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## The Language Of Hatred In Sports As A Means Of Political Propaganda Overview Of The Case In Ex-Yugoslavia

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### *Summary*

In the recent years sports workers and researchers as well as sports audiences are focused on the issue of fans associations and solidarization on aggressive basis with the extreme right. According to Didier Pages, "there are groups of fascists who operate on the football grounds and terrains". He goes on to say that all European teams have their fascist fan groups. According to the crime investigator Kris van Limbergen, "The vandalism in football is a very good opportunity for the recruiting of fans-vandals working for the extreme right." Limbergen goes on to describe, first of all, the situation and the circumstances in Belgium, saying, "The football scenes in Belgium are characterized with extreme racism, sexism, regionalism and anti-Semitism."

In the communist countries there existed a belief that sport is a very powerful means of political propaganda, and finally of war that may burst. This was the way how sport was seen in ex-Yugoslavia, as well as nowadays in multicultural countries like Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia, etc.

The idea that supporting and doing all for sport, making the countries morally stronger and more ready to fight in a war (if needed), has unfortunately been found in Yugoslavia during the time the country was ruled by Tito and after his death. This was symbolized by so many songs and poems in various sports matches, which used to generate strong hatred and nationalism on ethnical basis, which as such finds its market in today's Bosnia, Macedonia and Serbia.

Key words: language of hatred, vandalism in sport, political propaganda, ex-Yugoslavia, the language status, the official language.

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## Introduction

Recently, sport as a popular and alternative culture has become a secret/magic power, which makes millions of people get into trouble for using vulgar words, staying outside on the streets and causing conflicts, which gives them a condensation of emotions that could not be found in their daily lives, causes excitement or rejoice, and often rage that stops normal life (Pajaziti, 2011). This rhetoric and behaviour continue even today everywhere in the world, where international relations and the existence of the state itself are endangered by this hooliganism and language of hate based on national and religious hatred.

Nationalism is more reflected in sport in multicultural societies. Exaggerated nationalism also implies the inevitable hate speech. "Escalation of nationalism in sport is conditioned by the influence and action of extreme ideological currents in the society and their attempts at nationalist passions at all costs to be expressed in sport" (Štakić, 1996).

By analysing the states of the twentieth century, it is confirmed that their interest in sport and physical education was the same as they are part of paramilitary training. This applies mostly to countries with totalitarian traits and countries prepared for war. Before the beginning of the First World War, Henry Degranzh, director of the sports magazine *Auto*, also founder of the famous bicycle race "Tour de France", defends the thesis that "war in general is only sport, a great match between two nations". In his place, physical education had been under the care of the Ministry of war until 1926. Historian Erik Hobsbawm says that "the idea of creating a national sports idol and relation to sports clubs sympathizers can be used in the moment when psychological or military mobilization of citizens is needed". He further states that "between two wars, international sport becomes a national war, whereas the sportsmen as representatives of the nation or representatives of their country, even the fan, become part of their nation" (Hobsbawm, 1993:156).

Italy is considered to be the first fascist country that instrumentalised soccer for political purposes. For this purpose, the second world championship in soccer was used by Mussolini, which was held in Italy in 1934. On this occasion, the Italian national team players were called by Mussolini the "soldiers in the service of the nation" (Milza, 1990:1964).

Recently, the investigators of sport and sports audiences, especially of violent behaviour of the fans in soccer matches, which in the 1980s led to many bloody incidents, where the most severe incidents with greater number of victims occurred at the Heysel stadium in Brussels (on May 29, 1985, 39 people died) and Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield (on April 15, 1989, 95 dead people), attract the attention of the groups of most aggressive fans in Europe with the extreme right wing. According to Didier Pages, "fas-

cist groups often operate in soccer areas". All European soccer teams have their own fascist groups. These fascists have understood very well that soccer is the same activity as war, and they experience it with enthusiasm. Every week, stadiums are full of potential fascist candidates, where spectacle offers hatred towards others. Soccer is war and soccer stadiums are areas for training young Nazis who dream of wide areas (Pages, 1990:137-139).

Kris van Limbergen, expert in the field of criminology, says that "soccer vandalism is a suitable field for recruiting members of the extreme right wing". Limbergen describes soccer situations in Belgium: "Soccer scenes are characterized by racism, sexism, regions and anti-Semitism" (Limbergen, 1990:80-81).

