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# **Continuing Escalation of Anti-Minority Incidents in Vojvodina**

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HUNGARIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION (HHRF) is an international human rights organization which, for the past 28 years, has monitored the human rights condition of the 3 million Hungarians who live as minorities in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia-Montenegro, Ukraine Croatia and Slovenia. In accordance with its purpose, HHRF regularly collects, translates, analyses and disseminates reliable reports on the human rights condition of these communities. With offices in North America and Europe, the Foundation serves as a clearinghouse of information for Western governments, human rights organizations, the media and the public.

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## **I. Introduction**

The harassment and physical assault of non-ethnic Serbs including children, threats against ethnic Hungarian and pro-autonomy leaders, desecration of cemeteries, vandalism of property and the proliferation of racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic graffiti are becoming near daily occurrences in the province of Vojvodina. 300,000 strong, and comprising 14 percent of the population, ethnic Hungarians are the largest national minority in this multi-ethnic region.

As HHRF's expanded—by no means exhaustive—chronological report indicates, radicalization of Serbian society, especially within the multi-ethnic province of Vojvodina, has been on the rise for the past 1 ½ years, and intensified since Fall 2003. The underlying motivation seems to be misdirected venting of the majority's frustrations against minorities (innocent bystanders) over the “loss of Kosovo.” The components of this increasing tendency of intolerance consist of, among others:

1. Failure by the authorities to acknowledge and curb anti-minority sentiments and acts
2. Overt provocations by Serbian radical elements within the echelons of power, and
3. Ongoing disparity between the native population and hundreds of thousands of resettled ethnic Serbian refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

### **Official Responses to the Incidents**

The overwhelming response by Serbian authorities to reports of minority-related violence, desecration, vandalism and incitement to hatred is evasion, minimization and low-balling of the number of incidents. Different government officials have given varying figures regarding the number of anti-minority incidents ranging from a total of three to 300 in 2004 alone. This fact alone is a telling indicator of the reluctance to even assess the extent and scope of the situation.

Only after U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos' July 9, 2004 letter to Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica in which he asked the “*government [to] take immediate action to curb those Serbian elements in Vojvodina which are targeting Hungarian and other minorities as scapegoats,*” did the prime minister invite ethnic Hungarian leaders to meet with him in Belgrade. Following all-day discussions on July 13, Kostunica agreed to create two committees, one to investigate anti-minority incidents and another to establish and evaluate projects to prevent further incidents. To date, neither has been done. At that time, the prime minister also said he would shortly visit towns in Vojvodina with larger Hungarian populations as well as the editorial offices of the only Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó*.

After two postponements, on September 8, Kostunica did in fact visit the province. The prime minister's pronouncements reflected previously voiced official attitudes which include (1) admonishing minorities that the situation will grow worse if they continue to “go abroad” with their plight; (2) side-stepping the issues by concentrating on linguistic subtleties such as the word “atrocious” not existing in the Serbian language; and (3) attributing unspecified “political motivations” to ethnic Hungarian leaders for voicing concern over burgeoning violence.

### **The Police Force: Part of the Problem**

The situation is compounded by the police authorities' reactions to incidents of assault. The Hungarian community's sense of despair is heightened by the fact that in many instances the very forces which should be providing protection and recourse instead (1) are slow to come to the scene of attacks, (2) minimize the severity of the incidents, (3) dismiss the ethnic motivations of attacks by attributing them to merely drunken behavior, (4) fail to rigorously pursue and conclude investigations and (5) are not unknown to be the instigators of

unprovoked assault themselves. A shocking example is the case of the mayor of Padé/Padej, ethnic Hungarian **László Komáromi**, who reported that on August 20, 2004 the local police chief of Csóka/Čoka, **Ivan Mijandzic**, twice slapped him without cause while on official business in the police station.

The total number of incidents reported in HHRF's expanded chronology is merely 70 and includes all follow-up information we've be able to obtain on police investigations and their degree of effectiveness; merely a fraction of the cases have reached the court level. It is interesting to note that the authorities have been much more effective in their investigations when the victims were ethnic Serbs. A case in point is one **Zoran Petrovic**, who was brutally beaten up by five ethnic Hungarians in Temerin and suffered very severe injuries. In this case, the police found the assailants immediately, and on September 23, 2004 newspapers announced that charges have been filed. Another case was the murder of a police officer in the 80 percent Hungarian-inhabited village of Csantavér/Cantavir. All state media reported the case, insinuating that the murderer was surely an ethnic Hungarian. The police soon found the shooter, who turned out to be Serbian; however, no Serbian-language newspaper has yet to report this development.

Plans by the national government to establish a National Minority Council include the review of police effectiveness and the creation of a multi-ethnic police force, two timely and much-needed measures.

In sum, in order to curb and prevent future incidents, at minimum, a task force needs to be created with national and provincial components to (1) **urgently and thoroughly access the situation**, (2) **gather data from diverse sources**, (3) **swiftly investigate and prosecute**, and (4) **formulate and implement** a multi-tiered, broad-based short and long-term strategy for the cessation of anti-minority hostilities and the prevention of future incidents.

## **II. Harassment and Physical Assaults against Non-Serb Minorities; Threats against Ethnic Hungarian and Pro-Autonomy Leaders**

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The intimidation, harassment and physical assault of ethnic Hungarian children by ethnic Serbian children—often times for speaking Hungarian—is occurring with alarming frequency. For example, the incidents of January 31 and November 13, 2003 pointedly show that these acts are ethnically motivated. In the first, a bus driver shouted and cursed at young students for speaking in Hungarian and chastised their teacher for not teaching them “proper culture and language.” In the latter, four students who were pummeling another stopped after it turned out the victim's last name was Serbian and that they would not “hurt one of their own people.”

The number of incidents is underreported both by the victims and the authorities who tend to minimize their severity and ethnic motivation, and are not unknown to blame the victims for “provoking” the attacks. In the case of the former, a general atmosphere of fear is pervasive among minorities. As the mother of one of one of the victim's said:

*"hate-speech is common in the fights that take place between Serbian and Hungarian teenagers both in the school and on the street...ethnic Hungarian children are afraid to inform their parents or other adults because they fear further violence. Parents feel desperate because they believe that Serbian authorities will not intervene."* [see report of March 12, 2004]

When a police captain slaps an ethnic Hungarian mayor in a police station, without provocation, as happened on August 20 of this year, this fear is well-founded. Police are generally slow to come to the scene and according to HHRF's information, have successfully followed up in only 13 cases we have reported.

