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Temerin – the present or the future of Vojvodina

Content:

Research summary

Introduction

Temerin municipality

List of incidents, opinions, proposed solutions

The readiness of the people in Temerin to talk about the incidents

Temerin and Novi Sad, (non)discrimination, opinions on solving the problem of incidents

The feeling of national jeopardy as the context for the incidents

Reactions to the incidents

Civil watch

Conclusion

Appendix

Methodological references and on the field experiences

About the research:

The theme of the research conducted in April 2012. was the state of inter-ethnic relations in the Temerin municipality. The bearer of this research was the Centre for Development of Civil Society (CDCS), with the support of the Fund for an Open Society and in partnership with the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

According to the 2002. census, the Temerin municipality had 28.275 inhabitants, which puts it in the rank of smaller municipalities. Temerin is characterized by delicate relations between the absolute Serbian ethnic majority (64,2%) and the numerous Hungarian minority (29,5%). In the past decade, these delicate relations often culminated, almost continuously, in inter-ethnic incidents. Temerin is a lacmus test for the past, present and for the future ethnic conflicts in Vojvodina. Geographically speaking, Temerin is situated on the outer brinks of a relatively homogenous Hungarian ethnic corpus, yet the close proximity of Novi Sad puts it near the capital of Vojislav Šešelj's „Greater Serbia“ (Velika Srbija) and the radical Serbian youth. In addition to that, Temerin was also exposed to large migrational turbulences for the duration of more than two decades. The last wave of migrations, caused by the war in Croatia and Bosnia, resulted in a significant increase in the Serbian population and in a harsher division between the Serbian and Hungarian community, first and foremost among the youth.

A strong wave of inter-ethnic incidents personified by physical assaults, verbal assaults and threats, graphite, nationalist posters, the desecration and the destruction of church property, monuments and cemeteries, and the destruction of private property was noted in 2003-2005 period, only to reappear, almost as a continuation, in the 2008-2012 period.

When describing the perpetrators and the causes of these incidents, the interviewed citizens of Temerin mention the misuse of alcohol and narcotics at places where the youth hangs out, while nationalism is often ignored in their interviews. This is yet another confirmation of just how politically „widespread“ ethnic nationalism in Serbia is, and how it has infiltrated the every day life of ordinary citizens. What the interviews do reveal is that both ethnic corpuses are aware of the presence of extremist groups such as Obraz (Honour), 64 Counties Youth movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom) and National Alignment (Nacionalni stroj) in their local community. However, they do not link these violent extremists with the political parties of the majority or the minority group.

The interviewees of Serbian nationality, see the shape of inter-ethnic relations in Temerin as being better than their Hungarian counterparts: 39% of Serbian interviewees and 52% of Hungarian interviewees see the relations as hard and tense.

On the other hand, ethnic Serbs from the Temerin municipality are much more pessimistic in terms of the future of Serbs in Vojvodina, when compared to their neighbors of Hungarian nationality. Only 13% of interviewed Hungarians see their nations perspective as bad, while this percentage is much higher: 35% among the interviewed Serbs.

The sense of national jeopardy has its consequences (both locally and in a wider/regional sense), whether it be founded or not. On one hand, it results in an obvious insincerity of many interviewed Hungarians, and on the other, it results in a widespread chauvinism among interviewed Serbs. This is clearly illustrated by one of the key research results: 47% of interviewees of Serbian nationality feel that national minorities already have too many rights, while only 18% of interviewed Hungarians support special minority rights.

The reactions of state, provincial and local government and civil actors to the incidents in Temerin differ. In the mind of the interviewees the prosecution reactions were slow, even with the least rigorous qualifications of criminal acts. The police is notably more efficient, in that it is more proactive in sanctioning offenders.

For the most part, the government of the Vojvodina Province is aware of the delicate environment and the inter-ethnic tensions. The local and civil actors, in coordination with the government of the Vojvodina Province, are trying to work on overcoming the ethnic distance among the youth.

The problem of Temerin might be easiest to comprehend by comparing it to the problem of the right wing, Serbian, chauvinistic extremism, which is flourishing in the suburbs of Novi Sad. If the percentage of national minorities was higher in Veternik or Futog (highly chauvinistic suburbs of Novi Sad) incidents characteristic to Temerin would surely occur.

Snežana Ilić

Introduction

Serbia and Belgrade know almost nothing of the ethnic tensions and incidents in Temerin that have been going on for years. These incidents are covered by newspapers in Vojvodina, the daily *Dnevnik* and the *Magyar Szó*, by the Radio-television Service of Vojvodina, and are even covered by some specialized portals in Serbia and Hungary. The Serbian government acts in response to these incident, and so do international factors and organizations. However, the focus of the general public in Serbia is on the redistribution of ever so scarce resources, thus neglecting this endemic problem.

The Municipality of Temerin has drawn the attention of international organizations due to an incident in March, 2004, when a wave of ethnic violence from Kosovo appeared in Vojvodina. It took two years for the government to react. The government received numerous pressures from the EU Council and OEBS during 2004 and 2005. These interventions led to the formation of a special Committee for the prevention of ethnic incidents in Vojvodina on November 2nd, 2005, by the Government of the former State of Serbia and Montenegro. This was followed by a more efficient police, prosecution, and finally the courts, which, after a few years, gave way to a significant decrease in the number of ethnic incidents and Temerin as wells as in Vojvodina.¹

In resent months Temerin was once again flooded with ethnic conflicts. Experience gives way to fear that this municipality, due to its specific environment, its continuous exposure to periodic waves of ethnically based violence.

The Autumn of 2011, brought with it a new stream of incidents to Temerin. These include numerous physical clashes between the Serbian and Hungarian youth, followed by demolition of various things. In these physical clashes, the Hungarian youth was not just the assaulted, but also the assaulter. Police and other state and province authorities reacted more quickly and actively than in the past.

In January 2012, new incidents occurred which were based on nationality, physical violence and spraying graffiti which promote hatred and intolerance.

In December of 2011, new incidents occurred whose perpetrators were quickly apprehended by the police, which is promising. The only concern is that these incidents were treated as felonies and the perpetrators were given 25 days jail sentence each. There is a well founded concern that the Higher prosecution in Novi Sad will not enforce Act 317 of the Criminal law which deals with causing and spreading national, religious and racial hate and intolerance, as it failed to do in previous cases

¹ CRCD covered this in its periodical publications:

http://cdcs.org.rs/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=13&dir=DESC&order=date&limit=20&limitstart=20)

which occurred in the time of growing ethnic incidents in Vojvodina from 2003 to 2005.

The changing of the foreign policy of their native country, seen in the attention given by Hungary to its diaspora, is an additional challenge at this point, as one of its consequences is a more radical attitude of some political actors of Vojvodina Hungarians. For example, the representative of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority Zsoldos Ferenc gave a statement on January 13th, 2012 to a daily newspaper *Magyar Szó*, in which he stated that „hundreds of nongovernment organizations support the policy of Hungary in „building the nation“, while a representative of the Forum of Councils of Civil Cooperation Csizmadia László stood out in promoting „the sovereignty of the Hungarian people“.

The Serbian fascist organization *Obraz* is very influential in Temerin. On the other hand, you can also find photographs of local Hungarian boys wearing fascist uniforms with 'sagittate cross' ('nyilas'). Temerin is like a lacmus test for the inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina.

When these relations are stable in Temerin, then they are stable, or even good, more or less in all Vojvodina. But this doesn't necessarily mean that when incidents take place in Temerin, that they will spread to other multiethnic environments. However, the risk is constantly present, if we have in mind the spread of potential waves of violence coming from different sides and distances, from Novi Sad, from Kosovo and Metohija, and even from Hungary.

This study is dedicated to researching the distinctive problem of ethnic incidents in the municipality of Temerin. The basis for the creation of this study is the past fifteen years of work that the Center for Development of Civil Society (CDCS) has put into improving inter-ethnic relations and into implementing minority rights in Serbia.

May 2012.

The municipality of Temerin

Temerin is the key to inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina, a sort of a lacmus test for the whole state regarding inter-ethnic relations in a wider area.

Two important facts are crucial in understanding the delicate and distinctive role of the municipality of Temerin as the most vital lacmus test of the past, current and possible ethnic conflicts in Vojvodina:

1. Temerin is situated in the far south of the Hungarian ethnically homogeneous corpus, which spreads from Potisje in Backa with the municipality of Kanjiža (currently with 90% of Hungarian population), to the municipality of Senta (82% Hungarian population), Ada (70%) and Bečej (49%) and to Temerin (29,5%); thus giving the Hungarian population in Temerin a feeling of standing on a borderline, an outpost and with it comes a fighting mentality.

