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HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AND ITS PLACE IN THE POLITICS OF REGIONAL
STABILITY AND GENOCIDE PREVENTION ON THE TERRITORIES OF SERBIA AND
CROATIA

ABSTRACT

The authors of this work shall show in what way Holocaust education has its place in the politics of regional security and genocide prevention. The authors believe that neither Croatia nor Serbia implemented this type of education to a satisfactory degree, and that they do not use its potentials enough so that in the younger generation they could develop a feeling of the importance of building and preserving a democratic society in which compassion and tolerance, especially towards minorities, has a significant place.

KEY WORDS

Stability, prevention, genocide, Holocaust, education

INTRODUCTION

Because the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) share the same goals in the region, the Western Balkans¹ have become a cornerstone of transatlantic cooperation over the last decade even if this region was affected in the recent past by interethnic conflicts. Despite the many rifts that have appeared in the transatlantic partnership, the US and EU continue to be united in their commitment to contain violent nationalism in the Western Balkans and to help the region in its transition to becoming a liberal democracy, and to its European integration. The EU has played a large role in state-building and conflict-prevention measures, but it suffers from a credibility problem for not having intervened effectively in curbing ethnic violence when it first broke out in the Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Thus, the US-led NATO forces seem to hold the most sway in terms of curbing violent outbreaks and fostering political change.² Even disregarding the aforementioned facts, the EU may be well suited and prepared to accept this responsibility, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) where it is slated to take over later this year, but also in Kosovo, given the continuing failings of the UN mission to find a way to bridge the divide between Albanians and Serbs. In that sense, Michael Haltzel, of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, asserted that the focus of the international intervention in the Western Balkans is shifting from a martial one to one that is primarily concerned with law enforcement. This shift plays into the EU's strengths and addresses the greatest threat to stability, which is crime. He noted that there has been clear progress in the region, given that it

¹The Western Balkans refers to the region comprising the five Southeastern European countries involved in the EU Stabilization and Association Process: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In this paper special attention will be given to Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

²European and US Policies in the Balkans, staff-prepared summary of a conference co-sponsored by EES and the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), held on May 23, 2004 in Berlin. Meeting Report 297. Internet

has become almost inconceivable that ethnic groups in BiH would take up arms against each other.³ But other problems in the region of the Western Balkans still exist, most notably in the form of high unemployment rates, corruption, favoritism and huge trade deficits. Partially, it gives support to the rise of nationalism and the political awakening of right wing forces that are yelling about “past injustices” and “natural state borders”. So, NATO enlargement is also an important conditionality tool, and is perhaps stronger than the EU in some countries, since membership in NATO can guarantee the absence of war, and since the US is the strongest player in NATO, the Western Balkans tend to follow its lead.

On the other hand, the EU should develop specific policies for countries with a higher risk of ethnic tensions (e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina) than those with no apparent potential for conflicts to re-emerge, but with shadows of national intolerance and presence of racism and anti-Semitism (e.g. Croatia and Serbia). These policies should be built on two main goals. The short-term goal of the EU for the Western Balkans should be the stabilization of the region and the prevention of new conflicts. The subsequent goal was to foster the development of economic, political and cultural ties within the region. Assuming that the EU will eventually integrate the Western Balkans, the accession to the European Union will safeguard peace and stability, not only in the region but also in the European continent.⁴

As it seems right now, the only one possible way to solve the regional political and economic problems is the EU enlargement and NATO membership, and the international community must do all it can to ensure that this process is successful.

³ Ibid.

⁴ About policy of enlargement of EU see Vladimir Gligorov, Mario Holzner, Michael Landesmann, *Prospects for Further (South) Eastern EU Enlargement: from Divergence to Convergence?* Research Report of the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, 2003, p. 296.

In order to achieve that, one of the first preconditions is enforcement of regional stability policies in the Western Balkans.⁵ In accordance with this, since 1999, the Stability Pact was launched as an initiative that drew together the EU and some other partner states with the aim of bringing peace, stability and economic development to the Balkans. The Pact has brought about a high degree of cooperation among the Balkan countries, by promoting self-help aimed at ending dependency on donor countries.⁶ It contributes to peace and security not only in the Balkans but also in the European Union, as well as to, more broadly, international security. It should be known that the working principles of regional stability policies include three factors. The first is the evaluation of the situation in the Western Balkan region that promotes regional stability through enhanced international security co-operation, especially with institutions located in or close to the region of interest. Second, execute strategic research on an academic level supplementary to and stimulating the practical work done in the region. And the third, providing support for the improvement of networks in the field of international security policy and help create a peaceful, strategic and stable community in the Western Balkan region compatible with the broader Partnership for Peace network and beyond.