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**NEW September 28, 2004**

An ethnic Hungarian high school student, **E.N.**, was beaten for smiling at a Serbian fellow student on the bus. The ethnic Hungarian boy from Bácsfeketehegy/Feketic, and the Serbian boy from Szikics/Lovcenac, were both traveling on the 6.30 a.m. bus of the Topolatrans Bus Company to the agricultural high school in Bácsstopolya/Backa Topola when the incident happened. According to eyewitnesses and the victim, the Serbian boy said: *"No Hungarian has ever smiled at me and none will ever do!"* and then proceeded to punch E.N. Several other boys started to punch E.N. as well and when two of his friends tried to help him, all were beaten. E.N. suffered several bruises and injuries. The case was reported to the local self-government as well as the police. **Károly Pál**, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Bácsstopolya municipality told reporters at the Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* that the police have already investigated the incident, identified the aggressors and filed charges against them. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), September 29, 2004](#)]

**NEW September 27 and 28, 2004**

A fight broke out among several students of the technical high school in Temerin on September 28. The previous day an ethnic Hungarian student, **L. N.**, had found the wallet of an ethnic Serbian girl from the school and returned it to her. The girl later accused L.N. of stealing 200 Dinars (approx. \$3) from the wallet. Ten students from the girl's class came over during recess and started demanding the missing money. L.N. and his friends showed them their empty pockets as a sign of good will. The Serb students left, but after 10 minutes came back, saying that L.N. should apologize. The boy refused to do so, as he did not have a reason. A Serbian boy hit L.N. and a small fight started between the two boys. During the fight **Cs. M.**, another ethnic Hungarian student, also got hit. When the break was over, all involved returned to their respective classrooms and went home at the end of the school day.

The next day, on September 28, the taunting continued. **G. K.** and **A. P.** gave a first-hand account of the encounter to **Béla Csorba**, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP) from Temerin, who transcribed the events for HHRF. This is how **G. K.** remembers the case:

*"During recess, about 30 boys gathered in the schoolyard, some of them with baseball bats, taunting us. When they left school at the end of the day, L.N. and another boy, stuck with two teachers and the group did not follow them. Instead, the group came after us, as we headed towards the park. There were only eight of us, so we started to run. I stumbled and fell; they overwhelmed me and started to kick me while I was on the ground. They kept asking me: "What happened to the wallet?", "Where is the money?", "What are you [Hungarians] doing here? This is our land!" My wallet fell out; they searched it, and after taking a few less important papers, gave it back. Adults walking by came closer to help, so our attackers fled. However, one of them was too slow, I caught him, and hit him a couple of times because I felt very desperate and hurt by what had just happened to me. His friends saw this and came back, but by that time, my friends had arrived with branches from the nearby trees. Someone tried to call the police station, but no one picked up the phone. We walked to the police station with a friend of mine, **E. P.**, and I called my mother on my cellular."*

At the police station, the boys recounted the incident to three officers and stated that they felt there was an ethnic motivation to the attack. One of the police officer's dismissed the ethnic taunts recounted by the victim with *"You must have provoked them."* The officers also

expressed doubts that 30 people would have attacked one person. **Lajos Miskolci**, senior police officer, asked G.K. to show his injuries and after seeing them retorted “*This is nothing.*” The mother of G.K., who was present at the hearing, told them: “*I didn't expect this kind of attitude from the police,*” and took her son to the local medical center for evaluation. [First-Hand Account Taken in Temerin for HHRF by **Béla Csorba**, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP) on September 28, 2004]

### ***August 23, 2004***

The ethnic Hungarian mayor of Szabadka/Subotica, **Géza Kucsera**, is the latest victim of threatening telephone calls. On Monday, he received a message on his official answering machine from an unidentified man summoning him to the headquarters of the extremist Serbian Radical Party to “pick up a package from The Hague” and sing a belligerent fascist Chetnik song. It should be noted that Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj, now on trial for war crimes in The Hague, considers himself the new Chetnik Vojvod. The Mayor exclaimed indignation at the affront to his character and said he will file a police complaint. [***Magyar Szó*** (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 24, 2004]

### ***Updated August 22, 2004***

At 3:30 a.m., a group of ethnic Serbian youth assaulted two ethnic Hungarian teenagers in front of the Hotel Patria, near the Croatian Consulate, in downtown Szabadka/Subotica. The two boys—19-year old **Denisz Sötét** and another wishing to remain anonymous—were getting off a bus in the company of others, at a bus stop. Shortly thereafter, a dark gray Mitsubishi pulled up and five young men jumped out. They told the two teenagers that they were looking for someone called “Zsolt.” When they realized that neither of the two boys was the sought individual, one of them shouted: “*It doesn't matter, these are also Hungarians, so let's beat them!*” The gang started to brutally beat and kick the two boys while others around them fled. Denisz Sötét was dragged to the front garden of the Hotel Patria, and kicked severely while lying on the ground. In the meantime, the guard standing at the nearby Croatian Consulate remained idle, and did the dozen of guests celebrating a wedding in the hotel and privy to the incident, recounted Sötét’s father later to reporters. When the assailants left, Sötét and his friend crawled to the guard patrolling the Hungarian Consulate a few hundred meters from the scene who called the police immediately. Soon, six to eight policemen arrived at the scene. However, instead of trying to catch the perpetrators who were getting into the car which was still at the bus stop, the police officers kept questioning the ethnic Hungarian teenagers about the incident. Sötét’s father later reported to the Hungarian language daily ***Magyar Szó*** that after arriving to the scene, he overheard one of the policemen say: “*Enough of this nonsense that Serbs are beating Hungarians. I do not want to deal with this. Anyway, one or two smacks are not such a big deal.*” Sötét suffered serious bruises; head, face and abdominal injuries. Police escorted him to the hospital, but in the absence of an acting surgeon, Sötét was told to go home and come back if his pains continued. In a September 8 interview with ***Magyar Szó***, Szabadka's police chief, **Borivoj Mucalj**, stated that after having investigated 90 Mitsubishis, police found the gray car belonging to the perpetrators. He also said that the police identified the assailants: two minors. No further details have been released. [***Magyar Szó*** (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 23, September 18 and 19, 2004; ***Vajdaság MA—Délvidék Hírportál*** (www.vajdasagma.info), August 23, 2004; ***Népszabadság*** (Budapest), August 24, 2004; ***Magyar Hírlap*** (Budapest), August 24, 2004]

**August 20, 2004**

In Csóka/Čoka, local police chief **Ivan Mijandzic** physically assaulted the mayor of Padé/Padej, ethnic Hungarian **László Komáromi**, at the police station. The victim said he had no explanation as to why the police officer slapped him twice on his face. He told the Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* that the incident occurred between 9:15-9:30 a.m. when he went to the police station to procure certificates necessary for running in the upcoming local elections in September. Komáromi is a member of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina and is on the party list for the post of local councilman in Padé. While he was waiting for the document certifying that he is a resident of Padé, a police officer told him that the police chief wanted him in his office. When Komáromi entered the room, the police chief started to arrogantly question him about why he wanted to damage inter-ethnic relations and who he thought he was. Komáromi replied that he is a taxpaying citizen of the country and is on official business at the police station. When the police chief threatened him again, the mayor said: “*Sir, whatever your intention are, act according to the law and police regulations.*” **Mijandzic** responded by slapping Komáromi twice on the face, yelled at him to get out, and ultimately shoved him out of his office. After the incident, Komáromi went to the Zenta/Senta hospital where he was examined. The medical report states that the victim



suffered a highly visible suffusion of blood and the incident has affected his nervous system as well. Five days after the incident, the Csóka police station still refused to comment on the event. At the inquiry of the Hungarian daily, *Népszabadság*, police said that an official statement could be obtained at the central police station in Nagyikinda/Kikinda. However, the head of the Nagyikinda police station was said to be out of the office when sought. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 24, 2004; *Népszabadság* (Budapest) August 25, 2004]

