The New Right and the Old Left in South-East Europe

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Content

Preface

In recent years Europe has experienced an unexpected rise in the power and influence of the far-right. At the same time, some of the traditionally most important left-wing parties experienced their demise, after decades in which they played a key role in the political life of its countries. Aim of this publication is to shed a light on the interconnectedness of these two processes. It has been published with the support of transform! europe, and it brings together different essays and articles previously published by regional portal Bilten.org supported by Belgrade office of *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.* These texts offer a unique and valuable overview of "The New Right and the Old Left in South-East Europe." Although written in specific contexts during the last four years, these articles provide a deeper, analytic understanding of broader political developments, so none of them lost its relevance.

After social democratic parties across Europe abandoned their working class mass base and accepted majority of centrist socioeconomic policies, they gradually started to lose foothold among popular classes. The long-term weakening of traditional left parties was precisely one of the sources of strength of the new right-wing forces. The economic crisis that broke out in 2008 only further accentuated this processes. Lack of credible political alternative from the Left, which marked the crisis period, left opened space for extreme right to present itself as the true defender of disadvantaged parts of the population. The steady rise in electoral support for extreme right parties showed that Left has to find new ways for mobilizing popular support, beyond a third-way consensus that in the end destroyed much of the traditional social democracy. Therefore, the success of the struggle against extreme right will mostly depend on the ability of the Left to renew itself on the new ideological and political grounds.

Our first thematic bloc deals with social-democratic parties in South-East Europe. Those parties were established across the region after the break-up

of socialist regimes. Political and electoral trajectories of these parties are very indicative of broader economic, social and political changes we have witnessed in the last decade or two in the region. But it is important to notice differences, not only in trajectories but also in ideological content and class backgrounds of these parties. While some of them share political profiles and destinies of social-democratic parties across Western Europe, some of them were primarily influenced by local political context and framework. Our aim with this dossier on social democracy is to provide a more nuanced picture of political capacities and limits of social-democratic parties in the region.

Also, this region has not been an exception regarding the rise of the far-right. At the same time, it would be an oversimplification to consider the far-right in the Balkans as just a provincial manifestation of the same phenomenon in the West. It has its own history, set of goals and modi operandi that show some similarities but also significant differences between various countries. Defending democracy in South-East Europe requires a better understanding of the concrete conditions in which far-right movements develop as well as a closer analysis of the implementations of their various techniques. We believe that our dossier on far-right in the Balkans can significantly contribute to the education of local activists and researchers in the region and further.

Anja Vladisavljević

The Old Left

Social Democrats in Power: Romanian Case

Romanian social democracy represents a rather unusual political phenomenon in Eastern Europe. Social Democratic Party (PSD) is not only ruling the country at the moment, but it's also the main protagonist of Romanian transition and as such the most responsible factor for current conditions in the country. Nevertheless, it's also one of just a few center-left parties in the region which maintained broad electoral support until today. In last few years, the PSD-led government often faces mass protests on Romanian streets, that easily gain sympathies of the international public. At first glance, everything is clear: angry citizens protest against corrupt political elites. But the political dynamic in the country is actually much more complex. This article is a review of protests in August 2018 and it tries to detect the main actors in power struggles, that represents the background of street clashes between police and protesters

Florin Poenaru

Romania came into worldwide attention again recently. On August 10, an 80,000-strong protest against the current ruling coalition and its perceived policies to curb anti-corruption turned violent. The police intervened brutally, using tear gas, water cannons, and truncheons against demonstrators. Close to 500 people requested medical assistance and hundreds more filed complaints against the gendarmes after the protest. Videos and photos of the police brutality did the rounds of the international press and legitimately sparked outcry at home.

To condemn the violence of the police is easy. To pierce the narratives prefacing and surrounding these events is not. Just as it is increasingly difficult to make sense of what is actually going on in Romania. Since the current ruling coalition won elections in November 2016, the country has seen unprecedented levels of political turmoil. Constant street demonstrations against the main party – Social Democratic Party (PSD) – is just a part of the story. Contradictory policies and internal fractures inside the ruling party led to

the rather bizarre moments when it managed to bring down two of its own prime ministers. At the time of writing, PSD leaders are holding an emergency meeting in which factions openly fight each other and the talk is to bring down, or at least severely cull the members, of the current cabinet. Thus the paradox that the alliance with one of the strongest Parliamentary majority in the post-communist era is also the one constantly mired in crisis.

In order to be able to grasp the current situation in Romania, I believe it is necessary to do away first with mainstream interpretations, common places, and clichés. It is not that they are simply wrong, partisan or self-serving. They are in fact bordering on the irrational. One of the most dramatic consequences of the current political and social turmoil has been the outright suspension of reason. The society is, or at least appears to be, so blinded by political partisanship – on all sides – that there is no room left for discussions, let alone analyses. One is either with or against something, no middle ground and no nuances. The few voices that resisted the temptation of outright regimentation in one camp or another are outcast as either traitors or simply stupid for failing to rise to the importance of the moment and join the fight.

The adumbration of reason and the abandonment of critical tools, however, are not restricted to locals only. OpenDemocracy[1] run a piece that not only assumed the perspective of the #resist movement (that is, the protesters against PSD) but also managed to offer a caricature of the opposing sides. Similarly, an article in the Guardian[2] dispensed with all precautions and turned into a eulogy of the protesters. It also mystified the reasons the people took to the streets on August 10, by simply inventing demands that the protesters never actually had. Most shockingly, the left-wing magazine Jacobin[3] published a text by a Romanian journalist that rehashed all the

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1 Roland Clark, "When liberals have had enough: a new wave of protests in Romania", OpenDemocracy, 17. augusta 2018.; https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/roland-clark/when-liberals-have-had-enough-new-wave-of-protests-in-romania

2 Claudia Ciobanu, "Migrants left for a better life. Now they fight for a better Romania", The Guardian, 22. augusta 2018.; https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/22/romania-migrant-diaspora-protest-police-crackdown-corruption

3 Matei Bărbulescu, "Voting With Their Feet", Jacobin, 23. augusta 2018.; https://www.jaco-

narratives and clichés of the right-wing supporters of the protests. Alexandra Ghit balanced the books by offering an exemplary deconstruction in an article for Lefteast.[4]

Why this misunderstanding? Why this impossibility to cut through official narratives for an in-depth investigation? The reasons seems to be the abandonment of what György Lukács called totality: the analysis of social reality as a whole. Put differently, competing narratives about the protests, and about the social situation in Romania more generally, obtrusively tell just one side of the story. They always leave something out.

The Illiberal Allure of Anti-corruption

The narrative of the protesters is deceptively simple and thus easy to empathize with: a struggle against a corrupt party, led by a convicted person that seeks to muzzle anti-corruption efforts for its own benefit. While there might be some ground to support the claim that a revision of the anti-corruption legislation might help some of the leaders of PSD, the uncritical defense of the current anti-corruption campaign is simply untoward. It means to ignore the very nature of this campaign and its immense abuses that reduced it to a political tool. Without retracing the entire history of the anti-corruption campaign in Romania, it is worth remembering that it was meant from the very beginning as a tool in the hands of the former president Traian Băsescu in order to fight the political class as such. No one disputes that corruption has been and still is a problem in Romania, (albeit its levels and outreach are more often exaggerated than real) and something had to be done. But the definition of corruption was very narrow and it referred mostly to the actions of politicians and state functionaries (corruption done by capital, especially global firms, was conveniently left out of the investigations). Moreover, during the time in office of President Băsescu, members of PSD were disproportionately targeted by anti-corruption campaigns. The political nature of the campaign was fully revealed when, once Băsescu was

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binmag.com/2018/08/romania-psd-corruption-protests-emigration

4 Alexandra Ghit, "Not as good as they look: Romania's latest anti-corruption protests", Lefteast, 28. augusta 2018.; http://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/not-as-good-as-they-look

no longer in power, his own acolytes faced charges and had to step down.

But the problem with anti-corruption is not restricted to its design, which was faulty, to begin with. Its long-term effects are more damning. First, anti-corruption managed to strip of credibility the political class as such and to raise suspicion to the political act in itself. Politicians and politics are dirty by nature, they must not be trusted and should always be kept in check. Technocrats and other unelected figures should fill the void and directly administer things for the people.

Secondly, once corruption was declared a matter of state security, the Romanian Information Service (SRI, the secret police) was brought into action and began to play a large part. Recent declassified protocols between SRI and judicial institutions active in the anti-corruption campaign show the frightening extent to which the secret service was involved in all stages of opening a file and gathering information. While not illegal according to legislation that clearly privileges anti-corruption goals rather than democratic rights of individuals, the protocols were nonetheless bordering illegality. This created a powerful consortium between fully autonomized state institutions that lacked any political oversight and public scrutiny and was backed by the Presidency (the incumbent President Iohannis dutifully continued the practices initiated by Băsescu) and parts of public opinion and the media. Abuses of power were, in such a context, inevitable and they materialized in pressing charges against politicians without a shred of evidence. The goal was simply to shame them for the public opinion and force them to step down. Inevitably, in recent months, judges closed down a series of notorious cases for lack of evidence or due to procedural mistakes. Most gravely, the National Directorate for Anti-corruption (DNA) opened a case against the government in February 2017 for passing a governmental decree, which is a blatant breach of duties. This was one of the main reasons the former head of DNA, Kodruta Kovesi, was dismissed from her position earlier this year.

Finally, the design of the anti-corruption campaign and its subsequent abuses that were made possible by the autonomization of the judicial and secret institutions also led to the transformation of unelected officials into sui generis political figures. Kovesi and other similar figures from the judiciary,

but also the heads of the SRI, began to play an increasing role in the public sphere and to use their offices in order to intervene into political disputes and to interfere with the work of the parliament. It is customary in Romania, for example, for prosecutors to express opinions about legislation passed by the Parliament. In some cases, there were even strikes against Parliamentary bills. The principle that the parliament expresses the will of the people and is the sole legislator is now contested in Romania not by some dark forces of illiberalism, but by the supporters and promoters of anti-corruption. As Ciprian Șiulea put it, anti-corruption managed to erode even the modest democratic arrangement of post-communism, depriving the state and the society of the tools to prevent the descent into authoritarianism and populism.

Hence, to blindly and uncritically support the anti-corruption struggle is not only to white-wash its abuses or to ignore its faulty character. It is also a form of supporting institutions of force that act in an authoritarian fashion and without proper public and political scrutiny. Ultimately, it is a way to condone the erosion of the slim liberal democratic framework in the name of very abstract (and quite problematic) principles of justice. Right-wing populism, illiberal practices and authoritarianism of political leaders that are now the norm in most of Europe and the US are not recent phenomena in Romania. They were already set in place after 2004 under the auspices of anti-corruption.

From the streets to state institutions: facets of political conflict

PSD tried to reign in the abuses of anti-corruption and to redesign it in order to bring it under political oversight. This was absolutely needed and, moreover, it was in line with decisions made by the Constitutional Court that already signaled grave unconstitutional aspects in the anti-corruption laws and practices. But as Costi Rogozanu rightly observed, PSD lacked the credibility for such an important and sensitive issue and, most damagingly, lacked the proper cadres to do so. Suspicions about the real intentions of PSD coupled with incredible dim-witted actions of its key members sparked the protests and led to the current incredible levels of resentment towards PSD.

But again, this is only part of the story. The other part of the story is connected to class. Urban protesters in the big 3-4 Romanian cities where the protests were more vibrant resent PSD not only for its anti-corruption stance but also for the social basis it represents: not the poor as it is commonly, but falsely, claimed, but the petit bourgeoisie of the small cities and the state bureaucracy. In short, it is not just PSD leaders that are resented and despised, but also its members and voters. To make things worse, the current leadership of the party and the government members perfectly express the habitus and idiosyncrasies of the provincial petite bourgeois much to the chagrin of the protesters who constantly make a point of mocking them. This inflated even more the anti-PSD stance and contributed to the duration and forcefulness of the protests.

Indeed, PSD has its many ills and since it has been the most important party of the transition it does bear most of the brunt for the current situation in Romania. But to scapegoat it, as the protesters do, is a form of misjudgment. Here we encounter another paradox: while the social and economic policies implemented recently by PSD are highly worthy of criticism, the anti-PSD protests address none of these issues. In fact, the August 10 protest addressed no issue: the protesters naively demanded that the government should step down and PSD should give up power. More tellingly, the protests were prefaced by a rather surrealist episode in which the vulgar, tasteless and macho slogan ”Muie PSD” (which roughly translates as ”PSD suck dick!”) became *the* defining slogan of the #resist movement and embraced across the board.

This approach is indicative of the opposition and its repertoire. It is not only misguided and rudimentary but it also suits PSD perfectly, allowing the party leaders to excel in the practice of victimization. The apogee was reached a few days after the protests when PSD president Liviu Dragnea went live on television and affirmed that he was the victim of a botched assassination attempt last year. The story is so far-fetched that many questioned his psychical state. His intervention failed to divert attention from the issue of police violence as it was intended to do, but managed to bring down another notch the level of reason in the Romanian public sphere.

These forms of argumentation and tactics elicited comparisons in the #resist movement between PSD and ruling parties in Hungary, Poland, and Turkey. This is even more ridiculous and it shows what the two sides have in common: a race to the bottom towards utmost ridiculousness. In fact, the entire narrative according to which Dragnea and PSD are local embodiments of similar traits found in Hungary, Poland and Turkey should be rejected as utterly baseless. PSD has historically sought to link profoundly the party with the state apparatus and an authoritarian vibe was always constitutive of its operations, but we are still very far from a situation comparable to the aforementioned states. The reason is simple, and it was already sketched above: neither Dragnea nor PSD (nor any other political actor) has or could muster enough political power and control over the state. The anti-corruption campaign shifted the real place of power from politicians (the Government and the Parliament) to the nexus that links the judiciary with the SRI.

Conflict inside state apparatus?

Let me go back briefly to the events on August 10. To stress it once more, the violence of the police and gendarmerie was despicable. But not at all surprising! This is, after all, a repressive institution, well-financed and well manned, that exerted brutal violence in the past as well. In 2012 anti-austerity protesters were savagely beaten on the streets of Bucharest. Many football supporters can testify for the violence of the gendarmes on a weekly basis. But that's only part of the story. Police actions on that day unfolded in the erratic, inconsistent and amateurish manner. The investigation that followed did nothing to clear the air. A series of contradictions between state officials and a number of inadvertences between their declarations led to a blame game that raised even more suspicions. The gendarmerie appeared in disarray and the leadership clueless. The head of the Minister of Interior appeared equally overrun by the situation and out of synch with her subordinates and other related institutions.

