

How to Kill Packet-Radio & APRS? Come to Serbia! (Part 2)

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Abstract

In this paper, we continue analyzing pervasive failures in Serbian policymakers' strange decisions, as well as continual country's ham radio leadership's wrongdoings – that all together significantly leads not only to the stagnation in development of VHF & UHF ham radio data infrastructure but also to possible extinction of anything else but contests in telegraphy and 'fox-hunting'.

1. Introduction

In the previous installment of this series, I mentioned that at the time I was writing my first paper for DCC conferences – the paper published in the proceedings of the “22nd Annual ARRL and TAPR Digital Communications Conference” (Skoric, 2003), “I ceased any connection with governing people in Serbian ham organizations for good.” (Skoric, 2018). Well, I was wrong: Almost twenty years later I came back to Amateur Radio Union of Vojvodina (Savez radio-amatera Vojvodine, abbr. SRV) to serve as the Union's secretary.

That was not my idea at all, so let me tell you how that happened. Somewhere in November 2018 I received an email from Polish radio amateur Armand, SP3QFE, who asked me whether I knew any ham skilled in ham satellite operations in the area of Sremska Mitrovica city, some 100 kilometers far from my place. He asked me that because there was a lady teacher in an elementary school in Sremska Mitrovica who wanted her school to participate in ARISS contacts with scientists at the International Space Station (ISS). So she managed to locate SP3QFE who served as the regional

coordinator-mentor for ARISS, and then he managed to find me as a possible source of information. Unfortunately, I had no previous experience with ham satellites, so I sent an email to the Union's office, asking for help. The person who responded was Stanisa, YU7AC, one of the Union's vice-presidents. We exchanged few emails about the topic, and I eventually paid a visit to the Union's office. After some conversation, YU7AC asked me to serve as another vice-president because they had vacancy for one member in the governing board. Having in mind what I wrote in (Skoric, 2018), I refused his invitation by stating that I did not want to talk about any 'comeback' until I clearly see that the board is doing something to improve the rules related to CEPT status for the 2nd class (the former no-Morse E-category) of Serbian hams. And instead of talking in that direction, he quickly tried to persuade me to take the 1st class license examination. I refused again by stating that I was too busy with my academic activities to waste my time with learning for an exam that “wouldn't prove anything” (self-citation).

After a week or so I received an email from him, telling that in the evening on the same day there was the examination session at the local club and

if I wanted I could enroll for the exam. I thought I could not lose anything by going there, and found my copy of the textbook titled "Priručnik o stručnom osposobljavanju članova Saveza radio-amatera i načinu organizovanja ispita" ("Handbook for educating members of SRS and defining amateur radio examination procedures") written by Djordje, YU1KH, and published 1995 by SRS (Amateur Radio Union of Serbia) in Belgrade. I spent some three hours to scroll through the book pages in trying to refresh my memory for some electronics theory. Eventually, I passed the examination in the evening – although not so perfectly because I had wrong answers to some questions. (The threshold for successful result was around 70% of the question pool.) Besides YU7AC, the other examiner was Mirko, YU7WW, the president of the local radio club "Novi Sad"-YU7BPQ.

A couple of days later, I received another email from YU7AC, asking me to take the Union's vice-president position by mentioning (citation) "... now when we have solved your CEPT issue" (end of citation). As I was in a strong belief that a person can really change (read: improve) any organizational system when he or she is *inside*, I decided to take the risk, and accepted that (voluntary) position. In other words, I felt that after becoming a member of the Union's board I would be in a position to change things.

I was wrong.

2. "Let us work"

2.1 New secretary

Few days later I received another email from YU7AC, having the Subject: "Secretary". From the mail's content I understood that I was appointed to the secretary position – not for the vice-prez. I knew that it was not the exact part of the previous talks, but I told myself: Ok, let's do it this way.

(According to the Union's bylaw, only the president is elected by the electoral assembly, and then he or she is free to choose his or her

team – including the secretary. In this particular case, I have never met the acting president before. That was Laci, YT7DQ, and he obviously agreed when YU7AC nominated myself for an office. It remained questionable, though, why YU7AC had talked to me about the 'vice-prez' office – rather than the sec'y one. Was that incidental or intentional? To understand this, you need to know that the vice-presidents' roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined in the Union's bylaw, and that differs from the secretary's roles that are listed in details.)

So far – so good. At the very beginning I felt I had successfully joined a new team of people who (I thought) were strongly inclined to keep the organization prosper & healthy. In terms of time, it was the early 2019, and a lot of work was in front of the team: Concluding the previous business year, preparing the annual conference of the assembly (held in March), printing & sending membership fee reminders, and so forth. I took over some of those tasks immediately and without questions because I wanted to show my willingness to be a team-player. In parallel with administrative tasks, I offered various organizational improvements because I still felt as a recent outsider who had just jumped to the wagon and who was in a better position to observe the situation from a 'backseat'.

