

Magyar beatings in Serbia

In the recent past, in the 'European Serbia', the incidents of attacks on Magyars have multiplied. Not only in Temerin but other places, as well. This escalation in spite of the tremendous amount of money that has been spent on tolerance programs, the problem-free relation with the Republic of Hungary, and the local Magyar party's partnership with a Serbian authority that presents itself as both democratic and European.

Magyar youths are being assaulted in Temerin, whose population once was majority Magyar, for the sole reason because they dared to speak in their mother tongue on the street. But Magyars are also being attacked in Szabadka (Subotica), also with a majority population of Magyars in times gone by. Why? Because they still exist, because they wish to be equal citizens and equal political entity in their city, the center for the Magyars of the Délvidék (Voivodina).

Of course, the attack in Szabadka is entirely different from that in Temerin and the physical injury meted out in the other Voivodina settlements. It left no external marks, yet the consequences are more severe as the henchmen attacked an entire ethnic community that they try to exclude from public life. Some from various backgrounds have stated that the incidents in Szabadka are not systematic Magyar cleansing but a reaction to the politics of the Voivodina Magyar Association. The democrats of President Tadić, at least those with half a brain and have not yet been bought, know precisely that this exclusionary action is aimed at the Magyars of Szabadka and, through them, the entire Magyar population of Voivodina.

It has been going on, with varying intensity but always with pre-planned methods, since Trianon, now 90 years ago. I have not enough space in this article to present facts and data to support the various Magyar-cleansing actions of the past nine decades, the most subtle and devious moves, but if one has lived through this period, or is, at least somewhat, aware of our minority history, will know exactly what I mean.

The exclusion of the Magyars from public life in Szabadka is not a recent trend. It has been tried, with varying success, since I can remember. The majority of the local Slav population -- but especially the masses directed here for settlement in the past decades -- have never looked kindly at the activities of the Magyar mayors (the 'Magyar rule' in their terms). This they often raised at various forums; not just words but they often tried to do something about it.

While the Balkan War lasted, and the subsequent tension between Serbs and Croats, their attempts were unsuccessful. Of course, it was just a matter of time -- as we all knew perfectly well -- until they reconcile, get together and overthrow the 'Magyar rule' they so hate.

Thus, it was not the electoral loss of the Magyar Coalition (which, if we analyze it, was not really that) that was the primary cause for the 'loss' of Szabadka -- as some now try to spin it -- but the Pan-Slav alliance to wrest control of local power, the luring of the majority of Croats and Bunjevci to the Democratic Party, followed by the unprincipled partnership with the recently-reviled opposition. That and the drastic drop in the local Magyar numbers.

What happened was entirely predictable in this semi-Balkan environment. The last straw for the ‘democrats’ was the petition, with 125,000 signatures, which appeared on the electoral ballot, and those definitive statements with which the chosen leaders and representatives of the local Magyar community unequivocally stated: it wishes to think and engage in politics independently, in the interest of its own continued existence and recovery. And that it will not join their ranks for the sake of a few velvet seats and well paid representative’s jobs, or other posts.

This is when the collective Magyar beatings began in Szabadka, the Magyar-cleansing of the municipal government. Now, after the Magyar councillors, the Magyar executives of public corporations are next; after Szabadka, Palics is the next target. Who is unable to see this, needs to see an eye doctor; who does not want to see this, has a problem with his backbone.

The wound of every beating is painful but less so if it came from a stranger. That will heal. The ‘wound inflicted by a relative’ is the most painful and takes longest to heal, and aches for a long time after. There are several such ‘relative inflicted wounds’ to be found in this Magyar beating in Szabadka: the injury inflicted by those Magyars who parade or lay low among the hired henchmen; the wounds inflicted by those Magyars who voted for these henchmen at the last election (and not a few, either), naively trusting that they are, after all, different than the earlier ones and will more effectively represent their interests than their own people in the Magyar Coalition.

And finally, the wound caused by those Magyars, who are seemingly unable to see the reality and blame the latest assault on Magyars on those forced to endure the beatings, not the unbridled rabble doing the beating.

Károly Dudás

Hét Nap, <http://www.hetnap.rs/uj/index.php?no=282>, February 3, 2010.

Tolerance ... in words only

According to experts, attacks based on ethnic or religious grounds can only be prevented by increasing the legal consequences for them.

The Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség (VMSz, Alliance of Magyars of Voivodina) condemned the ethnic-oriented attack and monument disfiguring carried out Saturday night in Szabadka (Subotica). The town’s politicians, the Embassy of the Republic of Hungary in Belgrade and its consulate in Szabadka yesterday expressed their views in a similar vein regarding the incident. In all three statements, a call is made to the official state organs to identify and charge, as soon as possible, those responsible. In the opinions of Jenő Maglai, president of the Szabadka town council, and Rudolf Weiss, president of the Evangelical diocese, it is only through tougher laws that such attacks can be prevented.

During the past months, we have had to report on several attacks based on ethnic or religious grounds. The site of many of the atrocities is Szabadka, often called the town of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The center of this norther Bácska county town was the scene of two criminal assaults on Saturday night. According to our information, four ethnic Magyar youths were assaulted, in a

well lit park, by ten or twelve Serb-speaking youths. On the same night, unknown perpetrators damaged the statue of Martin Luther on the square in front of the Evangelical church by toppling the bust off its base.

Regarding these events, our newspaper office yesterday received three statements, all three condemning the incidents. The board of the VMSz condemns in the harshest terms the events of the past weekend in Szabadka and demands that the police arrest and charge, as soon as possible, the vandals who carried out the incident against the statue of Martin Luther. "... Since attacks were again carried out against Magyar youths downtown, we demand in the firmest terms that the interior secretariat find the guilty ones. We demand a thorough investigation and information to the community..." the communique goes on to say. According to the VMSz, a significant number of such incidents could be avoided if the number of police patrols were increased in the affected areas of Szabadka.

Saša Vučinić, mayor of Szabadka, and Jenő Maglai, president of the town council, condemned the damaging of the Luther monument in a common statement: "... The damage causes unrest and fear in the citizens of our town, regardless of their religion. We expect the appropriate authorities to find those who carried it, as soon as possible. At the same time, society must make a strong statement against these acts of intolerance against 'otherness'..." the statement asserted.

Learning of the toppling of the statue of Martin Luther, the Embassy of the Republic of Hungary in Belgrade and the Consulate in Szabadka expressed their shock and deemed the act as vandalism in their official press release of yesterday: "... This sort of act, regardless of ethnic, religious or denominational affiliation, grinds into mud the ideal of tolerance, creates tension and unrest among the peaceful citizens..." the press release went on to state.

Substantiation is most important.

The attacked youths told the reporter of the Magyar Szó (Magyar Word) that they did not lodge a complaint with the police because they were afraid they would be treated as Csaba Horváth and Róbert Szabó of Újvidék (Novi Sad), who were treated by the police, in a similar incident, not as victims but as offenders. If we had not covered the incident in the columns of our newspaper, then these atrocities may have never seen the light of day. Thus, it is valid to assume that the true number and frequency of ethnic based assaults is unknown to the reading public and that the peaceful town of Szabadka is not as peaceful as before. This supposition was corroborated by Jenő Maglai, president of the town council and president of the local organization of the VMSz. We learned that, from time to time, the VMSz office and the municipal government had to address complaints regarding assaults that were ethnicity based. The reports were usually about fighting between youth groups, or attacks against young people, said Maglai. He continued to say that the topic has become the attention of the VMSz executive for review and, as the president of the Szabadka local of the VMSz, he made the local chief of police aware of the importance of solving the incidents.

"In the case of these atrocities, we could ensure meaningful progress only if we were able to conclusively prove that these attacks are ethnically motivated.

The police usually report these incidents as ordinary fights and disputes. By the time the police reports are prepared, it is impossible to determine the true reason and start of these attacks. For ethnically motivated attacks, the courts may impose more serious punishment, hence the need for substantiating the crime. The attacks can only be checked with severe legal punishment,” stressed Maglai.

The municipal council and the town are unable to do much to stop the atrocities, applying political pressure and regular contact with the chief of the local police force are probably their sole means, stated Maglai. He then added that he is not at all satisfied with public safety in Szabadka. I must admit that the work of the police has become more forceful, of late, but there is still much to do, opined the president of the town council.

“Changing the legal penalties is the most important step but that is the prerogative of the state, the federal government. On top of that, the most problem prone spots, schools and town squares, should be equipped with surveillance cameras. We have been planning to do it for some time but financial reasons are holding it back,” summed up Maglai. In his opinion, the town, with the cooperation of the schools, should do more to raise the tolerance level of students. The Magyar and Serb youths do not have enough contact, do not make friends, with each other. As a result, their sense of acceptance of the other leaves a lot to be desired, speculated Maglai.

