

## ETHNIC INCIDENTS IN VOJVODINA

Since the beginning of 2004 there have been marked more incidents on an ethnical base than during the last seven years of Milosevic's Government, in Vojvodina (apart from the series of conflicts in August 1995. as well as the period of NATO bombing.) and during three years of Djindjic-Zivkovic Government.

During only 6 days, from the 6<sup>th</sup> - th 23<sup>rd</sup> of March the police marked more than forty incidents on ethnical base. Ten policemen were injured. Some communities, like Slovakian and rusinian, for the first time have become the target of an ethnical threat ( as for example in Backa Palanka and Djurdjevo) . Even the mosque was seriously damaged in Novi Sad. The great number of aggressive hooligans attacked some parts of the city where Ashkalis live, such as Adice, and Veliki Rit in Novi Sad. Police succeeded to stop them only after using the tear-gas. There have been many other damaged objects in Sombor and Apatin, as well (the police has given out the information that in the first of these two places were more than fourteen incidents on an ethnical base and in the other one 13 during only 6 days), sporadically, they were spreading all over Vojvodina.

The fact is Belgrade publicity paid a minimum attention on these incidents.

It is very obvious that this phenomenon has not been inducted only by conflicts in Kosovo during March, but we are talking about a long-lasting and potentially much more dangerous phenomenon than it has been considered to be. Since the beginning of 2004. to the same beginning of happenings in Kosovo during March there were marked the massive demolition of many graves at the roman cemetery in Tavankut, Novi Sad, Temerin, Senta as well as the incident with a journalist in Zabalj, many graphites in Subotica, Kikinda, Srbobran, Coka, Vrsac, Temerin, discrimination on an ethnical base as well as the parallel monoethnical separations in Senta and Kanjiza (in the first case the reason was because of the renaming of some streets, and in the other one it was because of raising up the Hungarian flag at the City Hall).The constant threat to Croatians in Hrtkovci and Slankamen which press permanently ignore ,physical attack on Croatians in Subotica , the threatening to the journalist Ms Fratucan she would be killed as well as to some politicians as Kasza and Canak, to editorial stuff of newspaper "Hrvatska Rijec", to Croatian diplomats in Subotica, to politician Mr. Corba Bela in Temerin. Daily fights of young pupils who belong to different ethnical groups in the North Backa, fight between the ethnical Serbs and Slovaks from Lug and Susek in the Beocin municipality, as well as many others incidents which monitoring have been successfully done by the Center for the Development of Civil Society.

At Vojvodina level and at the level of the whole state community concerning inter-ethnic incidents there have been certain reactions from The Committee for inter-ethnic Contacts and The Committee for Information of Vojvodina Parliament (already at the end of January), The Commission of the Security of the Executive Council of AP Vojvodina, The Provincial Secretary for Minorities, Dr Korhegy Tamas, The Head Office of the county Ombudsman in Novi Sad, The Leader of the League of Hungarians in Vojvodina, Mr. Kasza Jozsef, The President of the National Council of Hungarians Mr. Laszlo Josza, Eight Presidents of the communities in North Backa territory and the Minister of Human's and Minorities' Rights Mr. Rasim Ljajic. The lack of reactions from the government at the level of Republic of Serbia is very visible. The Prime Minister the Republic of Serbia Mr. Vojislav Kostunica expressed his sorrowful opinion against the incidents at the ethnic bases and promised to help in uncovering them, and Mr. Kasza, his companion and The Leader of the Association of Hungarians in Vojvodina passed sentence upon Mr. Kostunica as he did not criticize publicly the national incidents in Vojvodina.

The German newspaper " Spiegel" wrote about all these very delicate disturbances in March in Vojvodina, only one day before conflicts in Kosovo and the new wave of violence which has been inducted by happenings in March. Not only one embassy deeply expressed a serious concernment because it was more than visible that there has been worsening of inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina. Mr. Kovac Laszlo, the Minister of foreign Affairs of Republic of Hungaria said exactly the same. The Ambassador of Serbia and Montenegro in Budapest, Mr. Dejan Janca asked to be welcomed at the Hungarian foreign office because of all these happenings.

There are a few moments here which are from a big importance.

Vojvodina which use to be a multiethnic province has been now more and more only bi-ethnic. Concerning the results of census of inhabitants from 2002, not a single ethnic group reaches more than 3% of its quota in Vojvodina Province, apart from Serbian ethnic group and Hungarian, as well. The final quota of ethnic Serbs in Vojvodina has raised its level from 57% to 65% between the census made in 1991. and the one made in 2002. Assimilation of minorities is more than obvious; some of them such as a Romanian one has lost about ¼ of all members of the group for only 11 years (given numerically number of ethnic Romanians has failed from 38000 to 29000).

Now days the party which is on the head of Vojvodina is DOS, but at the level of the whole Serbian state it has been decomposed and automatically replaced by the other one which structure is different.

Frustrations extended through the ethnic confrontations as well as the competence about the spared resorts ( such as the workplaces which easily get ethnic foreign) have been objectively consequences of an economical dissatisfaction in Vojvodina.

At the parliamentary election in December the right-wing, radical party, in Serbia has got 38% of votes, but in a part of Serbia which is on the South of Danube and Sava it has got 22%. Kac, Futog and Veternik, suburbs of Novi Sad are the real centre of the “Great Serbia”, which Serbian radical stream plead in.

The idea of Vojvodina autonomy has not been supported by an international community: it is confirmed by the fact that on a so called »Subotica initiative« which took place at the 28 th of February in 2004 not a single invited representative from EU nor SAD was there.

It is easy to conclude that international community does not want to react on a very remarkable »Serbisation« in Vojvodina as for already well known developing course of a issue of Kosovo. It all counts for the greatest part of politicians in Belgrade as well as the media and the civil society. At the same time we are faced with worsening of inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina.

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