. "Government decision divides Muslims", *Danas*, September 1, 2010. Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić said that the protest of IZuS religious teachers was not held for quite opposite reasons – because it failed to draw sufficient numbers. Because their gathering was not held, the IZS counter-meeting was also postponed. Jusufspahić expressed readiness for the two communities to meet and look each other in the eye. He announced also that he agreed with Mufti Zukorlić on ninety per cent of issues because he spoke the truth. However, he said, with that truth he wants something untruthful. Because Zukorlić was trying to throw a basket where he shouldn't, we must be there, said Jusufspahić picturesquely, to throw him a banana. "We have to throw Zukorlić a banana." *www.vesti-online.com*
- 212 From the Bajram Academy in Prijepolje, Zukorlić invited parents and pupils to boycott religious instruction which would, he said, be conducted by unqualified instructors. The directors of certain schools in Novi Pazar were, according to the media, in a bind over which instructors to engage. By law they are obliged to employ those on a list provided by the Education Ministry, but the Islamic Community in Serbia (IZuS) was warning that – if they did not engage teachers from their list – this would result in a boycott of classes. Protests were held outside some schools. In the Selakovac Primary School, the director, according to *Politika*, was subject to unpleasantness. According to the media one of Mufti Zukorlić's bodyguards physically attacked him because he hired the "wrong" religious teacher. However the ISuZ Web site carried the information that no such incidents occurred at this meeting.
- 213 "Seeking change of Government decision", *Danas*, August 23, 2010. The Ministry of Religion issued a statement describing as unacceptable that the government decision was a consequence of a discriminatory attitude to religious teaching, adding that religious instruction must not be endangered by personnel changes, that Dudić had not been replaced as a member of the commission but had left his position on his own initiative and that religious instruction could not be a test range for inciting divisions in the Islamic community and a place for the settling of any kind of political accounts. "Ministry claims Zukorlić refuses to cooperate", *Danas*, August 31, 2010

Muamer Zukorlić described the replacement of Dudić as an “attack on Muslims because they dared to ask for their religious and national rights<sup>214</sup>. Zukorlić also criticised the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) because it had failed to respond to the letter to other religious communities, thus, he said, “legitimizing our awareness that the Serbian Orthodox Church is very interested in seeing the Islamic Community weakened, in its development being halted and that state organs are an instrument of the Church in implementing its program<sup>215</sup>”. Orthodox Bishop Irinej Bulović described this accusation as untrue and maliciously contrived lies and said that Zukorlić “cares neither about religious instruction nor about presenting religious teaching in the media nor about any religious rights of Serbian Muslims. The stoning of buses, the burning of the Serbian flag, violence to a school director and many other acts point to his intentions being completely otherwise<sup>216</sup>.”

### **Islamic Community property**

The problem of property belonging to the Islamic Community has also come to the surface after smouldering for some time. The trigger was construction of a kindergarten on a parcel in the Fifth Local Community in Novi Pazar which IZuS claims to be the property of Vakuf. The General Council of IZuS described this as the culmination of violence, discrimination and trampling on the fundamental rights of Muslims, while the Mesihat of the IZuS issued proclamation calling the faithful to a protest to be held on the disputed land. The protest was prevented by police, who were met by a barrage of stones, roofing tiles and foul language<sup>217</sup>. Because IZuS officials had not succeeded in having the police allow access to the disputed land, a num-

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214 “Ever clearer calls for autonomy”, *Danas*, August 20, 2010

215 “Church behind conflict in IZS”, *Danas*, August 20, 2010. (September 3, 2010)

According to Zukorlić, the SPC is retaliating against the IZ because, when the Church and Religious Communities Act was adopted, they opposed the SPC having legal and formal favoured status.

216 “Irinej replies to Zukorlić”, *www.pressonline.rs*

217 Six police officers were injured in the incident. Protesters shouted “Rasim, you thief”, “Suljo, you thief”, “Rasim the Serb”, and “Suljo the Serb”. The police officers were branded Chetniks who had been slaughtering people in Kosovo. Imam Sead Šaćirović explained the insults he had hurled by saying that one police officer had shouted to



ber of protesters blocked access roads to the town. That evening, Zukorlić called on the authorities to begin talks in order to maintain peace and stability in Sandžak. LDP leader Čedomir Jovanović<sup>218</sup> played an important role in mediating these discussions.

