

ДАРКО ГАВРИЛОВИЋ*
Природно-математички факултет
Нови Сад

УДК 316.624(497.11):342.7
Монографска студија
Примљен: 27.04.2014
Одобен: 22.05.2014

DISPELLING THE HATRED IN SERBIA

Importance of Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education - How to Unmask The Myth about Enemy

A destruction that only man can provoke, only man can prevent.
Ellie Wiesel

Summary: In this article we will examine the urgency for dispelling the hatred in Serbia where the manifests of contemporary anti-Semitism and myths about enemy are still alive. In according to that, we will insist on need for social responsibility from the head of state to the importance of Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education same as on making a network between them in Serbian society. The analysis focuses mainly on Holocaust deniers, conspiratorial explanations of western policies and homeland traitors among the Serbian scholars, intellectuals and writers. In article will be suggest that the proliferation of conspiracy theories during the war in Ex Yugoslavia same as after the war led to a shifting of the boundary between acceptable and non acceptable political explanations, with the result that formerly unacceptable anti-Semitic themes became respectable. The Myth of the Enemy, have been exploited to provide national leaders with legitimacy for waging wars, providing justification for killing and deaths, absolute political instrumentalization and conquering new territories.

Key words: genocide, anti-Semitism, myths, enemy, Serbia

* chdr.novisad@gmail.com

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, and especially during the last fifteen years, the human need to right the immoral wrongs has been expressed in political discourse as a propensity to apologize for acts of past injustice. Nicholas Tavuchis was among the first scholars to take up the subject of these political apologies, and his text: „Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation“ still serves as a historical starting point for the field. Tavuchis regarded apology as one of the „deep truths“ of social life and as a „moral expedition“ which could repair damaged social relations and allow the parties of past injustices to go on with their lives (Barkan, Karn 2006:5). From Argentina, to South Africa, to ex-Yugoslav countries, to the United States – societies and international institutions are deciding how they should reckon with past and atrocities (including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, rape and torture) that may have been committed by a government against its own citizens, by its opponents, or by combatants in an international armed conflict (Barkan, Karn 2006:5).

One of the most important ways how to secure the future peace is to prevent the genocide. The fundamental goal of this article will be to shape the most important steps in attention to prevent genocide, especially Holocaust education, and to unmask the political myths, especially, myth about enemy. In this paper, the author will use the example of a political myths about the enemy that were created in Serbia. The intention is to emphasize the importance of politically correct action in the region. The aim is to curb ethnic hatred and anti-Semitism.

Responding to the Challenge - social responsibility from the head of state to the importance of Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education

Preventing genocide is a goal that can be achieved with right organizational structures, strategies, and partnership - in short with right blueprint. At first, it should be recognizable that making progress toward preventing genocide requires leadership and political will. In accordance with that, the first step should be made from the president on down - ideally at the beginning of a new administration. History has shown that reconciliation process is going through repentance of the high ranking politicians in attention to prevent possibility of recurrence a genocide. It is possible with sufficient interest and attention from the highest ranks of government. One of the well known political acts in that direction is a gesture of humility and penance by social de-

mocratic Chancellor of Germany Willy Brandt towards the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In the former Yugoslavia, politician Milo Djukanovic was the first among presidents who apologized for crimes committed during the war in Croatia. After his apology, followed apologies of the other presidents and politicians. Serbian president from 2008 to 2012, Boris Tadic, was in commemorate memorial center of Potocari where he expressed his regret to victims of the Srebrenica massacre and in the memorial center Ovcara where he visited the graves of Croatian victims of the siege of Vukovar. Recent Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic during his visit to Sarajevo apology to the Bosnians. But the „presidential apology“ was not enough. Under presidential leadership, the administration should develop and promulgate a government-wide policy on preventing genocide, mass atrocities and in the same time to improve neighbouring countries relations (Albright, Cohen 2008:7). The president should create a standing interagency mechanism for analysis of threats of genocide and to strenghten regional efforts to prevent possible mass atrocities (Albright, Cohen 2008:7-8). Also it is recommendable to create high-level interessembly body, some kind of Atrocities Prevention Committee that should be dedicated to responding to such treats. In accordance with that, we can mention a good political practice that was made between Croatia and Serbia. So, Croatian and Serbian parliaments created Parliamentary friendship group which is established in the National Assemblies in Serbia and Croatia for the purpose of voluntary improvement of relations and cooperation between these two countries.