Besides these factors, regional stability policies have to include genocide prevention policies because this is the most important way of having to secure the future peace. Preventing

⁵ It should be known that the first tool to stabilize the Western Balkans was the Royaumont process. It was launched in December 1996. Its aim was to support the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreements. In 1997 the EU was still opting for the regional approach, establishing political and economic conditions as a prerequisite for bilateral relations with the five countries of the region. These conditions included respect for democratic principles, Human Rights and the rule of law, minority protection, market economy reforms and regional cooperation.

⁶ A cornerstone in the EU's approach to the Western Balkans after the post- Kosovo crisis was the introduction of the Stabilization and Association Process. This process promotes stability within the region and facilitates a closer association of the Western Balkan countries with the EU, and ultimately assists countries in their preparation for EU membership.

genocide is a goal that can be achieved with the right organizational structures, strategies, and partnerships - in short, a goal that can be achieved with a right blueprint.⁷ At first, it should be known that making progress towards preventing genocide requires leadership and political will. In accordance with that, the first step should be made from the president down - ideally at the beginning of a new administration. History has shown that the reconciliation process is achieved through the repentance of high ranking politicians in order to prevent the possibility of reoccurring genocides (for example, during his presidential mandate, Boris Tadić took upon himself, as his duty as the president of Serbia, to visit, and bow down to, the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, as well as the Croatian casualties from the war which was fought in Croatia, by visiting the Ovčara memorial center). 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 the relations of the neighboring countries.⁸ The president should create a standing interagency mechanism to search for and analyze any threats of a genocide occurring again, and to strengthen regional efforts to prevent potential mass atrocities.⁹ Also it is recommended to create a high-level assembly body, a kind of Atrocities Prevention Committee, which should be dedicated to responding to such threats.

An important part of the politics of preventing genocide in the former Yugoslavia region is dealing with the past, because the twentieth century was marked by totalitarian forms of government (fascist and communist) which committed both genocide and mass violations of Human Rights. The fascist regime in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) and German

⁷ The essential ideas and strategies on the prevention of genocide are adapted from Madeleine K. Albright, William S. Cohen, *Preventing Genocide - A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers*, Holocaust Memorial Museum Washington 2008.

⁸ Ibid, p.7.

⁹ Ibid, p.7,8.

occupied Serbia with the collaborative government of Milan Nedić, persecuted, imprisoned and killed many using the death camps, and carried out mass liquidations without court proceedings. Even if the communist regime insisted on Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity” and equality of all Yugoslav nations, this regime committed serious crimes against Human Rights and caused massive suffering for all those who did not find themselves part of the communist regime. Finally, during the nineties, when nationalistic leaders and their compatriots played the evil game that led to genocide, ethnic cleansing, massively violated Human Rights, as well as their imprisonment and executions of the opponents of the regimes, the question of a new type of responsibility as well as of lustration, which was never enforced, was raised. So, today, with the politics of the new government and the decision to move forward with the reconciliation process, all these countries should confront the past in which serious human violations and atrocities were found. This goal is possible if the politics of memory implies a distancing from the past and from the crimes of totalitarian regimes. It contains the educational dimension of remembering the victims of these regimes. It means that there is a need for the use of a scientific approach (involving scientific methodology, the analysis of documents and rational interpretation of the past). All of the above leads us to the conclusion that the education policy in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina should be changed in terms of having the teaching about Human Rights as an indispensable part of genocide prevention politics. In that sense, we think that education about the Holocaust should have an important role. It would be reflected not only in the usefulness of its methodology and its approach to students, but also in the means in which this type of studying would be connected to studying and learning about Human Rights. Seeing as how both of these types of studying are closely connected to the past of the region of former Yugoslavia, where the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and various civil rights violations occurred and that countries in transition still haven't shown the ability to deal with the violent

pages of their history books in an unbiased, politically correct and civilized way, it is necessary to implement both of them in the school system

So, actions aiding in the prevention of genocide should find their place in education. Beside the fact that the government needs to carry out lustration of those political forces and the media which 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 dispel the political myths¹⁰ that erased democracy. In accordance with all that is mentioned above, this article will present a need for incorporating Holocaust education into the school system.

THE NECESSITY OF TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

The Western Balkans are perceived as a region of weak states that still need international support.¹¹ In the past decade all the countries of the region have experienced a period of transition and ethnic conflict that rose from the awakening of nationalism, poisoned with 20th century

¹⁰Passim by Darko Gavrilovic, *Dispelling the Hatred in Serbia, Importance of Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education - How to Unmask the Myth about Enemy*, Kultura Polisa, god. XI, 2014, br. 24, str. 425-435.