Interior Minister Dačić said that they “don’t want conflicts,” but that no one could attack police and then expect them not to react to those attacks<sup>219</sup>. Tomo Zorić, the press representative for the Prosecutor’s Office of the republic, said that the prosecution was monitoring the situation and that, if elements of criminal responsibility were established, criminal proceedings would be launched<sup>220</sup>. DHSS leader Vladan Batić says everything Muamer Zukorlić has done to date has elements of disseminating national and religious hatred and division and says it is time for the state to react to this because tomorrow could be too late<sup>221</sup>. Darko Trifunović, an expert on international terrorism also says the state should react if Zukorlić crosses the line and breaks the law: “He is on the borderline, and that’s the space in which he is moving, while tension grows in Sandžak. His speeches do not constitute a crime but his words should be condemned because he is hiding behind a robe and a turban<sup>222</sup>”. Zukorlić’s activities are raising tensions, said military analyst Aleksandar Radić, adding that a security crisis is being contrived and will be followed by an attempt to internationalise the problem<sup>223</sup>. Radić believes that

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 him that “I wasn’t in Srebrenica and that he would kill us the same way he killed our fellows there”. “Seizing power with riots”, Pravda, September 6, 2010

218 “Jovanović is behaving like Zukorlić’s political branch and I believe that he is doing so because he wants to win votes in Sandžak. I don’t know what’s wrong with him,” said SDPA official Meho Omerović. “Omerović: :Čeda is a spokesman for Zukorlić”, <http://www.Sandžaklive.rs>

219 “Dačić: Police can’t solve political and religious problems,” Dnevnik, September 6, 2010. Several protesters addressed threats to the Novi Pazar correspondent for Danas, Slađana Novosel. UNS, the Association of Serbian Journalists roundly condemned the threats.

220 “We are monitoring and analysing the situation closely. We are calling for tolerance,” said the Prosecutor’s Office, “and we are warning that there is a thin line between freedom of speech and the crime of inciting national, racial and religious hatred and intolerance,” “Prosecution warns Zukorlić”, Blic, September 7, 2007

221 “Arrest Zukorlić”, Pravda, September 7, 2010

222 Ibid.

223 “Seizing power through riots”, Pravda, September 6, 2010

the government should show authority but that there should also be discussions with Zukorlić.

### **International University in Novi Pazar**

The Novi Pazar International University was founded in 2002 with the support of the then prime minister, Zoran Đinđić. Belgrade has persistently tried to damage the credibility of this university by stalling or failing to regularly issue accreditation to its constituent faculties or by favouring the state university in Sandžak. Meanwhile the International University has become one of the largest in Serbia. Čedomir Jovanović (LDP) emphasizes that it is “necessary to bring an immediate halt to the constant production of problems and to resolve the most important problems very quickly. These included finally recognizing the legitimate make-up of the Bosniac National Council, issuing all accreditations to which the faculties of the International University in Novi Pazar are entitled and finding a way, through dialogue, to begin solving all the other problems which cannot be reduced to technical or property and legal issues”. He points out that “this university was supported by the government in 2002 because it wanted to help young people in Sandžak which, as the youngest region in Europe, was without a single opportunity for studying. Today this is one of the largest universities in the country and this is adequate proof that were not wrong at the time. On the contrary, it is the incumbent authorities who are wrong, who are depriving this university of accreditation, exacerbating the problems and the lack of understanding in Sandžak<sup>224</sup>”.

Jelko Kacin also commented on the International University, saying he believed that “Belgrade is conducting a policy which is totally counterproductive, which is based on conflict and which does not make any contribution to improving Serbia’s image. On the contrary, even in the matter of the status of minorities, where some progress has been made, everything I have mentioned here is dragging Serbia backwards<sup>225</sup>”.

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224 <http://www.islamskazajednica.org>

225 Radio Free Europe, October 19, 2010

## Dialogue or internationalization

Zukorlić has repeatedly sought dialogue with Belgrade, but these requests have been ignored. Belgrade saw these requests as a desire first, by meetings with the most senior state officials, to weaken the authority of the two Bosniac leaders and ministers in the republic government and, second, to establish Zukorlić as a key figure in resolving problems. Problems in Sandžak have usually boiled down to squabbles among the Bosniacs and a struggle between Bosniac leaders for political supremacy<sup>226</sup>.