This circumstance, as well as the close proximity of Novi Sad, the lair of Serbian chauvinism and the center of a virtual „Greater Serbia“ (Velika Srbija), molds the Serbian population, especially the younger one, into the same borderline, fighting mentality, which is uncommon to Vojvodina. In the '90, the municipality of Temerin, along with the municipality of Zemun and Mali Zvornik, were the only municipality in Serbia under complete control of the far right Serbian radical party. Keeping in mind the large portion of the Hungarian population, this means that almost every Serb that was eligible to vote, voted for the radicals.²

2. Migrations and colonizations have, for the most part, effected the change of the ethnic structure of Temerin. Before the Turkish invasion (16th century) Temerin was a Hungarian village. During the Turkish reign (from approximately 1539 to 1699) the Serbs made up the bulk of the population. Hungarians once again started inhabiting Temerin around 1770 and 1780. The Serbs, with 1.610 people and 210 families left the village in 1800, to found a new settlement about 20 kilometers east of Temerin (Đurđevo). The reason for this move was the demand made by the Serbs for Temerin to be made part of the Shajkash (Šajkaška) military district, where Serbs had the status of free peasants – soldiers, with no feudal obligations to the Hungarian nobility. This demand was denied, and thus until 1920. Serbs were not living in Temerin. In a rather tendentious census from 1910, Temerin was inhabited solely by Hungarians.

In the 1920s a colonization had taken part in order to increase the portion of a slavic population in relation to the Hungarian population: two settlements were founded on unoccupied lands – the first

² The official site of the Temerin municipality provide more data on Temerin and its sub-municipalities: www.temerin.rs, www.backijarak.info, www.starodjurdjevo.com, www.temerinski.info

was Staro Đurđevo (now one of four sub-municipal units in the municipality of Temerin), locally known as the Colony (Kolonija) (the western part of Temerin, separated from the central and eastern part by a railroad track). The second ethnically homogenous Serb colony was Sirig. The village of Bački Jarak was almost exclusively inhabited by a German population, which was forced into camps in 1944 and then forced into exile, while their homes remained to be settled by ethnic Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Wars for the Yugoslav legacy of the 1990s changed the national structure of Temerin once again: over 9.000 refugees came into this small municipality, out of which 5.000 settled here permanently, living with relatives and friends. They did not continue with their migration due to the close proximity of Novi Sad and the prospect of earning wages in this big city, only 20 km from Temerin, and 12 km from Bački Jarak.³

These changes led to a significant increase of the population, notably an increase of the Serbian population in the general population. Today, the municipality of Temerin has a population of 28.000⁴, 64% being Serbs, according to the 2002 census, and 30% being Hungarian (in actual numbers 18.155 Serbs and 8.341 Hungarians)

The ethnic structure of Temerin is dominated by Serbs with 50% and Hungarians with 43% part of the population (in actual numbers Serbs 9.660, Hungarians 8.187).

The school system in the municipality of Temerin incorporates a preschool, four elementary schools and a high school “Lukijan Mušicki“ with classes in Serbian and Hungarian. Hungarian is also taught in the two of the four elementary schools.⁵ A local radio broadcasts its program in both languages, and there are also two local newspapers: the *Dialogue* in Serbian and the *Temerini Újság* in Hungarian language.

³ Temerin and Novi Sad are connected by public transportation enabling many of its inhabitants, that are not involved in agriculture, to work in Novi Sad.

⁴ http://media.popis2011.stat.rs/2011/prvi_rezultati.pdf

⁵ <http://www.temerin.rs/obrazovanje.aspx>

List of incidents, opinions, proposed solutions

The incidents in Temerin are also set by the general conditions in Vojvodina and by specific circumstances.⁶

The fluctuation in the number of incidents is linked to circumstances of a much larger context: Temerin was swept by the wave of violence against minorities that appeared in Vojvodina, Belgrade and central Serbia, which was related to the exile of Serbs from Kosovo on March 17th 2004, and with the proclamation of the independence of Kosovo on February 21st 2008.

On the other hand, some factors seem to last much longer: the number of incidents in Temerin, as in all Vojvodina, has grown in 2003, before the violent events in Kosovo.⁷ Other periods, such as year 2007, was unusually peaceful. It would be one-sided to try and pin this calming to the sentencing of leaders and members of the Nazi organization National Alignment in November 2006. They were given four sentences without the possibility of parole and eleven sentences with the possibility of parole. However, experiences from other places show that the implementation of legal repressive measures significantly decreases the number of incidents.⁸

According to Temerin` locals, the incidents started at the beginning of the `90: „Nobody is saying that there were no incidents based on nationality before, but the former government knew how to control them. The police took care of it. But, then the `90 came and everything changed. Before the `90 you didn`t have Hungarians and Serbs going only to certain clubs. Everything was shared. There was only one community. The `90 came and changed everything. In `91 there were 12.000 Hungarians, in `92 8.300. They left, went to Hungary, and even further. So the structure changed. In the `90s it was fifty-fifty. Then the refugees came. 10.000 refugees came to Temerin by the year `96. 6.000 is still living here. I am not saying that everyone is making problems, most people accept the diversity. But when the Hungarians became a minority...“

According to the report of the Committee for the Inter-ethnic relations of the Vojvodina Assembly, in the period of rapid increases in numbers of ethnic incidents (2003-2004) there were 178 inter-ethnic incidents recorded. Out of which 82 incidents were aimed against Hungarians, 19 against

⁶ Data was gathered using the internet sites of Radiotelevision of Vojvodina-RTV, organisation Argus, Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, Obraz, Center for Human rights – Srbobran, CDCS, *VajMa* portal, [site of the pokrajinskih organa uprave i Skupštine AP Vojvodine, sajtova samouprave i ustanova iz Temerina](#), printed newspaper editions the dailys *Dnevnik*, *Magyar Szó* and *Novosti*, as well as being based on interview from the field research.

⁷ http://cdcs.org.rs/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=16&Itemid=60

⁸ Ethnic Serbs from the village Susek, Beocin municipality had annual fights with the Slovak neighbors from the village Lug. The beatings of Slovaks came to an abrupt halt after the first jail sentence was issued.

Croats, 15 against Serbs, 14 against Albanians. The victims were also, Roma 12, Jews 7, Slovaks 6, Ruthenians 3 and Ashkali 2.

The Committee for inter-ethnic relations recognized six types of incidents in the past two year period: graphite (2003:4 cases, 2004:35), nationalist posters (2003:4, 2004: none); desecration and the destruction of church property, monuments and cemeteries (2003:12, 2004:30); destruction of private property (2003:7, 2004:17); verbal assault and threats (2003:12, 2004:50) and one case of racial discrimination in 2003. In the other hand, according to data acquired by the representatives of Hungarian political parties, during 2004 and 2005, there were around 600 incidents targeting national minorities in Vojvodina.

The number of incidents dropped drastically after the formation of the Committee for the prevention of incidents, by the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2005, which was formed only after pressure from international communities, from the Council of Europe to begin with.

The question of „the dark number“ of incident, the actual number, remains unanswered, since many incidents were not reported. According to an interlocutor from Temerin: „and then incidents, the fighting amongst each other, stopped, until the beginning of 2006. For example, I am talking about the fights that happened regularly on weekends. And I think that, not even 10% of them was ever solved, but the general public wasn't even informed about them. I think that not even the Ministry of Internal affairs has the accurate data about what really happened, because many didn't report it“.

What happened until this calming period?

August 30th 2003, graphite „Death to Hungarians“ signed by Serbian chetnics (Srpski četnici) appeared;

September 21st, 2003, five young Serbs beat up two Hungarian boys in local „Pivarium“;

December 5th 2003, the monument dedicated to Kovács Antal, a poet, was sprayed with paint, and so were the doors to the Hungarian cultural society “Szirmai Károly”;

February 4th 2004, the bilingual sign on the Temerin History museum was broken;

April 9th 2004, Hungarian politician Csorba Béla found a knife in front of his gate with a note „We will slaughter you“

April 19th 2004, graphite aimed against Hungarians were found on a private residence;

September 27th 2004, Serbian pupils of the Technical high school beat up two of their school mates of hung aria nationality;

September 28th 2004, thirty Serbian pupils of the same Technical high school, some of them with baseball bates, insulted their school mates of Hungarian nationality, with nationalist chanting;

June 11th 2005, an ethnic Serb warned a group of young man not to speak Hungarian in the street, hitting and kicking took place;

The monstrous abuse of a Serbian young man from Temerin by five Hungarians in June 2004, led to the perpetrators being sentenced to a total of 61 years in prison for an attempted murder. The now deceased victim claimed that the attempted murder had not been based on ethnicity. Numerous actions aimed at reducing the sentence of the „Temerin five“ greatly affected the relations between different Serbian and Hungarian actors, as well as on the behavior and the mood of every citizen in Temerin and the whole municipality.

The year 2007 was relatively peaceful.

In late April 2008, two Hungarian youths were beaten up by a much larger group of Serbian peers;

June 14th 2008, two Hungarians were also assaulted on the street;

June 17th 2008, a graphite „Serbia to Serbs, an ax to Hungarians“;

June 27th 2008, two Serbs beat up a Hungarian boy;

July 19th 2008, glass was broken on the Hungarian cultural society “Szirmai Károly” and damage was done to the sign written in Hungarian;

November 7th 2008, flyers „Death to Hungarians“ were found on several houses;

Incidents continued in the following years.