When lacking proper information, which is notoriously hard to get in such cases, there is always the trap of undue speculation. But, in accordance with the mood in Romania, let me offer mine: what happened on August 10 – and

I refer here to the very violent but also extremely chaotic and suspiciously sloppy intervention of the police – is in fact a symptom of a larger problem. At first glance and according to all mainstream narrative what we seem to witness in Romania is a struggle between righteous demonstrators and a vile PSD around, or starting from, the anti-corruption issue. My suggestion is different: what really takes place is a very concrete power struggle between various branches and structures of autonomous state institutions that seek to preserve or enhance their power share, not different from the cases described by Greek sociologist Nicos Poulantzas. SRI and the judiciary institutions that have the most to lose following a more pronounced assertion of political control are, naturally, expected to be the most active in this struggle. After all, the protests on August 10 had no official organizers or leaders – an impressive feature for an 80,000 people gathering. This type of interpretation might border on the conspiracy theory. But precisely because of that might also be the most rational in the current context.

Reforming Macedonian political system

In the last elections (2016) in Macedonia, voters for the first time voted outside ethnically defined boundaries. After a long domination of the main right-wing party, Social Democratic Union of Macedonia again took power amid great expectations of its' voters. It started a process which aims to redirect the focus of parliamentary politics from ethnic issues to the social end economic ones. The success of this process would depend precisely on the role of governing Social Democrats, faced with serious obstacles on that path. The first one is the nature of the Macedonian parliamentary system that is based on strict ethnic lines. Besides that, structural constraints on ruling party's economic policies are strongly felt as well, especially since the government is unambiguously determined to continue country's path towards joining NATO and European Union

Artan Sadiku

The post-Yugoslav republics were built on the basis of ethnonationalism, and that fact still influence every day challenges which often do not relate to ethnic issues. The prevalence of ethnicity in the formal politics of many of the post-Yugoslav republics is not linked to the present recurrence of ethnonationalism in Europe, but it represents a continuity of a model established in the 1990s. Embarking on such a path of building new societies was the consequence of the ideological bankruptcy of the Yugoslav elites who had nothing else to offer beyond ethno-nationalist narratives in order to cover the absolute failure of the new neoliberal economic model which was inaugurated with the promises of a better life.

Macedonia had been celebrated as the "oasis of peace" because it left the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia without any major internal disturbances like the one that accompanied dissolution of the rest of the country. But the constitution of 1991, adopted in the spirit of dominant ethno-nationalist doctrine, had inscribed within itself a crisis to come. After a decade of living the fears of wars in its neighbourhood, the inevitable crisis came to

Macedonia in the year 2001.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement that sealed the ethnic clashes in the country was one of ethnic power-sharing which at that time seemed to reflect a democratic character, one of inclusion and integration. Because the crisis came as a result of ethnic discrimination, the inclusion and integration were supposed to follow strict ethnic lines. Ten years after the Agreement, the formal Macedonian politics was dominated by ethnocentric political parties, which competed on virtually parallel political spaces, that of the Macedonian and the Albanian ethnic community in Macedonia.

It was only in 2011 when a visible social movement started to take shape around the scandal of the murder of Martin Neshkovski by the state security apparatus, that the new political and social issues, not connected with inter-ethnic relations, started to be questioned in Macedonian society. All the way to 2015 there were dozens of massive social mobilizations that crossed the ethnic lines and put forward common political demands from education to healthcare, workers rights and social security. It was the first time in the recent history of the country that significant social movements were organized beyond ethnic lines.

This new social reshaping was picked up by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) which in the election campaign in 2016 addressed demands raised during the social protests. With the help of the Albanian ethnic votes, SDSM managed to come close to the ruling Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and finally formed the government in coalition with the ethnic Albanian party – Democratic Union for Integration (DUI).

The new government was one that had to bring a new era in the Macedonian politics and society depleted socially, economically and culturally by the more than a decade of Gruevski's repressive rule. The challenges in front of the new government related mostly to the issues of the reform of the judiciary, rule of law, media freedom and democracy. These were also set up as the main criteria for the countries progress towards the integration with the European Union.

But, in the course of performing reform policies, the prime minister started facing troubles due to the share of power with the coalition partner which in this case in the Albanian political party that was governing with VMRO-DPMNE in the previous decade. DUI is not interested in reform program that would advance an economic, social and cultural position of Albanians. Their political agenda is not one of reforms, but of bargaining for more ethnic interests which they would translate into ethnic votes for the next elections. In this run, the DUI constantly pushes further the ethnic demands towards a terrain which will put the Prime Minister Zaev in an uncomfortable position with his predominantly Macedonian ethnic electorate and thus generate a resistance from his side, a move which they could use to withdraw the Albanian votes back into their own ethnic political campus.

Erasing of ethnic parties

Although the ethnic issues are fortunately not the predominant ones in the parliamentary Macedonian politics these days, the ethnic format of the coalition and the dominant political parties is a cause for the setback in many of the reformatory undertakings of the new government. Reforms in the economic sense remain quite embedded in the same neoliberal doctrine run by Gruevski, but still, they brought forth significant improvements in the field of freedom of expression, culture and formal democracy. A major intervention is needed in the procedure that determines the formation of the government. Namely, the traditional model of ethnically determined ruling coalitions must be transgressed in order to have fully functional and homogenous state structures for the purposes of implementing new policies.

The traditional criticism that the erasing of ethnic parties will bring forth a new model of domination of the ethnic Macedonian issues over the Albanian ones is not legitimate anymore given the new context in which the social-democrats have been voted by many Albanians and have included Albanians in their electoral lists. The challenge remains, however, to take this process further, that is, to completely reform the social-democratic party into a fully open and representative political party of all the citizens of Macedonia irrespective of their ethnic background. The current interven-

tions in the party structures of the SDSM remain quite cosmetic and thus limit its scope of the appeal to the Albanian voters in the next elections.

A political analysis of the mode of functioning of the government does provide for advantages even for the concerned Albanian electorate in Macedonia, which remains afraid of losing its voice in a government without a distinct ethnic Albanian political party. Given the fact that the Albanian political party in the government coalition is always the smaller party, its political interests are always corrupted by the larger governing party. The failures in the realization of these interests, no matter if they come as a result of the governing modality, often come to generate ethnic tensions in the country.

On the other hand, a political party that counts on the votes of the Albanians in Macedonia and has incorporated within its structures a significant number of representatives of this community would come to principled political positions on ethnic issues through internal discussions. Once decided, these positions would become government policies of the ruling party, evading any possibility for blackmailing and trade-offs with other issues. In such a move, ethnic issues would not become irrelevant to the Macedonian politics, but there would be established a new pattern of politics that involves all the ethnic communities in dealing with, not just ethnic, but also all other important political causes.

Currently, there are six Albanian political parties in the parliament which all compete in their nationalistic appeal in order to gain prominence against each other. Such a political setting disadvantages Albanians in Macedonia in their non-ethnic needs as citizens, because certain domains of policy become occupied by Albanian parties that forge particular ethnic projects that obstruct the general progress. A non-ethnic political re-configuration should be forced through by the social-democrats who are the only party in the country that have a potential for transforming political discourse in the country in a non-ethnocentric. The only political space, given the maintenance of the neoliberal economic policies, in which a significant change is possible is the internal ethnic re-configuration of political lines in the country. Even though it does not seem like a political priority of the

social-democrats at the moment, ethnic divisions of the political scene in Macedonia in the future will pose itself as the main challenge to deal with. If the reshaping of the party-political model in Macedonia fails, the whole progress made in the country in the last two years will revert back to already seen ethnic tensions, a context in which VMRO-DPMNE can score well and thus damage the credibility and support of the current government. Knowing the stubbornness of the Albanian parties in exploiting every policy issue to their ethnic doctrine, the conditions for the reshaping of the politics in Macedonia are tough to tackle, but if done with success, they will deeply transform a society that has been plagued in all aspects by the dominance of the formal political status quo.

Given the new rise of nationalist politics all around Europe, the Macedonian political development can provide both a lesson and a motivation for rethinking resistance to this trends. Ethnically based policies can be defeated only through the articulation of socio-economic interests of people. Although not yet a concrete policy, the socio-economic unifying argument is a distinctive feature of the political discourse of the social-democrats in Macedonia, but it will hardly work in social and political terms without a real change in the life of the majority of the people in the country – regardless of their ethnic affiliation.

Decay of Serbian Social Democracy

Serbia has a long tradition of social democracy which goes back to the last decades of the 19th century. State of modern Serbian social-democracy isn't that much different from the situation in which social democrats find themselves in other European countries. Contemporary Serbian "descendants" of social democratic movements have completely abandoned their original values, but unlike many of their foreign counterparts they also completely lost their political influence. Ideologically, for the last twenty years, they were leaning on western and bourgeois values. This was their undoing as former nationalist radical Aleksandar Vučić became favourite Western's favourite politician in contemporary Serbia.

Nenad Glišić

Roots of socialist ideas in Serbia date back to the days of Principality, in the second half of 19th century. Principality of Serbia, factually independent but still unrecognized diplomatically and under the administration of Prince (later King) Milan, used to send a certain number of gifted young men to get their education abroad. Svetozar Marković, born in the town of Zajecar, was among them. During his education in Russia, he came into contact with *Narodnichestvo* and started with his political work in revolutionary circles. During this time, the influence of Chernishevsky, Hercen and Dobroljubov left a mark on Marković. After Russia, he continued school in Switzerland where he started studying scientific socialism. Svetozar Marković lived for only 28 years, but his impressive work heavily influenced not only the development of social thought but also literary and cultural field.

Alongside with bringing socialist ideas in rural Serbia, Marković marked the end of romanticism and transition to realism in art with his work "Pevanje i mišljenje" (*Singing and thinking*). Very early he came into conflict with the regime of Milan Obrenović which at the end indirectly contributed to his death. During his school in Zurich, he published an article in newspaper "Zastava" based in Novi Sad and lost his scholarship as the result. Left without funding for his education he returned to his homeland and started

publishing magazine “Radenik” which was issued in 1871 and 1872. Because of his political work and anti-government articles, he was sentenced to nine months in jail in 1874. By the time of his release, he was so sick from tuberculosis that he died in Trieste in 1875.

The legacy of Svetozar Markovic runs very deep, especially if we bear in mind not only his early death but also the composition of 19th century Serbian society in which workers represented barely existing group inside the general population. The number of literate people was even fewer. In the year of his death, the socialist movement which he created and formed achieved first electoral victory. In November 1875 on local elections in Kragujevac, the coalition of socialists and radicals has beaten pro-regime liberals by 7:1. Regime orchestrated a gathering in February 1876 and tried to overthrow the elected administration, but the plan was uncovered and demonstrations which stopped it followed. This event is remembered under name “Red banner” because protestors carried a large red flag with Cyrillic inscription “Self-management” through the city. This had been a first political victory for the young socialist movement, not just in Serbia but also on a broader scale.

Svetozar Marković set deep foundations of new ideology; he was a revolutionary, not a reformist. In one of his key works “Serbia in the East” he carried out an opinion opposite to then dominant one, according to which it was necessary to allow step by step development of capitalism which would then collapse in its final form. Markovic argued that these steps can be skipped, and considered family community, similar to Russian “obschina”, some kind of embryo of a new society in which the means of production, like all property inside family communities, would be collectively owned. Also, he was advocating the idea of Balkan Confederation as a response to the expansionism of the newly formed countries.

Radicals U-turn

Radicals used to value ideas of Svetozar Markovic, but after his death, they have gradually abandoned them. Founding of People’s Radical Party in 1881 under the leadership of Nikola Pašić marked the great turn, primarily in

terms of agrarian policy, because Marković was an advocate of collective land ownership. They were advocating constitutional reforms, peoples instead of the regular army, representative democracy and universal suffrage. Some of Svetozar Marković's closest associates and followers took key party positions. However, the Timok uprising in 1883 marked a total reversal. The 10-day uprising which broke out because authorities decided to confiscate privately owned weapons from the population was bloodily crushed. Because of two articles about this event in their party newspaper, King Milan Obrenović arrested almost whole Radical party leadership, except Pašić who managed to escape to Bulgaria. Some of them, including Pašić, were sentenced to death, but the penalty was not carried out. Radicals were demoralised and ready to compromise. After a while, they became a part of the establishment, and later on, a real pro-government political force. Serbian social democracy was waiting on its next generation.

The leader of this generation was Dimitrije Tucović. Ideas of Marković, betrayed by his contemporaries, became more influential at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In 1901 a modest propaganda group decided to renew "Belgrade worker's society", and later "Movements central comittee". They were leading the demonstrations against Pašić and advocating the foundation of unions. Because of the demonstrations against King Aleksandar Obrenović, Tucović was forced into exile. After May Coup and murder of the King in 1903, Tucovic returned. During the same year Serbian socialdemocratic party (SSDP) was founded.

SSDP became the member of Second International, where they clashed with predominant Austrian social democrats, primarily around the question of annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Alongside vivid propaganda and educational activities, this period of SSDP history is characterised by principled anti-war policy. Although there were anti-war factions in other parties that were rebelling against Second International opportunism, SSDP was the only party whose MPs voted against war loans in their national parliament. Despite this attitude which was in that time on the same line advocated by Lenin, members of SSDP, including Tucović, could not escape the participation in WWI. Reason for that was two-sided: Firstly, they were considering the Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia as an aggressive action of imperial-

ist power; secondly, they were sharing the fate of most of the Serbian people. In a letter to his father, Tucović wrote: "I was never even thinking about shielding myself from the fate that is following the entire people, I will not be thinking about it now". He died at the very beginning of the war, in 1914 during The Battle of Kolubara, near Lajkovac.