Zukorlić repeatedly emphasized that they were ready for dialogue at all levels. “We want to talk. We want to solve the problems through dialogue and talks but we will not sit by with our arms folded. We still insist on internationalization. We shall present this tyranny to all international institutions and organizations, in both the West and the East<sup>227</sup>.” The same tone appeared in a letter to EU Foreign Affairs and Security Commissioner Catherine Ashton, which demanded that “international observers be sent to the Sandžak region”.

The status of Bosniacs in Sandžak was also discussed at the annual meeting of the Muslim World League (Rabita) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. At that meeting, Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić asked that Muslims in Serbia who followed Zukorlić be protected from the violation of human and religious rights. Zukorlić himself spoke at this meeting about the endangering of the religious and national rights of Muslims. The conference also saw an initiative launched for the Islamic Community to be Sandžak’s link with the Islamic world for investments in the region.

A Committee for Support for Sandžak was set up in Sarajevo in September with the aim of giving “full and multi-layered support to the struggle of Bosniacs in Sandžak on their path to securing full freedom and all individual and collective rights, against the ever more frequent discrimination against Bosniac on religious and ethnic grounds<sup>228</sup>”. Avdo Hebib, a fighter for human rights and the rights of Bosniacs, former Interior Minister of Bosnia-Herce-

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226 In the opinion of Dejan Vuk Stanković, the issue here is a struggle for political supremacy between Bosniac parties. “Zukorlić would like to be the unassailable leader of the Bosniacs. “Seizing power through riots”, *Pravda*, September 6, 2010

227 “Chief mufti again calls authorities to dialogue”, [www.islamskazajednica.org](http://www.islamskazajednica.org)

228 <http://www.islamskazajednica.org>

govina and the incumbent president of the Patriotic League Association, was elected chairman of the committee.

Serbian officials say there is no need at all for the presence of foreign observers<sup>229</sup>, while opponents of Zukorlić in Sandžak believe that observers should see that “there is a man in Europe, a religious leader, who has his own television station, university and a motor pool bigger than that of the municipal council and who is announcing the establishment of a political party<sup>230</sup>”.

### **Sandžak: new hotbed of crisis**

In Belgrade there is a different official and unofficial explanation of Muamer Zukorlić’s activities. Events involved in the setting up of the Bosniac National Council have inspired some commentators to describe Sandžak as a new hotbed of crisis which could destabilize the country and the region. Darko Tanasković, a professor at the Faculty for Security Studies, claims that “we are not far off having suicide terrorists because we already have everything else: from Wahabbism to the glorification of Al Qaeda and Mujahideen on various Web sites<sup>231</sup>”. Ninoslav Krstić sees these events as a consequence of incendiary statements on the establishment of Sandžak’s autonomy while, for Zukorlić, they are a consequence of hopelessness and the increase in tensions. He says these incidents deserve to be condemned but cannot be seen as more significant than violation of the Constitution, discrimination against Bosniacs and the endangering of the Islamic community.

Momir Stojanović, the former director of the Military Security Agency, interprets events in Sandžak as a message from the West: “Here’s what we can do if you don’t soften your position on Kosovo. What’s being said here is this – if you don’t do what you are asked to do, we will set Sandžak ablaze.” He is of the opinion that Zukorlić has close connections with leaders in BiH and Kosovo and that he enjoys the strong support of radical Islamic centres in

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229 “There is not a single objective reason for Serbia to need European and other observers,” said Minister Čiplić, adding: “If anyone thinks that foreign observers should support someone who opposes the construction of a kindergarten, then that someone has strayed into politics”. “Mufti appealing in vain”, [www.novosti.rs](http://www.novosti.rs)

230 Ibid.

231 [www.vesti-online.com](http://www.vesti-online.com)

Iran and Saudi Arabia, from whose foundations he also receives funding<sup>232</sup>. DSS spokesman Petar Petković also expressed the suspicion that some foreign countries are behind events in Sandžak. He called on state bodies to investigate whether the Friends of Sandžak club, which includes the ambassadors to Belgrade of some of the most influential countries, is behind Zukorlić's behaviour<sup>233</sup>.

Dževad Galijašević, an expert in terrorism, says that Zukorlić "is a clone of Grand Mufti Cerić and has bagged for himself the role of a Balkan ayatollah. What they have in common", he adds, "is major Arab capital, a taste for the Wahabbi and a wink from America for everything they do<sup>234</sup>". He points out that it is Mustafa Cerić who advocates the thesis that all issues in Serbia should be resolved by dialogue between the two constituent peoples, Serbs and Bosniacs, and that Zukorlić's ultimate aim is not the territorial autonomy of Sandžak but the fuelling of instability and the destruction of Serbia as an important regional factor, because the strengthening of Serbia is not conducive to US interests in the region.