¹¹Wim van Meurs (Ed.), *Prospects and Risks Beyond EU Enlargement, Southeastern Europe: Weak States and Strong International Support*, Opladen, 2003.

national hatred which also brought anti-Semitism and racism, which exploded during the Second World War. All these types of experiences have followed a decline in the standard of living and a slowing of economic growth.

Placed in the Western Balkans, where the national struggle for sovereignty was present, in the decade before and during the Second World War, when Nazism waltzed with ethnic nationalism, anti-Semitism has been a sensitive barometer in the politics of that part of Europe, because it accurately reflected not only the gradual erosion of the democratic principles and institutions that region adopted, but it also caused the Holocaust.

First it should be known that, endemic in the area, anti-Semitism became virulent in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the period of 1933-1941, mostly under the influence of the Third Reich, and it paved the way to the destruction of the Jews during the Second World War. Three years after the war, Yugoslavia recognized the State of Israel, but after the Six Day War, the Yugoslav press had followed state policy and reflected bias against the State of Israel and gave support to the Arab states. So, step by step, anti-Semitism knocked on Yugoslavia's door, and it was colored by the communist foreign policy. The Holocaust became taboo, because, while the communists never denied crimes committed by the Nazis, and often used them as justification for the preservation of their totalitarian rule, they often ignored or distorted the tragedy of European Jews. The millions of Jewish casualties were often subsumed as losses incurred by their own nations. Even beside that fact, until the Six Day War, unlike in many other parts of Eastern Europe, in Yugoslavia the communist authorities took a benevolent stance toward the commemorative activities initiated by the Jewish community. Even though the dominant ethos of "brotherhood and unity" among Yugoslav nations demanded civilian losses to be "de-ethnicized" and subsumed under the broader category of "Yugoslav victims of fascist terror", the Jewish community was given some leeway and was allowed to commemorate Jewish victimhood

in a more public way. The construction of the five monuments in 1952, a project for which state authorities provided both moral and financial support, epitomizes this lenient attitude of Josip Broz Tito's regime.

The restructuring of the political life after the fall of communism and the establishment of parliamentary democracies restored civil liberties, but it also brought to the surface long-suppressed ethnic-national animosities. So, anti-Semitism was revived, of course, as a convenient instrument of domestic nationalistic politics. Many of the newly established nationalist groups were former leading communist officials, including secret police agents, eager to retain their power and privileges. Also, a part of the intellectual elite gave support to these nationalist ideas which includes different anti-Jewish conspiracy theories.

Since the abolition of the "old nationalists" in the 1990s (Serbia abolished the first generation of the Serbian national leaders and partially the Chetnik movement and Croatia abolished the first generation of Croat nationalists and tried to forget the Ustasha crimes while remembering the partisans crimes) the anti-Semitic manifestations occurred more and more frequently. This anti-Semitism only functioned among the cultural and political elite as a symbolic tool for establishing a political identity, and not as an ideology directing political action.

Contrary to that, some historians, not only from Croatia and Serbia but from other Western Balkan countries too, linked the Holocaust to a war campaign that was guided against their nations. In that sense, they used the Holocaust as a tool for receiving international help for their political cause. For example, some Albanian historians, like Ana Lalaj, linked the Holocaust to Serbia's ethnic-cleansing campaign against Kosovar Albanians in 1999, when she concluded "the Nazi Holocaust against Jews and the Serb ethnocide against Kosovars are two

parallel ideologies and practices that differ only in time.”¹²Bosnian authors of history textbooks did the same. They abused the fact that genocide was committed in Srebrenica in 1995, and set up a thesis by which Bosnians were many times the victims of genocide during the entire 20th century. When they wrote about the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in school textbooks, they claimed that "beside genocidal policy towards the Muslims, the regime dealt cruelly with the Croatian politicians which were advocating for a federal government"¹³ forgetting that the Muslim politicians in that "genocidal creation" had their high representatives from the Yugoslav Muslim Organization in several governments, and that their politicians in the parliament voted for the first constitution (Vidovdan constitution) of that country. Just as they are not objective when dealing with their past in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Bosnian authors disregard facts from their own past during the Second World War. Writing about the history of their people in the period from 1941 up to 1945, they forget that one part of the Bosnian politicians gave their support in establishing the NDH and that they actively participated in the acts of the Ustasha government. Pushing aside the mentioned historical truth, Bosnian authors have accused the NDH government of fostering a genocidal attitude towards the Bosnians, because "they wanted Bosnian Muslims to be simply identified as Croats (which was actually just one form of genocide committed over the Bosnians¹⁴), while forgetting that a large number of Bosnians joined the Ustasha army, and they also formed the "Handzar" division which had an active role in the genocide against the Jews and Serbs. It is evident that the mentioned historians were wailing only over the fate of their own people, exaggerating their own losses, while minimizing

¹²Ana Lalaj, "Rasti i hebrenjve dhe humanizmi i popullit shqiptar," Studime Historike 3-4, 2004, p.183.

