

Institute for War and Peace Reporting

Jugoslovenski Jevreji na meti

Jevrejski predstavnici u Jugoslaviji apeluju na vlasti da zaustave uznemirujući porast antisemitizma u zemlji.

By Branko Bjelajac, BRC 268, 3 August 2001

Cini se da je antisemitizam u porastu u Jugoslaviji uprkos cinjenici da je jevrejska zajednica malobrojna. "Toliko smo beznacajni za drustveni i politicki zivot zemlje da je naprosto iznenadjujuce sto smo se uopste nasli pod snaznim pritiscima i napadima", izjavio je za IWPR Aca Singer, predsednik Saveza jevrejskih zajednica u Jugoslaviji, iz Beograda.

Singer je rekao da je njegova zajednica ocekivala veci stepen slobode nakon zbacivanja Slobodana Milosevica s vlasti i politickih promena koje su usledile, ali se umesto toga suocava sa porastom antisemitizma.

Jevrejski savez ukupno broji oko 2.200 clanova koji zive u devet razlicitih zajednica, ukljucujuci Beograd, Novi Sad, Suboticu, Nis, Zemun i Zrenjanin. Tokom drugog svetskog rata, vecinu Jevreja su iz Srbije deportovali Nemci uz pomoc domacih pomagaca, srpskih fasista.

Singer je rekao da su najvidljiviji dokaz ovog antijevrejskog trenda uvredljivi i pogrđni grafiti na javnim mestima i zidovima zgrada. "Toga ima cak i u gradovima i oblastima u kojima nema Jevreja kao sto je Apatin u Vojvodini. Takodje, cesto primamo pretece i uvredljive telefonske pozive."

On dodaje da je bilo antisemitskih napisa u medijima za koje su najodgovorniji krivci - "Obraz", organizacija za koju aktivisti grupa za ljudska prava tvrde da propoveda rasnu, etnicku i versku netoleranciju, i bivsi svestenik Srpske pravoslavne crkve, Zarko Gavrilovic.

"Obraz" negira bilo kakvu umesanost u kampanju zastrasivanja Jevreja. "Nas pokret odbacuje sve ideologije koje nisu zasnovane na duhu srpskog naroda i pravoslavnoj veri," tvrdi ova grupa u svojoj izjavi. "Srbi su dostojanstven narod koji nema nikakve veze sa verskom i rasnom mrzljom."

Singer naglasava da su srpski patrijarh Pavle i sinod Srpske pravoslavne crkve osudili antisemitizam, "ali, mozda, to nisu ucinili dovoljno energicno".

U nekim drugim antisemitskim incidentima, vandali su ostetili jevrejska groblja - u junu mesecu su iscrtane svastike na nadgrobnim spomenicima u Zemunu i Beogradu, a zestoka antisemitska propaganda i slogani su se pojavili u novoobjavljenim knjigama, pamfletima i na Internetu, pri cemu se neke organizacije i pojedinci otvoreno optuzili Jevreje da predstavljaju neprijatelje srpskog naroda.

"Poslednji incident je objavljivanje izdanja "Svete knjige - jevrejsko ogledalo" u kojoj se koristi izuzetno uvredljiv jezik da bi se iznele lazne optuzbe protiv Jevreja," kaze Singer. "Podneli smo krivicnu prijavu protiv autora i izdavaca, i sada ocekujemo

odgovor drzave na ovaj talas mrznje. Do sada, drzavni organi nisu iskazali preteranu revnost po ovom pitanju."

Uprkos siroko rasprostranjenom verovanju da su Srbi patili skupa sa Jevrejima za vreme Drugog svetskog rata, kvislinska vlada Milana Nedica je uistinu pomogla Nemcima da ukloni iz Srbije 85 odsto jevrejskog stanovnistva, oko 70.000 ljudi.

Jevreji su odvodjeni u sabirne centre koji su se nalazili u beogradskim predgradjima, od kojih je najveći bio deportacioni centar Staro Sajmiste. Odatle su mnogi poslani u smrt - u koncentracione logore sirom onog dela Evrope koji se u tom trenutku nalazio pod nacistickom okupacijom, ili na licu mesta ubijeni. Singer kaze da je tako zapravo citava zajednica prakticno istrebljena.

Jugoslovenski predsednik Vojislav Kostunica prolestos je posetio sinagogu u Beogradu povodom posebne komemoracije posvecene zrtvama holokausta. Zatražio je oprostaj za ono sto je srpski narod ucinio Jevrejima u proslosti.

Naravno, bilo je mnogo primera iskazane solidarnosti i saosecanja sa Jevrejima. Brojne srpske porodice su rizikovale svoje zivote pokusavajući da zastite svoje sugradjane Jevreje. Tokom proteklih godina, oko stotinu srpskih porodica dobile su posebne zahvalnice od izraelskih vlasti za svoj heroizam.

Milanka Saponja-Hadzic iz Helsinskog komiteta za ljudska prava pripisuje nagli rast antisemitizma "antiglobalizaciji, antiamerikanizmu i antimodernizaciji" koje promovisu neki ekstremno desnicarski orijentisani pojedinci i organizacije, a upravo ce oni, prema recima g-dje Saponja-Hadzic, "predstavljati ozbiljan problem i izazov civilnom drustvu u Srbiji".