However, it appeared very soon that other members of the board were looking at me as a kind of a 'servant' who was there to satisfy their administrative needs, such as going to the post office or bank, or to seat in front of the computer and type various reports, etc. I do not need to say that I felt uneasy with such kind of (unpaid) 'job', but I told myself: Ok, I was a retiree anyway, and nobody forced me to attend the office everyday, and even when I visited the office I could also think about some more improvements, and I could put those ideas on my agenda, and ...

To examine the 'public opinion' regarding the 'state of the Union', I subscribed to the "YU0V" member mailing list, and posted some inquiries.

My posts were related to reviving packet-radio network on the geographical part of Serbia that was under the Union’s responsibility. And I received only few responses – although off-list. (Those who responded did not want to go publicly for whatever reason.) Some responders were skeptical that many (if any) things could be improved in the Union’s practices. Their explanation was that the old-fashioned way of thinking within and around the organization was the greatest barrier to any improvement. In other words, the governing people and the majority of members had deep grassroots in a (mis)belief that only ‘fundamental’ amateur radio modes & activities, such as CW and SSB contesting, were the ones worth to play with. Other activities, such as amateur radio satellites, packet-radio, APRS™, ARISS contacts, and many others, were either unknown to the majority of local hams or totally marginalized by the Union’s leadership.

I considered that as a long-term bad politics, and I wanted to change that. So I took an opportunity to rewrite the Union’s 2019 yearly plan, by adding activities related to developing

packet-radio and APRS™ networks, as well as initiating communications with Amateur Radio Union of Serbia (Savez radio-amatera Srbije, abbr. SRS) in Belgrade, the national capital. The planned communications with SRS would include talks about improving the rules that govern amateur radio in Serbia – more precisely the necessity to accept pan-European CEPT recommendations in its entirety. As discussed in (Skoric, 2018), Serbia has accepted only parts of recommendations that favored telegraphers, and I argued that no ham category should be ever marginalized as a result of preferred operating mode(s).

And by the way, even though the 1st amateur radio license in Serbia was listed as the CEPT-compliant in *ero.dk* website, in the license itself it was not clearly noted that the licensee had a fully-compatible CEPT document, see Figure 1. In fact, it would be more suitable for license holders in the 1st class (Figure 1, left) that their ‘plastics’ include some words like “CEPT-compatible”, or like. Otherwise, some foreign administrations may require additional paperwork when a licensee travels abroad.



Figure 1. Ham radio licenses of the 1st class (left) and the 2nd class (right).

Not to mention that it would be also suitable for license holders in the 2nd class (Figure 1, right) that they obtain “CEPT Novice -compatible” status and be labeled accordingly. That was also a part of my agenda because I noticed that many licensees in the 2nd class spend their summer or winter holidays in neighboring countries, and

they should be allowed to use their handy or vehicle VHF/UHF amateur radios while travel around. By the way, it is quite usual today to see on the APRS™ maps foreign operators traveling throughout Serbia and reporting their positions without any special requirement. Having in mind that APRS™ in this part of Europe is almost

exclusively used on VHF band (144.800 MHz), and that the majority of license holders in the 2nd class use handy VHF/UHF radios, I see no reason why to keep them legally unable to use their stations abroad for making friendly ham contacts on a short-term basis. Do we really

want our VHF/UHF bands to remain fully utilized, or not? To illustrate international road traffic in Serbia, I give an example of a Turkish amateur radio operator TB2BCE who frequently travels by Serbian highways as a truck driver (Figure 2).