Ninoslav Krstić is of the opinion that instability in the Raška region is emerging according to the same scenario as that in Kosovo. Krstić claims to have information from foreign intelligence services that this instability has already been in preparation for two years and that Muamer Zukorlić has been selected to implement it. "We are now in the phase in which attacks on police will begin and become increasingly frequent and the Serbian side will be blamed for everything". Krstić describes the situation in Sandžak as very dangerous and adds that "the call for autonomy is a call for the creation of

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232 "West setting Sandžak ablaze over Kosovo", *Alo*, September 7, 2010. Stojanović asserted that the authorities are responsible for what he described as the dizzying rise of Zukorlić. For the sake of Muslim votes from Sandžak, the authorities openly flirted with Zukorlić and helped him become what he is now. Both the late Prime Minister Đinđić and President Tadić had collaborated with Zukorlić and supported him, said Stojanović.

233 *Ibid.*

234 "Zukorlić playing for America", *Alo*, September 10, 2010. In mid-September information appeared in the media that Zukorlić is attempting to split Sandžak from Serbia with the assistance of the US Congress. "US congressman lobbying for secession of Sandžak", *Pravda*, September 15, 2010

a state and the call for the creation of a state is secession and annexation – and we know to whom<sup>235</sup>.”

Darko Tanasković believes that the activities of Mufti Zukorlić and Grand Mufti Cerić are part of the same project. “It is indicative that their accusations against Belgrade are being stepped up at exactly the time the opinion of the International Court of Justice on the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo is expected... Apparently it is necessary to contribute to the creation of an impression that Serbia is still a problematic state which does not respect the rights of its citizens of Muslim denomination. If this results in at least a few cases of Muslim countries recognizing Kosovo’s independence the job will have been done<sup>236</sup>.”

Miša Đurković of the Centre for Conservative Studies believes that the aim of the Balkan transition is to reduce Serbia to the pre-Kumanovo borders and that it is only a matter of days before the issue of Sandžak will be activated. Đurković believes that a large part of the Serbian political elite share responsibility for Zukorlić’s rise to prominence. As the spiritual child of Mustafa Cerić, Zukorlić established a strong university which became the main recruitment and training centre for his future disciples. Control of the university secured Zukorlić a key tool for shaping and directing the future Sandžak intelligentsia, young and determined people. This gave him a vital mechanism for long-term ascendancy over the administrative sectors and, thus, of real power in the region. Đurković also described the measures taken by Minister Čiplić as detrimental to the state, saying that they have only added fuel to the flames and contributed to Zukorlić’s popularity.

Dušan Janjić, the director of the Forum for Ethnic Relations, is of the opinion that talks with Zukorlić are in order. He believes that the meeting between a Sandžak delegation and US Congressman Keith Ellison was “yet another warning for Boris Tadić that he must sit down and talk to Zukorlić<sup>237</sup>”. Janjić also expressed doubts about Serbia’s capability of finding, on its own, a successful model for the integration of minorities, saying that it will need outside help for this. In his opinion, the situation in Sandžak testifies to the collapse of the government’s policy on minorities<sup>238</sup>.

235 “West preparing Sandžak secession”, *Politika*, September 5, 2010

236 “Zukorlić’s clamour must not drown out other Bosniac voices”, *Politika*, July 25, 2010

237 “US congressman lobbying for Sandžak secession”, *Pravda*, September 15, 2010

238 “Collapse of state policy on Sandžak”, *www.dw-world.de*

Boris Tadić said that a stable society in Serbia requires greater dedication to resolving the issue of the status of religious communities and national minorities. He emphasized, however, that it is not usual European practice for political discussions to be conducted by the representatives of religious communities. National and religious issues must be separated and discussions should be held with anyone who has legitimacy in their own field<sup>239</sup>. With this statement, Tadić backed Ljajić and Ugljanin, whom he sees as the political representatives of the Bosniac national community.

Rasim Ljajić, however, claims that Sandžak will not be a hotbed for crisis because it does not have the potential for that<sup>240</sup>. Meho Omerović, a member of the Serbian Parliament Security Committee, shares his opinion. He believes that the grave economic situation provides fertile ground for provoking incidents, but that the Bosniacs are not a security threat to the state of Serbia, nor that the state of Serbia treats Bosniacs in any way but as equal citizens. Omerović did, however, admit that there had been some errors in the behaviour of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, mostly concerning the change of the “famous rules”<sup>241</sup>.