The Legacy of Dimitrije Tucovic

The political legacy of SSDP is deep and significant, and the same can be said about the work of Dimitrije Tucović. Alongside with translations of Marx. Bebel, Kautsky and the others, Tucović was publishing his own works which were unique in that time, but also today. The best example of that is the book "Serbia and Albania: A Contribution to the Critique of the Conqueror Policy of the Serbian Bourgeoisie". In this book, Tucović was criticising the policy of the Kingdom of Serbia towards Albania, as well as war crimes committed against Albanians. It was published after two Balkan wars (in 1912 and 1913) and it was reflecting events which were described by the public of that time, and later historiography, as the end of Turkish rule and military presence after several centuries. During victory celebrations, no one was worried about civilian and innocent casualties. There was even lesser possibility that someone would criticize the Army, who reached the peak of its reputation. In an atmosphere of fired up nationalism, looming pressure from Austro-Hungarian Empire and upcoming World War, Tucović published this historic work in which he stated that "there was an attempted forethought murder of entire Albanian nation", and he qualified this as a crime for which there must be a punishment. Serbian troops which entered Albania were characterized not as brotherly liberators, but as invaders. Year in which the book was published was also the year of Tucović's death.

On the other hand, he was attacking attitude of Austrian social democracy towards the national question. Politics of Austro-Hungaria was qualified as colonial and socialdemocrats were accused of supporting it. This was only one aspect of disagreement with parties of Second International.

At the end of WWI, members of SSDP mostly held Bolshevik positions. Those who did not accept the revolutionary programme of newly formed So-

cialist workers party of Yugoslavia (communists), were called "centrists" and they were working as a party faction in the beginning. However, after the Second Congress during which the Party changed its name to Communist Party of Yugoslavia, "centrists" published their "Manifesto of CPY opposition" and were excluded. After that, alongside their allies form Bosnia and German socialist groups from Banat, they again formed Socialist workers party of Yugoslavia, which later – after unification with two similar groups – became the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia.

Because of its opportunism, this organisation could not become relevant political factor between two World Wars. Nothing of any political significance was left behind it. Živko Topalović, party Secretary, supported Draža Mihailović's Chetniks during WWII, Serbia's biggest collaborationist movement. He was even member of Chetnik organization leadership. As Mihailović's delegate, he flew to Italy and stayed there until his death in 1972. During his absence, he was sentenced in 1946 to 20 years in prison.

Period of Socialist Yugoslavia

The legacy of Serbian Socialdemocratic Party and Svetozar Marković was highly respected in post-war Yugoslavia. Remains of Dimitrije Tucović were transferred from Lajkovac underneath a monument on Slavija square in Belgrade in 1949. A large number of schools in Serbia was named after Svetozar Marković. Nowadays the town of Jagodina, for some period was named Svetozarevo in his honour, as well as one University who got its name changed during the 1990s.

During Yugoslav self-management period, there were no opposition groups who would describe themselves as socialdemocratic. Dissident circles in Belgrade were a mixture of nationalists and liberals who later formed many political parties which were considering Milošević's regime as communist or leftist. Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia was occasionally trying to present itself as an ally of Spanish or Swedish socialists. There were several parties with term social democracy in their name, founded at the beginning of the 1990s, one of them formed by former Milošević's associates, but those

parties never succeeded in gaining mass support.

Post-Milošević setting

During the second half of the 1990s we witnessed a wave of newly formed socialdemocratic parties such as the Social Democratic Union and the Socialdemocracy founded by former general Vuk Obradović. Democratic Party also began to flirt with ideas of social democracy. This generation was mainly reducing social democracy to superficial ideas imported from Western countries. Because of this, average voter could not differentiate them from liberals, if there was any difference between them in the first place.

After the fall of Milošević in October 2000, various socialdemocratic parties participated in ruling coalitions. For example, the current government enjoys the support of Aleksandar Vulin's "Movement of socialists". Nevertheless, it's not proof of strength of socialdemocratic option, but of its weakness. Although polls suggest that the majority of people has a positive opinion about principles that can be considered as socialdemocratic (solidarity, equality etc.), that kind of parties are unable to achieve greater electoral success. Most they can do in the end is to become a junior partner in ruling coalitions.

Blurry concept

The very definition of social democracy is unclear for most of the aforementioned political parties. This not unusual considering the fact that most of the western socialdemocratic parties such as German, French, Scandinavian and British Labour party abandoned the content of their politics in the 1990s, preserving social democracy only in their names. In contemporary Serbia, social democracy is often reduced to ambition to win over voters who, according to analysis, are showing sympathies for this ideas. However, this kind of analysis does not give the answer to the crucial question: Do these voters even participate in elections or do they choose to abstain, considering that the turnout is around 50%?

Regardless of their rhetoric, among socialdemocrats of today, it is impossible to find someone who would challenge privatization as an idea. Reason for failure of socialdemocratic parties in post-Milošević period is that voters identified them as passionate advocates of the new regime, patrons of economic reforms and unconditional collaboration with Western forces. All in all, they were recognized as a part of corrupt partitocracy.

In the end, if we define social democracy in terms of contemporary centre-left, we will see that this policy never played a significant role in Serbia. Svetozar Marković and Dimitrije Tucović were very significant political actors a long time ago, but they had nothing to do with the political centre. They were revolutionaries who fought against imperialistic domination, first of all against Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nowadays, socialdemocrats cherish extremely uncritical pro-western policies and – as we already mentioned – are hard to differentiate from liberals, especially because they often form coalitions together.

Their argumentation was the logic of "lesser evil" – nationalists will lead us into isolation, that's what they were saying for twelve years. However, when the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) (one that gathers former radicals under the leadership of Aleksandar Vučić) came into power, it appeared that the West is fond of them. It is also obvious that SNS is a good and exemplary student of the West. This caused destruction on the so-called centre-left, or we can say on ideological centre. That parties are in chaos because their only asset – alleged reputation in the western world – was taken over by former radical. Even worse news for bourgeois opposition was when Prime Minister of Serbia became openly gay Ana Brnabić. What's left for them? They can hope that SNS will arrive on the brink of collapse after the descent from power. That is exactly what happened in Serbia to all earlier ruling parties.

Deep gap between the tradition of Serbian social democracy and its self-proclaimed descendants is clear. Nevertheless, Marković's and Tucović's greatness is unquestionable. Their images and examples are left behind as guidance for Serbia, regardless of the words and actions of those who call themselves social democrats today.

Social Democracy on the Periphery: A Brand Without Political Content

The Social Democratic Party of Croatia has been politically shaping itself at the beginning of the 1990s, in the specific historical moment characterized by a disappearance of traditional social democracy and open acceptance of the neoliberal agenda. During its second governing mandate (2011-2015), started a severe crisis of this party that manifested itself in increasingly open faction struggles. Since this article appeared in 2014, centrifugal tendencies that author outlines here only intensified, so the party found itself recently on the brink of disintegration. It becomes more and more obvious that the party doesn't have necessary ideological capacities, nor people that could design and launch a new kind of policy which could lead to party renewal

Rade Dragojević

Just after the death of Croatia's first president, Franjo Tuđman, at the end of 1999, when domestic political parties, Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP) being one of them, started to break free from earlier pressure of war and post-war reality, which dominantly set the course of action for political forces, new "factuality coercions" appeared. Before we point them out, we should recall that the 1990s, when domestic social democracy was going through its most difficult period (in the second parliament of 1992, SDP had 11 representatives, and three years later even less, only 10 representatives), were also times when international social democracy was put on defensive and agreed to immense concessions, in other words, it deliberately conceded to the neoliberal project which was at its peak.

At the beginning of the 1990-s, Bill Clinton's New Democrats were the first to embrace the "necessary cuts" in sectors of education and social policy, while simultaneously spreading fear among the population about supposedly fast-growing rates of criminal and with it giving prominence to security policy as society's main priority. The Labour under Tony Blair continued with the same policy, although in somewhat more elaborate terms, especially after April 1995, when Labour Party during its congress radically shifted

its programme and steered it in direction of compromise with capital and market. The third important member of the so-called "Third Way" was the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), which under the leadership of Gerhard Schröder developed a new doctrine called *Die neue Mitt*e, culminating with the *Agenda 2010*, which laid out the cuts in social spending Germany hadn't seen since the Second World War.

Pragmatism and Passivity

A new set of external pressures refers to global domination of economic issues and insistence on a new political course of social democracy, which would, to use the words of Anthony Giddens, include the depoliticization of society, deideologization of politics and democratization of democracy.

British Labour had rejected the idea of class struggle in their programme and replaced it with the idea of representing the whole nation instead of just one class. Such turn from class to people can also be clearly observable in domestic social democracy since the very beginning of the multiparty system, but during the first ten years even such a concession, that is, the practising of a more national than class aware politics, won't help it in achieving better election results.

From the beginning of the century up to now, the main feature defining domestic social democracy is its complete, and therefore often uncritical devotion to country's membership in Euro-Atlantic associations. Thus, all its politics, first of all, its foreign policy, is calibrated in order to reach that goal. In general, SDP is a party that has, in its quarter-century-long activity, been demonstrating it's not a political force that gladly interferes with socio-political currents, i.e. it's not a political force – although it should be, at least according to its tradition and initial habitus – which decisively interferes with historical currents. It prefers to passively surrender to the imperatives of the present and promotes achieving agreements as the main principle of its agency. In other words, SDP doesn't have any vision for the future that surpasses existing political horizon.

Entrepreneurial Party

In approximately that kind of context SDP in the year 2000 experienced its first parliamentary victory in a coalition with a group of liberal parties. The first mandate of social democrats, under the leadership of Ivica Račan, also had lasting importance for the party. More or less, all the main political decisions about the way the state and society should be led were adopted and put into effect back in those times. Labour Act that SDP led coalition voted in 2014, only followed lines that Račan's government established already in 2003. Generally speaking, social democrats, just as the government under its control, was led by approximately this kind of politics: as far as fiscal policy goes, all income produced by growth was more preferably transferred in direction of budget consolidation, rather than rerouted to redistribution. Usual scenario would be that after budget consolidation was done, previous level of redistribution was no longer regarded as important. Tax policies were also directed towards activating the labour market, especially through self-employment and not in the direction of redistribution. In that sense, in the past 15 years, the term "human capital" came into use, so employment policies went in the direction of strengthening of that concept. And that means encouraging self-employment, persisting on retraining and putting forward the idea of lifelong learning. Spreading the mechanisms of atypical forms of employment should be added to that, alongside a gradual, but irreversible abandonment of traditional forms of protection of full-time employed workers. In social policy, privatization of those services is preferred. One of the most important examples of that had been an attempt of the SDP led government to outsource auxiliary jobs in public and state companies and institutions, failed in the end under union pressure.

Speaking of outsourcing, it is interesting that the social democratic government gladly entrusted the overall social life to the so-called civil or third sector. But the novelty that had truly astonished and caught Prime Minister Milanović and his government by surprise is the fact that civil society can also be right-wing oriented and hostile towards a nominally left-oriented government. They got that lesson via two referendums, one organized around the issue of marital unions and the announced one (never realized) dealing with the issue of usage of Cyrillic script in Vukovar. But the fact that

the tool (referendum), just as the concept (civil society) are in fact ideologically adaptable, has been common knowledge for a long time. For example, it's well-known that the American right-wing civil sector at the beginning of the 1970s tried and partially succeeded, precisely by using referendums on local and wider levels, to depreciate a wide range of accomplishments that were won in radical 1960s, mainly in domain of education (the return of religious teaching and anthem in schools, role of parent committees, introduction of creationism in the curriculum, affirmation of homeschooling etc.)

As far as policy concerning the industry goes, since SDP had abandoned its traditional base, that is the workers, it turned to the entrepreneurs, in that sense also following a worldwide trend of nominally Left-oriented governments looking for support in business circles. Therefore, a photo taken in Zagreb's disco club Pepermint, which shows the then Prime Minister Milanović *cruising* with Emil Tedeschi, the owner of Atlantic Group and Croatia's second biggest entrepreneur, is nothing more than a genre-photo of Croatian, but also international social democracy, proving that Left politics enjoys hanging with the capital. In that context, it's no surprise that all eyes are upon direct foreign investments or *European* capital, while the domestic economy is going through process of complete tertiarization and deindustrialisation. In consequence, politics of last SDP government didn't go further of verbal displays of the governing, and controversies over the way they appointed this or that official, without any significant political effects.

Reconstructions Without Change

The aforementioned notion of "factuality coercions" was borrowed from a text written by political scientist Zvonko Posavec about twenty years ago, in which he described structural impossibilities to act on the Left in Croatia in any substantial way. He had noticed that such a situation, among other things, also leads to an absence of differences in the programmes of political parties. Indeed, what the Left government can do – or any other government which will stay within the so far described boundaries, whatever party may lead it – is more or less to deal with state budget accounting. Since everything is turned over to the hands of others, be it under coercion or voluntarily, domestic administration is left with very few obligations. Military issues

are under the command of foreign military alliance called NATO, financial policy is governed by Brussels through programmes of public debt and budget deficit control, social issues have been voluntarily handed over to the hands of the so-called third sector, and industrial policy have for a long time been in the domain of fortune telling – pondering over whether there'll be any foreign investments or not.

Realpolitik of SDP in its' two terms in power wasn't dictated by any kind of predetermined or prefixed set of rules, but relied more on decision making depending on the situation at hand. That is a result of a substance crisis of social democracy *en tout*. If in core European countries it hasn't been possible to overcome this crisis, even with a very ambitious reformist effort of consolidating socialist and liberal concepts, it would be unrealistic to expect more success in peripheral, Croatian context.

Political paralysis of "civic" option

A political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is strongly determined by the strict division on nationalist and civic options. Persisting "new" civic political projects are crashing themselves against the rocks of post-Dayton Bosnian settlement. Although the history of the illusions of civic alternatives to the tripartite nationalist division of votes and resources suggests their impotence, there is actually much space for political progress. But, for the beginning, it is necessary to refute some of the usual, self-explanatory distinctions as civic and individual vs. national and collective.

Dinko Kreho

Writing about the perspectives of "civic", "alternative", or "non-nationalistic" political options in BiH can easily begin and end in general conclusions. Among others, this conclusions can be multiculturalist, liberal-individualistic or neoliberal, ranging from calls for more co-operation, tolerance and trust among peoples, through insisting on the emancipation of an individual and the affirmation of his / her rights, up to technocratic promotion of business-entrepreneurial pragmatism as an alleged counterbalance to nationalistic "irrationality".

Through activism and social criticism, a radical leftist position was also formed on the margins. This one dismisses equally nationalist and "non-nationalist" party-political options as two branches of the capitalist system and insists on the need for anticapitalist mobilization as the primary form of struggle. Young non-party Left also often shows a lack of analytical scruples and their theoretical positions is not so easy to accommodate with the situation in politics and society – which again leads to the proliferation of general conclusions and some kind of paralysis. In such a situation, it's not easy to say something meaningful about the prospects and perspectives of "different" political engagement in Bosnia.