End of May, 2009, a group of 15-16 youth of Serbian nationality attacked a group of 5-6 Hungarian youths, demanding that they shout the chant „Kosovo is Serbia“, when the young Hungarians refused, the Serbs attacked them with boxers and beer bottles;

Soon after the catholic cross in front of a ethno-house was desecrated;

December 14th 2009, a flag of the Hungarian national minority was stolen;

January 18th and January 25th 2010, young man of Hungarian nationality were beaten up, after being asked by the perpetrators what was their nationality;

February 11th 2010, in the center of Temerin, flyers were put up warning „Serbian brothers and sisters“ that a group of Hungarian separatists, members of the 64 Counties Youth movement (Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom), attacked 5 Serbs; other sources claim that the same incident involved about 20 Hungarians beating two of their peers of Serbian nationality; on march 2011, sport facilities were sprayed with graphite „Death to Hungarians, we sow fear“ and „Kill, slaughter so the Hungarians parish“;

In July 2011, nationalist movement Obraz, (at the time of writing this research the Serbian Supreme Court is forming a decision on a possible prohibition of this movement) organized a public lecture in Bački Jarak, which was, according to the internet site of the movement, attended by 200 people, while according to reports from local Hungarians in Temerin, it gathered around 500 people, amongst others a large number of high school pupil from the school “Lukijan Mušicki“; once the

lecture was over, „members of Obraz, walked through the center of Temerin, while singing and carrying Serbian flags, and being cheered on by the Serbian citizens“.

Reports from collocutors from Temerin state that after lecture, a group of about thirty people gathered in the park to discuss how to Hungarians from Temerin because the Serbs are at jeopardy. This was the same night when the public lecture of Obraz, took place („the same people, youth, high school pupils“).

In September 2011, a group of five Hungarians beat up four of their Serbian peers, using metal rods and chains; two weeks later another Serbian youth was beaten.

December 23rd 2011, windows were smashed on a house that belonged to the father of a Hungarian youth, who suffered constant attacks from pupils of Serbian nationality which led to him quitting school and planning on finishing school without attending classes, according to the writing of *VajMa*.

On Christmas Day, in accordance to the Gregorian religious calendar, in 2011, an older Hungarian woman was attacked upon returning home from midnight mass.

During New Years Eve in 2012, there was another beating, with injuries that could have been fatal.

On Christmas Eve, in accordance to the Julian religious calendar, in 2012, graphite „Hungarians under ice“ appeared.

As it was said earlier, the dark number of incidents apparently adds to a bigger number than the one stated above; according to reports from interviewees, „the Egeresi service (president of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina – i. e. by CRCD) has determined a number, but the real number is bigger... friends who are Hungarians and have suffered some violent acts, said that they were told that „they will get what is coming to them“ if they report the incidents to the authorities. And added: „Reports were processed in cases where people were (physically) injured“.

The willingness of the people in Temerin to talk about the incidents

In the researched community where” everyone knows everything“ – the topic is not how well the community is informed, but rather the willingness to talk about the incidents. Without such willingness it is impossible to act on its elimination.

When asked „Which acts of violence are you familiar with?“ 11% of interviewees refused to answer, while 7% quite insincerely replied they know not such cases.⁹ 61% of the overall

⁹ Percentage points were rounded to whole numbers for easier visibility.

interviewees mentioned fights, 7% the monstrous murder of the Serbian young man in 2004, which was the beginning of the case „the Temerin five“, 4% answered with insults based on nationality etc. Insults and scorns based on nationality were mentioned in all three ranks of answers sums up to 14% of interviewees. In the second and third rank of answers the case of „the five“ is mentioned, when added up, by just little over 2% of interviewees – the distinctiveness of this case is apparent, since the answers do not accumulate by adding up frequency, in rank order. It is either the only (and thus the most important) case of violence to interviewees, or it is „lost in the fighting“. The rest of the answers are quantitatively insignificant, perhaps because they are scattered.

It is interesting to see that, when looking at the nationality of the interviewees, there are no significant differences in answering this question. The only apparent thing is discrimination based on nationality (although this is not an incident, but likely an division that is present), little under 4% of interviewed Hungarians feel discriminated, compared to 1% of interviewees of Serbian nationality that feel the same.

The formulation of some of the answers to the same question seem rather characteristic – interviewees of Serbian nationality use terms such as: fights among young people; Hungarian boys beat up a Serbian boy; a Serbian boy beaten by Hungarians; not long ago kids were attacked by the 64 Counties (in ore that one incident); fights - 64 Counties attacked under aged Serbs; attack on a Serbian boy in park; Hungarians are privileged here, we (Serbs) are not; one young man was almost staked; driving Serbs on stakes behind the market place, by Hungarians; mutual inter-ethnic hatred among under aged youths consuming alcohol; etc.¹⁰ On the other hand, interviewees of Hungarian nationality use word formations such as: fighting in the streets; five Hungarians beat up a drug dealer; a fight in high school; a fight in front of the bakery; a few years back Hungarians got 15 years for fighting, which is a lot more than some get for murder; I am well informed, and I don't hold sides; people of Serbian nationality beat up an old woman of Hungarian nationality on her way home from church; a few years ago (Hungarians) beat up a junkie at the market place and they got very high sentences; they beat up a boy who lost his sight (Hungarian boy); some got sentenced harshly because they belong to a certain national minority (would not talk about specific incidents); a man was attacked in the center of Temerin because he speaks Serbian poorly; etc.

When asked „Where do the incident happen, in which situations and what locations? Why? And why not in other places?“ 35% interviewees answered with cafes and their surrounding; 11% with parks; 10% with the center of Temerin; and 7% with schools and on the streets. The interviewed Hungarians more often answered with cafes and the center of Temerin than Serbs (43% to 32% and

¹⁰ All the answers are given in their original form, without punctuation marks nor editing.

16% to 9%, respectively). On the other hand, interviewed Serbs recognize parks as the scene where incidents take place, more often than interviewees of Hungarian nationality. (13% to 2%). We must not forget that the structure of people visiting cafes overlaps with the ones spending their free time in parks (especially at night), but we must also keep in mind the economic situation (the ability to afford drinking in cafes).

There is no difference in Serb and Hungarian answers when describing the causes of the incidents, in connection to the location of incidents. Nationalism as a cause for incidents is rarely mentioned, or is often ignored. Generally speaking, the ethnic nationalism in Serbia is „normal“, due to the lack of facing with the past, especially with the past wars for the Yugoslav heritage. On the other hand, joint interstate efforts of Hungary and Serbia to demystify the mass murders of Serbs and Jews in 1942, and Hungarians in 1944, are helping to ease the “political history” of the Serb and Hungarian community in Vojvodina and their organizations.

But, nationalism has quietly infiltrated itself in the mind of an „average citizen“, making it invisible to their everyday perception. Besides, psychologically speaking nationalism is delicate, since it always involves the matter of responsibility of belonging to a certain group. This is why alcohol and drug abuse are chosen as the main causes of these incidents (mainly in front of cafes, discotheques, clubs): political instigation; drugs; alcohol; youth going out, drinking; parks, schools, hidden unprotected places, junkie hang outs, late at night, Saturdays; when they go out; the influence of alcohol; mainly where there is a lot of people; gatherings; cafes, where there is liquor; in the evening when kids are drunk; mostly in public places under the influence of alcohol or drugs; in other towns the police is better at doing their job, so they don't have similar situation; mostly in streets; the main cause is alcohol and drugs; I think it happens everywhere, on the streets, at night, under the influence of alcohol and drugs, etc.

The answer to the question „Who are the perpetrators of the incidents?“ to 40% of interviewees it was „the youth“, 8% extremist groups (64 Counties, Obraz, National Alignment), 3% „sport fans, hooligans“, etc. Among the interviewees of Hungarian nationality 4% sees „Serbs“ as the ones causing the incidents; among the interviewees of Serbian nationality 10% depict „Hungarians“ as the perpetrators.

A third of the interviewed Serbs and Hungarians claim they do not know „Who instigates the incidents?“. Among those interviewees of Serbian nationality which gave more content in their 10% of them answered with 64 Counties, 9% Hungarian political parties, 7% persons under the influence of alcohol, 3% youth, 2% nationalists, and in general, 7% answered with „Hungarians“. Interviewees of the Hungarian nationality mentioned Serbian political parties 13%, Obraz or/and

the National Alignment 8%, youth and „nationalists“ were mentioned by 5% each, etc. „Both sides“ are seen as instigators of incidents by 4% interviewed Serbs and 2% Hungarians.

Some forms of answers to the above mentioned question are worth noting – among the interviewed Serbs we come across: we instigate one another; politicians (people who never achieved anything); doesn't know, doesn't see any instigators; politicians or people in high places; leaders of extremist groups; politicians that influence our way of thinking; politicians, Hungarian right; leaders of various organizations with national character; those who sell alcohol to minors; etc. Interviewed Hungarians mention as instigators: parents influence in the way they are brought up; people in your surroundings; people in high places, which have a dishonest business; there are instigators for sure but I don't know who they are; somebody who influences others; right wing organizations on both sides (64 Counties, Obraz and etc.); I think they have some political background – a connection to Hungarian and Serbian parties; right wing parties; nationalism as an ideology; the surroundings; drugs and alcohol; nationalistic politicians; etc.