However Zukorlić believes that neither Ljajić nor Ugljanin have legitimacy to act as representatives of the Bosniacs but may, he says, take part in discussions as representatives of the government<sup>242</sup>. He also challenges the

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239 “Tadić rejects dialogue with Bosniacs”, *www.sandzakpress.net*

240 “Sandžak will not erupt in flames”, *www.novosti.rs*

241 “Sandžak is not Kosovo”, August 23, 2010. On the subject of errors, Ombudsman Saša Janković said that he would institute proceedings against the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights in order to establish the errors in its work. It should also be noted that the commissioner for information of public importance, Rodoljub Sabić, has filed twelve criminal complaints against persons unknown for unauthorized collection, use and falsification of information when compiling special voter rolls. Finally, Nevena Petrušić, the commission for the protection of equality, asked the ministry to change the rules for constituting the Bosniac National Council because the requirement for verification of two thirds of the seats had violated the principle of equality. The ministry, said Petrušić, “has acted on the recommendation and, with the removal of this discriminatory provision, my work is completed.” “Ombudsman announces charges”, *www.e-novine.com*

242 “Because Ljajić and Ugljanin are representatives of the government in Sandžak, we have absolutely no problem with them taking part in talks as government representatives, on the other side,” said Zukorlić. “Muamer Zukorlić: we want negotiations with the Serbian Government”, *Danas*, September 7, 2010

legitimacy of the two largest parties which, in his opinion, do not conduct either a Bosniac or a Sandžak policy but a pro-Belgrade one. Both the Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak and the Sandžak Democratic Party have, according to Zukorlić, lost the purpose of their existence, they have drifted away from the people, distanced themselves from their platforms and become hostages of their positions in Belgrade. For years they had fed on their mutual hostility and this has created a political space for the emergence of a third political option.

The Bosniac Democratic Union (BDZ) is a new party now being established under the leadership of Emir Elfić. He has said that BDZ will be a party of the democratic centre which will focus primarily on the interests of Bosniacs and on Sandžak's economic recovery. It could become an important factor in calming the situation, as well as an interesting partner for the opposition parties in Belgrade<sup>243</sup>. The grave economic situation in Sandžak – Novi Pazar has been described as the economic equivalent of a fire-gutted building – works to the advantage of the new party.

### **Introduction to internationalization**

The approach of Human and Minority Rights Minister Svetozar Ciplić and Religious Communities Minister Bogoljub Šijaković to the performance of their functions comes from a starting position based on power and discrimination rather than on a dialogue with the representatives of minorities. This indicates that the state lacks inclusive policies and political will to resolve the minorities issue in Serbia. The resignation of Marko Karadžić, the secretary of state with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, has underlined the febleness of this ministry. State Secretary Karadžić was one of the few representatives of the authorities who spoke clearly and unambiguously of the state's responsibility to honour human rights, especially in concrete cases of violence and discrimination.

Discussions between the representatives of election tickets, which had been scheduled for October 1, were not held, and a meeting held earlier in

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<sup>243</sup> Zukorlić also supported the founding of the party and it could, among other things, also contribute to Zukorlić ridding himself of some of the pressure he has long been subject to over entering politics without doffing his clerical turban.



Belgrade had made it obvious that agreement was well nigh impossible. This was also hinted at by a representative of the Bosniac ticket, Esad Džudžević, who finds it unacceptable for Zukorlić's people to occupy senior positions in the national council "because he has crossed the line and has triggered violence". Bosnian Rebirth are also intractable, demanding five seats on the council, the number they won in the election. Nor will the Bosniac Cultural Community give up on their demands, however they are not against elections "provided that there are OSCE representatives at each and every polling station". Mevludin Dudić said that they have no intention of taking part in any election organized by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights.

Jelko Kacin, the European Parliament's rapporteur for Serbia, said that responsibility for the success of dialogue on the establishment of the Bosniac National Council, launched under the auspices of the OSCE, is borne particularly by the Government of the Republic of Serbia. He emphasized that the reasons for this conflict, as he described it, are deeper and stem from the grave economic situation in Sandžak, one of the most underdeveloped regions of Serbia, as well as from the divisions in the Islamic community which date back to the government of Vojislav Koštunica. He also said that dialogue with Zukorlić cannot be avoided although he is not only a citizen but also a mufti. "He has his rights, while many in the region perceive in him the personification of their attitude to the minority community. This is a measure of the degree of collateral damage being done on both sides<sup>244</sup>.

