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Organised Crime and OC research in Hungary - Some special fields and data

Dr. Szilveszter Poczik

Project Manager, National Institute of Criminology (NIC), Budapest



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Abstract

Criminology became an independent discipline in Hungary in the 60s. That is why the foundation of the Hungarian National Institute of Criminology (NIC) in 1960 had also a symbolic importance. This happened after a period of the ice age of the social sciences in which the narrow-minded communist governments stamped sociology and criminology as imperialistic pseudo-sciences. Today NIC is the most significant criminological research institute in Eastern Europe which, being research and higher training center of the Chief Prosecutor's office, covers all relevant research fields of criminology. NIC focuses on empiric research and plays an active role in the elaboration of criminal policy and of national, governmental and communal strategies of crime prevention. Because of the complexity of the structures of the organized crime no independent OC project is running in NIC, but in the single researches dealing with any phenomenon of crime the analysis of its specific relation to OC is unavoidable.

In the period of the political transition, border opening, reconstruction of the market economy and integration in the European Union of Hungary, OC appeared unexpectedly as a result of external and internal factors. In Hungary ruled earlier a milder variation of the communist dictatorship, it tolerated certain restricted forms of market economy, some grey and black trade areas and corruption of the officials: e.g. trade in used cars, currencies and street prostitution belonged to these. At that time in these areas small groups were active and these accumulated the finance resources which were later the base for establishing the internal low level OC. The old and new small groups at the lowest level of OC remained furthermore in the criminal area: prostitution, black markets, smuggling of stolen cars and car spare parts, production and smuggling of drugs in small items, cigarettes and alcohol smuggling, street prostitution, smuggling of human beings and real estate fraud. Other, stronger and well organized OC groups intertwined fast with various legal interest groups and with groups of high ranked officials of the local or regional administration, as well as foreign criminal organizations, and established this way strong positions in the show business, hotel and restaurant industry, play casinos, media, real estate trade and in the

- meanwhile international - red light environment. Based on their finances and links they became members of the legal or quasi legal society of entrepreneurs.

With opening the borders, smaller and bigger foreign criminal groups appeared and operated partly independently, partly together with Hungarian partners in different areas: East-Asians, mostly Chinese groups in product piracy and brand piracy, Vietnamese groups in the cigarette smuggling, drug production and drug trafficking, Turkish groups in the international drug transport, Italians and Dutchmen in trafficking in human beings (for prostitution and illegal labor markets), Rumanians, Slovaks, Serbs in people's smuggling, and internationally active, organized Romanian groups of travelling professional criminals who committed pick-pocketing and burglary of houses and shops in great number. The threat and prediction, however, feared at the mid 90s that Hungary could become the base of the Russian and Russian speaking organized crime did not realized.

The transformation of the economic structure and finance markets offered a wide field for white collar criminals who were active in the whole spectrum of the economic crime, (various crimes in the course of the full-scale privatization, money laundry, bankruptcy deception, unlawful dissolving of enterprises with great debts, foundation of companies for investment- and loan-deceptions, mass production of falsified invoices, etc.). A series of bomb attacks in the last year of the 90s on prominent persons of certain OC-related enterprises and on politicians pointed not only to the strong competitions of criminal organizations, but also to the existence of illegal markets of weapons and explosive materials and to the existence of criminal groups, ready and willing to terroristic activity. A bomb attack in 1991 committed by RAF-activists Andrea Klump and Horst Ludwig Meyer against the airport bus transporting Russian Jews immigrating to Israel showed that international political terrorism in Hungary is not an imaginary but a very real threat. This events and tendencies required amendments in the penal law and the penal policy. The necessary law and police structures for the investigation and fight against OC have been created by the end of the 90s.

In the respects described above Hungary does not differ considerably from other countries of the former Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe. The real difference consists in the fact that in Hungary the formerly ruling communist élite plays the leading role in

politics and economy until today and behaves like a – meanwhile post-communist – OC network, and forces other political participant to similar behavioral patterns. After the theoretical model of study books of criminology OC tries to corrupt the state administration. However, in this case the conclusion is obvious, that the OC itself took over the governance and organizes the society according to its functional rules, behind a democratic facade. The enforced general corruption, clientism and plundering are the basic roles for all activities in politics, economy and civil society. This is the most dangerous form of the OC which represents in its political statements pro-European, in its activities strict counter-European positions and endangers the basic values and achievements of Europe. Also other states, e.g. Poland and Romania experienced similar periods. That is why the difference between Hungary and its neighboring states is gradual only, but the social consequences were nowhere as disastrous as in Hungary. As a result of this development Hungary became from the forerunner of the transition by today the “sick man” of Europe and has good chances to become very soon – using the terminology of the political science - the first so-called "failed state" in Europe, while “states failures” were known until now in the Latin-America and the Third World only.

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