**July 30, 2004**

Around 3:00 a.m. a fight broke out in Csantavér/Cantavir between four young men: **Siniša Ćulum** and **Duško Maljković** of Újfény/Novi Žednik, and **Róbert Dudás** and **Kornél Nagy** of Óbecse/Becej. Police were able to intervene quickly, thereby preventing serious injury. The initiators, Ćulum and Maljković, were charged with a misdemeanor for “disturbing the peace.” The conflict was probably ethnically-based since the victims reported the assailants shouting: “*What are you doing here? Go home! We’re going to kill you!*” upon hearing the two speaking in Hungarian. “*I have never participated in a fight, not to mention an inter-ethnic one. I have had a Serbian girlfriend now for two years. I have many Serbian friends; none of them have ever treated me this way,*” said Dudás. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 3, 2004]

**July 30, 2004**

Similar to the incident in Törökkanizsa/Novi Knezevac on May 30, violence erupted in Szabadka/Subotica at a 17 year-old boy’s private birthday party. After four uninvited ethnic Serbian boys bullied their way onto the premises around 11 p.m., and objected the Hungarian music being played, approximately 30 members of well-known neighborhood gang returned. The gang broke down the door, proceeded to destroy bottles, hitting people over the head with them, and damage music equipment and other property inside the rented space. At least five of

the party participants had to be hospitalized. The police arrived late after the mother of one of the boys called them to the scene. Asking to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals, she recounted the events to reporters: *My older son [aged 29] managed to dial us up on his cellular before he passed out. We called the police station. We were told that they had no available cars at the time and we should dial another number. We called the other number, told them about the situation, and hurried to the spot. I saw both my sons covered with blood. The streets were covered with blood.*”

*“By the time we arrived, only three of the attackers remained at the scene,” continued the mother. “I started shouting to them; the police told me to behave. One policeman insinuated that there had been alcohol consumption and no supervision. I told him, in vain, that there were five adults present at the party. I find it unbelievable that soon we will have to hire private security detail in order to guard Hungarian private events,” concluded the visibly shaken mother. [Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 2, 2004]*

### **July 3, 2004**

At 11:00 p.m., four 17-18 year-old ethnic Serbian perpetrators (C.S. born 1987, A.V. born 1987, P.K. and Velibor Vulikic born 1984) attacked four 16- to 17-year-old ethnic Hungarians (T.A. born 1988, P.S. born 1989, A.E. and B.E. born 1988) in the so-called „Fighter’s line-up” district of Szabadka/Subotica, an area inhabited mainly by Serbian refugees from Kosovo and Bosnia. One of the victims said that the Serbians attacked without provocation, shouting „Kecske, kecske” (goat, goat), an abbreviated version of a popular anti-Hungarian slogan. T.A. was hospitalized for internal bleeding, facial fractures and kidney bruises. The incident happened at 69-71 Joó Lajos Street in a parking lot. Police conducted a swift investigation and detained all perpetrators on July 7. The official police press release stated that P.K. and P.S., minors, are well-known to the authorities as delinquents. [Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 7 and 8, 2004]

### **June 14, 2004**



Seventeen year-old ethnic Hungarian student **Krisztián Börcsök** said unknown assailants attacked him on an empty street of Keresztúr/Ruski Krstur at 1:00 p.m. The victim was riding his bicycle home from school in the nearby village of Törökkanizsa/Novi Knezevac when he was attacked and beaten in the face several times. There were no witnesses. Börcsök had to be hospitalized for his injuries. A police investigation is currently underway. [Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 16, 2004]

The Újvidék/Novi Sad Ministry of Interior office issued a press release regarding three perpetrators who had attacked two high school students from Óbecse/Becej on June 6, 2004 at 1:00 a.m. [see report of June 6]. The aggressors— **Dragan Radivojevic** (born 1985), **R.P.** (born 1986) and **M.S.** (born 1989)—were minors under the influence of alcohol. One of their victims was repeatedly beaten on the face and body. The press release, however, failed to mention that the attack had ethnic overtones. [Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 17, 2004]

**June 6, 2004**

Unknown perpetrators attacked two ethnic Hungarian minors, **Szabolcs Pap** (born 1987) and **Kazimir Korolija** (born 1987) on Petar Drapsin Street in Óbecse/Becej shortly after midnight. The victims were riding home on their bicycles when they passed a gang of young men standing near the road. Suddenly, someone from the group started running after the bikers to inquire about the time. Since only one of them had a watch, they started to speak in Hungarian. Szabolcs Pap gave a first-hand account of what happened next:

*“By then the boy who had asked about the time reached my side and kicked the rear wheel of my bicycle. First I lost my balance and then fell off the bike and hit a pile of bricks at the edge of the road. I was lying on the ground when the boy started kicking me and immediately three of his companions came over to beat me. They loudly cursed my mother and told me to get away from this place, I have no business being here. Since my friend, who stopped his bicycle a bit further, saw that I was overwhelmed, he started shouting for help in both Serbian and Hungarian. Upon hearing the noise, a man and a woman came out from a nearby house and shouted at the crowd beating me. Only then did they begin to loosen their grip around me, so my friend could get to me and help me escape. We started running toward a bridge, leaving our bicycles behind. Only when we turned around and saw that no one was following us did we stop, and I called my father on my cellular phone.”*

Pap added that by the following day he was covered with bruises and injuries all over his body. The physician **László Kovács**, who performed a medical examination of the boy two days later, reported the incident to the police. At first, the parents were reluctant to file charges against the assailants for fear of reprisal. However, with the aid of the local branch of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz), they went to the police. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 10 and 11, 2004]

**May 30, 2004**

In Törökkanizsa/Novi Knezevac, a private party organized by young ethnic Hungarians in a rented house turned into a massive street fight after a large group of Serbian youth arrived at the scene. Earlier that evening, two Serbian young men had been told that the party was a private affair. According to one party attendee, they muttered “*We’ll be back!*” as they left the house. After the partygoers called the police, five cars arrived carrying 15-20 attackers. The uninvited group started to beat a small group who had gone out for some fresh air. The new attackers claimed that they had come to protect their friends, who had been assaulted earlier. The fight ended only with the intervention of police officers. Six ethnic Hungarian and two Serbian teenagers were seriously injured and had to be hospitalized. The Knezevac branch of the police has begun an investigation. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 1 and 3, 2004]



### **May 27, 2004**

In Szabadka/Subotica, six to seven young Serbian men attacked an ethnic Hungarian teenager during the daytime in the downtown area. The boy was walking home from school when the attackers approached him and grabbed his bag, kicking his arms and back. The perpetrators fled when the boy's father noticed the incident. The attack was reported to the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz) which led VMSz President **József Kasza** and Chairman of the Executive Committee **Árpád Papp** to visit the chief of police. In an interview to the only Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó*, police chief **Borivoj Mucalj** claimed that after having investigated the incident, the police found no signs of ethnic motivation. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 29-30 and June 2, 2004; *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 24-25, 2004]

### **May 22, 2004**

In Szabadka/Subotica, a group of eight Serbian young people attacked three ethnic Hungarian teenagers, aged 18 and 19, on the main square at 1:30 a.m. The victims were engaged in a conversation in Hungarian at a popular local bar when a group of Serbian individuals arrived. As the Hungarian teenagers grew apprehensive and left the bar, the Serbian group followed them to the town hall street corner. One of the victims said that they were outnumbered and could not protect themselves. *"I did not hit back, because there were so many of them and I feared that I would receive even more [blows]. I held up my arms to cover my face. I had no idea why they started beating us and why they stopped. I think that they were drunk. Maybe they had taken drugs and wanted to show off. I am certain, however, that they beat us because we are Hungarians. They heard us speak in Hungarian in front of the café. We were not in their way; we tried to avoid them, but they followed us,"* said the freshman university student who suffered bruises and a black eye.