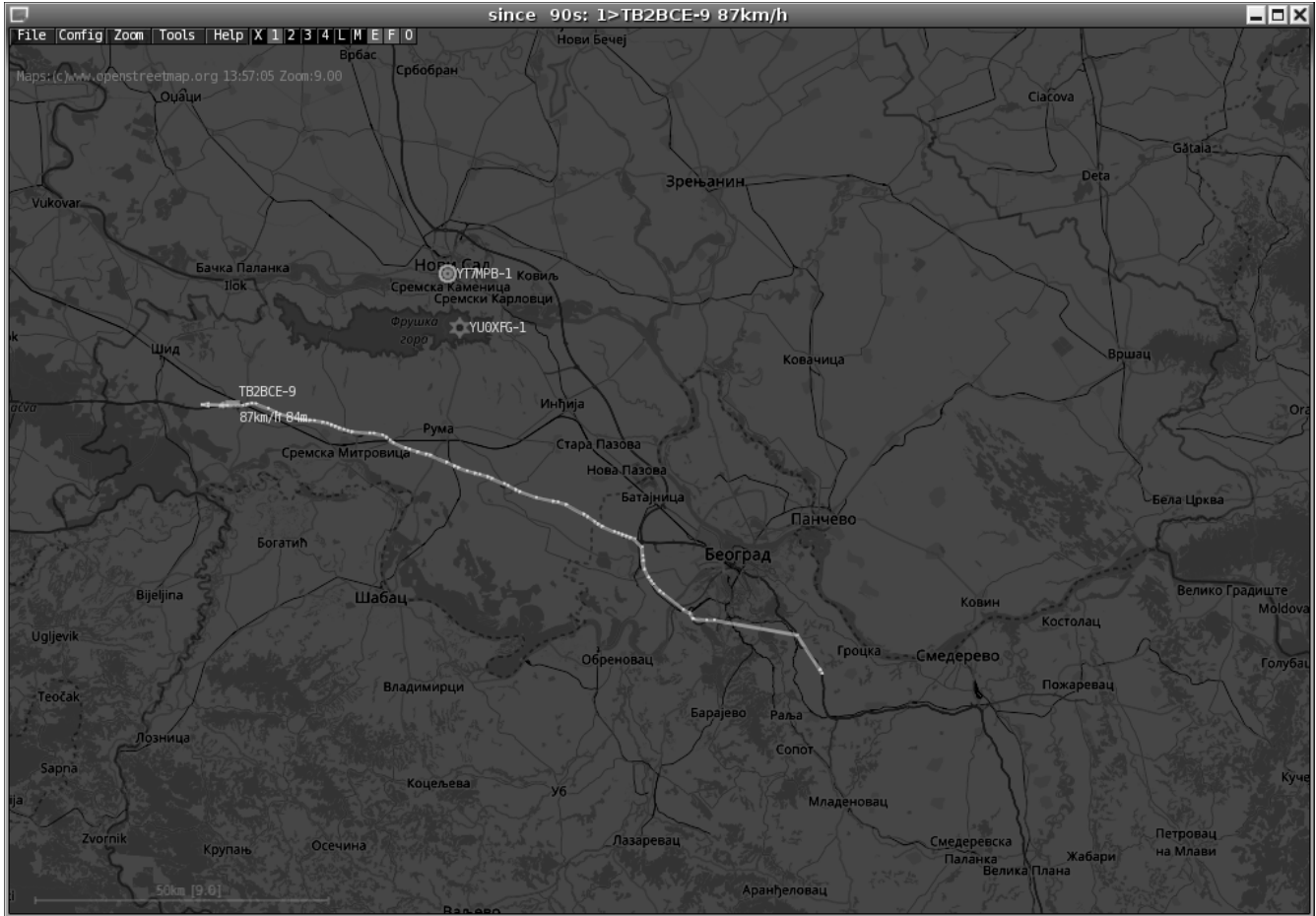


Figure 2. Turkish amateur radio operator TB2BCE who traveled from east to west on January 22, 2018.

There are other examples, such as an Austrian motorcyclist (OE8NDR, Figure 3), or a German car driver (DL1ZM, Figure 4).

2.2 No real political will

Although the president and vice-presidents of SRV did not make visible objections to my proposal for improving the regulations, it appeared that it was easier said than done. When I talked to YU7AC about the proposal, he wanted to assure me that I will have the

strongest opponent in his ‘good friend’ Sinisa, YU1RA, who was, by the way, one of the creators of actual regulations (brought to power in 2011) that decreased ham radio opportunities for Class 2 licensees in Serbia. It appeared that YU1RA had advocated that Serbian Class 2 licensees have not deserved to be included into the CEPT licensing system. YU1RA, who also serves the office of a secretary general in SRS, falsely claimed that the quality of education in the former E-category (now Class 2) was ‘so bad’ by means that the level of technical knowledge in Serbian no-Morse operators was

‘far lower than the standards prescribed by CEPT and/or CEPT Novice practices’. It is really bizarre for the ham society leaderships to express such nonsense because it would seem that they care about wellbeing of the EU more than the EU’s own telecommunication regulators. There is an old adage here in Balkans that says something about those (wrongdoers): “They want to be better catholics than Pope”.

Unfortunately, the reality is quite the opposite: The SRS leadership does not care about the EU and CEPT regulations at all. Instead, by falsely claiming that they ‘protect’ pan-European amateur radio traffic from apparently/allegedly ‘unskilled & uneducated’ (no-Morse) operators (Class 2) in Serbia, they actually diminish chances that this country modernizes itself in many areas, including ham radio technologies.