According to Rudolf Weiss, president of the Evangelical diocese, in light of the events of Saturday night, it is legitimate to question public safety in Szabadka and the hope for peaceful coexistence between the nationalities. Until the state does not catch and make an example of the offenders, then the ethnic-fueled attacks and acts of vandalism will be repeated again and again, said Weiss.

“The young see that, in this country, anybody can do anything without retribution. It is not surprising that the attackers on Saturday said that in Serbia, everything is permitted. About the damage to the monument, I stand by my earlier statement. Until the incident is repeated, I call it an act of vandalism. If, however, it is repeated, then we can talk about an attack against another religion or denomination. In that case, our denomination will make the events of Szabadka, in Serbia, known to the entire world. The state must not turn its back; leaving attacks based on nationality, religion or denomination unpunished is a shame, it drags down the prestige of a country and its cities,” stressed Weiss.

Evelyn Pesevszki

Magyar Szó, September 15, 2009.

Will they exhume the secret Communist-era mass graves?

According to the Sunday edition of *Blic*, the responsible committee will begin its work in September.

“The state committee will begin to identify those secret mass graves in which the bodies of those executed after the 1944 liberation were buried and begins to assemble a roster of those executed during that period,” said Slobodan Homen, Serbian Secretary of State for Justice, commenting on the news that the

graves of those executed by the partisans without judicial process will, after all, be opened. Also, that the names of those executed and tortured to death will be compiled by the Serbian authorities.

“The first task of the committee is to review the archives and try to determine the identity of those murdered, many of whom were executed between 1944 and 1946, without a trial or sentencing. Concurrently, the committee will make visits to every place in Serbia where the atrocities occurred and will compile a list,” quoted the Vajdasági Rádió és Televízió (Voivodina Radio and Television) from the Secretary’s statement made to *Blic* on Sunday. In his statement, the Secretary made it known that a large number of people are on the committee: historians, lawyers and specialists in DNA analysis.

“We will assemble a list of archives, museums and historical institutes and ask them to suggest one or two of their colleagues to become members of the committee. We have forwarded the request to the Serbian Parliament, the department dealing with missing persons and the federal Department of Justice; we expect an answer in 15 days. The committee should be formed by September 1 and should be ready to begin its work,” emphasized Homen.

The committee should be able to draw on numerous sources in its work because, according to *Blic*, at least 80% of those sites are known where mass executions took place at the end of World War II and the following period. According to Srđan Cvetković, historian at the Institute of Modern History in Belgrade, almost every town and larger settlement has one of these mass graves in its vicinity. “Several hundred sites are known, where mass killings took place. In some places, it was the execution of 4-5 people; elsewhere, people were killed by the hundreds. There are places where the number of victims exceeds that: in Niš, for example, between 800 and 1,000 were executed, in Belgrade, several thousands,” underlined Cvetković.

According to the historian, the exact number of people killed between 1944 and 1946 will probably never be accurately determined, yet, it can be determined from a number of widely known facts that approximately 60,000 - 80,000 people were killed on Serbian territory without a court hearing. “Over 35,000 were executed in Serbia proper and, according to German and Hungarian sources, a further 40,000 - 45,000 fell victim in Voivodina,” underscored Cvetković. He went on to specifically recount an incident in Pirot, relating to the local head of the Ozna (Department for the Protection of the People), Miodrag Bošković. According to established facts, while he was strangling a person as part of his questioning, the guard accidentally shot him. In retaliation, 159 persons were executed, many rounded up from Vlasotince and Leskovac and trucked to Pirot.

July 28, 2009,

<http://www.vajma.info/universal.php?rovat=cikk&ar=tukor&id=2743>

Serious ethnic incident in Újvidék (Novi Sad)

The assaulted Magyar youths recounted the June 7 attack at a press conference.

Two ethnic Magyar youths were attacked in Újvidék -- one is in serious condition. They were attacked merely because they were speaking in Hungarian

on a city bus, as they were on their way to the center of this, the provincial capital. The attacker, about 40-45 male, began by insulting them, ordering them that they can only speak Serbian in Serbia. The young men at first ignored his threats, then commented that they thought Serbia was a free country in which anybody could use their mother tongue, or any other language. They retorted with, "Who are you to forbid us?"