When asked „Who is preventing the stabilization of inter-ethnic relations?“ 39% of interviewed Hungarians and 31% of interviewed Serbs didn't reply. Hungarians have less of a tendency than the interviewed Serbs, to think there are no obstacles in the stabilization of inter-ethnic relations in the Temerin municipality: 11% of Serbs and 21% of Hungarians said that there is no one stopping its improvement. Interviewees of Hungarian nationality often, in 25% of cases, blame political parties and extremist organizations (with Serbs the percentage is around 14), then the state and the government (9%, the same as the interviewed Serbs), next the youth and the police (4% each, while Serb corresponding numbers are 0 i 12% (!)), and Serbs (2%); interviewed Serbs view national minorities as a hurdle in stabilizing inter-ethnic relations in 5% of cases. Among the answers of the Hungarian interviewees we have: nobody is preventing it, but the government is not working on the prevention seriously enough; these right wing organizations, they are the only one prospecting from all of this nationalist politicians the government of Serbia; refugees, they don't want peace; perhaps the police are afraid and so they don't react, maybe the government too; inert citizens and incapable police; political parties who instigate; etc. The answers of interviewees of Serbian nationality to the question „Who is preventing the stabilization of inter-ethnic relations?“ are as follows: nobody is preventing it, everyone's playing stupid; nobody wants to do anything about it; maybe the politicians; the politician, the situation suits them; nobody is preventing it, but if somebody is trying to stabilize them, they are not doing it well; the media; I think everybody has a part in it; the state and people in it; political parties; ministers; they are preventing (the Serbs and the Hungarians); getting even; we are all human, its just the way we are, not right; etc.

Temerin and Novi Sad, (non)discrimination, opinions on solving the problem of incidents

The overall situation in Temerin is very much influenced by the close proximity of Novi Sad. Novi Sad is the virtual center Šešelj's „Greater Serbia“, and now it is the stronghold for the neo-Nazi National Alignment whose members, in two occasions, physically assaulted antifascist during their manifestations, once in 2005 at the Philosophical faculty and then in 2007, on the streets of Novi Sad.

Suburbs Veternik and Futog are the heart of the recruitment base for „sport hooligan“, right wing, extremist, destructive gangs, who were in front lines during the disturbances on February 21st 2008, when their members set fire to the United States embassy in Belgrade. During the exile of Serbs from Kosovo. On the 17th and 18th of March 2004, around 2.000 hooligans from Novi Sad demolished the government building of the Province and tried to burn the Roma and Ashkali settlements in Veliki and Mali Rit. They were deterred by a very robust police action, while the Roma population had to spend two nights in march, hiding with their children in the fields.

On the other hand, ethnic Serbs from the Temerin municipality often point the Hungarian organization 64 Counties as the most visible in their local community. However they are wrong about this: 64 županije are not significantly active in Temerin, a about twenty Hungarian neo-Nazis are organized around a different principle.

Based on the information gathered in Temerin, the ethnic incidents in this municipality are somewhat connected to the nearby Novi Sad. What is the opinion of the interviewers on that? When asked „Are the incidents connected in any way with the influence from Novi Sad? How?“ 52% of interviewed Hungarians and 57% of Serbs said that the incidents are not connected with the influence or any actors from Novi Sad. Many interviewees didn't know the answer to this question, and only 13% of Serbs and Hungarians said that there is a connection. Hungarians mostly mention the organization Obraz, (7%), while Serbs (only sporadically) mention the influence of Nenad Čanak, the leader of an autonomous party League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV). Its interesting to see that there is no mention of the local branches of the Serbian and Hungarian nationalist parties and it is quite possible that these outlets ended have nothing to do with the incidents.

When answering the question „Where do you see the solution to the incidents? How can they be stopped? Who should stop them?“ 36% of Serbs and 27% of Hungarians said that the police are the ones they see as a possible solution. Additional 27% of Serbs and 25% of Hungarians feel that it is a

job for some other government body. Parents in this context are seen by 11% Hungarians and 3% of Serbs as a possible factor, school by 5% Hungarians and 2% Serbs, etc. The forms of some of these answers are: they should be stopped by the state, but we don't have a president who would do something good for its people; first the president of the state has to be changed; they should be stopped by those with the jurisdiction; no incident can be completely resolved; removing the head of municipality if Temerin; putting a Serb in charge and the emigration of Hungarians; they should all be put in jail, etc.

The link between the ethnic incidents and the potential ethnic discrimination in the municipality Temerin is a very special kind of a problem. It is less important whether such discrimination really exists, and the monitoring results show that it mainly doesn't¹¹: the collective consciousness can be perceived as reality, even if not based on facts. A deliberately suggestive question (to brake the barrier of conformity) „Where is national discrimination evident in your municipality?“ 36% of Hungarians and 35% of Serbs were very specific in saying there is no such discrimination. 2% of Hungarians and 10% of Serbs claimed that the Hungarians have privileges; that the Serbs have privileges was not claimed by any interviewee of the Serbian nationality, still this is the opinion of 9% of Hungarians. Avoiding a person of different nationality and national splits (which are not discriminatory indicators, but do tells about the problem of perceiving this problem) are mentioned only by Serbs, slightly over 4%. The interviewed Serbs, 6% of them hold a grudge against Hungarians for speaking Hungarian in public places, while 23% of Hungarians and 16% of Serbs give answers which tells us that the discrimination does indeed exists, but is sporadic and imprecisely formulated.

Some of the answer formulation are worth mentioning – Serbs talk about: all of Temerin being colored in Hungarian colors; disrespecting religious holidays (Serbian New Year); nobody can find a job unless they know Hungarian; the president is Hungarian and he focuses on his own people; Hungarians and Serbs employ only their own; the language barrier by clerks – workers of Hungarian nationality; ill proportioned division of jobs in the government services; minority representatives have an advantage if their superior is the same nationality as them; its mostly seen in employment; unequal job distribution between national minorities ans Serbs; the rights that Hungarians have, starting with better classrooms and better schools and much more rights; seems in creating groups and everyone putting their own first; the fact that Hungarians are in the government in the past years; nobody works, everybody steals; Hungarians are more protected that Serbs, they have more rights; I am the one feeling discriminated against,, if I don't know the language, the I don't have a job; in many places when you come in they first great you in Hungarian, when I come

¹¹ While smaller government errors such as a temporary unilingual signs, are deliberately ignored; there errors were quickly corrected.

into the grocery store and they say Good day or Can we help you in Hungarian, and everyone knows who is a Serb and who is a Hungarian; they are wicked, etc.

The interviewed Hungarians sometimes respond to such questions with: there is no discrimination now, this was the practice at the time of Milošević, when Hungarians were evicted from state/public services; when there are no signs in Hungarian; evident in unemployment in the public sector; there are complications in the administration concerning the use of letters (latin/cyrillic); employing more people of Serbian nationality in public institutions; there is a language discrimination; I don't think its present; there are rumors about it, but it has not happened to me; I heard that policemen give Hungarians more fines; fewer jobs for Hungarians; not in every case; it was very hard during radicals, its better now, but it still need working only; more equal use of the Hungarian language; Hungarians don't have the rights they had during Tito, etc.

It is noticeable from the answers to this particular question that a significant numbers of both groups are convinced they are discriminated against, when it comes down to employment (that is employment in government and public institutions). Not so few interviewed Serbs criticize Hungarians for using their language publicly or for their poor knowledge of the Serbian language. The issue of learning the language of your surrounding and the matter of (it is our estimate that it is more of a problem of having the means but not having as much will) learning the „official language“ are becoming typical for Temerin as well, and not just the multiethnic places that CDCS has researched throughout Vojvodina.

The key question and a very direct one was „What would you like for the people of other nationalities to change in their own behavior, making you more comfortable?“ The general attitude is that the members of other nationalities should not change anything, meaning they are satisfied with their neighbors being of some other nationality was answered by 14% of the interviewed Hungarians and 19% of the Serbs. More respect for the members of other nationalities was stated by 48% of interviewed Hungarians ans 18% of Serbs. 10% of Serbs demanded that the Hungarians not speak Hungarian, 8% that they learn Serbian, that they should adjust to Serbia and not think they are in their own country, 14% of Serbs and 4% of interviewed Hungarians, that the Hungarians should „go back“ to Hungary, little over 1% of interviewed Serbs. Given the importance of the question, more formulations of given answers is needed. The formulation itself gives a hint on the interviewers nationality: that they not be so selfish, to bare in mind others; that we help each other and not fight and endanger our lives; that they not talk in Hungarian in a Serbian crowd, because we cant understand them, while they can understand us; that they stop pretending they don't know