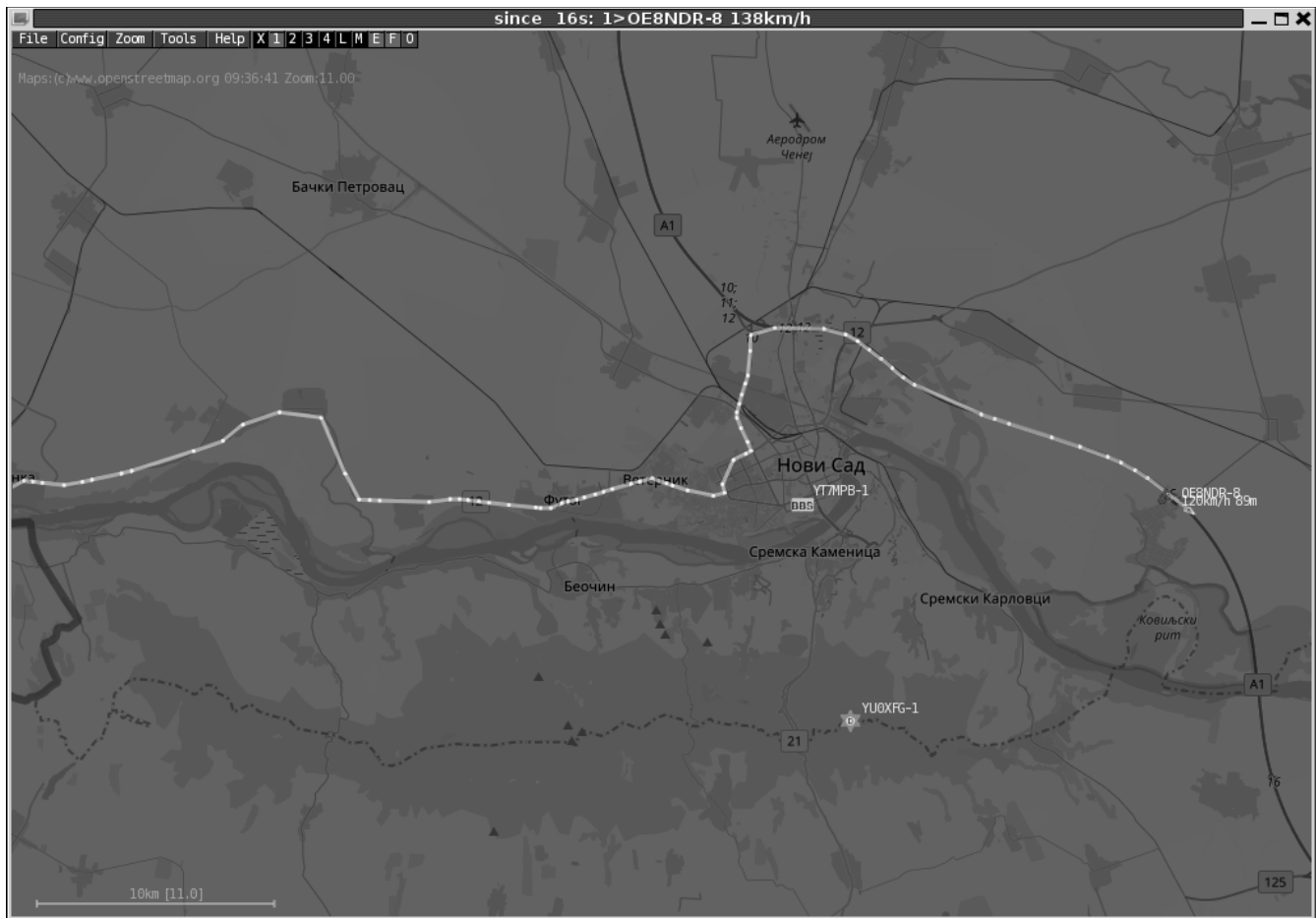


Figure 3. Austrian amateur radio operator OE8NDR who traveled from west to east on April 19, 2019.

2.3 I say, you say ...

Here I list some examples that are witnessing bad attitude in Serbian ham leaderships when it comes to modernization & reforming ham communities in the country. It became common among the ham radio traditionalists in Serbia to urge candidates to ‘avoid by any means’ the examination for Class 2 (former no-Morse

category), as well as to ‘skip’ the ‘unnecessary Class 3’ (the beginners category). Recently I was in the local club YU7BPQ when one of the older members Ljubisa, YU7BG, strongly suggested to a newcomer to go ‘directly to Class 1’ - even though the young candidate clearly expressed his interest to start with handy VHF/UHF radios. Unfortunately, YU7BG was resolute: “Handy? No way! That’s not ham radio! Come here to the

ham shack to see what telegraphy is.” I was amazed by such level of discouraging prospective candidate to start from basic things. (Not to mention that just few days later YU7BG asked the club’s executive board to approve his

request for purchasing new batteries for the club’s handy talkies. He did not bother to explain the reason for purchasing batteries, and did not clarify his intention for using portable radios at that time.)

