

# **RELATIONS BETWEEN VIOLENT EXTREMISM FROM EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AND GREECE**

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Violent extremism is considered a serious threat to contemporary European and global security, mostly in relation to terrorism and other insurgent strategies (European Union 2014). Extremist scenes from various countries and regions are closely interconnected and they support one another. The transfer of strategies and tactical elements is also an important element of contemporary transnational extremism. The rise of extremism in one country or region is interconnected with the state of extremism in other countries and regions. This process is characteristic of the impact of extremism in Greece on East Central European extremism. The campaigns and links between left-wing extremism, right wing extremism and Islamist extremism are analysed in this article.

## **Left-wing extremism**

Cooperation between the far left from Greece and from East Central Europe has a long tradition rooted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the communist regimes (mostly in Czechoslovakia) supported leftist emigrants from the Greek civil war in the 1940s and 1950s. This traditional Greek diaspora is not politically active, however, with the exceptions of several “hard-line” communists. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE), including its ideology, is a model for the dogmatic part of the communist spectrum - mostly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. However, the KKE does not support contemporary insurgent and terrorist violence, it holds the traditional Marxist-Leninist line of the mass revolution. Its statements are translated into Central European languages (Komunistická strana Řecka 2012).

The young extremist left from Greece and East Central Europe started its intensive cooperation thanks to the militant anti-Globalist movement at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Black Block and other militant activists met at several huge mobs. Greek activists visited Prague during the protests against the World Bank/International Monetary Fund Summit in September 2000 and against the NATO-Summit in 2002. East Central European militants were in Athens and other Greek cities (mostly in Thessaloniki) during the European Social Forum in 2006 and since then they are continuously in touch with the Greek scene (Mezinárodní revoluční organizace 2010).

When the so called “Greek revolt” in 2008 started, strong support campaign by East Central European left wing extremism followed. The webpages dealing only with the Greek situation were founded, mostly the Polish “Grecja w ogniu” (“Greece in Fire”). The statements of the Greek terrorist and militant groups are translated and published here in Polish, including the Συνωμοσία των Πυρήνων της Φωτιάς (“Conspiracy of Fire Cells”) and its allies (Komórki Nikola i Alfredo”/FAI 2013). The Greek crisis is (besides the topical Syrian crisis) one of the main topics also for the Czech communist militant webpage “Třídní válka” (“Class War”) (Bastl, Mareš, Smolík, Vejvodová 2011: 52).

Some left extremist activists from East Central Europe enjoy “militant tourism” in Greece, others are working in Greece and join the local anarchist structures, including violent groupings. The most famous case is the Polish anarchist Andrzej Mazurek, the so called “last prisoner of the Greek revolt”. He was sentenced to 7 years in prison in Greece in 2008 due to violent attacks during the demonstrations. In December 2012 he was transported to Polish prison for the rest of his imprisonment. Demonstrations and campaigns in Poland, Slovakia or the Czech Republic were organized to back him (Mareš, Výborný 2013: 30).

Militant actions related to Greek left-wing extremism were carried out on East Central European territory, mostly in the Czech Republic. In April 2010 the collective Angry Brigade (“Rozhněvaná brigade”) attacked the Greek embassy in Prague with Molotov cocktails. The attack was dedicated to the imprisoned Greek anarchist Giannis Dimitrakis. In the years 2010-2011 several toll gates on Czech and Slovak highways were damaged, at least one attack was committed by the group called according to Greek inspiration – Revolutionary struggle (“Revoluční boj”) and dedicated to the killed Greek anarchist Lambros Foundas (Mareš, Výborný 2013: 31-32).

Inspiration by direct militant actions of Greek and Italian left-wing violent extremism and terrorism can be identified in East Central Europe in previous years. The support for Greek leftist anti-Fascist struggle, mostly against the Golden Dawn, is an important current issue of cooperation between left-wing extremists from East Central Europe and Greece.

### **Right-wing extremism**

The rise of the Golden Dawn and the interconnected violent anti-immigrant incidents in Greece are considered as inspiration for several East Central European right-wing extremist parties and movements. The connection between the far right from this area and Greece were not very intensive for a long time, with the exception of some right-wing football hooligan contacts and contacts of the neo-Nazi groups within transnational networks. The Blood & Honour Division Hellas was and is a part of Blood and Honour, a. o with divisions from Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This international network supports pan-Aryan unity and racial war. The term “Division” in the names of national branches is inspired by the SS terminology from WW II (Bötticher, Mares 2013: 603-604).

The success of the Golden Dawn led to celebrating of this party in East Central European right-wing extremist media sphere. It was perceived as a fact that parties which were in marginal position for a long time have the potential to grow rapidly under specific circumstances. The violent activities of the Golden Dawn members and its supporters were also evaluated positively in the discussions of East Central European extremists (Mareš 2014: 71).

### **Islamist Extremism**

The cells of Islamist extremists are active on Greek territory and this security threat is interconnected with the immigration issue. The relations with the Islamist extremist scene in East Central Europe are not very intensive. However, various travel and migration routes from Greece may lead also across East Central European territory or they could affect this area indirectly.

The route from Greece across Western Balkan aims to Vienna as an important center of several extremist groupings with connections to East Central Europe (Mareš 2014: 69). The route across Bulgaria to Western and Northern Europe can be directly connected with the

transfer over the territories of Hungary, Slovakia, Poland or the Czech Republic. On the other hand, strong Islamist extremist connections from Greece across Italy and other Mediterranean countries to Western Europe are not directly connected with East Central European area.

### **Conclusion**

The interaction between extremism in Greece and East Central Europe is strongest by the left-wing extremists, where the stable connections and “solidarity campaigns” characterize the legacy of the “Greek revolt” (including attacks against Greek diplomatic targets and attacks dedicated to imprisoned extremists). The Golden Dawn and militant right-wing extremists from Greece are an inspiration for East Central European scene, however, only a limited direct cooperation can be identified. Field of Islamist extremism is in this field interesting mostly from the point of view of migration and transit routes from Greece to Western Europe.

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