A few days prior to this incident, Serbia's only Hungarian-language daily, *Magyar Szó*, reported that a larger group of Serbian youth provoked ethnic Hungarian high school students in Subotica's downtown area near the theater. The victims were beaten with baseball bats. In both cases, the ethnic Hungarian teenagers were reluctant to tell their stories to the police for fear of reprisal. In a subsequent interview with *Magyar Szó*, police chief **Borivoj Mucalj** said that no one filed a report about this case at the time, only a few days later, and by then it was impossible to find the parties engaged in the fight. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 22, 2004; *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 24-25, 2004]

### **May 3, 2004**

In Újvidék/Novi Sad, a group of young people harassed members of the Adventist religious community participating in an evening service, and assaulted two of its ministers who were trying to defend believers from further attack. One of the ministers was an ethnic Hungarian. The assailants were quickly taken into police custody. A Ministry for Religious Affairs statement, released subsequently, reiterated the right to freedom of religious expression. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 5, 2004]

### **April 17, 2004**

Unidentified perpetrators set the car of a man from Kosovo Polje on fire in Újvidék/Novi Sad, causing damage of 100,000 Dinar (approx. \$US 1,700). [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 20, 2004]

*April 9, 2004*

**Béla Csorba**, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP), found a 12-inch kitchen knife wrapped in paper slipped under his door. Attached to the weapon was the following message in Serbian: “*We will slaughter you*” (in Serbian: “Zaklacemo vas”). Csorba reported the threatening note to the police, who have begun an investigation. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), April 10-12, 2004](#)]



*April 5, 2004*

**József Kasza**, President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz) and **Miroljub Labus**, Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and President of the G17 political party, met—at the initiative of the former—to discuss ethnic tensions in Vojvodina. Shockingly, Labus asserted that neither police files nor the national media had reports on any serious ethnic-based incidents or human rights violations. Kasza proposed the establishment of a special government committee consisting of local experts, including psychologists, sociologists, doctors, and teachers, to develop tools promoting tolerance and co-existence in the primary and secondary schools of Vojvodina. Labus pledged to examine the proposal. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), April 7, 2004](#)]

*March 22, 2004*

**Nenad Čanak**, the President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly, received a threatening letter for the second time this year saying: “*A death sentence on you came into force yesterday. We are here to execute this sentence. Your disloyal career has ended, and no one can help you.*” The letter was handwritten and mailed from *Nova Pazova*, a city between Belgrade and Novi Sad. An entity calling itself “The Serbian Diaspora Summary Revolutionary Court,” allegedly headquartered in Chicago, claimed responsibility for the letter. This entity had sent similar letters in the past to both Čanak and **József Kasza**, who is President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz). The last letter to Kasza stated: “*You have been sentenced to death for your attempt to separate Vojvodina from Serbia.*” [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 23, 2004](#)]

*March 17 and 18, 2004*

Vojvodina was marred by two days of province-wide demonstrations, vandalism of minority-owned establishments, and incitement to hatred in reaction to the wave of violence in Kosovo. Over 40 ethnic-based incidents occurred between March 17-23, including hitherto unprecedented attacks against ethnic Slovaks and Ruthenians. In the town of Zombor/Sombor, 10 businesses including bakeries, shops and restaurants run by ethnic Albanians were damaged. In a public statement, the chairman of the municipal council, **Jovan Vujcic**, linked his regret for these incidents to the wave of violence against ethnic Serbs in Kosovo. On March 18, the Vojvodina Parliament was the target of nationalistic demonstrations in the center of Újvidék/Novi Sad. Speeches were made, and heckling heard against **Nenad Čanak**, the President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly. The flag of Vojvodina Autonomous Province was torn from the assembly building. Police mostly watched as crowds damaged a bakery owned by an ethnic Albanian, although it did block roads once the organizers of the demonstration (in three cars equipped with loudspeakers and bearing Novi Sad and Roma registration plates, as well as one without any plates) started to direct the masses towards the

suburban enclaves of Veliki Rit and Mali Beograd, well-known to be inhabited by Kosovo refugees and Roma. However, enroute, the demonstrators were able to shatter the windows of buildings, including those of the Novi Sad Theater (a Hungarian cultural institution) and those belonging to the headquarters of the Islamic religious community. The demonstrators dispersed around 2:00 a.m. [*Népszabadság* (Budapest), March 19, 2004; *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 21 and 23, 2004]

### *March 18, 2004*

A Serbian neighbor and his son assaulted **Tihamér Lavró** in the staircase of their house. Lavró lives with his mother and a younger sister in a compound called "Fighters Line-Up" in Szabadka/Subotica, an area with a 90 percent Serbian population, mainly refugees from Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. On the day in question, Lavró was returning home with a friend, who lives in the same building, when a Serbian neighbor tripped and kicked him. The boys tried to escape via the elevator, but the perpetrator blocked its outer door. While the victim tried to protect himself by holding the inner door of the



elevator, the son of the assailant joined his father and kicked in the inner door. After cornering the victim, they kicked and beat the young man with a bicycle part until he passed out. The victim was hospitalized with a concussion, facial fractures and numerous bruises on his body. In the past, the father had mocked the victim's ethnic origins, shouted insults about his mother, shoved the victim's sister, and repeatedly vandalized his car. Lavró and his family have been harassed daily by this neighbor either by telephone or in person. Following the victim's hospitalization, the son of the assailant threatened the mother, saying that the next time Lavró will end up in the morgue. Although police have begun an investigation, the victim told reporters that he is pessimistic since a prior incident involving the son is still under investigation after a year. The only possible solution he sees is to move to another place. [*HírTV* (Budapest) May 25, 2004 ]

### *March 12, 2004*



Three Serbian boys assaulted **Zsana Mészáros** in the local Miroslavan School in Palics/Palić during the recess between classes. The boys kicked her in the back and continued kicking after she fell to the ground. The girl was hospitalized and an x-ray examination showed chipped cartilage. Months have passed, but Mészáros has still not fully recovered and might have complications in the future. Mészáros and her mother told reporters that during the school investigation several teachers tried to protect the boys by not giving out names and telephone numbers.