¹³M. Imamović, M. Pešić, M. Ganibegović, *Historija za 8. razred osnovne škole*, Sarajevo, 1996, str. 62.

¹⁴ M. Ganibegović, E. Durmišević i M. Pešić, *Historija-Povijest za 8.razred osnovne škole*, Sarajevo, 2001, str. 84.

everyone else's, while also trying to change the history of the Holocaust on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

From the nineties, it should be known that, many Croat and Serbian historians tried to portray the Holocaust as being the result of the actions of German Nazism or of Hungarian or Italian fascism. Croatian authors tried to minimize the Ustasha genocide as the Serbian authors tried to clean the ugly face of the Chetnik movement and Milan Nedić's fascist puppet government from its war crimes and collaborationist past.

Because of that, a number of Croatian historians are still disregarding the genocide committed against the Jews and Serbs, trying to show a benign picture of the Ustasha regime during the Second World War. While on one hand they admit to the existence of Jasenovac (however not the massive crimes committed in it, they claim that in it "there were mostly captured Serbs, Jews and Roma, as well as Croats who were supporters or participants of the Partisan movement"), on the other hand, regard the cultural politics in NDH as flourishing stating that "in the cultural life of Croats there was a bigger freedom, which could be seen through the renewal and the flourishing of Croatian cultural institutions, publishing industry and development of arts etc".¹⁵

In Serbia, guided by nationalist ideas, the Party-supported official "historians" which portrayed the Second World War occupied Serbia as a country that not only prevented the Holocaust, but also gave haven to thousands of foreign Jews.

But the truth was different, as the political situation in the NDH and occupied Serbia during the Second World War.

¹⁵Miljenko Miloš, Povijest novoga doba, udžbenik povijesti za 8.razred osnovne škole, Znanje, Široki Brijeg, 2006, str.119,120.

In the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), by December 1941, according to the data Pavelic gave to Count Ciano, the total number of Jews was reduced from 45,000 to 12,000, and that was only the beginning of their eradication.¹⁶ In the NDH synagogues were ransacked, and then burned, with some, like the Synagogue in Banja Luka, redesigned as a brothel for German and Ustasha soldiers.¹⁷ Under the Ustasha guidance, the terror over the Jews, Serbs and Roma gained an increased swing in mid-1941, and then culminated by the beginning of 1942.¹⁸ In this period of mass arrests and executions by firing squads, followed all the way by propaganda, set to create an image of Jews and Serbs as enemies of the Croatian state, only a small number of Jews remained free while tens of thousands of Serbs lost their lives. After some calmness, which lasted till the spring of 1943, the rest of the Jews were arrested and only around 5,000 Jews survived the Holocaust in the NDH by fleeing to the Italian occupation zone, or by joining the Partisan movement. The final account was that an estimated 85% of the Jewish population in Croatia was killed. The exact number of the Jewish victims who perished in genocide in the region of Yugoslavia will remain unknown even if historians calculate about 60,000 dead¹⁹ while hundreds of thousands of Serbs in NDH were killed and tortured in concentration camps.

In August 1941, several concentration camps were set up and systematic roundups of Jewish men were carried out in Serbia and Banat. In October some 4,000 Jewish men were shot

¹⁶ Državni arhiv u Zagrebu (*State archives in Zagreb*), fond broj 252, kutija 1, str. 58, 60.

¹⁷ ARS, Izveštaj, javna berza rada, (*Report from the Public Labor Exchange – Banja Luka*) Podružnica Banja Luka, br.(no). 215, od (from) 3.10.1945, Upućeno Okružnoj upravi javnih dobara, Banja Luka.

¹⁸ ARS, Ethnic cleansing is completed with absolute success – in part due to the liquidation of Jews in local communities, and partly due to deportation to concentration camps until 1942. For a typical example see the reports: Kotarska oblast Banja Luka Broj 7879/42, Kotarska oblast Ključa Broj 2773/42, Kotarska oblast Priedor Broj 4158/42, Kotarska oblast Sanski Most Broj 3576/42.