Serbian, when they do; that they stop talking in Hungarian and laughing, when we can't understand what they are saying; that they at least speak our language; that they respect our country, language, faith and everything, that respect is somehow lost; we keep looking at each other, while forgetting our own values; that they learn the language of Serbia; their complete behavior and language; if they have something to say they should say it in Serbian, that is the most important thing, as for the rest I just don't care, cause they will never change; that they are not in their own country but in Serbia, so they need to adjust to the country they are living in, in this case Serbia, and not act like they are in their own country (in terms of rights, the law) and that they comprehend we are all human, regardless of our nationality; that they keep their feet on the ground, and stop raging all over Temerin; their behavior i.e. that they stop fighting for power, Serbia to Serbs – a Serb for a Serb; who is a Serb and of the Serbian people and not go to the Battle of Kosovo...; that they realize that they are not in their own country and that they can't behave however they like and demand greater rights; they should be aware that they are not in their own country; that they take part in social relations, since they have the right to do so; that they stop asking for too much because if they don't like it here, they should go back where they came from and specifically that the Hungarians stop making Hungary out of Serbia; that they behave age appropriately; that they learn Serbian since they live in Serbia, and not Ugro-Finland; Serbia to Serbs; A Serb for a Serb; that they respect all the citizens, and in doing so respect me; that they respect me and all the citizens, although it's hard; that they change everything that bothers us e.g.. their behavior; I simply don't like people of other religions, I wish they would move out; as I said-tolerance; that they be more tolerant and get to know our customs and us; to respect others and the fact that somebody speaks Hungarian; that they accept historic facts. Then: during World War II there was a work camp in Bački Jarak where 6.000 of our people died; Vojvodina should gain a much broader autonomy; that the sentence be wiped clean or drastically reduced to the people of Temerin that were wrongfully imprisoned; just that they see us as equals; I wish that people of other nationalities would show a bigger interest in others; they stayed for 500 years; they won't greet you in the street; that they don't look at me in a weird way when they read out my name; I have no desires for different laws, just that they be in the same rank as the rest of the citizens; I wish that they start accepting us as their fellow townspeople and not discriminate against us; etc.

The feeling of national jeopardy as the context for the incidents

Citizens of Temerin were asked „How would you summarize the position of your nation in Vojvodina?“. Interviewees of Hungarian nationality, 38% of them, assess the position of

vojvodinian Hungarians as being in jeopardy and hard, 36% of them as being good, various answers summed up to a total of 14%, and 12% would not or could not answer the question. Some formulations of the unsatisfied Hungarian interviewees should be noted: as being a minority, in the context of rights, tangible national hatred, and no consciousness among Serbs, its not nationalism, but rather national hatred; we are a minority so we keep quiet and take it; unfavorable in recent years; sometimes as equals, sometimes as in jeopardy; there is discrimination; its not all well as the politicians say it is; ghetto; raid; I don't know to what degree; very bad; discriminatory since we are a minority we can make a difference; its bad; we don't get a say in some matters; etc.

When asked „How do you see the perspective of your nation i the recent future?“ 41% of interviewed Hungarians had favorable expectations, 13% had bad expectations, while 18% felt there would be no change, etc; The overall optimism is obvious.

When expected to answer „How would you evaluate the inter-ethnic relations in your municipality?“ 52% of interviewed Hungarians responded that the relations are in jeopardy, hard and tense, 30% said they are good; etc. The question „Why do you think that is?“ interviewees of Hungarian nationality gave various answers, out of which the most characteristic were: everybody is living normally, there re some incidents, but they are not too horrible; there are problems, fights, quarrels, but mostly they are not to bug of a deal; bad, attacks of the Serbian youth on the Hungarian youth, Serbs are getting away with it , while the Hungarians are being punished covered up and in hiding; today Hungarians and Serbs are being divided by the society; a feeling of lack of security for the children; not good, but the Serbs aren't doing better either; etc.

The question „How do you perceive the shape of inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina?“ (some questions are repeated on purpose, using different formulations to brake the barrier of conformity regardless of the research topic) was answered with bad and tense by 11% interviewees of Hungarian nationality, 41% of them claims that the inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina are good, 20% that the inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina are better than in Temerin, 2% that they are worse than in Temerin, etc. A big discrepancy in answers is noticeable, when compared to earlier question, which was much similar in its contents „How would you summaries the position of your nation in Vojvodina?“. Interviewees of Hungarian nationality are much more favorable toward inter-ethnic relations that toward the position of their own nation in Vojvodina, and a significant number perceive the distinctiveness of Temerin as being an especially delicate community. When asked to explain their perception of inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina, interviewees of Hungarian nationality gave various answers like: depends on what region; good; even worse; bad; horrible; catastrophic

partially good; I think that there is a lot of tolerance in Vojvodina, but also a lot of intolerance; etc.

What were the answers of interviewees Serbs from the Temerin municipality to the same questions? When asked „How would you summarize the position of your nation in Vojvodina?“ 34% of interviewed Serbs perceive their nation as being in jeopardy and as being hard; 44% see it as being good. Here follow some of the formulation of answer by the unhappy Serbian interviewees: I feel as if Serbs were a minority tolerable; could be better; miserable; neglected in the same way as I was in Croatia; not enough attention is given to the Serbian identity; not enough attention is given to Serbian culture, customs; we are looked upon as a minority; minorities have greater rights than we do; Serbs are in the middle, everybody else has bigger rights than we do; etc.

The question “How do you see the perspective of your nation in the recent future?” was answered by 25% of the interviewees of Serbian nationality as favorable; unfavorable was the answer of 35% of interviewees; without change is what 15% of them expect in the recent future, etc. It is evident that the interviewed Serbs are much more pessimistic toward the future of their nation in Vojvodina, when compared to their neighbors of Hungarian nationality. No matter how unrealistic their perception might be (just based on the demographic reasons), this national pessimism would not be too difficult to turn into aggression against members of another group. In other words: this gunpowder is as dry as it can get, and you wouldn't need a big spark for it to turn into a blaze.

When asked „How do you perceive the condition of inter-ethnic relations in your municipality?“ 39% of interviewed Serbs stated that the inter-ethnic relations are hard and tense, and 41% said that they were good. It is apparent that the interviewees of the Serbian nationality see these inter-ethnic relations as being better than their Hungarian counterparts. Various answers were given to the follow up question „Why do you think that is?“, the same as with Hungarian interviewees, the contents of their answers being similar to ones given by the Hungarians, differing only due to their nationality.

The answer to „How would you evaluate the inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina?“ was bad and tense among 22% of interviewed Serbs (contrasted to the 11% of Hungarians), 41% (the same as the interviewed Hungarians) think that the relations are good, only 3% (Hungarian 2%) think that they are better in Temerin, etc. Local ethnic incidents seem to have less of an impact on the Serbs from Temerin and Bački Jarak, than on the Hungarians in Temerin. However, when compared to Hungarians, the interviewed Serbs double their numbers when estimating the inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina as being bad.

What is interesting is that the portion of those interviewed Serbs that have an unfavorable view of

the inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina, is noticeably lower than those with unfavorable view on the position of their own nation. Almost identical formulations were given when answering the follow up question „Why do you think that is?“ and when answering the question „How would you summarize the current position of your nation in Vojvodina?“

Serbs feel threatened in Vojvodina, while Hungarians feel threatened i Temerin. No matter how factually unfounded, this Serb feeling of being in jeopardy in Vojvodina, is a present social factor and is influencing the behavior of people. How can the elaborate and intricate network of the relations of the two national communities in Temerin be viewed, based on the information provided by some of the more sensitive interviewees?

The Hungarian Hope Movement (MRM) plays an important role in Temerin, being linked to the Hungarian radical right wing party Jobbik.¹² In terms of political parties, there are no conflicts between Serbian and Hungarian parties. There are conflicts among the Hungarian parties, Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) can only watch Temerin, as it is the only municipality whose president is a member of the Democratic party of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMDP). Interviewees claim that there are no political conflicts, but they do recognize that there are everyday conflict present. One might ask would a systematic politicalization and open conflicts between political organizations (while upholding the law), raise or ease the inter-ethnic tensions? Sometimes conflicts have a less harmful impact, when in open and within legal boundaries, rather than when its bare existence is publicly ignored. It is interesting to note that during a political campaign in the spring of 2012, there were no ethnically related incidents in Temerin, even while the political pressure was high.

Pokret mađarske nade, feared by many local Serbs, is in the minds of the interviewees, is a small party with a potentially big mobilization influence. Both Serbs and Hungarians are ill informed about one another; Hungarians tend to mix up the fascist Obraz, with the more medium Dveri, while Serbs mention the 64 Counties. The 64 Counties Youth movement was indeed active in Temerin, five or six years ago, but it is not more a matter of other Hungarian organizations, or, rather, a matter of informal organized groups, much like the twenty or so Hungarian *skinheads*. According to an interviewee, Obraz, is behind most ethnic incidents.

There are no religious conflicts in Temerin, the roman catholic and the Serbian orthodox church working on easing the tensions. There is a territorial segregation, evident when overlapping with fund distribution (i.e. building being built in the Hungarian part of Temerin). Some of these matters

¹² <http://www.vajma.info/cikk/szerbkiadas/1892/8222Jobik8221-podrzava-Pokret-madjarske-nade.html>

of inequality are relatively old: Bački Jarak was locally known as the capital of Temerin, because its settlers were former soldiers with a privileged status. Some interviewees explain the large number of incidents in Temerin, with the arrival of settlers and refugees. Temerin thus, resembles the militant suburbs in Novi Sad such as Veternik and Futog, with the one difference that a large population of Temerin are ethnic Hungarians.