Preventing genocide action should find place in education. Beside the fact that government need to carry out lustration of those political forces and those of the media who supported the previously committed crimes, they should incorporate Holocaust education, human rights education, and modernization of the school system in terms of creating subjects without bias and prejudices (especially subjects such as history, geography and native language and literature) in order to dispell the political myths.

The lack of a wider political as well as social will, to take a critical look at and cognizance of phenomena such as anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism, intolerance, etc, which are the concomitant of nationalism, deprives Serbian society of a chance to reconstitute itself into a democratic, tolerant and, above all, auto-reflexive society ready to accept difference as such instead of focusing on its own continuing frustrations or making assessments in terms of its own needs.

If we wants to speak about anti-Semitism in Serbia, it is important to mention that anti-Semitic sentiments have assumed not only political but also social and cultural importance although there are hardly any Jews in the

country at all. The exact number of Jews living in the territory of the Republic of Serbia (not including Kosovo) is not known. The last official census conducted in 2002 put the number of persons declaring themselves Jews at 1,1587. In the past twenty years or so in Serbia anti-Semitism has not existed as an isolated phenomenon; it should therefore be sought in the radicalization, intolerance and xenophobia permeating politics and society as a result of a disastrous, destructive policy. In view of the traditional perception of the Jews as ever others and foreigners, anti-Semitism in Serbia may, in a broader sense, be interpreted as a problematic attitude to difference rather than as a purely anti-Jewish ideology, practice, or discourse. Recent analyses of anti-Semitism in post-communist Serbia suggest that, for much of the 1990s, anti-Jewish ideology was a marginal phenomenon without strong institutional or ideological basis, but at the beginning of the 21st century, we are still faced with rise of nazism among young Serbs especially in ultra nationalistic organisations but also among teenage football players. Unfortunately, even beside that, since the nineties, we can find many examples of anti-Semitism among the Serbs. Most of them find themselves in theories such as of an international conspiracy against Serbia under the guidance of Jews, launched by the Milošević regime and satellite parties during the nineties, mostly because of the economic and scientific sanctions, had the object of explaining away the failures of Serbia's warlike and nationalist policy. An integral part of this theory was the thesis about the existence of 'shadow rulers', that is, of Jewish power centers, which was a main generator of anti-Semitism in Serbia. Other than there allegedly being a '...planet-wide Jewish conspiracy against Christian Orthodoxy, especially against the Serb people...', there was said to be a conspiracy by fifth-colonists including Jews and the few political groups and especially nongovernmental organizations opposed to the warlike policy. Conspiracy theories referring to the activities of the Council of Foreign Relations, The Bilderberg Group and The Trilateral Commission have also been advanced by certain segments of the Serbian intellectual establishment to which belong Smilja Avramov. Anti - Semitic conspiratorial notions are mainly disseminated by a relatively small number of activists who belong to the 'stratum of half educated intelligentsia' as well as by isolated members of the right-wing Orthodox clergy, such as Ratibor Đurđević, Dragoš Kalajić, Žarko Gavrilović etc. The principal exponent of the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory in contemporary Serbia, until his death in 2011, was Dr Ratibor Đurđević, a prolific writer with over thirty titles to his name, all of which are published by Ichtus Press, a publishing house that Đurđević himself owns. Đurđević's work included mystical and quasi-religious interpretations of current events and world history, based primarily on anti-Semitic conspiracy

literature produced in the United States. Zoran Buljugić trivialize the Holocaust and accuse the Jewish people of exaggerating. Serbian deniers have published articles or books trying to discredit well documented facts, historical research, and eye-witness accounts, all the while casting themselves as martyrs standing up to public opprobrium and censorship. Zoran Buljugić said that “the gas chambers did not exist” and that “in gas chambers died only insects not human.”

Anti-Semitic incidents was grown since the beginning of nineties. That situation provoked a reaction from representatives of the of Jewish Community of Serbia and various human rights organizations, which started to devote more attention to the resurgence of anti- Semitic prejudice. Also, there was some reaction from the country’s political establishment. For example, in February 2001, in response to a number of anti-gypsy and anti - Semitic incidents, Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica offered a public apology, in the name of the Serbian state, to the country’s Romany and Jewish communities. Also, the Serbian Orthodox Church published a statement condemning anti-Semitism.

