
FAR-RIGHT MURDER OF HUNGARIAN POLICE OFFICER: PRO-RUSSIAN RADICALIZATION IN THE CEE

The recent murder of a Hungarian police officer by a far-right paramilitary leader in Hungary shed light on the continuing radicalization and destabilization of the region by Russia.

Flash Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **The case is just one example of Kremlin-backed radicalization among far-right or far-left groups in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic or Poland.**
- **Violent, ideological radicalization is done via personal contacts with movements or propaganda pages specifically created to influence domestic populations.**
- **Individual governments should take special measures to counter such national security threats.**

MURDER OF A POLICE OFFICER IN HUNGARY

- On 26 October 2016, a police officer was tragically murdered in a small village, Bőny in Western Hungary where the far-right, paramilitary Hungarian National Front 1989 (Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal 1989 or MNA in Hungarian) has its headquarters and training camp.
- The perpetrator was the 76-years-old István Gyórkös, leader of the neo-Nazi MNA, who opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle at two officers of the National Bureau of Investigation ("Nemzeti Nyomozó Iroda," the Hungarian FBI) raiding his house in search for illegal arms and ammunition. One officer was instantly hit by the bullet spree and died on the spot. István Gyórkös was also shot in the abdomen, but a quick emergency operation could save his life.
- Investigative journalists revealed that the neo-Nazi organization's radicalization was supported by Russian diplomats and intelligence as early as 2012.¹ The movement founded by Gyórkös in 1989 separated into two parts in 2012 based on the political relationship with and views on Russia. Gyórkös and his followers aligned themselves with Alexander Dugin's Eurasianist ideology, as well as Vladimir Putin's imperial geopolitics in the fight against the Western and the Judeo-Bolshevist world-order.² The new MNA 1989's pro-Russian stance materialized itself in the creation of the leading Hungarian pro-Russian propaganda site, Bridgehead (Hídfő). Bridgehead was later handed over to a professional media team comprised probably of Russian intelligence,³ as evidenced by the "Tank scandal," the high-end political briefings produced daily, as well as the transfer of the page's domain to a Russian server.⁴ Investigative journalists after last week's shooting also shed light on the

¹ András Dezső - Szabolcs Panyi: Russian diplomats exercised with Hungarian cop killer's far-right gang, index.hu, http://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/28/russian_diplomats_exercised_with_hungarian_cop_killer_s_far-right_gang/

² Political Capital Institute: Putyin üzenőfüzete – A Hidfo.net és a kommunistabarát szélsőjobboldal, PCblog, <https://pcblog.atlatszo.hu/2014/08/28/putyin-uzenofuzete-a-hidfo-net-es-a-kommunistabar-at-szelsojobboldal/>

³ Juhász-Győri-Krekó-Dezső: "I am Eurasian" The Kremlin connections of the Hungarian far-right, Political Capital Institute - SDI, Budapest, 2015, http://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC_SDI_Boll_study_IamEurasian.pdf

⁴ In August 2014, the website published a mysterious piece accusing the Hungarian government of illegally selling T-72 tanks to Ukraine based on actual photos taken of a train trailer loaded with tanks at Nyíregyháza station. The Russian Foreign Ministry quickly

participation of Russian diplomats, in fact Russian military intelligence (GRU) members, in previous MNA airsoft drills or trainings – allegations confirmed by anonymous Hungarian intelligence sources.

- The tragic event and the Russian involvement prompted a subsequent hearing in the Hungarian parliament's National Security Committee to be held on 7 November 2016 to assess the Hungarian authorities' failure during the investigation and the Russian intelligence services' role in the movement's activities.⁵ Still, the case highlights a consistent pattern of Kremlin-backed far-right or far-left radicalization in Hungary and the wider region.

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN THE HUNGARIAN FAR-RIGHT SUBCULTURE

- The MNA 1989 is in fact only a small and quite isolated fraction of the pro-Russian far-right political scenery in Hungary. The centre of the subculture is the far-right Jobbik party, whose former Foreign Policy Cabinet head MEP Béla Kovács is currently under investigation for espionage against the EU for Russia.⁶
- Jobbik partly funds and it is closely associated with the revisionist Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (HVIM), the paramilitary white supremacist Army of Outlaws (Betyársereg), and another paramilitary organization, the Wolves (Farkasok).
- The pro-Kremlin stance of Jobbik and its satellite organizations is obvious. In 2015, the HVIM staged a pro-separatist demonstration at the Heroes' Square in Budapest to thank Alexander Zakharchenko, leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic for releasing ethnic Hungarian POWs of the Ukrainian Army.⁷ The Army of Outlaws praised the Russian anti-terrorism military intervention in Syria along with the battle-readiness of Russian compatriots on its homepage.⁸ One of the leaders of the Wolves and member of the Army of Outlaws, and a veteran of the Yugoslav Wars Zsolt Dér postponed joining the fights on behalf of the Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine because he is currently serving as an assistant to the Vice Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly Tamás Sneider (a former neo-Nazi), who is delegated by Jobbik.⁹

replied to the article through an official communique demanding explanation from the Hungarian government. While the story turned out to be false, the intimate knowledge of the Hungarian army's domestic transportation schedule, as well as the readiness of the Russian diplomacy to react to an almost unknown fringe media site raises the suspicion of a Russian intelligence action.