A wide range of "civic"

We should first address the distinction between the "nationalist" and the "civic", which is repeatedly discussed when talking about possible alternatives for BiH. The binary opposition between nationalist barbarians and civilized, liberal, cosmopolitan or "civic" forces determined the social, political and cultural context in each of the post-Yugoslav states during the 1990s. With rare exceptions, such antagonism has been constructed everywhere: it has occupied a central place in the discourse of Western political establishment, but also in the discourse of the opposition media or in the self-perception of various "alternative" political actors.

However, in BiH, the widest possible range of different political actors, orientations and options were considered "civic" or "anti-nationalist"; since there are three ethnonationalist policies in the country that spilled a lot of blood, almost every tendency that did not carry the mark of one of them would have the chance to be promoted as an "anti-nationalist". Thus, for a long time, the integral Bosnian patriotism was figuring as an alternative to nationalistic policies, because it opposed the territorial division of the country which they created through state-based integralism. The discourse on distinctive Bh. identity – whether it postulates "civil society" as opposed to ethnic tribalism, or imitates nationalist identity collectivism and primordialism – was also perceived as an opposition within BiH itself, but also in Zagreb and Belgrade.

Twenty years later, the perception of opposition between "nationalist" and "civic" as a fundamental antagonism in BiH's political life is still very persistent. While there are sometimes appearances of a different conceptualization of the social situation in the media, at the level of party politics, mentioned opposition remains unquestionable: every actor on that scene has to be branded as one of ours (Serb, Croat or Bosniak) or as a "civic" oriented. For a long time, the role of the central "anti-nationalist" option in the sphere of party politics was occupied by the Social Democratic Party (SDP), with an orientation that could be identified as a sort of belated "third-way" Blairite policy. However, in the last ten years, the SDP has been continually in decline: its former members often establish new "civic" parties, usually

accusing SDP of opportunism and surrendering to nationalist mainstream.

Our Party example

Latest such project, declaratively determined to "different BiH", proclaims principles such as: "one person, one vote, reduction of group rights, development of the economy, promotion of private entrepreneurship and equality of all peoples in every part of BiH". This clip illustrates well the ideological mixture we find in program acts and discourse of the average political party of declarative "civic" orientation. Liberal promotion of an individual's rights is mixed with economic (neo)liberalism and state-territorial integrity, without any insight into either nationalist discrimination or capitalist exploitation, even less about other forms of oppression of different individuals and collectives.

Our Party case is worth further analysis. Unlike numerous similar projects, this undoubtedly "civic" party did not emerge as SDP spin-off. It was formed in 2008 with a lot of media attention and the participation of some of the most famous figures from Sarajevo's cultural and intellectual life. At first, it was presented to the public as a "post-ideological" political party that "depoliticizes the political system" and "depoliticizes profession", ie the one that will "defend Bosnian-Herzegovinian society from major national narratives and turn it towards questions of so-called everyday life". Although this obvious attempt of "policy without politics" would be expected to be short-lived and to serve only as a platform for the promotion of individuals, Our Party has grown into a respectable player on BiH party scene. In the meantime, they gave up their "post-ideological" and "postpolitical" positions.

More recently, they represent themselves as a "party of social-liberal orientation" advocating "a society of solidarity and social justice, the rule of law and broad civic freedoms". The leaders of Our Party claim to offer "concrete solutions to the worst problems in the country and taking responsibility for brave initiatives in the local community". Indeed, at the level of community work and local initiatives, especially in smaller towns, Our Party proved capable of launching good initiatives and the continued engagement of its membership – in opposing sexism, homophobia, "criminal privatizations"

(not privatization as such) and the suppression of labour rights (but of course, not capitalism) – deserves to be perceived. However, problems with the political orientation of the Party as such are not less intrusive.

The trauma of being politically undefined is visible in the name of "Our Party", which suggests local connectivity, networking and a certain humanization of the political space. But apart from opposing "us" and "them" (nationalists), it does not point to any positive vision (we can imagine a far right, neoliberal, and social democratic party with the same name). Furthermore, the advocacy of "solidarity and social justice" on the one hand, and "broad civil liberties" on the other hand, are not integrated into any particular political direction. For example, we do not know how Our Party understands the interdependencies and interactions of individual, (ethno)national, class, state, etc. factors and identifications, or what do they think about the neoliberal impact on society in general. Statements about "rule of law" are used by all party actors, which is quite understandable in the "wild" social environment of post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina – but what if the legal apparatus is modelled to favour ruling classes and as a tool of oppression? We can hardly find answers to these questions in programming documents, actions and discourse of Our Party.

The paradoxical potential of BiH

Naturally, the atmosphere of a permanent social crisis was only intensified by the global crisis of the capitalist system after 2008. Despair grows, sentiments are radicalized and the legitimacy of the declared non-nationalist options are becoming more and more drastically questioned. In addition to the above mentioned leftist critique of "civic" alternatives, rightist critique is increasingly gaining momentum. That one assures us that any evocation of "civil" is only a mask for nationalism, mostly that of the most numerous nation. It needs to be said that the latter is sometimes the case – the symbiosis of liberal rhetoric, Bosnian patriotism and Bosniak nationalism is not a new phenomenon – but when such politics are denounced from nationalist positions, with aim of discrediting even the slightest possibility of non-nationalist politics in BiH, the problem becomes even more complicated.

At the same time, the lack of political articulation in the discourse, action and the program of "civic" oriented actors is used by the apologists of nationalism to claim that attempts to find alternatives to nationalism are, at the very least, impossible job. By apologists, I do not imply here only passionate nationalist ideologists, but perhaps even more those who accept the logic of nationalism with opportunistic motivation, with "common-sense" arguments – like the former poster boy of the young Left in BiH, Vuk Bačanović, who perceives "breaking up" of BiH as a "wise" solution.

However, the very fact that, apart from discussing the nationalist options in BiH, we can at least think about the alternative perspectives, is not something to be ignored. It confirms that, unlike in Serbia and Croatia, nationalism in BiH is not fully legitimized and naturalized in everyday life. Of course, ethno-nationalist identity politics is aggressively present, their narrative is filling the media, institutions, and everyday life – but precisely this visibility proves that nationalism has not triumphed completely. Nationalist politics in Serbia and/or Croatia do not have to assert themselves in this way; in these mostly monoethnic counties, nationalism can be reproduced more discreetly, implicitly and "more naturally". The inability to ethnical demarcation in BiH by war operations and the failure of the post-war politics to finally implement their segregation projects have caused that ethno-nationalism is not the only show in town.

Often, we can rightly write off the idea of "civic alternatives" to nationalism, the one that has been presented for a quarter of a century, as, in the best case, hollow rhetorical skeleton. However, very fact that the nationalism is recognized as a dominant but not mandatory mode of political activity (and everyday life) is worthy of our attention (in Croatia it is hard to imagine SDP calling HDZ nationalist). The reasons for this specificity do not lie in a fundamental, mystical "Bosnian exceptionalism", but in a series of socio-historical-geographic factors and circumstances – among which the fact that BiH was for the first time formed as a political project and state inside Peoples Liberation Struggle as an anti-colonial and anti-fascist project.

Of course, in order for contradictory "civic" forms of resistance to nationalism to become any political alternative worthy of that name, much work,

struggle and sacrifice are needed. If we are talking about the sphere of party politics, a convincing antinationalistic option should at least be "intersectional" and reject the logic of the binary opposition between "civil and individual" and "national and collective". This struggle should be directed against the complex system of exploitation, oppression and discrimination, even when it is limited by the repressive parameters of party politics.

In other words, this would be struggle for a different understanding of politics as such and not only for a concrete political change. It is not impossible that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which appears in the context of the other post-Yugoslav countries as a "troubled country", there is the most open space for such a thing to happen.

Where "pasokification" was born: A glimpse of PASOK's collapse

Greek PASOK played a key role in the political life of this country since the fall of the military junta in the 1970s. In European political context, it became a paradigmatic example of the decline of social democracy. In just a few years after the breakup of PASOK's last government, the party declined into marginality. A deep economic crisis that started in 2008 had damaging social and economic consequences in Greece. Main political victims of the crisis were precisely Greek social democrat

Angelina Giannopoulou

It is a common ground for politicians and political scientists as well, that European social democracy is currently undergoing the most serious crisis since its foundation. This structural crisis results from various factors that emerged during the past twenty years. Some of these factors are related to the socioeconomic transformations that started developing from the late 1970s, which consequently formed the neoliberal capitalism within a new globalized environment, some others originated from the clear abandonment of the traditional social democratic values and aims, such as the redistributive justice, the reduction of the social and economic inequalities and the vision of a Social Europe.

The conclusion about the decline of the Social Democracy doesn't come up only from the election results and the breakdown of the votes, though this aspect is obviously crucial and reveals the current potentiality of the Social Democracy to assert itself as a leading political power. Social Democracy's weakening appears also as a result and simultaneously as a cause of the sweeping crisis of the political systems in Europe. Subsequently, social democrats have great responsibilities for the rupture in the European integration process, mainly due to their determinant role in the building of the European project as we know it (EU, Eurozone).

Social democratic parties were the political entities which were called to materialize the new social contract of the postwar settlement and to en-

sure that a Europe of prosperity, social justice, peace and economic growth become the present and the future of the European people. This colossal promise – and political strategy – started crumbling after the establishment of the neoliberal doctrine in Europe combined with the U-turn of the Social Democracy towards the so-called Third Way. The Third Way was an effort to implement the "Social Europe" vision within the neoliberal and globalized framework. This strategy resulted, in the beginning, in electoral success; however, it was also the crystallization of the social democratic shift to more centrist ideas and policies. While the social democrats of the 1970s, such as Willy Brandt, Olof Palme and Bruno Kreisky were arguing in favour of a) welfare state and full employment, b) modernisation in the sense of political and cultural liberalism and c) the pursuing of a peace agenda, the social democrats who headed during the 1990s kept only the political and cultural liberalism in their agenda, though they were represented in 12 out of 15 European governments and held the post of President of the European Commission.[1]

The above point is one of the most significant in the study of Social Democracy's decline. Social democrats essentially abandoned their electoral and political core, namely the interests of the working class. Within a world in which the multinational capital has transformed the whole of the social and economic relationships, as well as the social classes, Social Democracy insisted on its traditional perception of the labour and the working class. Meanwhile, the social democratic policies were affected by the neoliberal orthodoxies and the TINA ("there is no alternative") doctrine. Therefore, Social Democrats never concerned about the political and electoral support that the working class used to offer to them. It seems that they didn't have second thoughts about their ability to remain the hegemonic political force in Europe, thinking they can adjust themselves to the new conditions without losing the traditional social alliances they had built. However, as far as the neoliberal capitalism was expanding across more and more spheres of the social life, asking for new fields of profit-making (education, social

1 Baier, W. (2014) *The Crisis of European Social Democracy and the Radical Left*, Presentation at the Seminar "The Neoliberal Agenda and European Social Democracies" in Florence on 16 November 2014

welfare etc.), the working and the lower middle class started suffocating from the decrease in the labor costs, the collapse of the welfare state, the democratic deficit within the national states and mainly within the EU and more and more widespread precariousness. The foundations on which Social Democracy was built through the years crushed, and besides that, the social democrats themselves accepted the TINA doctrine by declaring that the wealth produced through neoliberal capitalism would trickle down.

Capitalism as an economic system and also as a system of power relations has totally changed. Social classes, social interests and social representations have been subjected to crucial and multifaceted transformations. The globalization relocated the actual field of politics and of decision-making processes. The transition from the local/national level to the European and the transnational level transformed the power relations at the expense of the working class, the minorities, the immigrants, the youth and the emerging "class" of the precarious workers. Furthermore, the establishment of neoliberalism denoted the long-lasting austerity policies.

The politics of austerity, precariousness and employability became the principal strategy in the EU after the crisis's outbreak. Many social democratic parties were in power by the time crisis started unfolding its dramatic effects on the European people. Since social democracy was for years obeying the neoliberal guidelines, the followed policy reactions to the crisis were pretty unsurprising. Looking back on the Gerhard Schröder's "Agenda 2010" we can partially understand the political decision taken by the social democratic party in Greece, PASOK, in 2010 to agree on the First Economic Adjustment Programme with the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This political decision was determinant for the future of this hegemonic political party which governed Greece for a period of 20 years.

However, it would be quite superficial and methodologically fallacious to reach the conclusion that PASOK collapsed only because of its decision to accept and implement the first 110€ billion bailout programme. Conse-

quently, the so-called "pasokification"[2] of the social democratic parties in Europe should not be analysed exclusively under the scope of the economic crisis of the last ten years and its management from the social democrats. A brief look at the genealogy of PASOK will highlight some of the key points that reveal its role in the Greek political system during the Third Hellenic Republic ("Metapolitefsi") and help us to illustrate the framework of its collapse.

PASOK was the party-protagonist of the political transition period that we could roughly presume that reached its "end" with the crisis's outbreak in Greece. It was the party that led the democratic transition in Greece and moved to a direction of overcoming the civil war's wounds of the Greek society. Standing as the formidable adversary to New Democracy, the traditional right-wing, conservative party that was linked with all the dark sides of the Greek political history until the fall of the dictatorship, PASOK managed to occupy the major part of space on the left in political, social, and cultural terms. It was clearly the hegemonic party of the Third Hellenic Republic, the party that shaped the Greek state for almost three decades and governed for twenty years. In parallel, and certainly not secondarily, it was the party that served as a model for the entire party system in Greece and it determined the kind of the relation between society and the state. PASOK was not only a party of the state[3], PASOK met all the characteristics for being a hegemonic party:[4] a) it established its structural model in the Greek party system as an example, b) it shaped the agenda of the party competition and created the framework of the political debate, c) it formulated the characteristics of the charismatic leadership, d) it promoted its view as the hegemonic one that is

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2 For concrete case studies' analyses on the social democratic parties in Europe, see the reports from the two workshops that transform! co-organised with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. The first one in November 2016 in Helsinki [https://www.transform-network.net/blog/article/analysing-european-social-democracy-the-stance-of-the-left-1/], and the second in March 2017 in Madrid [https://www.transform-network.net/blog/article/european-social-democracy-opponents-or-potential-partners/]

3 Vernardakis, Ch. (2016) *The concept of the "party" on contemporary Political Science. An epistemological swift to Antonio Gramsci* at Metaxas, A-I D. *Political Sociology (4th volume). Social representation and political participation*, (in Greek), Athens, Sideris

4 Eleftheriou C., Tassis Ch. (2013) *PASOK. The rise and the fall (?) of a hegemonic party*, (in Greek), Athens, Savalas, p.p.27-28

based on an agreement led by a collective will which unifies different social groups and finally e) even when it has not been in the government, its hegemonic position in the party system remained unaffected, since its choices have been considered suitable and taken for granted.