Because of the rise of anti – Semitic theories, Holocaust denials, and incidents, the rise of the fascist ideologies in historiography, the rise of hatred among the youth, intolerance against each other nation and false history of Holocaust same as using the Holocaust as weapon for national struggle in Serbian society, we have to work on Holocaust Education and Human Rights education in Serbia in attention to bring to our society the most important key values of these two types of education – tolerance and respect. One of the best possible ways to do that is to do it through the educational system in the course of the Holocaust Education and Human Right education that will face pupils and students to crimes and the consequences of racist and anti-Semitic discrimination, dehumanization, and ultimately the deprivation of human beings. Also it is important to published practical handbooks that will seek to link education about the Holocaust with education about human rights. We have to have on mind that confrontation with Holocaust should always touch on contemporary issues and it also brought the need for historical contextualization and stresses the importance of presenting local events within a larger historical context. This not only relates to the teaching of factual knowledge but also to historical education about ideologies, political aspirations and personal motivations, as well as the structural and institutional processes which brought about these events. It is stressed that solid contextualization will counter the tendency to give the Holocaust a transcendental status “outside” the historical process and that Holocaust education requires a precise handling of historical facts. So, the task at hand is to com-

bine the transmission of factual knowledge with the development of the students' ability to deliberate and use a conscious shift of perspectives. However, Holocaust education at original sites and in museums strives to influence the moral awareness of visitors and might therefore also be seen as education for human rights.

Working on Holocaust education and linking it with Human Rights education is important because it will insist that anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred are always wrong and always dangerous. These two types of education will rise up more voices to speak out against anti-Semitism, racism and nationalism, and finally, with deep impact of Holocaust education and Human Rights education on our societies maybe all of us will have the civic courage to take action against all forms of intolerance whenever and wherever they arise (Gavrilovic 2013:222). In accordance with that task, since 2008, in Golubic (Croatia) Center for History Democracy and Reconciliation organized scholars and minority parties representatives from Serbia and Croatia to call a public attention to the refugee repatriation issue and discuss controversies over the war and problems of transition, but also, since the 2013, they make a call to a world scholar society to participate on Meetings in Golubic to discuss about rise of anti-Semitism and hatred in Croatia and Serbia and how to stop it.

At the end of the Meeting, the group of scholars, who were dealing with the issue of Holocaust education and Human Rights Education, emphasized the importance of these types of educations and implementation within the region. The participants believe that this kind of education can help in raising the level of tolerance towards minority groups in the region, and it can also increase the sentiment of the importance of respecting the dignity of each individual. Accordingly, participants have drawn the following conclusions:

1. Utilize technology/internet if at all possible to access Holocaust sites for schools at all levels. e.g. to utilize testimony, etc.
2. Include Holocaust education as part of history curriculum, which is tested.
3. Include context related education about the Holocaust
4. Confront dark pages of own history, overcome fear
5. Implement good practices letters to ghetto, letters to former Jewish inhabitants, learning about absence of people who contributed to the country's history and culture
6. Connect human rights education and Holocaust education through the NGOs and their educational programs
7. Invite participation of educators and academics at antiracist festivals-speaking about the Holocaust as a subject for an examination of basic moral issues

8. Focus on the special need to maintain minorities in cities where they are living now, and teach the majority about tolerance based on the Holocaust example
9. Reach out to organizations, e.g. schools, centers, NGOs, etc. to develop a network in order to support our efforts to teach about the Holocaust and link it with human rights
10. Develop education seminars for teachers about Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education (6th International Scientific Conference Report 2013: 232-233).

Responding to challenge - The Role of the Myth of the Enemy as the factor of destabilization of Serbian civil society and of the peace building in region

Beside the fact that Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education can help in raising the level of tolerance towards minority groups in the region it is also important to shed a light on dispelling the political myths, especially The Myths about enemy. In this sense, we will list a few examples related to the recent Serbian history. We will present the role of the myth of the enemy to the outside same as to the internal enemies in Serbia. This myth is not only played an important role in the past when it served to deepen hatred between Serbs and Croats but also it already served and for causing the war in the future.

In accordance with that, first we should mentioned the fact that the Socialist Yugoslav Federation came to an end not only because of the incapability of the Communist party but also because the reservoir of political will that hold Yugoslavia together is gone at the end of 80's. At the beginning of 90's federal system had no longer exist and Yugoslavia was dissolved as a state. The breakdown of Yugoslavia was caused by political, economic, religion and ethnic factors that were supported in media with political myths, such as myth about enemy, myth about seivour, myth about promised land, myth about choosen nation or myth about death. Even successful economic reforms could not hold the country together. The strongest cohesive forces became the strongest anti-cohesive. They were at work in Yugoslavia within Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. They are mix of national pride, local economic aspiration, and historically antagonistic confessionnal and cultural aspirations. Neither the Yugoslav Army nor the Communist Party was able to hold the federation together because both of these two institutions were in shambles of interethnic conflicts (Gavrilović, Despotović 2011:118). In such circumstances, a political myths, especially the myth of the enemy, played an important role. It was reflected in the strengthening of inter-ethnic hatred, provoking

ethnic conflict inside the national society and with all those forces that do not agree to the war state policy, and also they led to the strengthening of anti-Semitism.