¹⁹ J. Koš, „Nezavisna Država Hrvatska: Osvrt iz današnjice“, in the anthology *Holokaust, ljudska prava i obrazovanje* (priredio Ognjen Kraus), Židovska općina Zagreb, Zagreb, 2006, str. 45.

by the Germans. Women and children were interned at the Sajmiste, also known as Semlin Judenlager, a camp near Zemun, and in the summer of 1942 more than 6000 of them perished in mobile gas vans. Between late March and early May 1942, all the Jews interned at the Semlin Judenlager were killed in this way.²⁰ By August 1942 the Nazis had achieved the goal of the Final Solution in Serbia and declared Belgrade to be the first major city in Europe to be free of Jews.²¹ The Holocaust that happened in Serbia, which includes about 10000 Jews who were killed in Serbian concentration camps, was ignored in publications, including textbooks. Sooner or later, places of suffering and death such as Banjica, Semlin or the camps in Niš and Šabac, which were neglected since the late 1980s, will once again become topics of historical interest. In short, the entire anti-Semitic propaganda in Croatia and Serbia between 1941 and 1945 was directed toward one goal – the elimination of the Jews. The propaganda was supposed to incite and justify the apprehensions, deportations and massacres which started in June 1941.

However, as in Croatia so in Serbia, the majority of the politicians have remained aware of the international commemoration of the Holocaust, as well as, unfortunately, the possibility of its political exploitation in regards of getting international attention, compassion and eventually, support. No matter how tolerant the Serbian and Croatian leading politicians are of the ever present anti-Semitism, the terms “Holocaust” and “genocide” were used to win propaganda wars. Thus, two pictures were created. One for the home audience, in which anti-Semitism could occur, and one for the world audience, in which the suffering of one’s own people was equated to that of the Jews.

However, the reality was different.

²⁰ Jovan Byford, “Shortly afterwards we heard the sound of the gas van”: *Survivor Testimony and the Writing of History in Socialist Yugoslavia*, History and Memory, Vol. 22, No. 1. Spring/Summer 2010, p.6.

²¹ Zlatko Loventhal (ed.), *The Crimes of the Fascist Occupation and their Collaborators against Jews in Yugoslavia*, Belgrade 1957, pp.1-53.

It is a fact that the demise of communism and the disintegration of the one-party system in ex-Yugoslav countries opened the way to democracy and a market economy. But, in the same time, it has been marred by political instability, economic chaos, wars and social unrest. The vacuum created by the collapse of the communist order has been, for the most part, infected by virulent nationalism. These conditions have been marked by the reemergence of anti-Semitism. Forty five years after the end of the Second World War, the civil war in the former Yugoslavia and open anti-Semitism in Croatia and Serbia had a major impact on the Jewish community again. The main source of anti-Semitism can be found in the attitude adopted by the governments and societies of the ex communist countries in FRY toward the murder of their Jewish populations during the Second World War that can be taken as the current anticommunist reaction which naturally seeks to rehabilitate their image of fascist and Nazi collaborators. It aims to show that because communist governments suppressed both the actual existence and memory of prewar right-wing nationalist political formations for over forty years by tarring them as fascists and Nazi collaborators, the current anticommunist reaction is trying to “clean” their nationalistic roots from the murders and war crimes. Because, that image has been damaged by association with the slaughter of Jews, they try to deny the complicity of local nationalists in the killings or by denying the fact of the killings altogether. Beside that fact, we were also faced with the rise of anti-Jewish discourse in Serbia and Croatia which was self-absorbed, focused solely on the victimization of Serbs (and sometimes other Orthodox peoples) or Croats (and sometimes other Catholic peoples) in the hands of the imagined international Jewish conspiracy.²² In the past twenty years or so in Serbia and Croatia anti-Semitism has not existed as an isolated

²² See Darko Gavrilović, *Contemporary anti – Semitism in Croatia and Serbia and Urgence for Stronger Connections Between Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education*, Serb-Croat Relations in the 20.century, Novi Sad 2013.

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 always the “others” and foreigners, anti-Semitism in Serbia and Croatia may, in a broader sense, be interpreted as a problematic attitude to differences rather than as a purely anti-Jewish ideology, practice, or discourse.²³ While anti-Semitic writings appeared in both countries, anti-Jewish manifestations were more prevalent in Croatia at least because of the two facts: first, the most serious anti-Jewish incidents in Croatia took place on August 19, 1991, when the Jewish Community Center in Zagreb and the Jewish cemetery were bombed. The bombing, committed by right-wing Croat extremists, was condemned by many segments of Croatian society and by President Tuđman²⁴ and second, Croat president Tuđman was the author of the highly controversial book which questioned the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. His main objective was to minimize, if not totally deny, the role of the Croat Ustasha in the mass murder of Serbs, Jews and Roma, especially, in the Jasenovac concentration camp.