We could say that PASOK's history is the history of the Greek political system after the fall of the military junta and the history of the Greek state's strategy as well. Therefore, one of the most essential strategies of the Greek state, the Europeanization, became a strategy for PASOK as well and the rising contradictions between the economic goals that had to be fulfilled for Greece and interests of social groups that were the social and electoral base of PASOK contributed the most to the loss of the ideological identity of the party. As Spourdalakis and Tassis[5] pointed out "under the leadership of the modernizers, PASOK came closer to the economic orientation and strategy that are hegemonic worldwide and are presented as if 'there is no alternative'. Its coordination with the political hegemony of the time was enriched and further supported by the country's candidacy to participate in the Euro-zone [...] Turning the country's membership of the Euro-zone into the sole national dogma for the country, Simitis's government created a significant social deficit. The popular discontent generated was not enough to challenge PASOK's modernizing discourse. The party insisted that the privatization programme would be realized; promising that completing all the infrastructure projects would make the country competitive in the international division of labour, which in turn would lead to economic development [...] After 2002, with the country's membership in the Euro-zone, PASOK's popularity fell drastically..." Europeanization and the consequent submission to the mainstream economic doctrine in the EU, neoliberalism, were promoted and implemented by PASOK that tried to present these processes as a national interest. However, the social implications of these strategies and its concrete policies changed dramatically the living conditions of the social strata that PASOK used to represent and most importantly, the vision of a society of social justice, strong welfare state, redistribution, protection of the workers etc. was forever gone.

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5 Spourdalakis M., Tassis Ch. (2009) *Party Change in Greece and the Vanguard Role of PASOK*, South European Society and Politics, 11:3-4, 497-512

At the pick of Greece's "golden ages" in 2004 PASOK lost the elections from New Democracy, mostly because of its deprivation and not because of its opponent's strength. After five years of a right-wing government that had almost clearly stated that austerity is the only way for Greece to survive, because of the height of the public debt and the public expenses, and without New Democracy is able to present a positive vision for the society, PASOK, a bit renewed, after five years outside the state's control, won the elections in 2009 receiving 43.92 percent of the vote. The party gained the trust of the citizens with a program including: reduction of the economic and social disparities, fair redistribution, increase of public investment etc. George Papandreou gave such programmatic promises during the speech at the "Thessaloniki International Trade Fair", when he highlighted that "There is money, it is only that Mr. Karamanlis prefers to give it to the few and powerful." This was meant to become his vote-catching slogan.

Eight months later Greece was entering its first bailout program, and one year later Giorgos Papandreou resigns and the cabinet of Lucas Papadimos follows, as an interim three-party coalition cabinet. The electoral base of PASOK, that has been standing with the party for years, started to crumble after all these developments. In the next elections held in 2012, PASOK received the 13,18% of the votes, a historic low percentage. In the elections of January 2015, when SYRIZA came into power, PASOK reached 4.68% of the votes, becoming the weakest party in the Greek Parliament.

Generally, the party's reaction to the crisis could easily be characterised as "business as usual". In parallel, the complete loss of the party's political and ideological identity through the years led it to even cooperate officially with its greatest opponent, New Democracy. Despite some minor party antagonisms, there has been a clear attempt to achieve the widest possible consensus on the management of the crisis[6]. PASOK's fall is not only the fall of a bipolar party system. It is the fall of the Greek political system of the Third Hellenic Republic, the closure of a process that started with the democra-

6 Lyrintzis, Ch. (2011) *Greek Politics in the Era of Economic Crisis: Reassessing Causes and Effects*, GreeSE Paper No 45, Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe.

tisation of the Greek society after the dictatorship and ended up with the catastrophic consequences of Greece's participation in the European project. PASOK, as a genuine party of the state, after failed to continue serving the state strategy, it got thrown out of the game.

The New Right

Serbian Neonazis on Hold

Despite the traumatic experience of occupation in the Second World War, since the 2000s, political organizations of neo-Nazis in Serbia has flourished in various forms. But besides the justified suspicions that these groups are associated with secret services, their stronger development is endangered by a certain ideological confusion in which clerical nationalism, Slavic paganism and Western subculture are intertwined.

Tadej Kurepa

One night in April 2009 in Roma settlement in New Belgrade's 67th block, 20-30 neo-Nazis came in with two vans, armed with knives and metal rods. With chants "we will move you out" they attacked a group of children, women and men who were sitting outdoors. They ran off after about fifty men from nearby barracks organized themselves in defence of the settlement. Several policemen, who were on the watch next to the settlement did not respond and said that they "have no right to interfere". Journalists who reported from Roma settlements the following morning (as in the previous days) did not report about this event.

However, there is a reasonable doubt that these attackers were not at all neo-Nazis, but members of some of many private security companies. In other words, people working for a daily allowance. That was the time when the city council in Belgrade was dealing with the "Roma issue" as part of preparations for the 2009 Universiade and the construction of residential and business complex "Belville", which was realized by a consortium of Delta Holding and Hypo Alpe-Adria Bank.

Residents of this settlement in Block 67 were given a deadline of 15 days to leave, but the demolition team appeared already next morning around 6 am. Demolition began with a strong support from police and special forces. City authorities destroyed few things that these poor people had – all of their property remained buried in ruins, excavators were running over TV's, fridges… A woman who gave birth a few days earlier was running in panic with

a newborn in front of a bulldozer. 56 houses were destroyed and more than 45 families with a total of 126 members were left without a roof over their heads. City authorities did not provide them with the necessary accommodation beforehand. After the Roma settlement was demolished, its inhabitants, mostly refugees from Kosovo, spent several nights in the open, without warm clothes, blankets, food, and the ill ones even without medicines that were buried in ruins. The demolition was preceded by a media campaign for a better "city image" during the Universiade. Dragan Djilas, arrogant mayor of Belgrade at that time, called for equality before the law of all citizens and said: "We are not the authority that wants to move all of those people in some brutal way, but only those who threaten the development of Belgrade."

Political organization

Considering the organized brutality of state organs, the rampage of a group of 20 neo-Nazis seems somehow naive. This can be said about the event in 2016 when a group of thirty masked men armed with batons invaded Hercegovacka Street in Belgrade at the election night (very symbolic), bounded the guard and used three excavators to demolish objects in order to free up area for construction of "Belgrade Waterfront" (an urban renewal development project). These attackers stopped passerby, legitimized them and detained them, and police did not respond to citizens calls. Siniša Mali, the next arrogant mayor of Belgrade, said a few days later that "the city of Belgrade has nothing to do with this event." Soon, then Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić; said that the city government stands behind the demolition, but that they did it "with the best intention". Massive civil protests against the urban terror of "Belgrade Waterfront" followed.

If we do understand the difference between the neo-Nazis by itself and the neo-Nazis for itself, we can say that a very large number of neo-Nazis by itself is not politically organized, nor politically active. Seniors are deep in their thirties, and many of them even older, they have families and they are engaged in business or in various criminal activities. The younger ones are mostly older juveniles or younger adults, ergo 16-21 years old. They drink beer in parks and harass people who they estimate to have liberal perceptions or who just look "different". They are active for six months to two

years, and then they leave the whole thing when they find a girlfriend or boyfriend, or a job or something interesting in life happens to them.

If we are talking about neo-Nazis for themselves, namely about those who are politically organized, we can say that it is usually a matter of individuals organized into weak groups, or groups that are networked and who want to become organizations. Neo-Nazis in Serbia are largely not controlled by the state and security services, except those groups that tend to organize politically. Not because the state is trying to politically organize neo-Nazis, but because the security services interfere everywhere where there are attempts at forming political organizations.

On the other hand, nationalist organizations are mainly under the control of the state of Serbia and its security structures, or political parties that are currently in power, or Russia and its security structures. The extent of control over nationalist organizations is best seen from the drastic weakening of all street activities of nationalists since the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) came to power.

Various "experts" often raise a public alert, labelling nationalist organizations as fascists while those same organizations declare themselves as "anti-fascist". Of course, this nationalist anti-fascism is more than questionable, but people who live off public panic outbreaks about fascist danger are trying to present this threat to the public. Of course, this does not mean that neo-Nazis in Serbia are not a real and present threat.

From the first half of the 2000s, fascists in Serbia are attempting to achieve political articulation and to build the infrastructure of an organization that would at some point be registered as a legal political party. They hope that this will bring their movement to a new level and at least partly gain public legitimacy for their obscure antihumanitarian ideas.

Some projects were politically softer and some tougher, but it is possible to follow the continuity of these metamorphoses since 2005 until today. Despite their efforts to present themselves as "clerical nationalists" with arguments about the virtues of the Orthodox Monarchy or "Household

Economy", these projects are usually clearly labelled as neo-Nazi from the beginning in public and in the media. Every couple of years, one or two such projects break down, and a new one is formed in their place from the same people, under a similar name.

The first in a series of these projects was formed at the end of February and at the beginning of March 2005. The National Machine Organization was formed by several members of the older neo-Nazi organization, "Blood and Honor Serbia", who wanted this movement to become more political, along with several Nazis gathered in the Serbian section of the international racist internet forum "Stormfront". Activities of the National Machine were various campaigns of intimidation and preparation of infrastructure for the establishment of a legal neo-Nazi party in Serbia.

Still, their first public action was at the same time beginning of their end. Approximately twenty "machinists" stormed the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad during the "Fascist menace" forum organized on the occasion of November 9, International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism. This incident was filmed and the same evening most TV shows in Serbia featured stories showing people dressed in black who insulted, threatened and greeted with their right hand raised in their attempt to stop the ongoing panel. The biggest police action against neo-Nazis in the recent history of Serbia took place, in which 20 people were arrested, and a criminal complaint of racial, national and religious hatred was raised against 18 persons. At the trial, 16 people were sentenced to probation and two more were jailed for a year. Thanks to the set of more or less accidental circumstances, one of these two, Goran Davidović, known as the *Firer*, will become one of the key figures on the neo-Nazi scene.

Firers' failures

Several members of the National Machine formed the "New Serbian Program" (NSP) at the end of 2007, whose general secretary in March 2008 became a convicted neo-Nazi Goran Davidović. Soon, the National Machine's website denied that Davidović was their leader, calling for "resistance without a leader," and from that moment on, the National Machine stopped

following Davidović's activities. Davidović supported the coalition of the Democratic Party of Serbia (Vojislav Koštunica) and New Serbia (Velimir Ilić) at the elections in 2008 and went to Trieste in early 2009 to avoid going to jail. At that moment, among the fascists in Serbia, appeared speculations about the connections of Davidović with the state security structures. The new Serbian program is registered as a citizens' association in mid-2009 with Milija Ćuća as its leader. The latter found himself in the middle of "scandal" a couple of months later when he allegedly had a romance with a black woman during his vacation.

At that point, the NSP had no support or respect on the fascist scene. Davidović is arrested in Italy and extradited to Serbia in late April 2010. After coming out from jail, he's going back to Trieste, where he connected himself with Italian fascists. For some time he ceases to be publicly associated with organizations in Serbia. But, in March 2016, Davidović is back with a new organization – the "National Serbian Front" – which organizes a public rally in Belgrade on March 24, the day on which NATO bombing of Yugoslavia began. At this gathering, about 110-120 "front men" from all over Serbia, aged between 15 and 25 years old, marched with torches through the centre of Belgrade.

It should be noted that the abbreviations of the names of these organizations are always ambiguous: National Machine = NS = National Socialists, New Serbian Program = NSP = National Socialist Party, National Serbian Front = NSF = National Socialist Front and this also includes organization named Serbian Action = SA = Sturmabteilung i.e. the assault troops.

New strategies

The Serbian action was created in 2010. Parts of the National Machine especially the younger members took part in its formation. They advocated an Orthodox variant of fascism, in contrast with the older Nazis, who mainly emphasized Slavic paganism. This organization combines classic elements of Nazi ideology and parts of the program of the fascist movement Zbor led by Dimitrije Ljotić, Nazi collaborationist during the World War Two. Main

methods of increasing public visibility are graffiti and stickers on the streets, Internet site and social networks of Facebook and Youtube.

Like the National Machine, Serbian action is trying to form a broad network and politically articulate neo-Nazism. At the beginning of their work, they took over most of the contacts of the National Machine, which has for several years of its existence developed a network of activists and groups throughout Serbia, so that in 2012 or 2013, the graffiti of Serbian action could be seen in almost all cities and even in small towns and villages. In this way, the Serbian action gave the impression of a massive movement that is growing. However, in their propaganda video clips, there were rarely more than ten or fifteen people.

As far as public actions are concerned, Serbian Action has organized two charity futsal tournaments and tried to organize a panel on "communist crimes" at the occupied Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in 2014. Namely, members of the Serbian Action at the Faculty of Philosophy, representing themselves as the "Student Action" (SA), were involved in the occupation and work of the student plenums, where they tried to achieve an impact relying on a group of leftist students who flirted with nationalism. When this did not work with them, they used open threats and intimidation. The panel was not held. Students who kept the faculty occupied cancelled it, and on the day panel was supposed to be held anti-fascists from Belgrade and Novi Sad gathered in front of the faculty.

After this failure, Serbian action begins a period of stagnation and decline. A part of Belgrade's group is segregated and it formed "Autonomous Nationalists", which was later merged with Goran Davidović's "Serbian National Front".

The question of ideology

Serbian neo-Nazi scene has been tormented by various ideological dilemmas, from the opposition between "Serbian fascism" and "Orthodox nationalism" to all kinds of orientations such as race revolutionaries, national revolutionaries, conservative revolutionaries etc.

The National machine tried to resolve this a decade ago by adopting the motto "National Freedom – Social Justice – Racial Identity". National freedom and social justice are still the key values of Serbian fascists, although racial identity has been, in the meantime, lost somewhere, probably because it immediately reveals their political identity. The ideologists of the Serbian action continue to try to construct the theoretical framework of something they call "Authentic Serbian Nationalism" from various elements. It is a Serbian version of postmodern "third path" fascism in which the corporate stratified state, in this case, Orthodox monarchy, represents the third option between socialism and capitalism.