The demands for new elections from the executive authorities will further undermine their already low credibility. The demands for autonomy and restoration of the People's Council of Sandžak testify to this. Some Bosniacs see this as a way to protect their identity and their minority rights. Zukorlić has said that autonomy is inevitable and that the most desirable model is the autonomy of South Tyrol because it includes cross-border, dual autonomy which does not jeopardise the identity of either Italy or Austria<sup>245</sup>.

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244 Tanjug, October 3, 2010

245 The idea of autonomy did not get a positive reception. It was seen as politically unserious (Mirsad Jusufović, SDP) and an idea which is bound to fail (Branko Ružič, SPS). SNS MP Branislav Pelević said that the idea came as no surprise, that Zukorlić's aim is not autonomy but unification with BiH, that he advocates war and that state bodies must react. In Čedomir Antić's opinion, advocacy for autonomy is way to weaken Serbia and Muslim nationalism in the Novi Pazar area seeks to create a foundation for political emancipation and secession from the Republic of Serbia. "Mufti revives idea

By relying on ministers from the ranks of the Bosniac community (Ugljanin and Ljajić) and by ignoring Zukorlić, the government will face ever stronger demands as time goes by and will have less and less space to find a compromise solution. By trying to reduce the problem to the ambition and lust for power of one man, the government is missing an opportunity to realize that the problems in Sandžak are turning more and more into the Bosniac minority's problem with the state<sup>246</sup>.

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of partisan movement", *Politika*, July 16, 2010. Serbian Government Minister Rasim Ljajić says that the idea of autonomy was launched to satisfy the passions of young people living there who do not know the meaning of the word. ("IZuS calls for speedy restoration of autonomy", *Blic*, September 4, 2010), in other words that it is a hoax, launched for marketing and political reasons. *Dnevnik*, August 30, 2010.

246 "Our message is clear," said Zukorlić, "In order for us to accept the state of Serbia and see it as our own, the state must see us as its citizens, rather than as second-class beings. We will not let up on this, no matter how it jars in their ears. If they regard us as second-class citizens, we will not perceive the state of Serbia as our homeland." "Bosniacs have fraction of state", [www.islamskazajednica.org](http://www.islamskazajednica.org)

## Summary

The situation in Sandžak is evidence of the collapse of the government's policy on minorities. The resolution of the minorities issue cannot be based solely on the passage of legislation: that legislation must also be consistently and responsibly implemented. A change in the social ambience is also needed, something for which both the authorities and the media are responsible.

Belgrade bears additional responsibility for resolving the current situation because to date this problem has never been resolved in a responsible manner. Some actions of the responsible minister have been inappropriate and wrong, and serious effort is required to achieve success and progress as soon as possible.

The authorities in Serbia have shown by their behaviour in the Sandžak case that they are not capable of finding a successful model for the integration of minorities on their own and they will need some outside help.

The constitution of the Bosniac National Council was a trigger which activated all the other unresolved problems of Sandžak. These problems, economic problems in particular, would be more easily and rapidly solved if at least some of the outstanding issues were to be successfully resolved, primarily the establishment of the national council.

The International University in Novi Pazar has become an important institution for the region and the state must take a constructive attitude to this, starting by regularly issuing accreditation to the university.

Belgrade's political interference in relations within the Islamic community and the taking of sides with one of the communities has resulted in divisions in Sandžak and destabilization of the situation. The authorities cannot avoid dialogue with Mufti Zukorlić as this would mean that they are not accepting reality.

Given the irreconcilable positions taken by participants in the election, everything points to new elections for the national council being organized for members of the Bosniac minority. If that happens, it is essential that the elections are organized by the OSCE in order to avoid conflict and further radicalization.



**HELSINKI BULLETIN No.92/MARCH 2013.****Temerin: Administration of Justice**

## Novi Sad Courts – double standards

Interethnic incidents in Temerin have been attraction the attention of domestic and international factors alike for several years now. Though some representatives of local and central government have been strongly condemning these incidents courts of law have not always been up to the task when it came to fair trials and impartial administration of justice.