Serbs and Hungarians lived side by side in the '90s. Now, there are practically no more cafes that are for both nationalities. Hungarian high school pupils understand Serbian quite poorly. The division, in general opinion, is more evident among the younger population than among the older population.

The youth in Temerin is estranged amongst itself and divided according to their nationality, which in turn gave birth to the idea of a bilingual school. This would enhance and intensify peer socialization, but given the experiences elsewhere, this would, almost certainly speed up the assimilation of Hungarians. A politician of the right wing Hungarian party noted: „I don't see any perspective for the future, the proposed plan for mixed schools should go no further, because it would encourage the assimilation of Hungarians in Temerin. This is indisputable. We would stop the assimilation by saying e.g.. that Hungarians need their own culture, that the Serbs need their own culture and that by living well together, we could create a multicultural society. This is our opinion and we will defend the current school structure. As for some greater logic...as far as multiculturalism goes, better results would be achieved with other organizations, namely some civil organizations, for both Serbs and Hungarians, then some sport clubs, for both Serbs and Hungarians, so, we are looking at an activity that provides the time for socializing and all this without the assimilation, at least this is our attitude.“

An ideal solution would be improving the classes of the Serbian language for Hungarian pupils, perhaps even adopting a model for a foreign language learning. This is proposed by The National council of the Hungarian national minority. However, this would mean that the Hungarian language would be taught in Serbian classrooms, being that it is „the language of their surrounding“.

Given that the local Serbs feel discriminated, this solution is quite unrealistic.

What can and must be done, remains to be seen.

Reactions to the incidents

It has already been said that the intervention of international organizations, headed with the European Council, led to a decrease in the number of ethnic incidents in Vojvodina after the period of high tension from 2003 to 2005.

New incidents caused new reactions. On a European Parliament hearing called „Has the European

Parliament forgotten Vojvodina?“, on April 2nd 2009, a Hungarian representative Becsei Zsolt stated that the situation in 2009. has not improved much since 2005 in the context of inter-ethnic incidents.

The EP representative from Romania Tőkés László argued that there is fear among the Hungarians in Vojvodina, noting that there is a rapid settling of members of other nationalities into places populated with Hungarians. The hearing was attended by a representative from Serbia, the head of a civil human rights organization „Argus” attorney Bozóki Antal, the representative of the Helsinki committee in Serbia Sonja Biserko, the representative of a Belgrade Human rights Fund Sonja Licht a representative of the Center for human rights from Srbobran Süge Zsolt and the ombudsman of Vojvodina, Petar Teofilović.¹³

The assault in January on Hungarian youth, in Temerin 2010. caused the CDCS to react. The worsening of the situation in this municipality was brought to the attention of the commissar for foreign affairs and security of the EU Catherine Ashton.¹⁴ The Secretary of the Province Secretariat for Regulations Administration and National Minorities Korhecz Tamás gave a statement concerning the January incident of 2010 stating: „I believe that in these cases paying fines are not a sufficient form of sanctioning. On the contrary, such sentences only encourage the perpetrators to continue with their ethnically based violence.“ Korhecz also estimated that „it is certain that there are similar ethnically based attacks, like those in Temerin, all over Vojvodina, but such cases are not reported out of fear (...) the „war against hate graphite“ has been going on for quite a while now ““. Five days later the police in Temerin charged five young men with a charge for criminal behavior. No criminal charges were made for instigating racial, national and religious hatred.

The president of the municipality of Temerin Gusztony András a statement on February 20th 2010, after the assaults continued, saying „the perpetrators of this and similar incidents are usually given the leanest sentences“, while Korhecz Tamás noted that „ it is time that the state and justice system, when dealing with cases involving attacks on minority, issue conviction that involve imprisonment, and symbolic fines“. It should be noted that the media conference was attended only by Hungarian minority media.

Involving the attacks of allegedly uniformed Hungarian youths (they were allegedly wearing uniforms of World War II Nazi allies “nyilas”), who assaulted their Serbian peers with metal rods, in the fall of 2011. The Serbian right wing web portal noted that there were no reactions from the

¹³ <http://www.vajma.info/0szerbkiadas.php>

¹⁴ http://cdcs.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=418&Itemid=33

municipality and state authorities. .¹⁵

The President of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina issued a harsh reaction to this case.¹⁶ Contrary to the general belief of the Serbs in Temerin, the police concluded that this incident had nothing to do with the dealing of the 64 Counties Youth movement. The municipal Council for security and inter-ethnic relations held meetings. The Serbian ultra-national organization Obraz proposed organizing night watches.¹⁷ The police department in Novi Sad enhanced its patrolling in Temerin.

The president of the Temerin municipality concluded that, with the exception of September events when there were three multi ethnic fights, the number of incidents in Temerin was halved in the last year.¹⁸ The police quickly arrested the instigators. Gusztony „asked the police to investigate the background of these incidents, and not to take for granted that this is just another one of Temerin sparks“

The Minister of education Žarko Obradović stated that the security in the schools in Temerin is high“ and that the background of these incidents should be investigated. The Republic ombudsman Saša Janković raised concerns over the rise in incidents involving mutual hatred. The Hungarian Hope Movement (MRM) claimed that the fight between Serbian and Hungarian pupils, on September 26th was the result of an anti-Hungarian history.

The after the police in Novi Sad issued a statement saying that „between January and September of 2011, the number of inter-ethnic incidents dropped by 33%,“ and in response to whether there was any doubt that the incidents were inspired by multinational hatred, the police replied that „facts indicate that the incidents involved acts of violence, but that it was the prosecutions job to classify the events“. He also stated that „it is public knowledge that the situation was much worsened by Obraz and 64 Counties¹⁹. Our research has shown that the Hungarian extremist organizations are present in Temerin, but that the 64 Counties is not. The possibility that this movement has incorporated itself in the more moderate Hungarian Hope Movement would require a specialized investigation.

The Minister of Foreign affairs Ivica Dačić attended the meeting of the Provincial Council for Security which was held in October 2011, in Temerin. He stated that, in the recent period there were 108 inter-ethnic incidents, five of which were physical assaults, four were anonymous threats, 17 were verbal confrontations and 43 involved graphite. There was also the incident of breaking into

¹⁵ http://www.vidovdan.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18349:-qq&catid=48:vesti

¹⁶ Prema pisanju lista „Magyar Szó“.

¹⁷ <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/srbija.73.html:346180-Temerin-Zbog-pretucene-dece-Obraz-najavljuje-straze>

¹⁸ Magyar Szó, 28.09.2011.

¹⁹ Magyar Szó, 29.09.2011.

the Hungarian cultural center „Petőfi Sándor“ in Novi Sad.

According to the ministers words, „the number of inter-ethnic incidents is in decline, and that the more serious incidents involve three fights in Temerin, Serbs were the victims in two of them, and one incidents was aimed against Hungarians. Incidents based on ethnicity also appeared in Becej (two cases), and in Deronje, in the municipality of Odžaci. Overall 54 reports were filled, and in 33 cases the perpetrators have been identified.“

The Provincial Council for Security concluded that during the first nine months of year 2011, the state of inter-ethnic and multiconfessional relations was stabile, noting that they were not influenced by the incidents in Temerin.²⁰

New incidents followed on the Gregorian Christmas Day, 2011 and the perpetrators were sentenced to 25 days imprisonment (a sentence for a basic form of criminal act of causing and instigating racial, national and religious hatred is a year in prison). Lenient punishment were soon followed by demands from representative of the right wing party Jobic, in the Hungarian Parliament, asking the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to intervene. ”State Secretary Németh Zsolt pointed out that in the case of this particular attack, racial motives can be excluded since one of the attackers was Hungarian“. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded that the situation in Temerin was indeed serious, but at the same time, the Ministry felt at ease by the action undertaken by the Serbian authorities to resolve the case and refused to take any diplomatic action .²¹

The representative of the Democratic party of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMDP) from Temerin, Csorba Béla reaction to the statement of Secretary Németh was as follows: „The main perpetrator of this incident was a person who has been actively, for the past months, provoking incident against Hungarians in Temerin – explained Csorba Béla for the portal *VajdasagMa*, adding that the person was also close to the extremist organization Obraz, and possibly even its member. „The fact that these deviant behavior groups include members with Hungarian names, who have been completely assimilated in terms of their system of values, is nothing new and is not the distinct to Temerin“ – said the representative of the VMDP, noting that the actual motive was for the blame to fall on the assimilated Hungarians. „I am sorry that a politician with such great experience, like Németh Zsolt has failed to recognize these facts ”“²²

In the light of the Christmas incidents, Temerin was visited by a representative of Fidesz, the ruling party of the Hungarian Parliament and Ékes Ilona, the member of the Committee for National Unity, Human and Minority rights in the Hungarian Parliament. The Hungarian youth that was hurt in the incident was visited in the hospital by Egeresi Sándor, representative of the Vojvodina

²⁰ Magyar Szó, 26.10.2011.