Mészáros' mother visited the headmaster, who informed her that the boys were reprimanded and the incident will be discussed at a school meeting. But the school has not taken any action since the incident and Mészáros' classmates continue to laugh at her and mock her Hungarian origin. According to the mother, hate-speech is common in the fights that take place between Serbian and Hungarian teenagers both in the school and on the street. She also added that ethnic Hungarian children are afraid to inform their parents or other adults because they fear

further violence. Parents feel desperate because they believe that Serbian authorities will not intervene. [[HírTV \(Budapest\) May 20, 2004](#) ]

### ***November 13, 2003***

In Szabadka/Subotica, three to four Serbian high school students assaulted an ethnic Hungarian college student approximately 200 meters from the main post office at 10.00 p.m. The victim had been speaking in Hungarian and the incident occurred after he said goodbye to his friends at the post office and started walking home alone. Suddenly, a group of Serbian teenagers grabbed him from behind and started to pummel him. The assailants asked what his name was. After it turned out that the victim's last name was Serbian, the assailants said they would not hurt one of their own people and left the scene. The student had to be hospitalized. His father reported the incident to the police and the mayor's office. The Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* pointed out in its article that ethnic-based incidents are becoming a daily occurrence in the city's schools. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), November 18, 2003](#)]

### ***September 21, 2003***

In Temerin, five Serbian-speaking young men attacked and beat two ethnic Hungarians, Tibor S. and Árpád Sz. in a restaurant called "Pivarium." After the incident, which occurred around 11:20 p.m., one of the victims was hospitalized for several days. The police found the assailants. [[Béla Csorba, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina \(VMDP\), Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), September 23, 2003](#)]

### ***August 26, 2003***

Around 4:00 p.m. in Zenta/Senta, a local police officer was unwilling to handle the case of an ethnic Hungarian citizen because he addressed the policeman in Hungarian. The local resident went to the police station to file a complaint against a neighbor who had hit him that day and threatened his life. The neighbor was said to have been terrorizing the entire neighborhood for more than six years while the police neglected the case. When the local resident tried to explain at the police what had happened, the policeman on duty became agitated and, instead of processing the claim, shouted at the man, asking him whether he knew he lived in Serbia, where he must speak in Serbian. The resident was within his rights as the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Liberties of National Minorities establishes that a minority language can be used in official communications in those communities which are at minimum 15 percent minority-inhabited. Zenta is a predominantly Hungarian-inhabited town where the proportion of minorities exceeds 80 percent. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), September 1, 2003; Report by László Rác Szabó of Zenta/Senta](#)]

### ***March 8, 2003***

After a peaceful demonstration against the imposition of visa requirements for Vojvodina Hungarians wishing to travel to Hungary, a group of young ethnic Hungarians were walking towards a supermarket on the outskirts of Szabadka/Subotica. A car with a Belgrade license plate No. BG 148-03 passed by and suddenly stopped. Four to five young Serbians jumped out of the car, grabbed the Hungarian flag from one of the ethnic Hungarian teenagers, beat them and left the scene immediately. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 11, 2003](#)]

*January 31, 2003*

A bus driver insulted an ethnic Hungarian teacher and her class of 6-7 year-old primary school students on the No. 1 Klisa-Telep bus line in Újvidék/Novi Sad. The teacher, and her students from the local József Attila Elementary School, were returning from a play. However, as soon as the children started talking in Hungarian, the bus driver turned to the teacher and told her that she should teach her pupils the “proper culture and language.” In response, the teacher called on the bus driver not to say such incorrect things before the children. The bus driver then began to shout and curse loudly, insulting the teacher and the students. After the incident, the teacher reported the case to the local authorities. After an examination of the incident, the disciplinary committee of the Public Transport Company decided to discipline the bus driver for intolerance exhibited against passengers. However, **Svetko Tanasic**, the company’s director, denied any ethnic motivation to the incident. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), February 11 and 19, 2003](#)]

### **III. Desecration of Cemeteries, Vandalism of Property**

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HHRF’s expanded report contains 18 cases of desecration of Hungarian, Croatian and Jewish cemeteries, historic sites and symbols, and the vandalism of church and minority institutions sites. The police are generally lax in investigating these incidents, which are wide-spread. Their intent is seriously called into question in those cases where they have allegedly identified the perpetrators of massive damage in cemeteries to be minors, often small children, and thus discontinued their investigations. Two well-known cases occurred on March 27, 2004 and September 28, 2003. A related phenomena is the burning of the Hungarian flag as happened during a soccer game in Újvidék/Novi Sad on August 25, 2004.

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*July 31, 2004*

Unidentified perpetrators threw Molotov-cocktails into a shop in Temerin during the night. The street-level store belongs to **Zoltán Úri**, an ethnic Hungarian, who lives in the same building with his family. The fire caused extensive damage but since nothing was stolen from the store, the perpetrators’ motives remain unknown. The police are still investigating the case. Locals believe that it might be the act of nationalists who have been sending threatening letters to certain ethnic Hungarians in the town postmarked from Újvidék/Novi Sad, and who might be behind the flag-burning incident of July 25. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), August 2, 2004](#)]

*July 3, 2004*

Unidentified individuals desecrated 30-40 ethnic Croatian and Hungarian graves in the St. Rókus Roman Catholic cemetery in Zombor/Sombor. This was the third similar incident in the cemetery since 1995. The grave of **János Herceg**, a prominent ethnic Hungarian poet, was also desecrated. **Josip Pekanovic**, leader of the Sombor/Zombor branch of the Croatian Democratic Community of Vojvodina, was the first to learn about the incident. He reported the case to the local police, the Croatian Consular office in Szabadka/Subotica, and the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina. Police ignored demands by the Croatian and Hungarian minority organizations to investigate



the incident. After numerous calls, the police registered only 17 of the total cases of desecration. Citing the lack of effort made by the police authorities, **József Kasza**, President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina, called on **Dragan Jovic**, Minister of the Interior, to resign. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), July 6, 7, 8 and 9, 2004]

### **July 3, 2004**

Unidentified persons twice desecrated graves in Monostorszeg/Backi Monostor during the past four days. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), July 9, 2004]

### **May 29, 2004**

**Marjan Medesi**, aged 29, broke into the Catholic parish in Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin around 4:30 in the morning. The thief put valuables, cash amounting to 1,970 Dinar (approx. \$US 600) and a cell phone in a plastic bag. He severely beat **Jenő Tietze** and his sister **Adamina** who were trying to prevent the robbery. A criminal proceeding is underway and the assailant's detention has been ordered. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), June 2, 2004]

### **May 2, 2004**

In Magyarkanizsa/Kanjiza, unidentified perpetrators vandalized the Jewish cemetery, overturning a large marble monument erected originally in 1948 to commemorate the town's 160 Holocaust victims. **Paja Vigoda**, the cemetery's custodian, found the monument on the ground, smeared with human excrement. Police have yet to investigate the incident. Vigoda, who was appointed in 1996 by the Belgrade Jewish Community to safeguard the cemetery, said it was not the first time vandals had broken in. He said that no monies are allocated for the restoration and preservation of the cemetery. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), May 5, 2004]