In some cases that are now before the Basic and the Higher Court in Novi Sad criminal charges have been raised against ethnic Hungarians for spreading national, racial and religious hatred and intolerance (Article 317 of the Criminal Code providing punishment with one to eight years in prison) whereas the accused from the ranks of ethnic Serbs have been charged with violent behavior, including participation in a fist fight, punishable under Article 123 of the same law (either by fines or up to three year imprisonment). For the same offenses some perpetrators of the Serb origin have been tried in misdemeanor proceedings only and mildly fined.

**Case I**

In the night of January 27, 2013, two Hungarians spoke in their mother tongue on their way home from a party. As they told the police later, six young men attacked them all of a sudden. One of the two was hit on his head with a bottle (suffering *laesio traumatica capitis, superficialis*) while the other was thrown on the ground and kicked mercilessly. While beating

them the assaulters were cursing their Hungarian mothers in Serbian. The assaulters stood trial before the Basic Court in Novi Sad. The two Hungarians – though they had nothing to do with the assault in the first place – were also charged for the crime stipulated under Article 123 of the Criminal Code. All the accused were released a day later.<sup>247</sup>

### **Case II**

On February 3, 2013 in downtown Becej, a group of Serbian-speaking youngsters physically assaulted a group of young men and women of Hungarian origin, cursing them on ethnic basis. One of the assaulted was badly cut on his head and suffered a concussion, while another had his left eye injured. The police promptly arrested the assaulters. Strange enough, they were charged with misdemeanor only.<sup>248</sup>

### **Case III**

In the night of February 9, 2013 in Temerin, a “group of Serb young men threw bottles at three Hungarian minors” following a dispute. They “cursed their Hungarian mothers” and smashed shades and windows of the houses the assaulted Hungarians took refuge in. Perpetrators are charged with “violent behavior.” Bojan Pajtic, Vojvodina prime minister (holding a PhD in law), said it was “an ethnically motivated incident.”<sup>249</sup>

### **Case IV**

On June 7, 2009 in Novi Sad citizens Sabo Robert and Horvat Caba were brutally beaten in a city bus because they spoke in Hungarian. Sabo’s head was smashed, several teeth broken and one eye damaged. The Higher Public

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247 Dnevnik, February 12, 2013.

248 Newscaster in Hungarian, Internet Portal Vajdaság Ma (Vojvodina Today), February 4 and 9, 2013.

249 Dnevnik, February 12, 2013.

Prosecution (a district prosecution at the time) rejected the charge of “ethnically motivated incident” and pressed charges for “participation in a fist fight” against the assaulters and the victims alike. This is yet another illustration of double standards in the Vojvodina judiciary.<sup>250</sup>

The recent “Temerin case” of February 9 raised a hue and cry in Vojvodina and abroad. A petition signed by 1,217 persons so far, people of different ethnic origin, indicates that the functioning of courts of law in Novi Sad has to be seriously analyzed. Petitioners expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the law enforcement and the judiciary, underlying that these bodies were using double standards for perpetrators of same or similar crimes, depending on their ethnic origin.

After an incident in Temerin on October 21, 2012 – a restaurant fist fight between local Serbs and Hungarians – the Higher Court in Novi Sad pressed charges against seven Hungarians from Ada, Becej and Temerin for the crime of inciting religious, racial and ethnic hatred, stipulated under Article 317, para 2, of the Criminal Code, and against one Serb for the crime of violent behavior regulated under Article 344 (10–15 Serbs participating in the fist fight were not even taken into custody). The Article 344 provides punishment with 6-month to 5-year imprisonment.

The shortcomings noted during the investigation – of the police, the investigating judge and the Higher Public Prosecution in Novi Sad – question their impartiality and indicate ethnically motivated discrimination against the accused.

So, for instance, the police memo of October 23, 2012 quotes that witness C.N. “said he was one hundred percent sure about the identity of the person who committed the crime of inciting ethnic, racial and religious hatred and intolerance, stipulated under Article 317 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia.” The memo bears the stamp of the Police Department in Novi Sad and signatures of the eyewitness, the Deputy Public Prosecutor and an authorized public servant, but not of a defense lawyer. In other words, a suspect was identified as a person who “committed a crime as charged with” though he has not been put on trial yet.

When at a hearing of December 4, 2012, an investigating judge reminded a Serb taking the stand, B.M., that he had “differently described the events in the police memo,” the witness replied, “Policemen didn’t let us finish a

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250 *Magyar Szó*, January 16, 2010.

sentence, they finished it instead of us. I didn't want to protest against the memo, just put my signature under it because they kept it in the custody the whole night." The eyewitness also told the judge that the police threatened with pressing charges against him for participating in the fist fight.