During the Second World War the Jews were seen as the prime target on the territory of the former state. In the wars of the late 20th century, while the Jews experienced no threat of mass eradication on account of national and religious orientation, they were still victims of a great deal of verbal and physical assault, and especially the victims of a media lynch manifested in freely expressing various ideas concerning world-wide Jewish conspiracies, which prompted the Jews to leave this region again, and seek refuge somewhere in the West or in Israel. Observing the influence of the two wars on the Jewish population on the territory of former Yugoslavia, a

²³Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, *Anti-Semitism in Serbia*, Belgrade, November 2006, p.4.

²⁴ Randolph L. Braham, *Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in the Politics of East Central Europe*, in R.L. Braham, *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, Columbia University Press, New York 1994, p.27.

conclusion imposes itself that they were not waged as purely ethnic, ideological or religious wars, but they were embroidered with anti-Semitism which had, in the cruelest way possible, exploded in 1941. And so, the Jews, because of both communistic ideology, and the raw newly-awakened ethnic nationalisms by the end of the 20th century, were left outside the scope of interest in regards to the Holocaust education. In fact, neither Serbia nor Croatia introduced that form of education in their schools, not even today, considering the gravitas of the historically unique mass crime committed on our territories. Yet, these two states give it almost no significance. When modern Croatia and Serbia were formed (or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to be exact, comprised of Serbia and Montenegro) their state narratives primarily pointed out the tribulation of their own peoples, whereas the Jews were only casually mentioned, or were not mentioned at all. Apparently, there was a lack of sustained institutional effort to incorporate shameful facts concerning the murder of Jewish co-citizens into curricula and textbooks. Usually, in the history textbooks domestic Holocaust was forgotten or just mentioned in a sentence that it happened, with a few more lines describing what happened to the Jews elsewhere in Europe. While national communities in Croatia and Serbia remembered their own victims, the Jewish communities and their culture were mostly erased from collective memories and identities in textbooks.

Another terrible irony happened. From 1941 to 1944, a part of the Croatian and Bosnian Serb population was targeted with genocidal aggression by the Ustasha regime. Approximately fifty years later, Serbian paramilitary units conducted wide scale ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the units of Bosnian Serbs, as well as the Serbian paramilitary units committed various atrocities, the media was filled with justifications that claimed that the Serbian people were entitled to defend themselves from those who committed genocide over their own ancestors, almost half a century ago. And so, the cry in the media “in the name of the

defense of Serbdom and the Serbian lands, may history never repeat itself” really became a cry of atrocity and oppression over other peoples. In that way, collective memories of past victimization and cynical manipulation of Serbian nationalist leaders provided a moral cloak for some of the bloodiest acts of European state-building since 1945. So, it became clear that using the Holocaust as a lens through which to understand Serbian history and contemporary events proved an extremely useful nationalist strategy. It fed into pre-existing political myths of victimization and loss, while tapping into a growing public awareness of the Holocaust and its significance.

It is obvious that the dissolution of Yugoslavia allowed anti-Semitism, xenophobic nationalism, brutal ways of using the tragedy of the Holocaust and ethnic rivalries to resurface with a virulence which is often reminiscent of the Second World War era. Nationalist extremists or simply those manipulated by the Holocaust tragedy openly adopted the ideological tenets of the anti-Semitism long practiced by their counterparts in the West. What made matters worse is that the political elite gave its approval to incorporate that type of mortal hatred into the history textbooks.

Because of all that had been said, the need arises for a wider application of the Holocaust education. In our region, this form of education is not only crucial because of the fact that more than seventy years ago a nation had almost utterly been wiped out, but because one part of both Serbian and Croatian people in the nineties expressed the same desire to annihilate one another, as well as to express, alongside the national hatred, an anti-Semitic mood. Since Holocaust education in its methodology and in its techniques possesses the knowledge and the ability to, in an all-around and objective way, refine this catastrophic chapter in human history, and to extract from it the conclusions which lead to one universal conclusion that this “must not happen again”, it is necessary to implement the aforementioned mode of education in the region of ex-Yugoslav

countries, because its peoples have demonstrated the exact opposite, the readiness to “repeat history”. Due to that, Holocaust education must be included.

Because of this, Holocaust education must provide more direct references to the context of this event in the curriculum, which requires pupils to, ‘discuss injustices practiced by the Nazis and Fascists but also their own national collaborators’, and refer to ‘Human Rights violations’ and ‘atrocities against minorities and conquered nations’.