In the Serbian historiography of the last two decades in particular, there has been a pseudoscientific circle of self-proclaimed historians (in literature denoted as “neo-romanticists”) who started intensive processes of myth-creation. These were built on the debris of the old system and the shaken consciousness of the Serbian citizens, falsifying and distorting the Serbian political past, adapting it to a primitive and aggressive image of the Serbian political reality. Among the nationalists who created a “national route” in historiography and who accused other historians as the servants of the German interests in historiography were Vlajislav Zemljanički, Jovan I Deretić and Draško Šćekić who supported the idea that Serbs are the oldest nation in the world (Myth of Chosen People) and accordingly, that Serbs should have their own country which should be much bigger than it is (Myth of Promised Land). By them, all Serbian historians who support the German “false history” of The Migration of The Nations in the 5th and 6th century and do not accept their “Serbian national school of historiography by whom the Serbs are living in Balkan since the beginning of the World” are just the servants of the German political interests, and are the same as ignoramus and copyists who perpetrated that dirty work in accordance to serve the eternal Serbian enemy. These myth makers were amongst the most prominent, but on the intellectual scene there were also other scholars who supported these myths, specially, the myth of the enemy. All of them had a silent support of nationalistic, intellectual and governmental structures of the Milošević regime that had an idea to spread this false history among the Serbian citizens in attention to shroud the social conscience with the myths that can help in propagation of their political ideas. “A really devastating result made by these researchers who were absolutely certain about everything was reflected, besides other things, in the fact that the historical awareness on the Serbian people, extremely sensitive and even vulnerable in the years of the collapse of one regime – the collapse symbolically embodied in the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall – gradually immersed into self-satisfaction and obscure nationalism” (Radić 2003:12).

Serbian nationalist myths gained more credit among the people, and nationalists used them to prove that the myth of the enemy is not a myth; rather it is truth that which contains the “facts” that the World conspiracy against Serbia is alive and true. Obviously, Serbian nationalists gave a new route to the myth of the enemy at the end of the last century, in accordance

with their own political tendencies that led them into the wars in the former Yugoslavia during the nineties.

Also it is important to mention that the 'Myth of the Enemy' is used by nationalists to insure the audience in half-truths which always involved attempt to indemnify the nation in historical injustice that occurred to them as a result of conspiracy or by betrayal, confirmation that history serves as the witness to the historical injustice that befell them, enables the denunciation of other nations and opponents among their nation, and isolates and secures the eternal enemies. Consequently for these nationalists, enemies are everywhere; they pervade the Serbian nation, as well as work from the outside. They found enemies among scholars, journalists, writers and poets and accused them for national treason. Specifically, internal enemies resurface in the early 1990's when the regime of Slobodan Milosevic accused all intellectuals for betrayal of the "Serbian interests" and denominates them as "traitors of the Serbian nation". During the era of Slobodan Milošević nationalists as well as the sociologists, historians and politicians named a dozen of intellectuals as the traitors of the vital Serbian interests and servants of the Western Powers.

Serbian nationalists wanted to insure the Serbian community in existence of the eternal enemies, too (Turks, Austrians, Germans, Hungarians, Croats, Albanians, Bosnjaks and at last but not the least the new enemies – United States and Great Britain) with whom Serbs have an inherent obligation to fight. According to the Serbian nationalists, each Serb who refuses to engage in this fight, or criticizes this national ideal, or cannot view the circumstances through the lens of this myth, would be cursed for all times. So, at the end of twentieth century, in addition to the ring the list of the external enemies, Serbian nationalists found a group of the internal enemies, all this "liars, skunks, villains without national consciousness".

Obviously, Serbian Nationalists showed success in using mythical matrix for the needs of their political and national ends. In that case, as is often the case regarding other instances of such around the world, one's own nation is presented as an innocent victim, sufferer and brave, while the rival side is a cruel criminal and "executioner"; one's own national goals as holy and justified and the goals of the rivaling nation is oppressive, aggressive and unjust. The responsibility for the caused political and military consequences was always placed on the other side, with an extensively expressed unwillingness to admit to one's own guilt and committed crimes. Of course, if the myth of the enemy wants to be much stronger it should content the internal enemies who were always worse than the external enemies.