Also, in the communist countries people believed that sport is the most powerful tool of political propaganda and preparing for war. The idea that preparation for war is made by sport supporting (if needed) was also found in former Yugoslavia during and after Tito's death. Many songs that were sung in sports matches urged hatred and ethnic nationalism, which was later proved in the wars of the 1990s, where many groups of fans became paramilitary groups.

## Hooligans or Patriots?

The most fanatic fans, especially soccer fans, belong in the family of world fans – the so called hooligans. According to examples of European fans, especially Italian and English fans, we find out that fans of a country attract their attention by their violent and aggressive behaviour. Extreme "amigoism" is a phenomenon that infiltrated certain areas where you can meet a group of sports maniacs who call themselves "hordes of evil", "bad blue boys", "crackbrained", "maniacs", "devils", "hooligans", etc. These names were used in Macedonia as well, by giving them national nuance, such as fans of the Macedonian side with their names such as "Komits", "Lions", "Vojvodi" (dukes), "City Park Boys", "Çkembare", while on the Albanian side there are the following fans: "Ballistët", "Illyrs", "Smugglers", "Eagles", etc.

The behaviour of these "communities" can be noticed by the names they choose. They are planters of the seed of evil, they confront the players and fans of the opposing teams, they break and burn, even becoming murderers sometimes. Almost before every important soccer match, security bodies confiscate significant amounts of tools and devices that put human life in danger (pocket knives, knives of different sizes, explosives). Inside sports buildings and outside them as well, hooliganism is a very difficult issue, which threatens the real spirit of people's friendship in sport.

The majority of fan folk supporters consist of songs with character of "hooliganism", respectively songs which fans sing for provocative reasons, accept asocial roles, social

renegades, alcoholics, the crazy. For example, here is how the challenge between Crvena Zvezda (Red Star) and Partizan (Partisan) looks like:

*As long as the earth goes around the sun  
The hooligans of Zvezda won't calm down*

*One million Grobar Hooligans  
For Partisan will give their life  
(Čolović, 2000:336)*

The fans of Hajduk love this song more:  
*The entire north dead drunk  
Quite drunk, quite drugged  
We are rooting for Hajduk  
(Čolović, 2000:336)*

There will be riots tonight,  
There will be madness tonight  
*Here they come, the hooligans  
Along the street of Belgrade, Zagreb, Split  
(Perasović, 1988:19)*

In Macedonia, the group of fans called "Komits" from Skopje sing the song:  
*No I can't stay here  
I can't see Albanian  
Bring us now alcohol to drink  
Then let's go outside and beat up Albanians*

## Sport and Nationalism

Today, individuals and societies, amongst others, present themselves in the sports fields as well. A publicist once said that different sports competitions are a reflection of war competitions of ancient times. The tragedy of killing the opponents has turned into emotional tragedy and personal satisfaction. This applies to both individual and collective aspects. Therefore, the presentation of these fans is done mainly "under the care of false patriotism, national hatred and intolerance, which threaten the peace and safety of the country, which might lead to severe conflicts in multi-ethnic societies, such is our society".

Chauvinism and barbarous elements are often included in sport. There are fresh photographs of conflicts of ultranationalist Serbian and Croatian fans across stadiums and fitness centres, bad overture in the bloody war of the 90s between these two nations. Vocabulary used by hooligans for fighting the opponent comes from the language of violence and death, together with pornographic words and cursing. Even though “killing and cursing” are not the same, they are still of the same importance for hooligans.

Thus, a group of fans of Zvezda (Red Star) call themselves “Zulu Warriors”, so their fight is based on nationalism; they fight against the strange ones, also against fans of rival clubs of the city:

*Oh Grobar, oh Grobar  
 You are now zero compared to us  
 You will pass like frogs  
 Against Liverpool  
 There were 38, 39 dead people  
 Go home, go home  
 Or the same number of people will die now again  
 (Čolović, 2000:337)*

Among other songs of such vulgar and violent nature dedicated to the opponent is the song of “Komits” that sings about fans of “Ckembars” from Bitola:

*Coffins are floating along the river Vardar  
 Komits are slaughtering Ckembars*

In Macedonian sports arenas nationalist hysteria is present as well, where, in order to be the kindest fan, other nations should be insulted. The most commonly used insult word is the word “death”. This usually happens in soccer matches in Tetovo, where the guests are teams of Teteks (a Macedonian club) and Shkendija and Renova (Albanian clubs). In these matches they usually offend each other’s nations, religions and races. African players are usually offended for the colour of their skin, for being ape-like, while Albanian and Macedonian fans are offended for their nation and religion. Paradox and madness do not stop just there, because Macedonian fans curse Albanians in Belgrade as well, during soccer matches between Yugoslavia and Macedonia, even though they are not playing against Albanians.