⁵ Vizsgálja a nemzetbiztonsági bizottság, mi köze az orosz titkosszolgálatnak a bonyi rendőrgyilkossághoz, 444.hu, <http://444.hu/2016/10/31/vizsgalja-a-nemzetbiztonsagi-bizottsag-mi-koze-az-orosz-titkosszolgalatnak-a-bonyi-rendorgyilkossaghoz>

⁶ Béla Kovács was among the „independent European observers” invited by the Kremlin to undersign the Crimean secession referendum in March, 2014. <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.hu/2014/03/pro-russian-extremists-observe.html>; Jobbik MEP Béla Kovács, accused of spying for Russia previously, to lose immunity, hungarytoday.hu, <http://hungarytoday.hu/news/jobbik-mep-bela-kovacs-accused-spying-previously-lose-immunity-79900>

⁷ "KÖSZÖNJÜK, ZAHARCSENKO!," Alfahír, http://alfahir.hu/koszonjuk_zaharcsenko

⁸ Putyin elkezdte! – Elindult az orosz terrorellenes offenzíva Szíriában, betyarsereg.hu, <http://betyarsereg.hu/putyin-elkezdte-elindult-az-orosz-terrorellenes-offenziva-sziriaban/>; Az orosz hazafiak hadra foghatósága egyszerűen lenyűgöző (+videó), betyarsereg.hu, <http://betyarsereg.hu/az-orosz-hazafiak-hadra-foghatosaga-egyszeruen-lenyugozo-video/>

⁹ Dér Zsolt és az igazság – válaszok a bulvár média hazugságaira, betyarsereg.hu, <http://szenkoronaradio.com/blog/2016/03/31/der-zsolt-es-az-igazsag-valaszok-a-bulvar-media-hazugsagaira/>

RUSSIAN DESTABILIZATION IN THE CEE

- Previous country-case studies and analyses of the Political Capital Institute have pointed out similar far-right or far-left radicalization tendencies in other countries as well.¹⁰
 - There are several well documented cases of Slovak far-right paramilitary figures fighting in Eastern Ukraine or promoting the separatists' case in Slovakia.¹¹ One of them is Martin Keprta, member of the Slovak Conscripts (Slovenskí Branci - SB) whose organization received training from ex-Spetsnaz instructors earlier.
 - Polish counter-intelligence is currently investigating Mateusz Piskorski, the leader of the Polish leftist Change (Zmiana) party, as well as former activists of the far-right Polish Congress of the New Right (KNP) on charges of pro-Russian espionage.¹² The latter had taken part in so-called "active measures" on the territory of Ukraine in 2014 to provoke an ethnic conflict against the Polish minority living in Western Ukraine.
 - The latest move to destabilise the region occurred in the Czech Republic, where the "Donetsk People's Republic" opened a "consulate" in September 2016 with the help of Czech far-right actors.¹³

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The Kremlin is highly effective in infiltrating fringe parties and paramilitary organizations in the CEE which are easy to buy up or control.¹⁴ These pro-Russian organizations provide direct political or indirect propaganda legitimization of the Kremlin and its geopolitical goals.
- Fringe groups pose not only a political threat but a national security one as well, as they tend to commit violent acts facilitated by Russian secret services, Spetsnaz or by separatists in Eastern Ukraine.
- Russian influence over fringe groups in the CEE cannot be viewed as isolated cases of domestic politics, but as a deliberate and pivotal effort of the Kremlin to destabilize the CEE, the EU and the Transatlantic Community.
- Lack of proper governmental reaction to these threats is due to political and economic dependence on the Kremlin. While the Czech and Polish governments took some steps to counter pro-Russian radicalization, there is no such effort on the part of Hungary.

¹⁰ Péter Krekó – Lóránt Győri: Russia and the European Far Left, The Institute for Statecraft, <http://www.statecraft.org.uk/research/russia-and-european-far-left>; Lóránt Győri – Péter Krekó: Shades of Red Putinism: Pro-Russian far-left parties in Europe, RC Views, The Riga Conference 2016, <https://www.rigaconference.lv/rc-views/33/shades-of-red-putinism-pro-russian-far-left-parties-in-europe>

¹¹ Krekó-Győri-Milo-Marusiak-Széky-Lencsés: MARCHING TOWARDS EURASIA The Kremlin connections of the Slovak far-right, Political Capital Institute-SDI, Budapest, 2015, http://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC_Study_Russian_Influence_Slovakia_ENG.pdf

¹² Political Capital Institute: Putyin ötödik hadoszlopa: újabb kémek után kutat a lengyel elhárítás, PCblog, <https://pcblog.atlatszo.hu/2016/06/15/putyin-otodik-hadoszlopa-ujabb-kemek-utan-kutat-a-lengyel-elharitas/>

¹³ European Values Think-Tank: Consulate of the Donetsk People's Republic in the Czech Republic has the same legitimacy as a potential consulate of ISIS, europeanvalues.net, <http://www.europeanvalues.net/dpr/>

¹⁴ Prime examples of funding include Hungarian Jobbik, Polish Zmiana, Slovak ĽSNS led by Marian Kotleba.

- However, if proper measures aimed at deradicalization, policing and intelligence reconnaissance is missing, it will inevitably result in aggravated cross-border threats to national security.

For further information please see:

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