Meanwhile in Törökbecse/Novi Becej, a total of 21 tombs (10 Roman Catholic and 11 Orthodox) were vandalized and damaged in the local cemetery. Two employees discovered the extensive damage in the morning. A police investigation swiftly began and the perpetrator was apprehended the next day, confessing to the crime. Authorities said they will issue a statement shortly revealing the identity of the perpetrator, who has numerous prior convictions. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), May 4 and 7, 2004; [Magyar Nemzet \(Budapest\)](#), May 05, 2004]

### **March 27, 2004**

In Szabadka/Subotica, perpetrators broke into the Roman Catholic cemetery again, dislodging and destroying 82 wooden crosses and 10 stone decorations from Hungarian and Croatian graves. Three days later, police issued an incredible statement: the perpetrators had been caught: three children (A.F., D.T., and S.S.R.) between the ages of seven and eight. The investigation was discontinued even though children of that age and size would have been physically incapable of inflicting the extent of damage which was caused in the cemetery. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), March 29 and April 2, 2004]



**March 18, 2004**

Overnight, unknown perpetrators vandalized and damaged a few graves in the Roman Catholic cemetery located in the upper part of Zenta/Senta. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), March 19, 2004]

**January 19, 2004**

The tomb of a five year-old girl was vandalized in the Roman Catholic cemetery of Újvidék/Novi Sad. The perpetrators broke the white marble tombstone probably with a hammer. The local branch of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina issued a press release demanding an end to such incidents. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), January 20, 2004]



**January 13, 2004**

Unknown perpetrators broke into the Hungarian Reformed Church in Zombor/Sombor sometime after Sunday, January 11. They vandalized the churchyard, broke ornamentation on the church door, attempted to break into the church itself and, in the end, flooded the church's cellar with 120 cubic meters of water. By the time the minister arrived back to the church on Tuesday afternoon, the church yard itself was already flooding. Police responded immediately after the minister called them, and continued investigating into the following morning.



Strangely, while the police were still at the scene on Wednesday morning, unnamed minors were found to be kicking the church wall and taking apart the brick fence. After an hour and a half of questioning they were let go, and told that charges would be pressed against them. On August 18, **Andor Békássy**, minister of the church, told HHRF that he has not heard from the police since the date of the incident seven months earlier. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), January 20, 2004]

**January 5, 2004**

A marble cross at the entrance to the village of Kisbosznia/Mala Bosna was damaged. The case was reported to the police who, after questioning locals and consulting stone-carvers, concluded that there was no ethnic motivation to the incident. Six month later, after being queried about the incident by a *Magyar Szó* reporter, **Borivoj Mucalj**, chief of police of Szabadka/Subotica, stated that the cross had toppled because it was old and close to the road. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), January 9, 2004; [Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), July 24-25, 2004]

### ***February 4, 2004***

In Temerin, unknown perpetrators broke the bi-lingual sign identifying the local Historical Museum. The museum has been a target for Serb nationalists in the past. Two months ago, someone spray-painted the name of the Serb Radical Party on the museum's door. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), February 5, 2004](#)]

### ***December 6, 2003***

A statue of Hungarian poet Antal Kovács, located a few meters from the guard's post at the entrance to the Temerin town hall, was spray-painted during the night. Similarly, the entrance door of the local Szirmai Károly Hungarian Cultural Alliance (Szirmai Károly Magyar Művelődési Egyesület) was also spray-painted and, the name of the Serb Radical Party was emblazoned on the door of the local Historical Museum. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), December 11, 2003](#)]

### ***November 26, 2003***

More than 50 wooden and stone crosses were damaged in a Roman Catholic cemetery in Felsőmuzslya/Muzlja (a village neighboring Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin). On December 3, 2003 police arrested three minors—L.N. (aged 17), N.K.(aged 16) and K.D.(aged 17)—from Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin. One of the perpetrators, L.N., was placed under psychological evaluation, the other, N.K., was seriously rebuked, while the third perpetrator, K.D., was exempt from further examination. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), November 27 and December 5, 2003](#)]

### ***October 5, 2003***

At 7 a.m. in Grbavica (near Újvidék/Novi Sad), on the corner of Tolstoy and Puskin Streets, three young Serbian men aged 25-26 insulted **Károly Nász** and his wife, sprinkling beer over the husband. The couple was saying goodbye when the three, drunk men approached them. Hearing the spouses speaking Hungarian, they spilled beer over Károly Nász, started insulting them, and kicking their car. Nász called the police but was unable to give an accurate description of the aggressors due to his emotional state. Nász also told reporters that a week ago his grandparents' grave was desecrated in the Roman Catholic cemetery in Novi Sad. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), October 9, 2003](#)]

### ***September 28, 2003***

During the night, 86 graves were desecrated and severely damaged in the Roman Catholic cemetery of Újvidék/Novi Sad. Several crosses were overturned and tombstones uprooted. A 35-year-old grave of an infant, for example, was dug out half way after its marble tombstone was removed. The total damage is estimated at 950,000 Dinars (approximately \$US 15,800). Police began an investigation and found the perpetrators: two minors, a girl (A.K.) and a boy (M.P.) who are currently high school students. The perpetrators admitted to the crime and said they were intoxicated at the time of the act. The legal guardian of one of the perpetrators said that police investigation was very controversial. At first, police stated that both perpetrators' houses were searched in trying to gather evidence for the crime. However, police did not in fact come to their house. Secondly, it appears that more than two perpetrators were involved in the incident. The legal guardian told the daily *Dnevnik* that it is impossible for two minors—a boy weighting 64 kg and a girl weighing 35 kg—to cause such extensive damage in only one hour (which was length of the incident according to the police report). Before the judge, the two perpetrators claimed that they damaged only a few crosses and graves but added that a

group of older boys had been watching them from the cemetery's fence and also drinking. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/ Novi Sad), September 29 and 30, October 2, 7, November 8-9, 14 and 22-23, 2003]

#### *April 16, 2003*

In Szabadka/Subotica, unknown perpetrators vandalized one of the memorial stones in the Parcel No. 44 of the Zenta Street cemetery. This section holds the engraving of the names of 29 innocent victims of the 1944 massacres in Vojvodina. Local residents informed **Ferenc Sinkovits**, President of the '44 Memorial Committee, who reported the incident to the police. Last year one of the memorial stones was also damaged along with the gate and fence of the section. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/ Novi Sad), April 18, 2003]

#### *February 1, 2003*

In the Roman Catholic cemetery of Újvidék/Novi Sad, unknown perpetrators vandalized three tombstones. A police investigation is underway. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/ Novi Sad), February 6, 2003]

### **IV. Proliferation of Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Graffiti**

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The messages of graffiti found on homes as well as public institutions explicitly incite to violence against minorities and contain frequent use of the words “death to Hungarians,” “slaughter,” “go home,” and “this is our land.” The latter two messages are particularly grotesque in light of the fact that while the country has not adequately addressed the issue of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced ethnic Serbians from Croatia and Bosnia, Hungarians and other ethnic groups in Vojvodina are autochthonous. The well-known and unmistakable Serbian nationalistic acronym “CCCC” often accompanies these warnings as do anti-Semitic symbols. HHRF’s expanded report contains 21 such incidents.