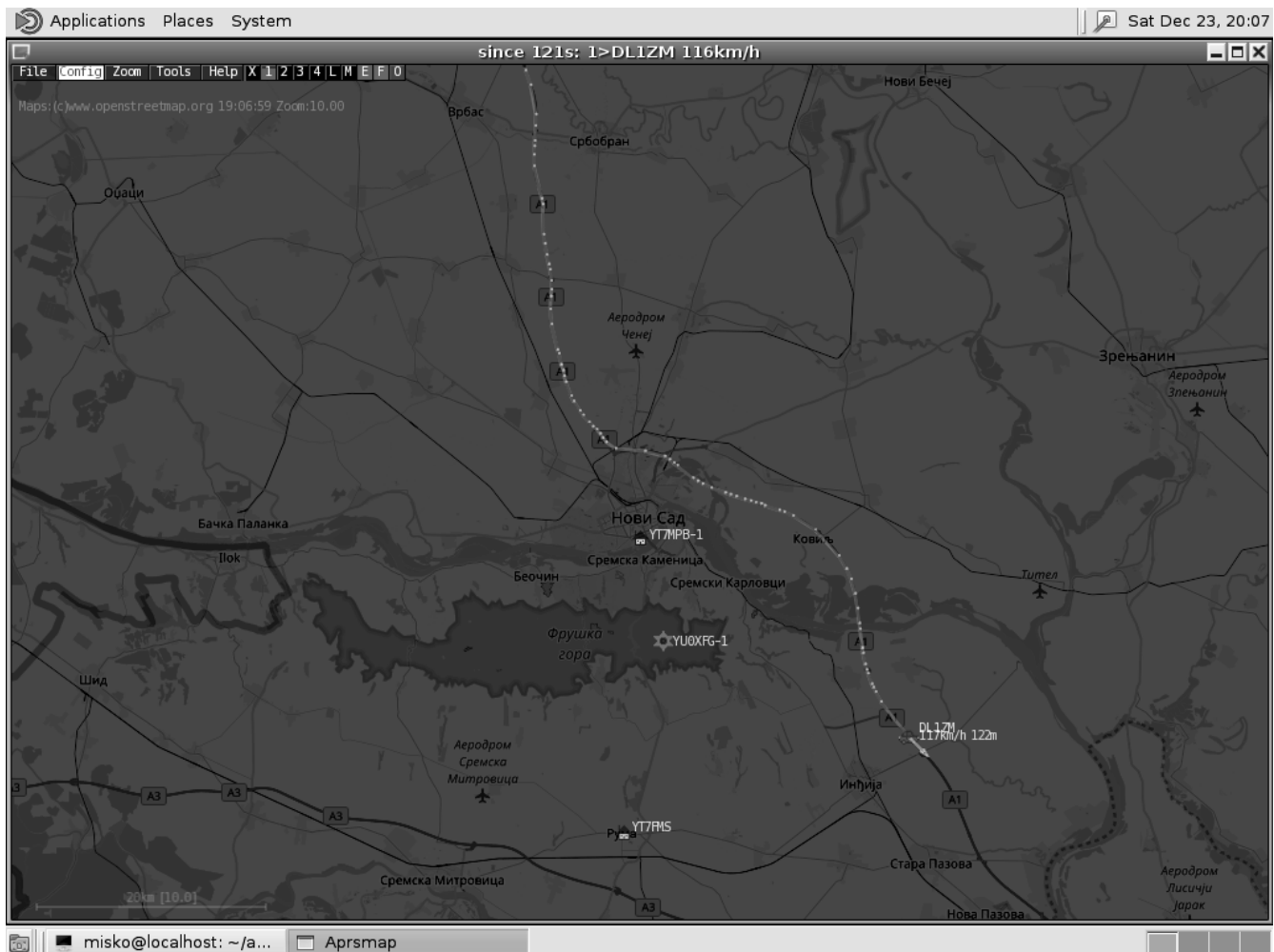


Figure 4. German amateur radio operator DL1ZM who traveled from north to south on December 23, 2017.

Even though I made it clear that my reactivation in the SRV executive board was motivated primarily to remove aforementioned bad attitude among ‘ham fundamentalists’ towards no-Morse hams and beginner categories, YU7AC told me in person that “only real hams are those who practice CW and SSB”. Really amazing. He knew very well that I was, for many years, the no-Morse ham operator who practiced data modes such as administering packet-radio nodes and AX.25 mailboxes, who kept alive local APRS activities, and so on. However, he was

not able to realize that his statement sounded offensive. Furthermore, when I advocated to reaffirm regional packet-radio network, he quickly claimed that “packet-radio was dead” as a ham activity. In opposite to his claim, I recently received quite positive opinions on the actual status of packet-radio in the USA (for example). Brian, NIURO, wrote that he, as the re-elected president of the ‘EastNet Packet Network’, can confirm many activities in building new nodes in his part of the country (Brian, 2019). David, KI6ZHD, said that “... Winlink email packet,

EmComm used packet, and Classic keyboard to keyboard packet is doing decently well here in the Northern California, USA. There are still a few packet BBSes, lots of TNC pBBSes, etc.” (David, 2019). Doug, N7BFS, noted that both Washington and Oregon states in the US had a number of nodes still active, mostly with Winlink/Airmail), and that he maintained four of them in eastern Washington and coordinated with a number of amateurs in the outer areas (Doug, 2019). Joe, AG6QO, pointed out that AX.25 packet is alive and strong in the USA, especially where he lives in the Pacific West:

Many BBS, nodes, keyboard-keyboard nets, and WinLink gateways using packet. I can node-hop from northern California into Washington state and Canada to the north, and to Arizona, Nevada and Mexico, all on VHF/UHF AX25. Very reliable, proven, and cheap, readily available hardware and software. (Joe, 2019)

Besides the US packeteers, Lorenzo, IW3HER, sent me an email informing on few ‘Super Vozelj’ nodes that were still active in his area of northeastern Italy, and have been maintained by Cristiano, IZ3LSV (Lorenzo, 2019). However, Rick, KG4OFO, argued “... that AX.25's lower overhead makes more efficient use of RF bandwidth as long as it's not just encapsulating IP” (Rick, 2019), while Tom, VK7NTK, saw difficulties in having more users in southern Tasmania (Tom, 2019). Mike, AB3AP, noticed a lack of packet stations in southeastern Pennsylvania where he lives. He added that there were a few but they're just outside his ability to transmit. Sometimes he can receive them, but they rarely hear him (Mike, 2019).