When we are talking about the immediate danger of neo-Nazis, we first think of the danger of a physical attack. For example, in 2016, a group of neo-Nazis stormed the left-wing "Social Center Oktobar" in Belgrade, smashed the inventory and beat up some people who were in there.

However, we need to recall the situation in Serbia ten years ago. When Kosovo's independence was proclaimed in 2008, demonstrations under the name "Kosovo is Serbia" (organized by the government in Belgrade) were massively attended by all football fan groups, all nationalist organizations and all neo-Nazi groups. They played a big role in the violent part of these demonstrations – the burning of the embassy of the United States and other embassies, and above all in the attempt to attack B92 television station. Members of the National Machine pulled a part of the mass with them and hundreds of people marched on TV B92 behind the banner "National Freedom – Social Justice" with Nedić's eagle in the middle of it, a symbol of National Machine.

Real danger

Already at the beginning of 2009, when the Belgrade Pride was announced for autumn of that year, a campaign of intimidation and terror began, during which hundreds of graffiti were written in Belgrade and other cities. As the date of the Pride was approaching, there were more and more cases of attacks and beatings, especially of the LGBT people. Pride 2009 was banned

several days before the scheduled date. In the fall of next year, when the first Pride was held in Serbia, there was a battle between the police and about 6000 neo-Nazis, nationalists and football hooligans which lasted for hours. It is perfectly clear that neo-Nazis, clerical fascists and other right-wingers could not organize this action on their own. They were coordinated and in other ways helped by the secret services (both military and civilian), as well as part of the then opposition, and now ruling parties, and certain church elements. Police units and public institutions were attacked, and there were shootings at headquarters of the then ruling political parties. There were new attempts to attack the embassies and certain media that were perceived as those who supported the Pride. We see, therefore, that these groups were used by larger players that wanted to take down the government.

There is no national bourgeoisie in Serbia which would support the development of the massive independent fascist movement. However, we can expect that the comprador bourgeoisie, which is firmly on the neoliberal line, will reach for the fascists as a reserve means of terror in the context of the deepening economic or political crisis. But even in this case, it is more likely that the government will use fascists by itself such as "Communal Police", which already now functions in practice as a private police of the ruling party, or various private security companies who can easily be operated with on a "free market".

In parallel with the deepening of the crisis, we can expect the re-strengthening of the fascist movement which will find support in the most reactionary elements of the political elite, security structures, large capital and parts of the church. Structurally, the basic purpose of such movements is the pacification of social turmoil and the suppression of the revolutionary left and workers' organizations. That is the reason why precisely these social forces need to be most alert and most sensitive to the growth of fascist groups and organizations. And that is why their response has to be strong and resolute.

Network of Black International in Serbia

For a long time, Serbia enjoys a good reputation among right-wing extremists in Western Europe. British racists, German Islamophobes, Italian fascists, French identitarians and Nazis from all over the world have turned Serbia into their Mecca in recent years. Support to the development of the domestic Nazi scene that's coming from the West is not conditioned only by the fantasy about Serbia as a kind of bastion in a struggle against Islam. It's also the consequence of the fact that domestic institutions in Serbia usually gives warm welcome to the extremist organizations from abroad

Miloš Perović

Better informed experts are familiar with the fascination that heterogeneous far-right organizations all around Europe have for Serbs and Serbia. Even though Serbs, like other Slavs, were considered as part of the inferior race during the original historical manifestation of fascism. Nowadays admiration of Serbia among European fascists is direct proof that fascist ideology takes new forms and develops over time. The primary reason for the new status of Serbs in neo-fascist circles is found in the recent war history of Serbia. In Yugoslavia's disintegration, the Greater Serbian nationalist project has, amongst other things, being directed against the Muslims (Bosniaks and Albanians). This is a sufficient reason for new European extremist right – based on Islamophobia and theirs simplified mythologized projections – for the idealization of the Serbian people.

Another reason for this idealization is the successful Serbian resistance to modernization and Europeanization, above all through a strong resistance to the European Union and the so-called liberal values on which it is formally based. Most frequent manifestations of this resistance, such as the attack on the US Embassy on the occasion of the formal declaration of Kosovo's independence or the long-standing violent resistance to the Belgrade Pride, further raised the reputation of Serbia in the fascist circles of Europe. And

thirdly, because Serbia, like Bulgaria and Greece, occupies a crucial geopolitical point of Europe, close to the border with Asia. This is the direction from which, according to fascist propaganda interpretation, the biggest threat to the European future and stability is coming – migrants. According to this conception, Serbs have the role of border guards, guardians of Christian Europe from the Asian invasion. All of the above reasons, alongside favourable stance of local authorities and the public towards European fascists declarative opposition to Kosovo's independence, have crucially influenced intensification of activities of the so-called "black international" in Serbia over the past decade or so.

European Nazis, Serbian mainstream

In this short article, it is impossible to look at all the examples of the activities of the European extreme right in Serbia in recent years, but we will try to look at the most recent and important ones. The last example of this practice was the "Europe of Free Nations" forum held at a hotel revealingly called "88 Rooms". At this event, organized by the National Serbian Front (NSF), Serbian Action (SA) and the book cafe "Carostavnik", in addition to the domestic extremists as Marko Dimitrijević from the Serbian Action and Zoran Buljugić, appeared the representatives of the German Nazi party NPD – Torsten Heise and Udo Voigt, who is also a member of the NPD in the European Parliament and a member of the Alliance for Peace and Freedom (APF), which brings together various fascist parties in this European Union body.

Heise was not in Belgrade for the first time because he also participated year before in the forum that time organized by "Zbor", an organization that is considered the successor of the collaborative fascist movement led by Dimitrije Ljotić from the Second World War. To which extent are opinions of this German Nazi actually part of the political mainstream in Serbia, proves the fact that the interview with him was published in Kurir, one of the most popular political tabloids in Serbia. There is no doubt that Heise has strengthened contacts with Serbian fascists over the last few years, and that the resources that NPD receives as a member of the Alliance for Peace and Freedom in the EU Parliament have certainly helped him.

"Border Guards"

Another Udo Voigt's colleague from the Alliance for Peace and Freedom has been particularly active in Serbia and Bulgaria since the current refugee wave. It is Nick Griffin, a British fascist veteran that has crossed the road from the National Front's infantry in the 1970s, to the leader and creator of the British National Party's (BNP) greatest electoral success at the beginning of the new millennium (from which he was later kicked out because of financial malversations and factionalism) to the European Parliament MP as the representative of the British Union (BU). Last year, along with unavoidable Buljugić, he spoke at the anti-immigrant panel of NSF in Belgrade. However, much more interesting are other activities of Nick Grifin and his Scottish colleague James Dobson. News portals Balkan Insight and Krik gave detailed reports on this. Namely, these two British fascists supplied light military equipment (drones, uniforms, tactical gear) to Serb nationalists in the north of Kosovo in preparation for the alleged "Muslim extremist attack".

It is also known that Griffin and Dobson supplied Bulgarian fascist paramilitaries that are patroling Bulgarian-Turkish border by capturing migrants and often subjecting them to sadistic torture. Besides that, Kosovo is a popular location for activities of Nazi "humanitarians", from Italian Casa Pound, through French Identitarians, to German Nazis gathered in the European Front of Solidarity. The leader of the last mentioned group is Mike Miller, a renowned neo-Nazi from Dresden and one of the main organizers of the German movement. Miller is a regular participant of Nazi demonstrations across Germany and was also one of the speakers on the summer demonstrations of hardcore Nazis in the Spandau district of Berlin. The "humanitarian" work in the Serbian enclaves of Kosovo aims to achieve a positive perception of such groups in the Serbian public space, as well as to change the common view of fascist groups in their own societies.

Nazis in institutions

However, the cooperation of European fascists with their Serbian fellows is not limited only to the street fascists from the sphere of non-parliamentary

politics. “Black international” has succeeded in gaining access to the cultural institutions such as Matica Srpska in Novi Sad. Namely, two seminars were organized in cooperation between the Matica Srpska and ultraconservative politician Mišo Đurković’s Institute for European Politics, attended by representatives of “moderate” German Nazism. The first guest was Götz Kubitschek, one of the leading ideologues of the German Identitarians and a frequent speaker at the meetings of the anti-immigrant Pegida movement, while other was Mark Jongen, an official of anti-immigrant, far-right party Alternative for Germany (AFD). This party won 13% of the votes at the last elections and became the third largest political force in the country.

Proof that this is not a coincidence but a result of the worldviews of the current leadership of the oldest Serbian cultural institution was the response of President Dragan Stanić on the statements and protests of numerous non-governmental organizations and anti-fascist groups in Novi Sad. Specifically, Stanić rejected the request of the Alliance of Anti-Fascists of Vojvodina to hold a lecture titled “Neo-nazism in Vojvodina at the beginning of the 21st century” in Matica after the departure of German extremists. He stated that “this organization did not prove credibility, objectivity and scientific foundations in the analysis of modern ideological and political phenomena.”

Silent support

In the next few days, the current president of Matica had led the debates on this question on the pages of daily newspaper Danas, where he presented the enviable level of cynicism. Allegedly, he was advocating pluralism of political attitudes and opinions and defending the right of AfD and Pegida spokespersons as right-wingers, not Nazis, to present their views within the institution he manages while simultaneously withholding the same right from anti-fascists. To add insult to injury, he continued with the accusation of the critics of the ideological direction in which Matica Srpska is heading, that they are doing the dirty job for “strong power centres”, saying it from the position of the most powerful and most influential cultural institution in Novi Sad, which enjoys state patronage. Of course, any state reaction to the politics of the current leadership of Matica is missing, which can be interpreted as a silent support.

The aforementioned examples of activities of the so-called "black international" in Serbia are only the most striking and most important of its activities in the last two years. The depth of Serbian extreme right-wing connections with its European fellows is impossible to cover in the form of this article. Especially in view of the fact that the very strong links between Serbian and Russian Fascists and nationalists – on which a whole book could be written – are not mentioned. But what has been said is enough to realize that the international neo-fascist movement finds a very fertile ground in Serbia for various aspects of its actions. Particularly worrying is the willingness of individual institutions to open their doors to them.

Is there extreme right in Romania?

While extreme right all around Europe achieves unprecedented electoral successes, Romania seems immune to such political developments. In the last few years, none of the extreme right parties made a significant breakthrough in parliamentary politics. But that doesn't mean that ideology of extreme right is not influential in this country. On the contrary, racist, xenophobic and homophobic ideas are well represented in the policies of mainstream political parties

Florin Poenaru

Much has been made of the success of extreme right parties in various countries across the EU in the last few years. The concern is genuine since extremist forces today enjoy unprecedented popular support. In Romania, the opposite was the case: the establishment and the media praised the country for its lack of extreme right parties. Such parties did not even run, let alone win something.

But this celebratory mood should not blind us to the fact that the extreme right is well represented in Romania as well. One should not conflate the absence of organized extreme right parties with the absence of the extreme right as such. A more pervasive phenomenon is, in fact, taking place: mainstream parties have engulfed the language and ideology of the extreme right. Far from being absent from Romanian politics, extreme right views and language are at its core.

Object of hate

The major difference between western extreme right and the eastern one is the object of hate they have. In the western case, it is predominantly the figure of the migrant that organizes the system of fear on which extremism flourishes, whereas in the east it is mainly the figure of the Roma. All the nationalistic, xenophobic and racist sentiments are directed towards it. This has been the main feature of Romanian politicians for at least a de-

cade, if not more. For example, the ex-president Traian Băsescu has made a series of violent remarks against women, the Roma and the poor while he openly praised the positive legacy of Marshal Antonescu, the World War II Romanian leader and a staunch ally of Hitler, known for authorizing the deportation and killing of Jews and Roma. There was no difference between the president's views from those usually associated with the extreme right. Similarly, a series of Romanian politicians, most prominently two foreign affairs ministers, have suggested the deportation and incarceration of Roma people. Mayors across the country took their advice literally in some cases, by expelling the Roma from city centres or by building concrete walls around their segregated communities. While, indeed, there are no vigilante groups tormenting the Roma as in neighbouring Hungary, in Romania the local politicians of all stripes are taking up this task, with the explicit support of the majority of the population.

The current government in power, even though nominally a Social Democrat one, has its share of extreme right manifestations as well. A few years ago, one of its prime leaders denied the Holocaust. The former foreign affairs minister (there must be something with this job) openly slurred homosexuality in a conference, while endorsing the values of the traditional Romanian family. In fact, the Social-Democrats are now explicitly moving towards a nationalist agenda, after previously trying to hide their neoliberalism behind the old arguments of the Third Way. This was evident in 2014 in the campaign for the European parliament: "Proud to be Romanian" was their slogan, which is usually associated with conservative politics.

This is not a new strategy either. Starting with the Communist Party prior to 1989, and then with every major party afterwards, the ruling political class was always able to mobilize nationalism, racism and extremism to its favour whenever political circumstances demanded it. Building the figure of the menacing Other, constructing the nation as a fortress under siege, mobilizing against external enemies were always part and parcel of mainstream politics from the 19th century nation-building process, not the strategies of some peculiar right-wing extremists. They were an integral part of the development of Romanian politics that accompanied the definition of a nation-state in which blood, land and religion were salient components.

Therefore, in Romania, the problem is not the mysterious absence of the extreme right, but the difficulty to disentangle such components from mainstream politics. They are almost synonymous and quintessential.

The challenge of mainstream politicians is to preserve the monopoly on this discourse and use it only to their own benefits. And this might confuse observers since indeed such a strategy reflects a more encompassing political protectionism. Romania has one of the most restricting laws in the EU regarding the formation of political parties. Not only the number of signatures required to form a political organization is huge (and in addition, signatures must be collected proportionally from the entire country's territory), but also the deposit is beyond the reach of people. A few years ago, a former prime minister, with notoriety and vast political and economic connections, tried to form his own party. He was not able to gather the required amount of signatures and therefore took the easier solution: he bought an already existing one. Regular citizens cannot do the same (form or simply buy a party) and therefore many remain disenfranchised and un-represented by the existing political class.

Post-fascism

But this also keeps at bay and out of the recognized spectrum of political parties the extreme right. Without the realistic possibility of forming a party, the extreme right groups and manifestations remain at the level of civic initiatives and NGOs, dealing like many other NGOs with specific issues: fight against LGBT rights, support the rehabilitation of aforementioned Marshall Antonescu and so on. Their presence is stronger online and takes different forms: from secular nationalist football hooligans, to fascist Christian nostalgics of the interwar period, to eco-friendly, conservative anti-capitalists.