Fans from Skopje, known as “Lions” and “Komits”, in order to express their anger of many defeats that occurred in Skopje, usually curse Albanians by saying: “Gas

chambers for Albanians”, “Good Albanian only dead Albanian”, “Only Brodets for you”, “Let the damn Albanians know that Macedonian name will never die”, and many other insulting chants.

The main cheer of Albanian fans is: “Karpalak” while, the fans “Vojvodi” (dukes) call them “Mountain Storm”.

During the cheers of rival fans, there are cheers that contain pornographic words. “Ballists” – fans of the club Shkendija from Tetovo – sing the song “Macedonian girl” to their opponent, but by making some changes: “Macedonian girl, big slut”.

Fans of the group “Komits” sing this song:

*I'm happy when I beat up Albanians*

*I'm happy when he is shaved*

The fans “Vojvodi” of the rival club Teteks of Tetovo made some changes to the song. Instead of “let the damned fascist understand”, they sing “let the damned Albanian understand”.

They offend each other so much that they even start to offend their notable historical figures as well. So, Albanian fans often cheer by saying “Toše fagot”, offending their music icon Toše Proeski, who died in a car accident, which irritates the opposing fans. The opposing fans make it up to them by shouting “Avio Impex”, reminding them of two airplane crashes of this company, where many Albanians died.

In the folklore of sympathizers in the Balkans, but also themes of the songs, slogans, signs, flags, emblems etc., are taken over from ethnic identities, which coincides with campaigns of political parties, where the fans also want to introduce themselves as representatives of their nation. Sometimes the two groups of fans of the same nation join together against opposing clubs and sympathizers that they see as representatives of some other enemy nation.

Thus, fans of Crvena Zvezda, especially when they are at the stadiums of the opposing teams, present the relationship with their country – Serbia – while during the 90s they presented their relationship with their leader Milosević and with Partisans as well:

*We are heroes of Serbia*

*Get out on the terrace, salute the Serbian race*

*From Kosovo to Knin, everything is Serbia*

*Oh Slobo, oh our Serbian, Serbia is with you*

(Čolović, 2000:339)

Sympathizers of both Croatian clubs Hajduk and Dinamo, who forget the hostility between them, also reply to this solidarity by singing:

*Dinamo and Hajduk are consanguineous  
It's not important who will be the first one  
Dinamo and Hajduk are two fraternal teams  
Croatia is proud of them*

*(Perasović, 1988:18-19)*

Insults towards Albanians in Macedonia have a political character as well; Macedonian fans usually mention the name of the former interior ministry Ljuben Boškovski, who is considered a hero because of the war of 2001, and "Tetovo Makedonski Grad" (Tetovo – The City of Macedonians). On the other side, Albanian fans sing patriotic songs such as: "United States of Albania", especially in Tetovo. They sing songs dedicated to provinces and cities of Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania; they usually sing the famous song "Ilirida, Chameria (Çamëria), Malësia (Highland)", they sing these songs as well as "Promise, promise, I make the promise", cheering "Ethnic Albania" by presenting the sign "Don't you FYROM, call my Ilirida".

## Violence in Sports Arenas

Hate speech, violence and intolerance are part of the daily life and part of all modern societies as well. As a result of this, every discussion related to violence is a discussion of the society itself. Because of the rapid progression of science and technological achievements the violence is becoming more massive and devastating, with unpredictable consequences for the society (Miljuš, 2010:348).

Sports fans, in order to show their personal patriotism, often burn the flag of their opponents. This happened during a basketball match between Rabotnički and Liria in Skopje. During the second half of the game, the fans of "City Park Boys" burned the Albanian flag. News agency INA reported that fans of this club were shouting all the time, cheering: "Good Albanian, dead Albanian", "Gas chambers for Albanians", as they did a few months before in Roma – Serbian fans burned the Albanian flag in front of thousands of people.

The most unnerving issue is that, almost before every important soccer match, security bodies confiscate significant amounts of devices and tools that put human life in danger (pocket knives, big knives, explosives, etc.).