²¹ <http://www.vajma.info/cikk/szerbkiadas/1726/>

²² <http://www.vajma.info/cikk/szerbkiadas/1728/>

Parliament and Stevan Krstić, Active chief of police in Novi Sad. Egeresi and Krstić condemned the newest incident, emphasizing that they will continue to cooperate in efforts to diminish inter-ethnic incidents..²³

The results of this research reveal the story behind the reactions of the locals. When asked „Members of some national minorities in Vojvodina are complaining about their status. Do you think they should be given some new, additional rights in relation to the rights they have now?“ following answers were obtained: 46% of interviewed Hungarians feel that minorities should be given additional rights: 18% of Hungarians are for special minority rights, and 5% stated that minorities have too many rights as is. Other interviewees of Hungarian nationality didn't know how to answer the question.

The findings are astonishing, since the level of implementing minority rights in practice are above those demanded by Hungarians in Temerin, if we were to exclude the answers given by the interviewees of Serbian nationality. Among the interviewed Serbs, 23% of them feel that national minorities should enjoy civil rights, 3% said that minorities should enjoy special minority rights (propagated not only by international standards, but state laws as well), and 47% feel that minority members have too many rights as is. The obvious dishonesty of interviewed Hungarians and the widely spread chauvinism of interviewed Serbs demands an explanation. Our first guess is that both nationalities feel threatened, no matter how founded or not that fear is. The collective consciousness contains messages that are perceived as facts, regardless of their genuine factuality.

Civil watch

The anti-Roma attitude in Temerin is something that the two, usually confronted groups, local Serbs and Hungarians have in common. This attitude is in accordance to a very high social and ethnical distance towards the Roma population in all of Serbia.²⁴ The matter of the civil watch is significant in the context of the relations toward the Roma: these watches were started in 2011, as a sort of paramilitary groups (although unarmed) in parts of Bačko Potisje (Bačko Petrovo Selo and Bačko Gradište) and in Northern Bačka (Čantavir). These places are comprised of an Hungarian majority, which was exposed to a demographic depopulation in the past decades. According to the Treaty of readmission, made with the EU (2007), Serbia was obliged to accept people which were illegally living in other countries, which lead to a wave of Roma which were deported from EU countries. After the settlement of a significant percentage of Roma population in the past years, these villages had significant increases in crime. The locals blamed the newly settled Roma for this.

²³ http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2012&mm=01&dd=06&nav_category=12&nav_id=571635

²⁴ Some researchers of inter-ethnic relations suggest that the ethnic distance towards the Roma should be changed to racial distance .

Even though civil watches were organized in predominantly Hungarian villages, they were mostly comprised of two nationalities, since they usually involved the local Serb minority. The leading Hungarian party in Vojvodina, Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ), was against such forms of organizing, which implies that some smaller, rival Hungarian political parties took part in organizing such watches.

It is interesting to see how Serbs and Hungarians in Temerin, who were for the most part on opposite sides, perceived these civil watches and the problem of mounting crime in places where Hungarians are a majority, and their reactions to the Hungarian-Roma problem. When asked „Which forms of crimes have been present in the Temerin municipality in the recent past?“ 50% of Hungarian interviewees and 30% of Serbian interviewees mentioned theft. Fights were mentioned by 27% of Serbs and 23% of Hungarians; drug dealing was the answer of 14% of Serbs and 4% of Hungarians. It is evident that the Hungarians in Temerin are much better informed about thefts, and that they are less informed about dealings involving the legal distribution of narcotics.

A vast majority of interviewed Serbs and Hungarians stated they are not informed when asked „What is your opinion about the civil watches in Bačko Petrovo Selo and Bačko Gradište? From whom are they protecting the locals? Who is organizing them?“ It is also interesting to note that that civil watches are seen as a good solution by 32% of interviewed Hungarians and 16% of interviewed Serbs. When asked a more directly formulated question: „The rise in crime is often blamed on the Roma which were deported from abroad. What should they change about them, so they could be better accepted in their new settlements?“²⁵, 7% of Hungarians and 9% of Serbs answered „I don't know“. „We should change our behavior to them“ was answered by 2% of Hungarians and 3% of Serbs. Forced emigration of the Roma is advocated by 2% of Hungarians and Serbs. The attitude of 7% of Hungarians and 4% of Serbs is that the Roma can not be changed (meaning their inclination to stealing). A more moderate attitude about the Roma, that they need to change their habits, behavior, work ethic, alleged inclination to crime and hygiene, is the attitude of 40% of Hungarians and 41% of Serbs. The variation is trivial. Less than half of both nationalities has a racist attitude toward the Roma, without any advocating for violent racist measures. Unfortunately to the Roma population, the widespread racism in Temerin is surpassed by the racism in Vojvodina.²⁶

Members of right wing Hungarian parties in Temerin, those who are accused of organizing the civil

²⁵ The biggest problem is that “you can't change what's in your blood”; it's in their blood not to work; they need a lot of attention, not just tomorrow, but long-term attention; one can spit on them, but one can also understand them; that there be less violence; people who are not informed automatically think that the Roma steal; the situation is complicated; that they don't steal; that they work if there is work to be found; they have their own way of life and we have a hard time accepting that; send them back abroad; that they try to make an honest living; etc.

²⁶ The Center for development of Civil Society did not want to present to the general public some of the research results, namely the one concerning attitudes toward the Roma in other parts of Vojvodina (2009) as not to contribute to the “normalization” of a wide spread anti-Roma mode.

watches in Bačka, are aware that there is no problem with the Roma in this researched municipality: „The situation in Bačko Petrovo Selo and Čantavir can not be compared to Temerin. It is an entirely different matter. We had problems there... the situation was critical because thieves were organized and were stealing everything. And lately, they started to get aggressive, they beat up old people and there was everything. Until the first civil watch came to patrol the streets, we had up to five, six crimes, at least every night in Bačko Petrovo Selo. After they started patrolling there are no more crimes in Bačko Petrovo Selo. I am not saying that it is entirely due to the civil watch, but they actuated the police and the prosecution to do their job. There were raids in Bačko Petrovo Selo, the police stepped up their game and now everything is fine. I am not saying everything is great, but the number of felonies, crimes and thefts has dropped significantly“. Some of them, in trying to justify the formation of the watches, went as far as seeing them as the possible bridge between different nationalities in local communities.²⁷

In Temerin, there are no anti-Roma behavior (apart from the wide spread anti-Roma prejudice), and there is a plausible and simple reason for this: very few Roma live in the Temerin municipality. As one interviewee from the right wing Hungarian political party said: „I don't have any information about the Roma settling in Temerin, and I don't think that will happen. It is a solely economic matter, (...) and Temerin is not at risk, because here, real-estate prices are high. For example, you can buy ten houses in Bačko Petrovo Selo, and for the same amount you can buy one house in Temerin, around 40.000 euros.“

The higher standard of the population in Temerin, is due to the close proximity of Novi Sad, which keeps the Roma from settling on a larger scale, and thus prevents an active anti-Roma behavior, which is present in other parts of Vojvodina and Serbia.

²⁷ „As for the civil watch, if Serbs and Hungarians were to patrol together, or perhaps a Roma, this could have positive effect on the general safety and on renewing the trust between the communities.“

Conclusion

So, what can be done?

First of all we should look at what is already being done. The incidents in Temerin are escaping the attention of the Serbian and Belgrade public, but are dealt with by other factors, whether it is on official duty or out of the need to secure a peaceful cultural life.

The provincial, local and civil actors are trying to make a difference. The same goes for the police and school authorities. TemerinGO action is basically well throughout, the implementation of which was planned during the writing of this study. The implementations are the Youth Office of the Temerin municipality, local high school "Lukijan Mušicki" and a unspecific local NGO. The action was supported by the Office of the President of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina and the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and National Communities.

The main goal of this action that really stands out is „overcoming the ethnic distance between youths in the Temerin municipality“, through joint activities of the high school youth. Some interviewees are of the opinion that the municipal Council for Security deal mostly with security issues involving traffic. Other think otherwise: „the Council for Security – its there, it works and it is needed“.

Civil actors remain ineligible. The Youth club had a project involving the municipality of Bački Petrovac, with a strong Slovak majority. In this project which is called „Playing against prejudice“, one Hungarian and one Serbian class played board games and watched the movie "Life nearby". Activists said that the problem is that young people don't know each other well, because they go to different schools. On the other hand, merging primary schools would most certainly speed up the assimilation of Hungarians.

The public prosecution in Novi Sad often makes the mistake of classifying incidents such as a fight or inflicting light body injuries, instead of classifying them as causing and instigating national intolerance. On the other hand, a more appropriate approach from the prosecution is unlikely, given the problem of job insecurity in public prosecution and courts, which makes them completely dependant on the political parties.

Neither the public prosecution nor the public courts in Serbia have anybody to rely on, apart on the recommendation of the European Committee, which enables them to do their jobs in accordance to law.