So this short survey proved that packet-radio was far from ‘death’ - although experiencing various difficulties in different areas.

3. More issues

Political discrepancies within Serbia, which started alongside with the fall of former Yugoslavia, have reflected to the amateur radio community as well. For example, Serbian regulatory authority RATEL looks at SRS as the representative of ham radio interests in the country. In the previous installment I discussed about RATEL's blindly following wrong suggestions originated in SRS. Unfortunately, it seems that the problem is not only in the offices of SRS, but also in SRV too. In fact, SRV executive board members tend to keep ‘calm & friendly’ when it comes to mutual relationships between the two unions. And both sides tend not to make troubles in between after they managed to ‘share the territory’. Now SRV handles license applications in Vojvodina province of Serbia, while SRS does the same in the rest of the country. The problem I noticed as the secretary of SRV is that SRV is not able (or not willingly) to properly articulate the problems with CEPT harmonization in front of the SRS leadership, and consequently in front of RATEL as the regulatory authority. And as long as status quo is maintained, I cannot predict much progress in domestic regulations (if any).

For example, although he does not want to say it loudly, it is obvious that YU7AC is not likely to produce any turbulences that, in turn, may produce some negative feelings in both SRS and RATEL. Why? It is unclear, but it is widely known that at least two vice-presidents of SRV (incl. YU7AC) have strong motivation to keep businesses of their private companies well and healthy. Their companies work in areas of telecommunications, so the owners obviously want to stay ‘at mercy’ of national regulators. Only God knows whether that situation shall be described as a conflict of interest, or not. You can tell me how you deal with similar cases in the US or elsewhere.

Somewhere in 2018, several months before I started to serve as the Union's secretary, there was a dispute between a former SRV vice-president Sasa, YT3H, and the SRS executive board in Belgrade, where YT3H was also one of the vice-presidents in the same time. (It was a

kind of a ‘delegating’ system where the SRV executive board had a representative in its SRS counterpart, to coordinate activities in both societies.) But, in some incidental situation the SRS president ‘fired’ that SRV representative, as a result of some personal disputes, or whatever. At that time, YT3H was a member of SRV executive board in full capacity, and ‘thankfully’ to that fact, SRV prepared an ‘objection note’ to SRS, related to apparently ‘unconstitutional expelling’ YT3H from the SRS board. However, few months later, YT3H decided to step down from the vice-president’s position in SRV, because of some personal reasons (or, this time, a dispute with the SRV board members). Interestingly, YU7AC ‘warmly welcomed’ the new situation and canceled sending the objection note to SRS – even though they previously designated expelling YT3H from the SRS board as ‘unconstitutional’. I asked myself: Where the ethics disappeared?

Another example is the Friedrichshafen show in Germany. As you know, it is a kind of ‘European Dayton’ ham meeting. Serbia, as a country, has never had a union’s booth there, but some local ham individuals regularly attended the show, by sponsoring their travel and stay by their own personal budgets. However, few months ago I was present when YU7AC had a telephone conversation and told his correspondent that SRS ‘appointed’ him as a ‘delegation chief’ for Friedrichshafen – although he was not going to attend the SRS booth at all, and commented that somebody else shall be found to serve at the booth. He also mentioned that part of the costs of travel & stay would be covered by SRS funds (read: membership money). I dared to ask YU7AC what was the purpose of the planned travel to Friedrichshafen – having in mind that the booth never existed and no ham saw that as a big problem. He responded that “... all the countries in the region of Balkans had their booths in previous shows, so that it must be some usefulness of being there ...” Nevertheless, I also witnessed when YU7AC discussed the planned travel with Mirko, YU7WW (the president of YU7BPQ club) and Sloba, YU7HI (the president of YU7BPQ advisory board).

From their discussion, it was clear that the main reasons for going to Germany included some of their private businesses. In general, that’s fine – but only as long as they do not pretend to ‘represent’ Serbian hams there (and do that at the cost of the hams’ membership money!)