The statement by this witness – who was not charged himself although directly involved – questions the police procedure and calls for proceedings against law enforcement officers for misconduct and ethnically based discrimination.

Besides, while identifying persons involved in the fight the same witness said officers in the police station had asked him if he recognized anyone present in the restaurant at the time, which he did, but nobody specifically asked him to identify suspects in the crime. Following the identification the police entered on the record that the "witness B.M. identified perpetrators of the crime of inciting ethnic, racial and religious hatred and intolerance." This also questions legal functioning of the law enforcement and the prosecution.

The very proceedings, including questions to persons bearing evidence, the manner in which their statements were recorded, and the evidence presented so as to provide alibis to some of the suspects who claimed they had not been in the restaurant that night also brims with shortcomings.

All the seven Hungarians have been kept in custody since October 26, 2012. The only Serb against whom charges have been pressed was released in January 2013.

Provisions on detention have been breached. Namely, Article 141 of the Criminal Code provides that a person shall be detained "if measures against that person cannot be realized by other means," that a person shall be not be kept in custody longer than necessary and that the police and the prosecution "shall act without undue delay if a person is detained." Besides, nowadays detention is optional rather than mandatory as it used to be. However, the law enforcement behaves as if this provision has never been changed. The law specifically quotes, "A person shall be released as soon as the reasons for which he/she has been detained are no longer valid" (Article 14, para 3). And this provision was bypassed in this specific case.

All these provisions have been violated in this specific case. The investigation was closed on December 21, 2012 and indictment was raised on January 9, 2013. As all the evidence by the prosecution have been presented there is neither a threat (Article 142) nor a reason (Article 14, para 3) for



which two of the accused, Koperec Congor and Smit Tomas, should be kept in custody. This is the more so since no explanation has been given for “specially aggravating circumstances in which a crime was committed” (punishable with five years or more of imprisonment) on the one hand, while, on the other several similar crimes have been committed in Temerin and Becej in the meantime – and no suspect has been detained. By the way, two investigating judges have opposed the prolongation of detention pending trial (as provided by Article 142, para).

One can hardly speak of aggravating circumstances in the case of Smit Tomas. While deciding on his detention law enforcement officers seemed to ignore the fact that he was a resident of Ada rather than Temerin. Because of prolonged detention Smit Tomas will lose an entire school year.

The Hungarian minority community was especially irritated when Justice Zdenka Stakic was named a presiding judge in the case. This is probably best illustrated by a large number of signatories of the petition to the Higher Court in Novi Sad – the petition calling for her exemption or replacement.

In 2005 Justice Stakic presided the trial against five accused persons from Temerin – all of whom were eventually punished with the total of 61 years in prison. People from Vojvodina and abroad protested against such a decision. Her appointment in this specific case indicates the Novi Sad-based Higher Court’s insensitivity to social response.

This and similar cases made the Hungarian community believe that their compatriots are being exposed to ethnically motivated discrimination – which is in stark contradiction to constitutional provisions on human and minority rights and freedoms and international conventions. Besides the Vojvodina judiciary is not impartial when it comes to such or similar incidents: as the prosecution qualifies crimes differently, depending on ethnic origin of suspects, different punishments are ruled for same crimes. Indicatively, the Higher Court much too often nods to the decisions by lower courts thus questioning not only its controlling function but also the very procedures.

## Conclusion

In order to lessen interethnic tensions and restore the Hungarian community's trust in the judiciary, the Helsinki Committee suggests:

1. Justice Zdenka Stakić's exclusion as the presiding judge and appointment of a judge of another court capable of presiding the trial in Hungarian;
2. Prompt consideration of the appeal against detention Koporec Congor and Smit Tomas submitted on February 28, 2013, and their immediate release as regulated under Article 31, para 3, of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia;
3. Prevention of misconduct among law enforcement officers and the judiciary and due implementation of constitutional guarantees for all citizens' equality before the law, regardless of their ethnic origin, religious or other affiliation (ban on discrimination, Article 21 of the Constitution), and for the right to fair trial (Article 32 of the Constitution);
4. Restoration of basic courts in the municipalities of Ada, Bačka Topola, Bečej, Čoka, Kanjiža, Senta and Temerin – as expected by the Hungarian community on the basis of their acquired rights – publication of the data about ethnic structure of courts and prosecution offices and proportional recruitment of the staffs in these bodies.