Because Holocaust education is also partially contingent on local historical concepts and narrative traditions, in accordance with it, future ex-Yugoslav countries curriculums should call for the pupils to “compare the phenomenon between Fascism and Nazism and what took place in Yugoslavia not only in the Second World War but also in the Yugoslav wars during the nineties’, and refer to ‘Nazi doctrines and nationalist doctrines’, ‘loss of human life’, the ‘comparative study of various genocides’, and ‘stages of genocide’ including Second World War genocide over the Jews, Serbs and Roma, and Yugoslav war crimes committed from 1991 to 1999.

So, even if the Holocaust is located most frequently in the history curricula in the context of the Second World War, it is important to put it also, in the case of the ex-Yugoslav region, in the context of the issue of ‘Human Rights’ or ‘Human Rights violations’, thus forming a part of teaching social studies or, more rarely, ethics education and philosophy.

The discussion of the Holocaust and comparison with mass murders in the Yugoslav wars among the people who have recently experienced mass atrocities, or in which little discussion of the event has hitherto taken place, is an effective way of broaching local persecution indirectly while avoiding the conflict which a direct discussion of the issues might provoke. We should have in mind that one thing should not happen - by defining crimes committed during the Holocaust as ‘genocide’ and defining local crimes euphemistically (as ‘cruel acts’, for example), some textbooks in the region of former Yugoslavia play down the moral and legal repercussions

of crimes committed locally. The Holocaust should not be used as a 'measure' or 'benchmark' of the putatively and relatively minor significance of local persecution during the Second World War or in the Yugoslav wars during the nineties, by which attention is detracted from those responsible for comparable crimes. Also, there is a need to see the character of modern anti-Semitism, a wide-spread social movement encompassing large masses and equipped with all the methods and devices of organizing masses which set themselves the goal of destroying the Jewish people on an international scale and compare it with mass crimes and genocide that happened in the wars in the ex-Yugoslav countries.²⁵

Because of this, it is important to incorporate the Holocaust education in the educational system in the region as well as to make the link with Human Rights education. While Human Rights are frequently mentioned in day-to-day life in the region, they are not addressed in history textbooks in such a way that pupils learn to fully understand what Human Rights are and how to implement them. So, by using the knowledge of Holocaust education local policymakers have to include a section about the history of Human Rights, including their origins, legal stipulations, their violations and attempts to implement them, while acknowledging the specificities of the historical discipline, which strives to foster understanding of the entire spectrum of past human endeavors, including heroism, altruism and humanism, but also conformism, thoughtlessness, exclusion, violence and cruelty.

This assessment of conceptual and narrative trends might provide an opportunity to reassess Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder's contention that the Holocaust is a mainstay of moral universalism.²⁶ Finally, we are presenting the following recommendations which are designed to

²⁵ Boaz Cohen, *Israeli Holocaust Research, Birth and Evolution*, Routledge, London-New York, 2013, p.70.

²⁶ See N. Sznajder, D. Levy, *Erinnerungen im globalen Zeitalter – der Holocaust*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2001, p.150.

be used by educational policymakers, politicians, researchers, textbook authors, and NGO educators, and generally all who are involved in education, concerning the Holocaust and Human Rights as well as with creating regional stability policy.

First, it should be known that moral, philosophical and legal ‘messages’ may indeed be implicit in accounts of history, but this is not their primary function. The primary function of the Holocaust education as part of regional security policy, while hardly to secure democracy or directly prevent further genocides, should be to help young people acquire knowledge and understanding of this complex event and to be more aware of what one may need to avoid in order for similar events not to happen again.²⁷

In accordance with this, Holocaust researchers and scholars from different countries met two times (in 2013 and 2014) during Croatian-Serbian meetings of scientists and politicians in Golubić, in Croatia. That is when they took the chance to recommend to the politicians that were present their thoughts on how important Holocaust education is on the territories of Croatia and Serbia. The participants came out with a sincere belief 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. The idea of these two Holocaust working sessions was to familiarize participants with new educational materials, methods and strategies of teaching and research about the Holocaust as well as sensitize them to the dangers of prejudice, discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism. In fact, Holocaust researchers came out with the statement that the Holocaust provides one of the most effective subjects for examining basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into this history

²⁷ Falk Pingel, *Sicher ist, dass... der Volkermord nicht mit Hitler begann und leider auch nicht mit ihm endet*. *Das Thema ‚Volkermord‘ als Gegenstand von Unterricht und Schulbuch*, V. Radkau, E. Fuchs and T. Lutz (eds), *Genozide und staatliche Gewaltverbrechen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Innsbruck, Studien Verlag, 2004, pp.98-113.