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#### ***NEW* September 28, 2004**

In Újvidék/Novi Sad, unidentified perpetrators spray-painted graffiti on two columns of a building located in the projects on Bata Brkic Street in the Újtelep District. One of the text's was written in Cyrillic letters and stated “*Death to Hungarians*” (in Serbian: “*Smrt madjarima*”); the other said “*Canak is an ustasha*,” referring to Nenad Canak, President of the Vojvodina Assembly as being a Croatian facist. The Serbian acronym with the four C-s separated in four fields by a cross— popular among Serbian nationalists—was also left behind. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/NoviSad), September 28, 2004]

**NEW** September 24, 2004

Graffiti stating “Death to Hungarians” (In Serbian: “Smrt Madjarima”) was spray-painted in red, Cyrillic letters on a residential home located at No. 73 Sándor Petőfi Street in Újvidék/Novi Sad. The Serbian nationalist acronym of four letter “C”-s was also spray-painted next to the graffiti. The house belongs to an ethnic Hungarian family living in the so-called “Telep District” where most of the city’s ethnic Hungarians live. Spokesman for the Újvidék police, **Stevan Krstic**, told the local **Radio 021** that an investigation of the case is underway. [[Vajdaság MA—Délvidek Hírportál](http://www.vajdasag.ma) ([www.vajdasagma.info](http://www.vajdasagma.info)), September 24, 2004; [Index](http://www.index.hu) ([www.index.hu](http://www.index.hu)), September 24, 2004]



**NEW** September 15, 2004

At night, unknown perpetrators imbedded a 35-cm kitchen knife into the front door of the home of the **Sötét** family of Szabadka/Subotica. Graffiti using Cyrillic letters and stating “Death” and “Drop dead, Hungarians!” was also spray-painted on the house, as well as the well-known Serbian nationalistic acronym “CCCC.” 13-year old **Klementina Sötét** discovered the knife and the graffiti as she was walking to school that morning. She ran back



into the house, screaming that there was blood on the door. The family reported the incident to the police, which began an investigation. It also issued a short statement stating that nationalistic and offensive graffiti—there was no mention of the knife in the statement—appeared on a family home’s walls, targeting members of the ethnic Hungarian minority. The incident came only 12 hours before **Ferenc Mádl**, President of the Republic of Hungary’s official visit to Szabadka as the final destination.

In August, a group of ethnic Serbian youth assaulted 19-year old **Denisz Sötét** at a bus stop near the Hotel Patria in downtown Szabadka and he suffered numerous bruises and injuries (see report of August 22, 2004 in Section I). Since he has gone public with his story, Sötét’s mother, Slavica, told reporters that during the daytime a black car drives around their home and sometimes stops at the house, reviving its engine. On September 17, the five-member family abandoned their home and left Vojvodina seeking political asylum in neighboring Hungary. Only the Sötét’s eldest son has remained in Szabadka. This development came unexpectedly after both **József Kasza**, Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina President, and Hungarian President **Mádl** visited the family, urging them to remain in Serbia. Currently, the Sötéts reside in one of Hungary’s three refugee camps, awaiting Hungarian authorities to grant them political asylum. [[Magyar Szó](http://www.magyar-szo.com) (Újvidék/Novi Sad), September 16, 18-19, 2004; [Népszabadság](http://www.nepszabadsag.com) (Budapest), September 18, 2004]



**August 25, 2004**

A group of 15 supporters of the Obilić (Belgrade) football team set fire to the Hungarian national flag in Újvidék/Novi Sad during a game between the Obilić and Vojvodina (Novi Sad) teams. They also held up a banner with the slogan: “*Temerin, revenge, warriors*” which they put aside when the police came. The police escorted the instigators to the police station where misdemeanor charges of misconduct were filed against two: **Mihajlo Milenović** (aged 21) and **Dalibor Marinovićot** (aged 26). Each paid a fine of 700 Dinars (approx. \$US 11). Further court proceedings are expected regarding the flag burning incident as this constitutes a crime in Serbia and not merely a misdemeanor according to the penal code. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), August 27, 2004](#)]

**July 25, 2004**

Temerin City Council Chairman, **József Milinszky**, issued a statement informing the public about a flag-burning incident. At 3:15 a.m., a local police officer on downtown patrol saw three flags burning in front of the First Local Community’s headquarters. The Serbian, Hungarian and local flags had been put on display the previous day as part of a festival. A police investigation is underway. The desecration of national symbols is prohibited by the penal code. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), July 26, 2004](#)]

**July 21, 2004**

In Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin, graffiti offending sexual minorities was spray painted on the wall of the local educational center. The slogans said: “*Go for a Serbia without homosexuals*” (in Serbian: “*Za srbstvo bez pedera*”) and “*Homosexuals are not humans*” (“*Pedery nesu ludy*”). A human rights activist working for a civic organization housed in the building, and who requested anonymity, said this was the first such offensive incident. Members of the association include a variety of religious, national, sexual and other minorities. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), July 22, 2004](#)]



**July 15, 2004**

In Újvidék/Novi Sad, a large anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared by dawn on a concrete fence in front of a residence on the Ernő Kiss Street. The epithet was spray painted with red colors, stating “*Okay, okay Hungarians — a deep mass grave awaits you.*” Police have begun an investigation. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), July 16, 2004](#)]

**May 2, 2004**

Nationalistic and anti-Semitic graffiti appeared again on several downtown buildings in the capitol of Vojvodina Province, Újvidék/Novi Sad. Inscriptions such as “*Serbia belongs to Serbs,*” “*Out with Hungarians,*” as well as anti-Israel slogans and crossed out Stars of David were found. **László Galambos**, Vice President of the local chapter of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina told reporters that such incidents occur daily in the city. [*Krónika* (Cluj/Kolozsvár, Romania), May 6, 2004]

**April 19, 2004**

Citing a statement issued by the Újvidék/Novi Sad Police, the *Beta News Agency* reported that graffiti instigating against Hungarians appeared on the pavement in front of the house at 34 Népfrent Street in Temerin. [*Vajdaság MA—Délvidék Hírportál* ([www.vajdasagma.info](http://www.vajdasagma.info)), April 19, 2004]

“*Let’s Slaughter Hungarians*” (in Serbian: “pobijmo madjare”) was the message spray painted on a train and highway bridge in Újvidék/Novi Sad. Mayor **Borislav Nosakovic** condemned the incident, promised to remove the graffiti and called on authorities to apprehend the perpetrators. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 20, 2004]



**April 9, 2004**

“*Death to Hungarians*” (in Serbian: “Smrt madjarima”) was the graffiti spray painted on a store and bakery located at the corner of Tito Marshall and Dusan Guconja Streets in the center of Bácsföldvár/Backo Gradiste. The officially approved Serbian-Hungarian bilingual road sign was also removed and replaced with a Serbian-language one. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 10-12, 2004]

**April 2, 2004**

Anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared in the town of Zenta/Senta stating “*Death to Hungarians*” and “*This is Serbia.*” The graffiti was found on a Hungarian historic monument and two place name signs. Local police and town officials have failed to investigate the incident. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 6, 2004]



Anti-Hungarian graffiti was reported on four buildings in Szabadka/Subotica: on the wall of the local sports arena, stating “Hungarians, go to Hungary” (see picture on the left), the Hungarian cultural house, Népkör, stating “We will kill you, Hungarians” (see picture on the right), the Szent Teréz Cathedral and the Lazar Nešić high school. The writings were all in the



Cyrillic alphabet. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 3-4, 2004]

### March 8 and 17, 2004

Anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared on a Hungarian decoration in a school in Csóka/Coka. The graffiti stated: “Out from Serbia! This is our home! You do not belong here!” (in Serbian: “Idite iz Srbije ove je nasa zemlja ovde niste dobrodosli”).