The vast array of such views and the number of groups existing in the shadow of organized politics became visible during the protests against Roșia Montană goldmine exploitation in the autumn of 2013. United by the common enemy of the foreign corporation, this struggle offered a platform for previously underground groups to come into the open and make their

case. It is also true that, in some cases, their presence was magnified by the government in order to discredit the protests. The criticism of the extreme right, especially the one coming from the left, was also instrumentalized against the protests themselves. Thus, the mainstream parties try to control not only the ideology of the extreme right but also the groups embracing it, mobilizing them in order to regain control over political situations.

Therefore, we need a different perspective to look at these issues, especially in Romania where many people were so quick to point out the absence of the extreme right as a sign of deep-seated European values and democracy. One such useful perspective is G.M Tamas' notion of post-fascism: a matrix of various politics, policies, practices and ideologies that have nothing to do with the historical legacy of Nazism as such, but the one that is oriented against the Enlightenment idea of universal citizenship. Basically, post-fascism is a political operation of excluding from citizenship, and indeed, from the ranks of human beings, certain categories of people deemed undesirable, dangerous, lowly, filthy, expendable. This can be the migrant, the Roma, the poor, the homosexual, the woman, the Jew and whomever at one point the majority decides to outcast as a scapegoat.

Who needs the extreme-right in such a context? Post-fascism is the tyranny of the mainstream politics itself, its fundamental core. The current debates about the extreme right in Europe (necessary as they are) should not blind us however to the advancement of post-fascism as politics proper. From this perspective, Romania is a case in point.

Bulgaria's Refugee-Hunters

When in 2016 appeared first voices about vigilant groups that hunt unregistered migrants on the Bulgarian-Turkish border, we didn't have to wait too long before they became heroes of European extreme right. But acceptance of this phenomenon in domestic and international context also points to some of the contradictions that enabled their establishment in the first place.

Stanislav Dodov

On the 8th of June, 2016 the ZDF broadcasted a news report about a paramilitary group, the self-proclaimed Bulgarian Military Union "Vasil Levski". The piece was shot during a regular "migrant-hunting" operation of the unit in a forest near the border with Turkey. According to the report, by the middle of June, there were about 800 individuals taking part in similar groups in Bulgaria.

Vigilante groups have three things in common: they push back migrants across the Turkish border, engage in enforcing unlawful "citizen's arrests", and make calls for a self-organized, militant response to events, perceived as threats to the Bulgarian national identity – from the "migrant invasion", to the corrupt oligarchic parties in power – towards a new national Revival.

Their fascist rhetoric depicts the Nation as one at risk because of "foreign hordes" and international conspiracies, with the only way of saving it being to retake the state through a collective militant response from the people. For example, the Home page of the Bulgarian Military Union "Vasil Levski" – one of the most prominent organizations performing citizen's arrests of migrants – overflows with this type of rhetoric in every single piece of writing.

Organized right-wing groups quickly gained worldwide notoriety – along with the aforementioned ZDF piece, Vice came up with a large article on June 16th, showing the day-to-day life of one of the "fathers" of the move-

ment, Dinko Valev, the ATV-riding migrant hunter. Global Voices spread an article on the growth of these groups, and international support is started to pile up with the call of Tatjana Festerling, ex-Pegida frontwoman, to all males in Europe to support the Bulgarian vigilantes in protecting Fortress Europe.

But how did these groups grow in numbers and gain publicity so fast? What are the actual factors, or rather, situations and relations – in Bulgaria, at least – that allowed for the allegedly rapid scaling-up of this movement in 2016? The first public appearance of a vigilante group came on February 18th of that year. In it, in the midst of DIY footage, portraying scenes of migrants lying on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs Dinko Valev, a soon-to-be Bulgarian superhero, is narrating his first encounter with migrants and his patriotic instinct to tie them and hand them over to the Border Police, fulfilling his civic duty. At the time, there were some vaguely negative reactions to this act, but in the mainstream media, the critical analyses and condemnations by popular journalists, activists and politicians came much later – in April, after another case similar gang activities appeared.

Polina Paunova, a well-known liberal journalist, attributes the flimsy state response and the eventual condemnation of such acts of "citizen's arrests", to the denunciation by Western media, and not to the intrinsic values held by a "genuine" democratic state. Because, as Paunova puts it, while we're still not talking about the importance of holding values such as respect for diversity, which – in contrast to Europe – are absent in Bulgaria, even the senses of both politicians and journalists are not just dulled – they are yet to be developed.

Such a transitional-evolutionary approach is widely shared among the right-wing liberal intelligentsia. For example, journalist Samuil Petkanov claims that "[w]e accept all who behave like parapithecus", referring to the prefix para in paramilitary, "to whom Evolution is yet to happen. The Evolution, which brings the sense of human dignity and the impulse to safeguard it, instead of letting them turn us into monkeys".

Troubled "mentality"

Other publicists reinforce the evolutionary underdevelopment of the Bulgarian nation-state, which allegedly allows for such anti-European practices, by stressing reminiscences of the past. Conservative intellectual Theodora Dimova claims that "it is [t]rue that lawlessness and impunity reign in our country and that [c]itizens have the right to protect their country, their property and life. The citizens shouldn't be passive in the face of law violations", says Dimova, implicitly referring to cases of "illegal" border-crossing. "We're always divided", the argument continues. "Half of the Bulgarians heroicise Dinko, the other half repudiate him", she adds, implying that national unity is needed, in one form or another. But most of all, Dimova's article suggests that there are national features, which were deeply engraved by the Communist regime, which hinder the desired evolution. As an example, she gives Atanas Stoykov-Premyanata, a communist and a partisan from the 1920s, who operated in the same area in the Strandja Mountain as Dinko Valev. Stoykov was praised as a heroic fighter by the Bulgarian Communist Party. Dimova argues that this kind of mentality still dominates society in 2016.

In an article for Deutsche Welle Bulgaria, Haralan Alexandrov, a famous cultural anthropologist, holds that the exhibitionist-voyeur culture is not a product of the "Bulgarian stupidity" only, referring to the act of arresting and humiliating people while capturing everything on camera. Still, "[w]hile elsewhere one simulates prestige, status, knowledge and wealth, here we simulate ordinary savagery, and that is just because in the minds of some people it is prestigious to be cruel, primitive and rough to the weaker. The scandalous selfies just outline and zoom in on some local cultural phenomena, that otherwise remain invisible".

To summarize, a large and influential portion of the mainstream discourse criticized the activities of vigilante groups by putting the blame on constructs such as culture, national mentality, communist history, the never-ending Transitional period, and our retarded evolution.

Good citizens' practice

There are, occasionally, subjects claiming explicitly that institutions don't do their job of criminalizing and punishing these groups. The most vocal proponent of this argument is the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) – they were the first to react to the video of Dinko and his appeals for joining his self-organized "migrant-hunting" squads. Yet there have been no publicly visible accusations of state incompetence going beyond the idea of inadequacy – a binary logic according to which it is adequate to prosecute the groups, while the opposite is inadequate. Similar to Paunova's perspective, here we have an idea that "it's all about a functional illiteracy regarding how the state works". It implies that the state can only function in a certain (liberal) way while any other way represents an aberration. These views seem to miss a few crucial points and developments from 2016, all of which show the state's response to the tendency of the rise of the vigilante groups.

In March 2016, Rumyana Bachvarova, Minister of the Interior, admitted that for the time being (nearly a month) the police authorities were not taking any measures against the cases of "citizen's arrests" of migrants despite the already widely popular video with Dinko Valev and Bulgarian Helsinki Committee's protests. She classifies his act as an exception – it's not common practice. On April 6th, Antonio Angelov, director of the "Border Police" Directorate, officially awarded a symbolic prize to a third vigilante group – Organization for the protection of Bulgarian citizens, and on the next day announced on national television that the police was ready and willing to cooperate with such groups.

In an interview published on April 15th, Radoslav Sotirov, director of the regional "Border Police" department in Elhovo, stated multiple times that these patrols have no right to detain. Yet he suggested that "volunteers" should keep on with their activities, but that they must move like citizens, and not like hunters. He also provided the concrete motives for the cooperation between the police and the vigilantes, as well as specific instructions as to how the cooperation was supposed to take place. In April, "Alpha Research", one of the leading opinion-polling agencies in the country, undertook a survey, asking Do you approve of the citizen's arrests of refugees?,

further implying that such a question is, in fact, legitimate. The results show that 29.4% of respondents answered Yes, and 25.4% answered Mostly yes.

Russian connection

At a conference of the VMRO (one of the leading extreme-right parties in Bulgaria, a partner in the governing coalition), held on the 17th of April, Georgi Parvanov, ex-President of the republic, ex-leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, and current leader of Alternative for Bulgarian Revival, called for legal changes that would allow the "[c]reation of a civil guard with clear responsibilities related to supporting the handling of the migrant flood on the Bulgaria-Turkey border". At the same time, he invited VMRO to pick presidential candidate jointly with his own party.

Parvanov is not alone. A member of the Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (heir to the Union of the Democratic Forces, the first ruling right-wing party after the fall of the socialist regime in 1989) said from the tribune of the National Assembly that "[i]f there are people who, as citizens wish to fulfil their constitutional duty of securing the border, then let the state take care of the organization and patronage of this process, instead of allowing self-initiative". Two months later, the already existing discourse suggesting that these groups were supported by Russia in terms of training and resources, gained public significance.

This was stated at first by Iliyan Vasilev, ex-ambassador to Russia (who knows of two groups, but thousands of people involved, contrary to ZDF's information published three weeks later), and then reinforced by Boyko Stankushev, head of the press-centre of the Minister of the Interior. He claimed that the Warrior's Union "Vasil Levski" and the BNM (Bulgarian National Movement) "Shipka" – the two main paramilitary organizations included in vigilante practices – received solid support from Russian agents in the country, and that they represented an attempt "to persuade [the public] that the state cannot fulfil its duties of securing the border. […] The plot involves shaking the existing constitutional order by means of populist propaganda, thereby causing the state to reorient, so as to become dependent

on the current rulers of Moscow". He continues that "[t]o me, these people are not patriots. What merit and service did they achieve?"

Road to power

In the end, the mainstream liberal logic of "state adequacy" is hardly applicable. The messages sent by the state were inconsistent: from impartiality, through interpretations of issues such as legality and civic duty, to the open legitimization of paramilitary groups and, after all, attempts for legislative changes. Further, it seems that state authorities, their liberal critics and the vigilante groups share a common narrative: "The state is dysfunctional, so the people need to unite and react". Recently, the discourse of "Russia is supporting the vigilantes to destabilize the state" (be it true or false) has been serving a good purpose in blurring the difference between nationalists and liberals, who shares a common ground in their refutation of Russia as a supposed heir to communist ideas.

It seems that the power of vigilant groups outside media commentaries is not impressive at all. Yet journalism that presents opinions other than those of the vigilantes themselves is all but absent. There were a few reports about people living near the border who were more often sympathetic to the migrants and did not approve of Dinko's actions. Against these faint voices, there is Alpha Research's nationwide and widely shared survey. But the biggest problem is legitimacy that this "direct citizens actions" receives from politicians and media commentaries.

Considering that the current ruling coalition comprises the Patriotic Front (which unites two different extreme-right parties) and a centrist right-wing majority, it should be stressed that mainstream liberal commentaries mediated the extreme rights' way to power, doing all of its dirty job.

New faces of fascism in Slovenia

Slovenia is often presented as a success story among post-Yugoslav republics. Perceived as one of the most successful transition economies, Slovenia also has a status of a country immune to political extremism. Nevertheless, the refugee crisis in 2015., although without demographic consequences to this country, significantly changed dominant political rhetoric. Slogans for a long time restricted to tiny (and aggressive) Nazi groups, became much more acceptable to the wider population. At the same time, responses to this challenges often prove themselves inadequate.

Tjaša Pureber

Simultaneous mass gatherings all over the country, including huge numbers of people protesting in small cities and villages, the high rate of distrust in institutional politics, dispersed mobilization through social media. In the winter of 2012/2013, those were some of the characteristics of mass protests, called the uprising, that were in many ways open, anti-authoritarian and even anti-capitalist, and have contributed to the fall of the right-wing prime minister Janez Janša and his government. In the winter of 2016, in the midst of what the authorities dubbed "The migrant crisis", those were the characteristics of the wave of protest that almost turned into the biggest right-wing uprising Slovenia has ever seen and was highly supported by the same political party that had once fallen due to public pressure.

At the same time as the image of fascism is changing from organized small neo-Nazi groups into more mainstream patriotic streams, we are also seeing the radicalization into increased militancy among old and new organized fascists. What has changed and what could be the potential answers to the new form of fascism in Slovenia and beyond?

Background story

Organized politics of hate, coming both from institutional political parties and organized neo-Nazi groups is nothing new in Slovenia and has been an

integral part of the transition from socialism to capitalism. In terms of organized neo-Nazi groups, Slovenia has seen their rise since the 1990s, with their politics ranging from closed concert activities to open public attacks on anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist and anti-racist people, organizations and structures. Many of these attacks went unnoticed or were characterized as street violence, though some gained more attention, such as the neo-Nazi skinhead attacks in 2001 against a person of colour, and in 2009 against the LGBT bar and a journalist in Ljubljana.

Despite ever-present attempts (since the late 1980s) from the right wing spectrum of institutional politics to create a patriotic relation towards the newly born Slovenian state and its symbols, patriotism was not a clear public choice for most people. Slowly that began to change through mass sport, numerous border related conflicts with Croatia in the 2000s and the slow penetration of such topics in the public sphere, in schools and even kindergartens. That slowly contributed to the rise of several patriotic organizations, that are less radical in their public image: from actions they take on the streets, to their public appearance and clothing and especially in terms of the positions they hold. Consequently, they are recruiting a much wider population, especially among young people. Their politics of hate is similar to those we are used to hearing from neo-Nazi groups, but it has begun to take a much more publicly acceptable form, as such organizations have slowly become the legitimate partners in public discourse, running for official positions, and participating in mainstream media.