yields critical lessons for an investigation into human behavior. It also addresses one of the central mandates of education in Europe, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen.²⁸ The participants' intention was to create a common ground for Croat and Serbian scholars and educators to share the ideas and strategies with other colleagues from abroad. Moreover teaching of the Holocaust is connected with the defense of minority rights as the Holocaust, among other things, was also the result of how European national states and societies transformed the Jewish population of their countries into a minority which had no rights and had to be excluded. Because of this, the following suggestions were emphasized, which at the same time represent the essence of the importance of this type of education in the context of leading the policy of regional stability on the territory of the Western Balkans:

1. To confront dark pages of own history, overcome fear.
2. To implement good practices; letters to ghetto, letters to former Jewish inhabitants, learning about the absence of people who contributed to the country's history and culture.
3. To connect Human Rights education and Holocaust education through the NGOs and their educational programs.
4. To encourage the participation of educators and academics at antiracist festivals-to speak about the Holocaust as a subject for an examination of basic moral issues.
5. To focus on the special need to maintain minorities in cities where they are living now, and teach the majority about tolerance based on the examples given by the Holocaust.

²⁸<http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-Holocaust/why-teach-about-the-Holocaust> (visit 10/08/2014)

6. To 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
7. To develop education seminars for teachers about Holocaust education and Human Rights education.
8. To be prepared and educated enough to recognize the dangers of widespread prejudice, discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism spread by the media during critical historical periods.
9. It's crucial to teach about social, political, economic, ideological procedures in history through case studies, paradigms and primary sources (as the discourse of newspapers).
10. In order to effectively fight ideological manipulation or propaganda²⁹ through press and mass media, we need to educate people to identify and recognize this manipulation when they see it; to enhance their ability to read between the lines, to be aware and to recognize when they are being manipulated.
11. When we teach about massive crimes in history and especially when we teach about the Holocaust it is necessary to explain what the reasons were behind the facts; there are many historical, social, religious, political, and economic factors, structural causes that cumulatively can result in massive crimes and that led to the Holocaust (Fascism,

²⁹As far as the war period is concerned the term is used in its main negative connotation by association with its most manipulative examples (e.g. Nazi propaganda used to justify the Holocaust). See Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Ideology and Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*, Harvard University Press, 2006.

For the examination of other periods we can use other terms (disinformation, evangelism etc), in order to be more accurate.

Nazism, its anti-Semitism and its anticommunism, racism, economic crisis (poverty), aryianization of Jewish properties, nationalism, boundaries revision, ethnic cleansing).

In order to prevent similar situations in the future, we have to gain awareness of the complexity of the subject and a perspective on how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of democratic values.

12. It is important to be aware of the fact that when there is war, when there is economic or political crisis and when society and people are under pressure, then the rise of the demonization of the “other” emerges most frequently from previous stereotypes, stigmatization, scapegoating, and dehumanization – often of minorities. All of the above are common practices that may end in the use and the intensification of violence. And once war starts, civilian casualties are almost a guaranteed certainty.

13. In every society it is important to find through the key areas of education, culture and institutions, common ground between different people, similarities and the fruitful contribution of every “other” to the society. We have to always think about who loses and who benefits from divisions among oppressed people. Those in power profit in many different ways while those who lose are ordinary people on both sides. In the end we all lose when whole generations are denied the right to develop and contribute their gifts to the rest of the human community.³⁰

FINAL THOUGHTS

Finally, we can conclude that the lack of cognizance as well as a wider political and social will to take a critical look at the phenomena of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism and

³⁰<https://carolahand.wordpress.com/tag/finding-common-ground/> (visit 11/9/2014)

intolerance, etc., which are the concomitant of nationalism, deprives Serbian and Croatian societies of a chance to reconstitute itself into a democratic, tolerant and, above all, auto-reflexive society ready to accept difference as such, instead focusing on its own continuing frustrations or making assessments in terms of its own needs. If these states want to go further to the democratic world they have a duty to pass on recognized and legitimate cultural achievements to following generations.³¹ It is equally valid that a society passes on both its own and its ancestors cultural failures to the following generations. The history of the Second World War and the Holocaust gives many examples of moral dilemmas, hostile attitudes and violence, norms and values that challenged the basic conditions of human existence and the development of civilization. Because of that, this type of education must not be presented simply as a story that happened to the Jews in the past, committed by some “bad people that are no more”. Holocaust education should awaken the civil and democratic conscience of Croatia and Serbia, and not just be a buried memory of former victims. If it becomes a woken conscience, then it shall become the guideline in the future on which wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia shall not be waged again.

³¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Pamięć, historia, zapomnienie*, Universitas, Kraków 2006, p.82