One interviewee was clear: „Once again O must emphasize: if the perpetrators aren't brought to justice, than there is no point. The Friendship club can not solve the problem. The problem will be solved with appropriate punishments.“

The police reactions are much more effective than the prosecutors, which was also the case in the

time of most incidents 2003-2005. Since the incidents in Temerin mainly occur in or in front of cafes, police controls of the cafes has increased.²⁸

The police has marked the problem quite clearly, and not only did it increase the number of night patrols in Temerin, but the Minister of the Police took part in the local government body actions aimed at incident prevention. However the police makes errors too. In September 2011, the spokesperson of the Novi Sad police stated that „it is common knowledge that Obraz and the 64 Counties greatly contributed to the worsening of the situation.”²⁹ There are Hungarian extremists in Temerin, and even neo-Nazi, but the 64 Counties Youth movement is no longer present.

Sometimes state institutions unintentionally, out of sheer sloppiness, make errors which fuel the tensions even more. In the summer of 2011, bilingual name signs were removed from the entrance and the exit roads leading to and from the Temerin municipality, after which new signs were put up written only in the Serbian language. The president of the municipality, Gusztory András reacted in revolt and claimed that the use of signs written only in Cyrillic lettering, in a municipality with an ethnically mixed society is a provocation on the part of the public enterprise "Roads of Serbia" as well as a violation of national minority rights. In a written letter of protest Gusztory demanded that the signs be immediately switched to new ones, which would be in accordance to law regulations.³⁰ After a few days, new bilingual signs were put up.

When in September of 2011, a new string of violent incidents occurred, the municipal Security council and the Council for inter-ethnic relations held emergency council meetings

It is more than obvious that instead of formulating some special recommendations, the key is to demand the implementation of the laws and to continue with the activities initiated by various state and local bodies and civil society. The key problems occur as followed.

- The first problem is the lack of independent prosecution and courts. The problem is affecting all of Serbia, but in such a delicate environment the consequences of this problem can be hard.
- Secondly, the notion of being in jeopardy. From a now more relevant perspective, it does not matter that the Serbs are not in jeopardy in Vojvodina. What is important is that a significant number of Serbs feel their nation to be in jeopardy and this delusion is influencing their behavior.
- Finally, Temerin, as well as Serbia in general, represent something that escapes the attention of the general public in Belgrade. Interviewers from Belgrade were working in the field and were under a strong impact of the inter-ethnic tensions, which was something they were not familiar with, prior to their prep training.

Any deterioration of the inter-ethnic relation in Kosovo or anywhere in Serbia, can easily light a

²⁸ <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/srbija.73.html:347263-Temerin-Sa-zebnjom-u-novi-vikend>

²⁹ Magyar Szo, 29.09.2011.

³⁰ http://www.magyarszo.com/fex.page:2011-07-12_Temerin_samo_cirilicom.xhtml

spark in Temerin, with much greater outburst. Unfortunately, this estimate is based on experience. Vojvodina is not Temerin, nor are the distinct inter-ethnic relation in Vojvodina the same as the ones in the Temerin municipality. However, Temerin might be paving the way for the future of Vojvodina, and not only in a bad way. The risks that this community is facing are not something that can not be overcome.

Appendix:

Methodological references and on the field experiences

The research was done during April 2012.³¹

Main research goal was to do a complex monographic research of the Temerin municipality in order to reveal the roots of ethnic conflicts, find possible ways of overcoming them and the obstacles that are standing in the way of the task at hand, means of minimizing those obstacles and optimizing the results (e.g. improving the inter-ethnic serbo-hungarian relations of this municipality) as to meet the first preconditions of the stabilization of inter-ethnic relation in Vojvodina.

Research methodology:

a) field work: indebt interviews of 300 inhabitants of the Temerin municipality (local government officials, political party members, active intellectuals, professors, NGO representatives, journalists, youth activists); the interviews were conducted by trained interviewers, mostly from Belgrade (12 of them). This created a language barrier with the Hungarian population. This was a conscious risk, anticipated by former experiences. Dye to the research topic, it was important to ensure a distance rather than empathy, between the interviewer and the interviewee. The language barrier was overcome, for the most part, by the interviewers experience; translations were acquired when necessary. The barrier of conformity was broken by successively asking of more and more offensive question, using the Kinsey method. Nevertheless the number of questionnaires that were pulled from processing was still high – around 50; giving an end total of 251 questionnaires. Four independent teams of interviewers was used, to enable the best field control of the process of collecting data and the additional logical control of the gathered records. The data was first processed qualitatively (this approach provides the most unanticipated finds) and then quantitatively (in the stats package of SPSS).

The plan of sampling was achieved, structure wise; interviewers were set on a tasks of acquiring a quote sample with an approximate 2 to 1 ratio of interviewed ethnic Serbs and Hungarians (in order to follow up any discrepancies on the micro level, between certain areas, the number

³¹ The Project team consisted of: ma Snežana Ilić – project coordinator, Alisa Halak – project assistant, dr Vladimir Ilić – metodologist and coauthor of the publication, Miroslav Keveždi – religiologist, interview and coauthor of the publication, Bojana Begović and Biljana Boumoussa, assistant in data analysis, interviewers Marina Olear, Dušan Vujičić, Doris Mihajlov, Aleksandra Marković, Stefan Vujičić, Petar Simić, Ivan Tijardović, Nikola Pljevaljić, Maja Krek, Stevan Janković, Matija Jovanović and Relja Knežević.

needed for statistical observation; one third to one half of the overall number of interviewees was the required portion of women participants (given the research topic and environment, knowingly sexist, it was expected that the male interviewees would be more frank in their answers; a third of the interviewees were between ages 18 and 22, 23 and 35, and over 36.

B) analyses of the municipality, police and court documents

c) analysis of the printed media, to enable the monitoring of the reactions and the link of municipal events and outer factors.

Field experiences:

Each research is in fact, a form of changing realities: social communities have no preplanned roles for the researchers and through their research they somewhat alter the content of the collocutors consciousness, making him more consistent, precise and with meaning. This is not something that can be avoided, even when sending emotionally detached researchers from Belgrade and Zrenjanin.

A research is also always a social relationship, and a mutual one: interviewees influence the researchers and their personal equation. What was the general impression of the interviewers about Temerin and Bački Jarak, its inhabitants and their views on ethnic incidents?

One interviewers impression was a hypothesis on its own, one that could explain the disproportion of the number of incidents in the Temerin municipality: „among the older population one gets the feeling of being in a small community, among the kids the feeling is as though you are in a suburb. They are probably more concentrated towards Novi Sad...“

Other field experiences are no less interesting. They are given in a bulk, without punctuation marks: We can start with Bački Jarak, the girl standing next to her Hungarian friend and talks about how Hungarian shouldn't have any rights. Economically speaking it seems to be in a more favorable situation than Telep. A man said that it was unthinkable for him that a Hungarian would come to Bački Jarak. You can see it in the accent (in Bački Jarak – ex. CRCD), its different than in Temerin, the Bosnian accent has taken over. They don't even acknowledge that the Serb haven't always lived here, as was later said by Hungarians in Temerin.

As for the Colony, we had the least problems and we finished quickly. They told us that the Roma live in houses and that they are not nomads and they were slightly cautious when they heard this

was a sociological study, and even they refused to take part, after hearing what it is about (this can be said about everyone, not just the Colony, it gave us the least of our problems, at least when concerning interviewees of the Serbian nationality).

Perhaps it was harder to start interviewing Hungarians, but later they were more cooperative. With the older Hungarians the unwillingness or difficulties in speaking the Serbian language are evident. One Hungarian woman gave the example of fights, but insisted they had nothing to do with nationality. The fight was between Bosnians, young man that got into a fight.

The cooperation was much greater on the outskirts than in the center. The center, with its apartment buildings, is very problematic, mainly because we were refused as soon as they heard what the research was about. (The building in the center of Temerin are mostly inhabited by ethnic Serbs, which are then surrounded by blocks of houses which belong to Hungarians –e.g. CRCD). The same goes for the Hungarians, their gates are mostly locked. Members of the cultural-arts society say they never pass any manifestation calls-for-funding that are organized by Serbs.

Serbs from Telep mainly mention the influence of Hungary and the 64 Counties. They scarcely mention Hungarian victims in the conflicts, they insist on the Serbian casualties.

The Serbs complained more about the Hungarians than the Hungarians complained about the Serbs, but the Hungarians were not as believable in their convincing they have friendly relations with the Serbs. Unfortunately, we had no contacts with Hungarians with more extreme views (the other group of researchers did – ex. CRCD), which was not the case with Serbs (answers like „eradicate Hungarians“ etc.). It is possible that the language barrier was a problem (interviewers were not aware that the interview with „more extreme Hungarians“ were conducted at the same time, as was stated earlier, four independent teams of interviewers were used – ex. CRCD).

The initial experience is without a doubt important, but it is nevertheless limited, thus the hiring of interviewers „from a far“. In any case, the 'Veranda approach' or the „distant observation“ was not used. The focus should be on other sources of information and, most importantly, on the ethnic incidents themselves.

Cooperation with the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and bodies of self governance of the Temerin municipality

The project is implemented in partnership with the Assembly of AP Vojvodina. This has eased the field work and has had a positive impact on the otherwise large distrust of both nationalities. The president of the Temerin municipality and the principle of the “Lukijan Mušicki“ high school have provided us with any form of help that was needed.