3.1 Strange budget inputs

According to the SRV’s ‘constitution’, this is a society of ham clubs in the province of Vojvodina (in the northern part of Serbia). In general, those clubs have decided to join SRV (i.e. to form the society on the provincial level). Particular club names are not listed in the ‘constitution’ because new clubs can appear and some old ones can disappear from the scene. Individual club members are not mentioned in that document at all, while individual ‘direct’ SRV membership is mentioned as an option for hams who do not have nearby clubs (or just do not want to join local clubs). From that point of view, it would seem logical that the clubs pay the highest membership fee to SRV, followed by those clubs’ members (who should pay a little bit less because they also finance those clubs), followed by the individual SRV members (who should pay the least because many of them live outside urban city zones, and hence do not enjoy SRV services/privileges intended for the clubs). But, that’s not the case: The clubs pay the lowest fee (1000 RSD per year); club members pay double (2000 RSD), and individual SRV members pay the highest (3000 RSD). Why? Nobody knows. However, that does not seem fair because most of the clubs are already equipped with radios, antennas, and other ham gear, so they make new purchases infrequently. Furthermore, the clubs’ members use that gear regularly, so they can save their personal funds. In opposite, individual (‘unconnected’) SRV members have to finance their own gear *and* to pay the most to the Union. Where’s the logic there? And what happens: As a secretary I realized that the majority of those individual hams do not pay their membership fee for several years. Usually, they only pay for the membership once in ten years when they need to renew their

licenses, and only then the unions use the chance to collect some money from them. (In fact, hams in Serbia are not obliged to be the unions' members any more.) From their point of view, those individual ('direct') members look at the membership fee as a money extortion, and because of that they tend to avoid paying for the full decade later. And although SRS and SRV bosses keep claiming that their organize 'important international contests & meetings', the majority of individual hams do not see much usefulness & services of those unions. As a result, instead of circa 500 new potential individual members, SRV manages to collect not more than 80-100 memberships per year.

3.2 No efforts to educate themselves

After my voluntary 20+ years of self-isolation from any organizational ham activity, I expected to see some 'new blood' within the Serbian ham community. I expected to see various efforts for getting closer to the education, science, and research sectors. For example, here in Vojvodina province we have few academic centers (Novi Sad, Sombor, Subotica, Zrenjanin). In all those cities we have active ham clubs. So I expected to see efforts on both local (city) levels and on the provincial (SRV) level, to establish long-term relationships in between the ham clubs and local schools and universities. It is known that amateur radio hardware and software always need modernization and improvements in quality of signal processing, speed and reliability of ham software, and so on. It would be logical to see initiatives for including ham radio in schools' activities, on mutual behalf. (By the way, collaboration with educational sector has been already listed in the Union's 'constitution' as one of the most important tasks.)

Unfortunately, there are no such efforts on the horizon. A former ham club at University of Novi Sad is 'dead' for a long time now. I asked myself why, until I realized that in the past the 'ham fundamentalists' only wanted to use high academic buildings as a place for erecting antennas – antennas for CW contesting, of

course. And whenever they erected such antennas, they fed them with so strong power – strong enough to produce interference to the academic lab equipment. As a result, many such falsely 'collaboration' with science & research ended by expelling hams from the university.

3.3 Living in the past

On March 24, 2019, ham leaderships of SRS and SRV 'contested' each-other in patriotism. That particular day was a remembrance day of starting NATO bombardment over the former Yugoslavia in Spring 1999. All the TV stations – particularly those under control of political authorities, celebrated a 'victory over NATO criminals'. Of course, not a single TV station dared to analyze what led to the confrontation with NATO. Nevertheless, YU7AC was hosted by some local media where he pointed out the important role of Serbian hams during the "NATO aggression". Similar content was heard from Dusan, YU1EA, one of the SRS leaders, who was the guest-speaker in the morning program of the state-governed RTS public service¹. Although there is no doubt that Serbian hams did a lot during the mentioned conflict, it was really sad to hear two unions' leaders so over-motivated to discuss one of the darkest periods in Serbian history.

To make things really bizarre, the same week we held in Novi Sad city the annual assembly of SRV, where the president of SRS informed the audience that the national amateur radio organization had to pay a significant amount of money to the state-owned company that coordinates TV towers in the country. As you know, high TV towers are often used as good locations for positioning ham radio repeaters. Although I am unsure how that area is regulated in the USA and other countries, it seems that Serbian government found a way to make money from those who were supposed to be (and who still believe they are) 'patriots on the first line of defense'.

¹ <https://vimeo.com/326136500>

3.4 Numbers do not lie

On Saturday, May 11, 2019, the annual assembly of SRS was held in Belgrade, the Serbian capital. Approximately one week before the meeting we received the SRS annual report. Among several intriguing parts of it, there was a detail that took my specific attention: The statistical summary of ham examinations per ham clubs, unions, and amateur radio classes. The summary is copied in Figure 5.

Одржани испити по клубовима (само СРС):

Клуб	2018			
	1. кл.	2. кл.	3. кл.	CW
YU1ACR			4	
YU1ADO	1	14		
YU1AFV	2		4	
YU1AKV	3	1	3	1
YU1AXY			5	
YU1BBV	4		6	
YU1FJK			20	
YU1HFG	6	2	7	
YU1INO	1		8	3
YU1SRS	2		5	
Укупно:	19	17	62	4

СРВ испити:

Клуб	2018			
	1. кл.	2. кл.	3. кл.	CW
YU7AOP	12			1
YU7BPQ	10		3	
YU7JDE	2			
YU7KMN	3		6	
Укупно:	27		9	1

Figure 5. Summarized report on ham examinations in between the two annual assemblies (Apr 2018 - Apr 2019).