Outside the sports arenas damage caused by violence of the hooligans is huge. They attack, beat up people, break windows, vandalizing across different streets of the cities. It was like this in 2009, in the neighbourhood of Nerez in Skopje, populated mainly by Albanians, when many people of the neighbouring areas were attacked and injured and many houses were damaged; the victims had nothing to do with the "extremist fans".

Even more symptomatic was the declaration of the group "Komits" who immediately after the violent behaviour through the streets of Nerez promoted themselves as "the only and final defenders of the Macedonian national honour and dignity in this country".

Another unpleasant event was the collision and manifestation of violence that happened in 2011 between "Smugglers" and "Komits" at the fortress of Skopje. This was not the first incident, nor the last one. Sometimes a question is asked, how many incidents are politically motivated? In particular, there are serious indications that the disappointment of fans is in most cases politically motivated and organized in advance.

### **Political Influence on the Violence of Sports Events**

Politicians have nothing to do with sport; they are there to achieve their political or nationalist goals. Sports events provide a good opportunity for them to promote their political goals, due to large numbers of people attending these events and the presence of the sports fans and the media. It is otherwise rather difficult to gather such large numbers of people. During electoral campaigns politicians perform special activities, so that sports arenas come to be used for promoting party pamphlets. As the electoral year passes the nationalist tensions grow, as an opportunity for certain parties to gather new adherents. The most appropriate places for this are the arenas where the sports events take place; in such places it is easier to promote pamphlets that contain nationalist views. Such behaviour of sports fans and the political influence on the sports clubs often lead to the escalation of violence in sports events, accompanied by material damage and injuries. More frequent are the fights between fans of the clubs from different ethnic environments; there are also fights between the fans of different clubs that come from the same ethnic environment, for example in Skopje, Bitola, Sarajevo, Mostar, Zagreb, Split, Belgrade, etc. – all these happen as a result of political influence.

### **Media Attitude towards Hooliganism in Sport**

Based on the writings of the sports press, violent behaviour of fans very often turns into resentment, incidents or fighting, all these being based on nationalism. Fans show higher aggressiveness towards teams and fans that belong to different nationalities and come from different surroundings. As a reminder, the years preceding the outbreak of wars in the former Yugoslavia saw events in sports arenas, and more often at soccer stadiums, in which fans presented signs with political messages, portraits of national leaders and saints, national emblems and flags, sang songs about Chetniks, demonstrated the Ustaša initials and greetings, etc. (Čolović, 2000:322).

Fans that developed strong hatred were punished anonymously by the press. In the Macedonian media, both Albanian and Macedonian, there were comments that gave

warnings about the risk that was causing these chauvinistic desires at sports stadiums, these comments also appealed to the country to take measures against such kind of actions. The titles of several articles, published between 2009 and the first quarter of 2011, illustrate this: "Macedonian nationalism on the stairs of the stadiums of Macedonia", "The reproaches of fans", "Language of hate, an integral part of the vocabulary of fans", "The one who sings does not have evil thoughts", "Boys of the stadiums", "Fans will sing", "What party team the fans play for", etc.

In their texts moral attitudes, didactic attitudes and ideological evaluations dominate. One journalist asks: "I have to ask – why does the government spend so much money on the campaign in order to strengthen the national consciousness and dignity? Are national consciousness and dignity of fellow citizens with different ethnic origins protected by the language of hate and language of violence?" (Dnevnik, 2009). Some university professors think that because of the fans involved in brutal ethnic and racist insults, the risk of match violence is high, but this is worrying when they are instrumentalised by the political parties for political motives. This is better illustrated by the annalist Čolović, who claims that, during the war in former Yugoslavia, "aggressiveness of fans for the state becomes precious capital of hate, while fans are used as a living shield" (Čolović, 1993:93-98); usually the state does not need to ruin the violent and aggressive behaviour of the fans, on the contrary, the state is concerned that the "capital of hatred is to be used in achieving military purposes" (Čolović, 2000:349).

## Measures to Stop the Violence

The solution to this issue would be as follows:

- sports clubs and sports federations should avoid the political influence of the politicians whose desire is to accomplish their political goals;
- political pamphlets should be forbidden in sports events;
- pamphlets that contain nationalist ideologies and the speech based on nationalism should be forbidden as well;
- collaboration and the friendship between sports federations and sports clubs should be expended;
- meetings with the representatives of the sports fans should be organized;
- tensions between sports fans should be settled down via the media;
- preventive measures, besides sports clubs and sports federations, should also be taken by the highest legislative and executive authorities of the state;
- the country should adopt such laws that will prevent the expansion of violence;
- persons who commit criminal acts should be sanctioned.