The verbal attack was followed by a physical assault. When they were about to get off the bus, the Serb man -- one Gužvica Dimitrije of Veterniki -- attacked the two Magyar youths. He struck Robert Szabó in the face while Csaba Horváth fought back, trying to protect himself. During the melee, the attacker heaped crude chauvinistic mottos on the victims. The incident was not, however, at an end because the attacker's wife called for help on her cellphone. The two men who arrived, presumably family members of the provoker of this incident, proceeded to attack Magyar youths waiting for the next bus. The cold-blooded retaliation was only ended by the police. It was probably the driver of the bus who alerted the police who proceeded to take everyone in for questioning, with the exception of Robert Szabó, who lay on the ground, unconscious. He was taken by ambulance to the local hospital. As an aside, it was Csaba Horváth who had to point out to the police that his seriously injured friend is in immediate need of medical attention.

The incident happened on Sunday, June 7 but Robert Szabó, 33 and the father of three, was only able to face reporters today. He was hospitalized for seven days with broken cheekbones and an injured eye, which sustained permanent damage. He went through several operations in the Novi Sad Clinical Center. According to the depositions several of his teeth were knocked out. Even today, three weeks after his beating, the scars of his assault can be seen on his face.

The victims recounted the event at a bilingual -- Hungarian and Serbian -- press conference attended by numerous reporters, representing Magyar and Serbian media. The press conference was called by Béla Miavec, the president of the South Bacska region of the Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség (VMSz, Alliance of Magyars of Voivodina) in the wake of the latest anti-Magyar attack. The media event was attended by the three VMSz parliamentary representatives Bálint Pásztor, László Varga and Árpád Fremond. Also present were: Lenke Erdély, president of the VMSz city council of Novi Sad, László Fehér, provincial parliamentary representative, László Galambos, member of the Hungarian National Council (MNT), Andor Deli, provincial Assistant Secretary of Minorities, Zoltán Góbor, assistant to the Ombudsman of Voivodina responsible for the protection of the rights of minorities, and András Szigeti, Deputy Consul of the Hungarian Consulate in Szabadka.

Béla Miavec called it the greatest problem that these type of events can happen in Serbia. To top it all off, the police have laid misdemeanor charges against the victims, too -- before conducting an examination, which has not taken place to this day. Miavec emphasized that it is the duty of the state to protect each of its citizens. He also took objection to the fact that the police have not laid criminal charges, merely misdemeanor charges, even though sound legal basis exists: inciting ethnic hatred, or inflicting serious bodily harm, or crimes

against public order. He also remarked on the bravery of the two youths for facing the ensuing publicity.

Representative Bálint Pásztor, president of the Executive Council of the MNT, said that he and his fellow representatives came to Novi Sad to gather information regarding the unfortunate incident. He added that this is not the end of their activities regarding the incident but will keep a close eye on subsequent responses and demand that the authorities maintain the usual and normal behavior with regard to the incident. He has stated in parliament that the VMSz is not the sort of party that takes its image based on the misfortunes of people but, if it wants to represent the interests of the Magyars of Voivodina, it can not let such acts go without comment. We must demand that the state authorities take these events seriously -- inciting ethnic hatred -- which is a crime under Serbian law. It is very worrying that Serbia has not yet reached the stage where the other parties, public opinion and public personalities react in an appropriate manner to these unfortunate incidents, said Pásztor, finally adding that the goal is to have no more such confrontations.

Imre Sebestyén

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<http://www.vajma.info/universal.php?rovat=cikk&ar=tukor&id=2678>

**A pre-condition of Serbia's joining the EU
should be an end to anti-Magyar violence!**

Serbia's entry into the European Union must be predicated on the condition that anti-Magyar violence in Voivodina cease -- urged László Tőkés, European Parliament representative of the RMDSZ, in his off-agenda comment at Wednesday's EP plenary session. He asked that the EU take a firm stand "in the interest of halting the anti-Magyar terror in Voivodina." The Romanian representative -- former bishop of Oradea (Nagyvárad) -- reminded that, due to forced emigration and the massive re-settling of the majority population, in a few decades the numbers of the Magyar population declined by one-third, to about 290,000 people. He also drew attention to the continued assaults on Magyars, behind which he suspected the complicity of the Serbian secret service.