Singer upozorava da ukoliko vlasti ne preduzmu nesto da bi sprecile sirenje verske mrznje, celokupno drustvo ce nesumnjivo patiti. "To ce najvise stete naneti upravo srpskom narodu. Nas je malo i da bi imali ikakvog uticaja. Srpska vlada bi, medjutim, trebalo da reaguje u skladu sa Ustavom i krivicnim zakonom zemlje - jer to je za njeno dobro."

Do sada je jedina reakcija na antisemitske incidente dosla iz saveznog Ministarstva za vere, ciji je uticaj znacajno smanjen nakon pada jugoslovenske vlade zbog izrucenja Milosevica Haskom tribunalu. Ministarstvo je nedavno organizovalo sastanak sa predstavnicima glavnih verskih zajednica u zemlji. Sa tog skupa upucen je apel javnosti za vecim nivoom verske tolerancije.

Branko Bjelajac je dopisnik novinske agencije Keston iz Beograda.

Yugoslav Jews Targeted

Jewish representatives in Yugoslavia call on the authorities to stem a disturbing rise in anti-Semitism.

**By Branko Bjelajac - Balkans: Regional Reporting & Sustainable Training
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Anti-Semitism is said to be on the rise in Yugoslavia, despite the fact that there are hardly any Jews left. "We are so insignificant in the social and political life of the country that it is surprising that we are under great pressure and attacks," Aca Singer, the president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia, declared in an interview with IWPR in Belgrade.

Singer said his community had expected more freedom following the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic and the accompanying political changes, but have instead faced an increase in anti-Semitism.

The Jewish federation is made up of about 2,200 members, living in nine communities, including Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica, Nis, Zemun and Zrenjanin. During the Second World War, most of the Jews in Serbia were deported by the Germans and fascist Serb collaborators.

Singer said the most visible evidence of the anti-Jewish trend is abusive graffiti on public places and buildings. "We have that even in towns and regions where we know of no local Jews, like Apatin in Vojvodina," he said. "We also receive frequent threatening phone calls and insults."

The community leader says there have also been anti-Semitic remarks in the media, with some of the worst culprits being Obraz - which rights campaigners say preaches racial, ethnic and religious intolerance - and the former Serbian Orthodox priest, Zarko Gavrilovic.

Obraz denies involvement in the intimidation of Jews. "Our movement rejects all ideologies not based on the spirit of the Serbian people and the Orthodox faith," said the group. "The Serbs are a dignified people who have no truck with religious and racial hatred."

Singer stresses that the Patriarch and the Serbian Orthodox Church Synod have condemned anti-Semitism, "but perhaps they did not do so as vigorously as they could".

In other anti-Semitic incidents, Jewish graveyards have been vandalised - in June, swastikas were daubed on tombstones in cemeteries in Zemun and Belgrade - and offensive propaganda and slogans have appeared in books, pamphlets and the internet, with some organisations and individuals publicly accusing Jews of being the enemies of the Serbian people.

"The most recent incident is the publication of the book 'The Holy Scriptures - The Jewish Mirror' where the worst language is employed to falsely accuse us," said Singer. "We have submitted criminal charges against the author and the publisher -

and we are now waiting for the state response to this hate wave. Previously, we've not had much of a response."

Despite a widespread belief here that Serbs suffered together with Jews during the World War II, the quisling government of Milan Nedic helped the Germans to expel 85 per cent of Serbia's Jewish population, around 70 thousand people.

Jews were rounded up and taken to several deportation centres on the outskirts of Belgrade, one of the biggest being Staro Sajmiste. From there, many were sent to their deaths in concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Europe. Singer said practically the whole community perished.

Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica visited the Belgrade synagogue last April for a special memorial service dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust. He asked for forgiveness for what the Serbian people did to the Jews in the past.

There were, of course, many instances of Serb compassion. Numerous Serbian families risked their lives protecting Jews. In recent years, about 100 of the former have received special praise from the Israeli authorities for their acts of heroism.

Milanka Saponja-Hadzic of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights attributes the rise of anti-Semitism to "anti-globalisation, anti-Americanism and anti-modernisation" promoted by the likes of extreme right-wing individuals and organisations which, she says, "will be a large problem for emerging civil society in Serbia".

Singer warns that unless the authorities do something to curb the spread of religious hatred, society is bound to suffer, "This is going to hurt the Serbian people most of all. We are few and too insignificant to make any difference. But the Serbian government should react in accordance with the constitution and the criminal law code in the country - for their own sake."

So far the only reaction to the anti-Semitic outbursts has come from the federal ministry of religion, whose influence has been much reduced since the resignation of the Yugoslav government over the extradition of Milosevic to The Hague. The ministry recently organised a meeting with representatives of the major faiths. Following the event, there was a public appeal for greater religious tolerance.

Branko Bjelajac is the Belgrade correspondent of Keston News Agency.