# Reporting Rock and Roll fascism

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Here in the former Yugoslavia journalists have some tough calls to make and some weird stories to report. Take the the right-wing nationalist Croatian rock band called Thompson. They are named after a machine gun, which gives you a flavour of their politics. They play patriotic songs on the Croatian national day events and their fans even dress up in the uniforms of ultra-nationalist, neo-fascist groups. At today's conference on politics and the media in Sarajevo, a Croatian journalist asked how they should report the controversy around this band which appears to breach regional rules on hate speech and provocative political symbolism (just as Germany bans Nazi insignia). Should they report it straight or should they make a point of highlighting the dangerous messages this band is sending out? In fact the reporting in the Croatian press largely ignored the provocative, possibly illegal aspects of Thompson and concentrated on defending them against foreign slurs.

It all reminds me of the debate back in the late 70s and 80s in the UK around right-wing skinhead punk bands. At the time many student unions banned them as part of a 'no platform for racists' policy. Some might say this sort of policy has helped fend off white fascism in the UK. Many journalists here, however, warn that in practice, policies that ban or restrict these kind of groups simply boosts their support among a population who are by no means sympathetic to some pretty unsavoury ideolgical hangovers from the conflicts that began in the Communist era and ended only as recently as 1996.