Conclusion

One of the possible ways to deal with the past injustices, facing with historical wrongs and committed crimes is to research the past without involving the political myths and bias and prejudices. In that sense, we need strong political support from the state top to down in accordance with democratic changes in society which has to include among other civil actions and democratic values, Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education. This, even as a first step, is impossible, if we are faced with politicaly controlled society with strong support of historiography that never takes care of valuable documents that can shed light into our past. Covering up the historic truth, creating the political myths, such as the myth of the enemy, and their placement into the historiography is the same as creating half –truths in history, and it brings society where bias and prejudices still shape the colour of hatred. Finding enemies everywhere for reasons of higher interests of one’s party, nation or political option is one of the more significant causes of wars not only among the Serbs and other nations in ex Yugoslav territories but also all around the world. Due to all this, political myths and both the intentional and non-intentional cover-ups of the historic truth behind the causes of conflicts among South Slavs only prolong the existing conflicts and bring about new conflicts with even more perilous consequences.

Bibliography:

1. Albright M.K, Cohen W.S (2008), Preventing Genocide - A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers, Holocaust Memorial Museum Washington.
2. Avramov S (1998), Trilateral, Beograd.
3. Barkan E, Karn A (2006), *Group Apology as an Ethnical Imperative*, Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation, Stenford California.
4. Ćulibrk J (2011), Istoriografija holokausta u Jugoslaviji, Beograd.
5. David F (1991), Vladika kao antisemita, Vreme, 29 July 1991.
6. David F (2000), Antisemitizam među nama, Danas, 6-9 January 2000.
7. Gavrilović D (2010), Zatočenici mitova nacionalizma i komunizma - svet i Jugoslavija, Sr. Karlovci.
8. Perica V, Gavrilovic D (ed.) (2011), Political Myths in Former Yugoslavia and Successor States, Dordrecht – Hague.
9. Gavrilovic D, Despotovic Lj (2011), Yugoslavia – The beggining of the end, *Istorija 20. veka : Časopis Instituta za savremenu istoriju*, 2, Belgrade.
10. Gavrilovic D (2013), Contemporary Anti-Semitism in Croatia and Serbia and Urgency for Stronger Connections Between Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education, in *Croatian – Serbian Relations; Minority Rights – Fight Against Discrimination*, Novi Sad.

11. Radić R (2003), Srbi pre Adama i posle njega, Belgrade.
12. 6th Internatinal Scientific Conference Report Croatian-Serbian Relations; Minority Rights-Fight Against Discrimination, in Croatian – Serbian Relations; Minority Rights – Fight Against Dicrimination, Novi Sad 2013.
13. Zorić O, Knjiga koja negira Holokaust zabranjena u Srbiji, Radio slobodna Evropa 10.06.2013.

РАЗОТКРИВАЊЕ МРЖЊЕ У СРБИЈИ

важност образовања о холокаусту и образовање о људским правима - како раскринкати мит о непријатељу

Сажетак: У овом чланку ћемо испитати хитност разоткривања прогона и мржње у Србији, због тога што су још увек у нашем друштву присутни како савремени антисемитизам тако и митови о непријатељу. У складу са тим, ми ћемо инсистирати на потреби да се по том питању успостави друштвена одговорност која би требала да обухвата све релевантне политичке факторе почевши од шефа државе преко владе до политичких странака. Сви они би требали да уложе напоре да у српском школском систему заживи образовање о холокаусту и образовање о људским правима. Овај рад се првенствено фокусира на идентификацију оних који поричу холокауст, на теорије завера, објашњења западних политика у вези са образовањем о холокаусту, као и потребу појединих српских писаца, да у складу са сопственим политичким убеђењима, идентификују издајнике међу српским научницима, интелектуалцима и писцима. У чланку се сугерише да је пролиферација теорија завера током рата у бившој Југославији исто као и после њега довела до померања граница између прихватљивих и неприхватљивих политичких објашњења, са резултатом који је довео до тога да су раније неприхватљиве антисемитске теме постале, код једног дела јавности, респектабилне. У том смислу значајну улогу имао је мит о непријатељу. Он је искоришћен да би обезбедио легитимитет националним лидерима да воде ратове, пружајући им оправдање за убијање и смрт, апсолутну политичку инструментализацију и освајање нових територија.

Кључне речи: геноцид, антисемитизам, митови, непријатељ, Србија