A week after the message was removed, new ones appeared stating:

“Out from Serbia!” (Idite iz Srbije), “Serbia: Extend to Tokyo” (Srbija do Tokija). Local police and town officials have failed to investigate the incident.

[*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 12 and 17,

2004]

### October 17, 2003

At the Gynecological Clinic in Újvidék/Novi Sad, the personnel insulted an expectant mother, B.B., for speaking in Hungarian. The young woman was sent to the clinic for examinations and escorted by her husband because she doesn't speak Serbian well. The required examination was high-risk, to be performed only in the 16<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. First, the receptionist at the clinic objected to the husband speaking for his wife and later started yelling at him that “he should have taught her Serbian.” The treatment the young mother received from three examining nurses was the same. They admonished her that “we will teach you Serbian!”. Finally, the nurses yelled so much at the patient that B.B. left the clinic crying and without having the procedure done. Afterwards, the patient’s gynecologist from Szabadka/Subotica, **dr. Slavica Mazak Bešlić**, tried to intervene with the director of the institution, **dr. Vule Višnjevac**. The director's retort was that she should teach her patients Serbian before sending them to the clinic. **Sándor Egeresi**, Vice-President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly, reported the incident to the Ombudsman of Vojvodina, **dr. Petar Teofilović**. Subsequently, the director of the clinic, dr. Višnjevac was removed, and a new director, **dr. Milenko Bujas**, appointed. However, the central director of the Clinical Center in Novi Sad said that the change did not occur as a result of the above-described incident.

[*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), October 17, 18-19 and 25-26, 2003]

**September 10, 2003**

**Jovan Pejin**, historian and member of the Serbian People's Movement, accused Hungarians, Slovaks and Romanians of “occupying” Serbian territory in Vojvodina since the 10th Century. The diatribe was broadcast during primetime over Novi Sad Television during the “Otkopcano” (Unfastened) program. The Hungarian Alliance of Vojvodina (VMSz) protested this effort to undermine the peaceful coexistence of 26 ethnic groups in Vojvodina. [[Press Release of the Hungarian Alliance of Vojvodina, September 16, 2003](#)]

**August 30, 2003**

Graffiti, carved into the asphalt, appeared on the main street of Temerin, in front of houses inhabited by ethnic Hungarians. The message said: “*Death to Hungarians*” (in Serbian: Smrt Mađarima) and was signed: “*Serb Chetniks*” (Srpski četnici). The local branch of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP) condemned the act and called upon the authorities to take effective measures. [[Press Release of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina, September 2, 2003](#)]

**June 2003**

In mid-June, unknown perpetrators spray-painted graffiti saying “*Serbia is a Pravoslavnic country*” (in Serbian: “Srbija je pravoslavna zemlja”) in Cyrillic letters on the wall of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Zombor/Sombor. [[First-hand Report from the Resident Minister, Rev. Andor Békássy, dated August 18, 2004](#)]



**March 10, 2003**

On Monday, March 10, graffiti saying: “*This is Serbia*” (Ovo je Srbija), written in Cyrillic letters, appeared on the walls of the Széchenyi István Elementary School in Szabadka/Subotica. This school conducts its classes in Hungarian and has mostly ethnic Hungarian students. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 11, 2003](#)]

**March 7, 2003**

In Szabadka/Subotica, anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared on the walls of the Hungarian cultural house, *Népkör*, and a private house facing the Újvidék/Novi Sad University’s branch Faculty of Economics. The message read: “*Hungarians leave from here to the beautiful green Hungary!*” (In Serbian: “Mađari, kuš u Mađarsku, lepu zelenu”). In the morning, when the graffiti was spotted, employees of Népkör called the police, who arrived within 15 minutes, and began an investigation. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 8, 2003](#)]

*January 18, 2003*

Residents of the district called “Telep,” a predominantly Hungarian inhabited area of Újvidék/Novi Sad, found a number of flyers on their cars inciting to hatred against Hungarians. The flyers were hand-written and they contained the following text: “*Since we appreciate the good neighborly relations with Hungary we want the green stars [a term for ethnic Hungarians] living in Southern Bácska to go to the lovely green Hungary.*” A clover, the letter “M,” as well as a green-colored five-pointed star were also inscribed on the pamphlets. A police investigation is underway. President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly **Nenad Čanak** condemned the incident. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), January 21, 2003]

## **V. Vandalism of Multi-Lingual Signs**

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On August 16, 2003, the official Hungarian National Council of Vojvodina, established in 2002, adopted a resolution governing the use of Hungarian locality names in the province. This act was brought in accordance with the Article 7, Paragraph 1 of the Provincial Assembly’s resolution on official use of national minority languages. Accordingly, the Hungarian names of localities can be posted, and the Hungarian language used in public administration, in those communities where the proportion of the Hungarian population exceeds 15 percent. Thus, the common practice and right afforded by the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution—to post multi-lingual signs of all nationalities inhabiting an area—has been restored in the province. The defacement and vandalism of these new bi- or multi-lingual signs is such a widespread occurrence that only a handful of cases are ever reported.

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*May 15, 2004*

Residents of Tiszaszentmiklós/Ostijicevo discovered that during the night unidentified vandals had painted over the Hungarian name of the village on all the bi-lingual signs identifying the village. The Latin and Cyrillic Serbian versions of the name were left intact. Police have not investigated the incident. [*First-hand report from the Mayor of Csóka, Zoltán Margit*, May 16, 2004]



*April 2, 2004*

Two of the road signs identifying Zenta/Senta were vandalized during the night of April 2. Vandals spray-painted the text “Smrt Mađarima” (Death to Hungarians) on one, and “Ovo je Srbija” (This is Serbia) on the other. A well-known Serbian nationalist acronym “CCCC” is also visible. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 6, 2004 ]

### ***February 2004***

For weeks the sign indicating the entrance to the village of Kisorosz/Rusko Selo has been vandalized regularly. The Hungarian version of the name is painted over during the night, and later reapplied by the locals. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), February 16, 2004](#)]

### ***February 13, 2004***

Unknown vandals spray-painted over the Hungarian name of Magyarkanizsa/Kanjiza on all four road signs identifying the town. Inhabitants are perplexed by the timing of the incident since these official bilingual signs have been posted for several months. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), February 14-15, 2004](#)]



### ***March 8, 2003***

Unknown perpetrators spray-painted over the Hungarian name of Szabadka/Subotica on both the entrance and exit road signs identifying the town. The graffiti appeared at the northern part of the town, on the road leading to Palics/Palić. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 11, 2003](#)]