The British authorities adopted stricter laws for banning soccer fans from entering the stadium (1986), also the British authorities banned the hooligans from the stadiums (1989), they expended the penalty list against those who threw things onto pitches, against those who participated in incidents and racist chanting (1991). Since 1999, the ban of hooligans was necessary; since 2001, no matter whether the game was played outside or inside the country, for those who participate in incidents there would be measures of revoking their passports temporarily. The police, by possessing the proof based on video recordings, can arrest the participant even after many years after the incident occurred (Miljuš, 2010:351).

## **Conclusion**

There are opinions that this syndrome is applicable to us as well, which occurred in some sports matches across Europe, like in Italy and Russia, which does not contribute to coexistence in this country. The general opinion of the Macedonian media is that nationalist and racist fans should be punished. On the contrary, this kind of action would encourage others as well to take the same actions against those who ruin the coexistence in Macedonia.

Due to some measures that were taken so far, for example, the ban from entering the stadium, or the determination to negotiate with the perpetrator, considering them as isolated cases, made these phenomena to be repeated more frequently. So such actions are repeated continuously one after another every time when there is a soccer match. Thus nationalist violence becomes a ritual in and out of the stadiums. Fans of Crvena Zvezda (Red Star) say that war means to become a "Hero", then a "Tiger" – which is a case for final victory of the hooligan rebellion – the continuation of the destruction of the values of civil society. Hooligan subculture is going to become a dominant culture of the social elite, since the leaders of the hooligan fans are becoming national heroes. These hooligan groups have been a nest for promoting criminals during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, then later in Kosovo as well. Similar scenario is being repeated nowadays. History knows many similar cases: "When Macedonian students organized protests in front of the Macedonian government several years ago, led by the student Filip Petrovski, who has become a big democrat of the united right wing." At that time, the anti-Albanian fascist words were used for the first time by Macedonians: "Gas chambers for Albanians", "Death for Albanians", etc., anti-Albanian and fascist slogans began to be heard in many sports events.

There is the final question, whether zero tolerance should be practiced towards the language of hate and the language of violence by all hooligan fans that use every chance to pretend as if they were the biggest patriots and believers. Will there always be a doubt that conflict promotion based on ethnicity and religion responds to those politici-

ans who declare the moratorium on interethnic relations, or will hooligans be allowed to make their revolutionary dream come true?

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### *Sažetak*

U posljednjih nekoliko godina sportski djelatnici i znanstvenici, kao i sportska publika usmjereni su na pitanja navijača sportskih klubova i njihovom solidarizacijom na agresivnoj osnovi s ekstremnom desnicom. Prema Didier Plageu, "postoje skupine fašista koji rade na nogometnim terenima". On želi reći da sve europske momčadi imaju svoje fašističke navijačke skupine. Prema kriminalističkom istražitelju Kris van Limbergenu, «vandalizam u nogometu je vrlo dobra prilika za regrutiranje navijača-vandala koji rade za ekstremnu desnicu.» Limbergen to prije svega opisuje situacijom i okolnostima u Belgiji, pa kaže: «Nogometna scena u Belgiji obilježena je ekstremnim rasizmom, seksizmom, regionalizmom i antisemitizmom.»

U komunističkim zemljama postojalo je uvjerenje da je sport je vrlo moćno sredstvo političke promidžbe što na kraju može dovesti do rata. Na taj je način sport bio promatran na području bivše Jugoslavije, a i sada prevladava slično razmišljanje u multikulturalnim zemljama poput Makedonije, Bosne, Srbije, itd.

Ideja da podupiru i rade sve za sport čini zemlje moralno jačima i spremnijima za borbu u ratu (ako je potrebno), što je na žalost potvrđeno u Jugoslaviji u vrijeme vladavine Tita i nakon njegove smrti. To simboliziraju brojne pjesame s različitih sportskih utakmica, koje se koriste za stvaranje snažne mržnje i nacionalizma na etničkoj osnovi, koja kao takva nalazi svoje mjesto u današnjoj Bosni, Makedoniji i Srbiji.

Ključne riječi: jezik mržnje, vandalizam u sportu, politička promidžba, bivša Jugoslavija, službeni jezik