The upper part of the table shows the number of examinations in ham clubs under the ‘jurisdiction’ of SRS only (performed on the state territory called “Inner Serbia” - without autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo*), while the lower part has numbers for SRV union only. Although it was clear that overall interest in telegraphy exams was marginal (4 in SRS, 1 in SRV, see the fifth column), something else was very strange: SRV did not have a single one Class 2 /former no-Morse, now no-CEPT category/ examination (third column), and the number of candidates for the top-level Class 1 (second column) tripled the number of

candidates for the entry-level Class 3 (fourth column). The only conclusion is that SRV leadership worked very hard in 2018 to build up (artificially) the score for allegedly great number of newcomers in the ‘top-level’ ham group, and they did that (intentionally) at costs of Class 2 and Class 3. Especially at the cost of Class 2 that was slighted for decades, and is still undervalued by self-proclaimed ham ‘elites’ in Serbia. Amazing! In opposite, the numbers per classes in SRS seemed more logical (the most newcomers were in the entry-level category – 62, where the test was easiest, while Class 2 and the top-level Class 1 numbers were relatively balanced).

So, what can we say after looking at those numbers? Well, although there is no doubt that SRS, as the main national-wide ham group, has always had its ‘teething troubles’, it is obvious that the SRV leadership was not immune from delusion, obfuscation, lies, and continual tries to make things up. It is unclear how IARU Region 1 office has come to a decision to let SRS/SRV administrations to host next IARU R1 Conference in 2020. There are already rumors that the most important aspect of that event is big money that will come from the IARU budget. (Coincidentally, few days ago in early May 2019, there was an EU/EBRD economic meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a BBC-titled person told the audience that Serbia had received millions of € to improve its judicial system, but instead of an improvement the country’s position was lowered from some 60th to some 90th place in a global ranking.)

To learn more about the ‘harmonization’ with CEPT regulations in surrounding countries, I contacted offices of ham unions in Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the first two former ex-Yugoslav republics did not bother to respond to my inquiry, I received a friendly email from Mesud, E75FM, the president of “ARA u BIH” (Bosnian ham association). The content of his mail made it clear that Bosnian ham leadership wanted to be fair to all previous amateur categories, which means they did not want to exclude anybody

from international ham activities. So, they decided to put previous ‘upper’ classes A, B, and C into CEPT1, and ‘lower’ classes D, E, and F into CEPT2 (Mesud, 2019). Furthermore, CEPT1 is the Bosnian national equivalent to CEPT Amateur License, while CEPT2 is equivalent to CEPT Novice License. Fair? I think so.

3.5 Is there light at the end of the tunnel?

After realizing so many bad practices within the Serbian ham community, I initiated aforementioned technical works, such as those related to reviving packet-radio and APRS networks. I did it publicly by using the union’s mailing list. Only a few responses returned back – most of which pretty skeptical on any positive development. However I will stay optimistic until the bureaucratic and ‘ham fundamentalist’ obstacles become too much burden.

I also continued to talk with Serbian governmental offices: After having found that Prof. Dr. Irini Reljin, deputy minister in Serbian ministry for telecommunications, tourism, and trade (TTT), has been in charge for sector of electronic communications and postal traffic, I emailed her office few times in April and May 2019. In those mails, I informed her on the issues discussed in this study. No responses from her or anyone else in TTT ministry yet. By the way, I have recently noticed that in June 2018 RATEL closed the public opinions on then announced draft of a new amateur radio rulebook. Unfortunately, I missed that opportunity to act on time. However, although it was predicted that the new rulebook should have been brought to power in mid-2018, that did not happen yet. So I still hope that my suggestions sent to Ms. Reljin would be of use.

Nevertheless, bad feelings are still everywhere. I have recently witnessed when YU7AC loudly diminished the strength and influence of citizens’ protests on the streets of Serbia against the actual political establishment, by giving negative comments on the protestants’ allegedly low

numbers. That partially says something about (but not only) YU7AC’s tendency to blindly follow & support Mr. Vucich’s rigid political regime that is just a worse copy of the former Milosevich’s clique. And yes, I can understand that, for example, YU7AC has business interests in the actual regime, as he had similar interests in the previous governments. But, if that goes at the cost of the wellbeing of radio amateurs, I will be a strong opponent.

4. Conclusion

As I said at the end of the previous installment, I respect all amateur radio communication modes, including CW and SSB. I am not against them and I never was. Furthermore, I respect them as most traditional and proved ones. However, anyone’s skill in practicing them cannot be – by any means – an excuse for neglecting modern ways of computer-related communications, including various data modes. With that idea, I hope that DCC 2019 participants will be in a position to offer new perspectives for improving this fine hobby. In that direction I invite again radio amateurs from the USA (and elsewhere) to consider joining me in preparing materials for new book chapters and slides for technical presentations in developing parts of world.

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