In 2009 patriotic groups tried to intensify anti-Muslim hatred and attempted to organize a protest against the building of the first mosque in Ljubljana, but were stopped by the wide Anti-fascist front activities, that included a huge number of different actors, struggling for the open and tolerant city. At the same time, we have been witnessing self-organized hate from below, most notably in 2006, when villagers of Ambrus (and then some other places as well) organized into a mob, who chased the Roma family Strojan into the woods and out of their village with the proper pogrom.

Despite the fact that journalists have widely reported on the connections between the biggest right-wing political parties and members of organized

neo-Nazi groups, it is important not to draw conclusions based on conspiracy theories. Organized hate on the streets of Slovenia is mostly working autonomously, but it is definitely being encouraged by the general spirit of the time in institutional political environment, where right-wing politicians have consistently for decades been building their politics on the agenda against LGBTQ community (preventing adoptions, marriages etc.), Roma, migrants, etc.

Closing Slovenia for migrants

In the fall of 2015, when officials from the European Union declared a state of emergency in the Balkans due to the increased migration flow, Slovenia became the central figure in narrating the closing of the so-called Balkan route. As soon as Hungary closed down the borders, Slovenia became the main transit point, and also the second country in Europe to close down its southern border with barbed wire, encouraging its neighbours in former Yugoslavia to shut down the transport of migrants as well. This was orchestrated by a Slovenian political party, which won the election campaigning on the agenda of rule of law, human rights and centrist politics. As soon as the so-called crisis started, they adopted the discourse of security and fear, disciplining mostly the domestic population through the creation of an outside enemy in the image of the Other, a migrant. They have actively contributed to the situation that opened up a space for more open hate rhetoric and actions from both, right-wing political parties and organized fascist and patriotic groups, to the more or less self-organized citizens, radicalized in anti-migrant discourse.

When in January and February 2016 the Slovenian government started to search for potential centres for refugees in smaller cities around the country, the above mentioned groups started to mobilize on social networks. Protests started to follow one after another in small towns that never even saw protest activities before. The 300 people protested in Kidričevo, 200 in Vrhnika, 300 in Lenart, 3.000 in Šenčur (total population 3.121), and all that happened within less than three weeks. Despite the presence of established politicians from right-wing parties, paid and organized transport for protesters (we were able to see the insignia and faces from organized patriotic and

fascist groups there too), the majority of these people were self-organized.

Around the same period we have seen increased militant presence of fascist groups on the streets, several attacks on the autonomous squat Sokolski dom in Novo Mesto, including the one with Molotov cocktail, where people were gathering food and clothes for refugees, graffiti in Ljubljana calling for rape of leftist women (because they are supporting migrants), and later on (in July 2016), organized mass neo-Nazi attack on the Autonomous Factory Rog, one of the few places in Ljubljana, where migrants are allowed to spend their time freely and organize some activities (though the attack itself was highly connected with attempted eviction of Rog as well).

Resisting politics of hate

As we have already seen in 2009, the momentum for right-wing public activities in 2016 was once again stopped by anti-fascist protests. Both, the Anti-racist Front and right-wingers, organized protests in the same street in front of the asylum centre at the end of February 2016 in Ljubljana. The antifascist protest drew more people to the streets, from activists to cultural workers and migrants themselves, whereas the right-wing protest included various groups, from "concerned" elderly citizens to neo-Nazis, mobilized through social media, with patriotic anti-migrant rhetoric.

In the aftermath, on the one hand, we have seen public support to stop the rise of fascist politics in Slovenia; on the other hand, we have seen parliamentarians once again discussing left-wing violence and extremism. The response of the institutional left was then to accept this game of two opposing extremes and instead of talking about open and inclusive society, they participated in a discussion about extremism in Slovenia, trying to expose right-wing extremism as more dangerous.

Strengthening anti-extremism laws is a common agenda in Slovenia and Europe, often resulting in stricter laws that give police more jurisdiction in monitoring social movements from below, regularly resulting in terrorist cases against anarchist and rarely, if ever, in any kind of actions against right-wing extremists against whom they are supposed to be aimed. Howev-

er, the fact remains that 2015 has marked the biggest rise of the militant activities of fascist groups. Just like in the rest of Europe, where anti-migrant and anti-Muslim sentiments are reviving the right-wing scene in institutional politics and on the streets, we are seeing the same thing happening in Slovenia as well. We are no longer dealing with (merely) classical neo-Nazi groups nor right-wing politicians.

Community of privileged

In the past answers from the Left to this kind of problems were simple – conquering of the state power. Then it would be used for the criminalization of fascist activities. For a while, this was perhaps a semi-successful tactic for those who hold privileges (light skin, male gender, official documents), whereas people pushed to the edges of our societies have continued to be targeted by fascist violence. Today, in the aftermath of the economic crisis, the politics of hate is spreading through a new spectrum of society, where young mothers, our neighbours, schoolmates and teachers are marching along neo-Nazis under the patriotic flags and slogans about the need to protect our "authentic" culture. The genie is out of the bottle and institutional politics have no answer to this.

Just like in the rest of Europe, the new face of fascism is starting to create a situation, in which Slovenia is transforming itself in a gated community of privilege. Also, there is a widespread using of the language of ownership to justify this kind of situation. The Slovenian government first claimed their territory – building a wire fence to protect the borders. Their counterparts in right-wing political parties and patriotic groups introduced the idea of Slovenian social relations being endangered by the Other, by migrants allegedly wanting to take their jobs, women, culture, values. They are putting themselves to positions of authority, that is determining reality for everyone in Slovenia. Hence, the main struggle against such authoritarian politics of hate, that is not coming from a focal point of few neo-Nazi groups or even right-wing political parties, can only be countered by dispersed anti-authoritarian struggle from below.

The question for such movements, who have not yet proven to be entirely

successful, however, is how to demonstrate what it means to fight the rise of fascism in society? How to develop tactics and open political space in which people, who are not prone to the politics of hate, yet lack the co-speakers to step up against it, can find each other? This is, even more, pressing in a situation, where left-wing movement's tactics, as we have seen in Slovenia, can easily be re-appropriated by the self-organizing fascist mobs as well. The task, therefore, is also a struggle for ideas, principles, and concrete political content of anti-authoritarian open politics that would mobilize against growing hate in our societies.

We Are Living in Dangerous Times

In last couple of years, across European continent, we are witnessing steady rise of radical right. One of the most important examples of this phenomenon is Austria, where radical right became part of governing coalition after elections held in 2017. There are many signals that this situation is not something temporarily, but we are faced with fundamental political shift that will have lasting effects. One of the most important consequences of this process is normalisation of radical right whose presence in governments of EU member states stopped being cause for worry for European establishment

Walter Baier

We can no longer interpret the gains made by right-wing radical parties in Europe as sporadic phenomena restricted to a few individual countries. They represent a Europe-wide phenomenon. In the last fifteen years the proportion of seats held by right-wing radical parties in the European Parliament has more than doubled.

There are three new developments to observe in the run-up to the next European Parliament elections. First, in the 2017/2018 national elections in EU Member States radical right-wing parties increased their absolute number of votes from 10.3 to 22.14 million – more than twofold.[1] Second, great efforts have been undertaken by right-wing inter-party diplomacy to unite the majority of their MEPs, up to now divided among three groups in European Parliament: European Conservatives and Reformists, Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy and Europe of Nations and Freedom. And third, in view of the proceedings against Poland and Hungary initiated for violation of the EU treaties, it is not impossible that the MEPs of the ruling parties of respective countries, Law and Justice and Fidesz, will be eager to join such a group.

1 These figures do not include the elections in Sweden that were held on 9 September. Here the Sweden Democrats were able to increase their vote share from 13% to 18%.

Austrian example

Some aspects of the Austrian "case" can be considered paradigmatic for the radical right's road to power. The formation of the joint ÖVP-FPÖ government represents a caesura in the post-war history of Austria. Nevertheless we should note that two-thirds of the ÖVP's (Austrian People's Party) and FPÖ's (Freedom Party of Austria) gains in the 15 October 2017 elections came from two right-wing populist parties that no longer ran candidates. Voter migration from the opposition to the parties that formed the new rightist government amounts to no more than 3.5%.

Therefore, the generally established rightward shift has been mainly caused by this relatively small electoral shift. Nevertheless, the effect is indeed a resounding one. The SPÖ (Social Democratic Party of Austria) suddenly no longer occupied the post of head of government, which it had done for 41 of the 47 years since Bruno Kreisky's electoral victory in 1970. The FPÖ has entered government again. The Greens, having been represented in Parliament for 31 years, have lost their seats. And the ÖVP and FPÖ, with 53% of votes, have 62% of seats in Parliament, which brings them close to the two-thirds majority needed to enact constitutional changes. This could be the beginning of a reconstruction of the whole political system of Austria's Second Republic, which the Austrian contemporary historian Gerhard Botz fittingly calls an "illiberal-neoliberal turning point".[2]

In political science populism is defined as a 'thin-centred ideology'. The FPÖ, however, is a highly ideologised party. What is populist is its political style. In contrast to the year 2000, when under Jörg Haider it entered government with the ÖVP for the first time, it has moved further to the right. According to research published by the Dokumentatationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstands (Archive of the Austrian Resistance), 20 of the FPÖ's 51 members of parliament belong to German-nationalist fraternities.[3]

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2 Gerhard Botz, 'Es gibt eine neoliberale-illiberale Wende', *Der Standard*, 20 October 2017., http://derstandard.at/2000066398076/Es-gibt-eine-illiberal-neoliberale-Wende

3 Kurier.at (25 October 2017), "So national wird der neue Nationalrat" https://kurier.at/politik/inland/fpoe-und-die-burschenschaften-so-national-wird-der-neue-nationalrat/294.000.877

The FPÖ is frequently identified with the *national camp* that existed in the interwar years. The concept is paradoxical. The nation to which the "national" camp in Austria feels committed is not its own but the German nation. In the party programme established in 2011 Austrians whose mother tongue is German are addressed as members of a "German cultural and ethnic community".[4] The German-national outlook links the FPÖ to the subculture of the *German fraternities*, traditionalist clubs, and new-right periodicals, which constitute the sounding board of extreme right and neo-Nazi agitation in the country and a recruiting ground for their intellectual elites.[5]

In continuity with periods of Nazism and de-Nazification, German nationalism today still represents a sector of Austria's elites and, moreover, today it is the reflection of a growing influence of German capital in the country's economy and culture. 27.4% of university professors teaching in Austria come from Germany. At the University of Vienna they make up nearly 40%.[6] "Internationalisation among university staff means 'Germanisation' in very many cases", Universitätenkonferenz (Uniko) researchers recently noted.

A precarious equilibrium

If the government's ideological programme is disproportionately determined by the FPÖ, then the neoliberal orthodoxy of the programme's chapter on economic and financial policy has the handwriting of the ÖVP on it. The editorial writer of the pro-corporate, conservative daily *Die Presse* is correct when he writes that the government programme corresponds to "what can be expected of a right-of-centre government: less state in entrepreneurial competition, more state in public security. The turquoise-blue government

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4 Parteiprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei (FPÖ), Enacted at the federal party congress on 18 June 2011 in Graz, https://www.fpoe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/www.fpoe.at/dokumente/2015/2011_graz_parteiprogramm_web.pdf

5 Anton Pelinka, "Die FPÖ im internationalen Vergleich", c*onflict & communication online*, 1/1 2002, www.cco.regener-online.de/2002_1/pdf_2002_1/pelinka.pdf

6 Bernadette Bayrhammer, "Jeder vierte Professor ist Deutscher", *Die Presse*, 14 February 2017, http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/universitaet/5169827/Jeder-vierte-Professor-ist-Deutscher

is not out of step here with the mainstream of European governments led by conservatives."[7] This means a clear division of labour in the regime: "more state" is managed by the FPÖ, "less state" by the ÖVP.

In terms of social structure, the FPÖ's electorate is like that of other comparable right-wing parties in Europe: it wins majorities among workers and lower-level employees, those with obligatory primary and vocational education, and people in former industrial regions outside urban agglomerations. This part of the population, which has experienced the developments of recent years as "overwhelmingly negative" and conditions in the country as "rather unjust",[8] can only look forward to a further worsening of their quality of life from the deregulation and cuts announced in the government programme.

The government is hoping that economic growth will allow it to administer its planned interventions into the social security systems in gradual doses so that its effects will not immediately be felt and will not simultaneously hit all those affected.

And what about the left?

The traditional workers' party, the SPÖ, lost 11% of its votes to the FPÖ. Despite this the SPÖ retained its overall vote share because it could compensate these votes by a gain of former Green votes.[9] But this is precisely the problem: To the extent that the SPÖ has shown little capacity to ward off the right, it has all the more effectively damaged the left. The electoral alliance of the KPÖ (Communist Party of Austria) and the Young Greens (the former youth organisation of the Green Party) also fell victim to this effect. It had no success in a political climate mainly determined by worry over the

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7 Oliver Pink, "Dieser Weg wird kein linker sein" (editorial), *Die Presse*, 20 December 2017, https://diepresse.com/home/meinung/kommentare/leitartikel/5341956/Leitartikel_Dieser-Weg-wird-kein-linker-sein?from=suche.intern.portal

8 SORA, *Wahlanalyse Nationalratswahl* 2017, http://strategieanalysen.at/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ISA-SORA-Wahlanalyse-NRW2017-2.pdf

9 SORA, *Nationalratswahl 2017: Wählerstromanalyse*, http://www.sora.at/themen/wahlverhalten/wahlanalysen/waehlerstromanalysen/nrw17.html

looming right-wing coalition.

In the European context situation is partially different. The "radical left", that is, the parties to the left of the social democrats and Greens, increased their support in the last electoral cycle from 9.4 to 10.7 million.[10] However it must be noted that at the same time the vote share of radical right parties have, as already said, more than doubled to reach more than 22 million. Are we therefore seeing a repeat of the inter-war crisis scenario of an asymmetric polarisation clearly tilted towards the right?

The radical right will have one of the strongest groups in the European Parliament. The neoliberal elites appear to be ignoring this evolution and are carrying on with the same policy that has brought European integration to its current crisis. In the face of this situation a division and fragmentation of the left would be politically irresponsible. We must all work towards the greatest possible political unity.

10 These figures also without counting Sweden.

Biographies

Walter Baier, an economist in Vienna, was National Chairman of the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) from 1994 to 2006. He was an editor of the Austrian weekly *Volksstimme* and from 2007 has been Coordinator of the network *transform! europe*.

Stanislav Dodov studies Philosophy and the mysterious ways of educational policy. He's also a member of dVERSIA.net, an activist magazine concerned with radical politics.

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