Anti-Semitism and the Christian Right in post-Milošević Serbia:
From conspiracy theory to hate crime

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This paper proposes that understanding the causes of anti-Semitic hate crime requires the recognition of the cultural specificity of anti-Semitism, reflected in its unique mythical and conspiratorial nature. By neglecting to consider the idiosyncrasies of anti-Semitic rhetoric, general theories of hate crime often fail to provide an adequate explanation for the persistence of anti-Jewish violence, especially in cultures where Jews do not constitute a conspicuous minority, or where there is no noticeable tradition of anti-Jewish sentiment. This point is illustrated using as an example the emergence of anti-Semitic hate crime in Serbia in the aftermath of political changes in October 2000. The paper explores this development in the context of Serbia's recent past, arguing that the onset of violent incidents towards Jews entailed two distinct but related stages, both of which are linked to the conspiratorial nature of anti-Semitic ideology. The first phase – which culminated at the time of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia – involved the proliferation of the belief in Jewish conspiracy. At this stage, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, which were to be found even in the mainstream media, retained an 'abstract' quality and their proliferation did not, in itself, lead to anti-Jewish hate crime. The onset of anti-Semitic violence is associated with the second phase, which followed Milošević's downfall, when, with the marginalisation of conspiratorial culture, the belief in Jewish conspiracy, as an abstract ideological position, became reified and transformed into concrete instances of violence against the local Jewish population. In exploring this two-stage process, the paper highlights the way in which a closer examination of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and other anti-Semitic texts can help shed some light on the dynamic underpinning the persistence of anti-Jewish hate crime in modern society.

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Ever since the introduction of hate crime legislation in the United States in the late 1980s, the concept of 'hate crime', referring to breaches of the law 'that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity' (Hate Crimes Statistics Act, 1990) has attracted considerable interest from social scientists, legal experts and civil rights activists worldwide. Although the legal definition and the scope of the term continue to be a matter of controversy (see for instance Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Jacobs & Potter, 1998; Jenness & Broad, 1997; Perry, 2001; Craig, 2002; etc.), the proliferation of 'hate crimes' literature has had an important influence on the way in which prejudice-motivated violence is understood and researched. The popularisation of a generic term that covers racist, anti-Semitic, sexist, or homophobic crime has helped reinforce the tendency to perceive and study different manifestations of prejudice-motivated aggression as belonging to a single analytical and conceptual category.

When discussing the tendency to view hate crimes as a single class of phenomena, it is important to draw a distinction between the legal connotations of the concept and the way in which it is used in much of social scientific literature on the subject. In a strictly legal sense, the treatment of different hate crimes as constituting a single category of offence, often covered by a single piece of legislation[1] appears both justifiable and necessary. Above all, such practice conveys the message that discrimination across different divides in modern society is equally deplorable. Hate crime laws generally do not (and arguably should not) make either a qualitative or quantitative distinction between violence motivated by for instance racial, religious or homophobic prejudice. Moreover, there is compelling evidence to suggest that, compared to victims of analogous non-prejudice-motivated offences, victims of hate crimes suffer more serious and longer lasting psychological trauma (Herek et al, 1999, 2002; Cogan 2002, Levin, 1999; Lawrence, 1999). By treating hate crime as a single category of transgression, the law recognises common harmful effects of different bias crimes, and awards all victimised individuals (and groups) the same level of protection (for the alternative point of view on the issue, see Iganski, 2002).

Significantly however, none of these reasons imply that offences which are legally classified as hate crime have common social and psychological underpinnings or causes. Yet in sociological literature on hate crime, where the term is often used as synonymous with ethno-violence generally, different bias crimes tend to be seen as underpinned by similar causal dynamic, and therefore as requiring a common sociological or psychological elucidation. For instance, in *In the Name of Hate*, Perry (2001) suggests that the task of social science is 'to provide a coherent framework for understanding the diverse phenomenon that we refer to as "hate crimes"' (p.31). Notably, Perry calls for a single framework that accounts for a diverse 'phenomenon'. Craig's (2002) recent review of current research on the psychology of hate crime also invokes the need for a general explanation. Craig suggests that instead of focusing on a specific type of prejudice-motivated crime (e.g. homophobic violence), studies in this area ought to make 'attempts at generalisation to alternate bias-motivations' and explore the ways in which 'hate crimes differ from similarly egregious aggression' (p.86). Thus, in spite of the frequently cited caveat that 'no existing [explanation of the phenomenon] can carefully account for all types of hate crime' (Craig, 2002; p.90), theoretical writing on the topic appears to be geared towards identifying sociological and psychological factors that represent the 'common denominators' (Perry, 2001) in different manifestations of ethno-violence. It is also noteworthy that the generalising trend apparent in theoretical writing has affected policy decisions aimed at tackling hate crime. Attempts at constructing 'psychological profiles' of hate crimes perpetrators (e.g. Levin & McDevitt, 1993), which have influenced law

enforcement policy in some states in the US (Craig, 2002), are also based on the assumption that violent behaviour towards disparate minority groups is underpinned by common mental constitution or demographic characteristics.

One reason behind the inclination, apparent in sociological literature, to view hate crime as a single category of behaviour that warrants a general causal explanation is, broadly speaking, of a political nature. As was already noted, since its conception, the term ‘hate crime’ has been shrouded in controversy, much of which concerns the debate regarding what kind of prejudices lead to ‘hate crime’ (see Jacobs and Potter, 1998 for a review). One way in which the boundaries of a contentious category such as ‘hate crime’ are negotiated and maintained is by identifying *commonalities* (sociological, psychological, demographic, etc.) within the specific class of phenomena referred to as ‘hate crimes’ and demonstrating the absence of these features outside the category. The discursive dynamics of categorisation and particularisation, which are reflected in the attempts at generalisation, represent an intrinsic feature of the rhetorical process through which the legal and political relevance of the term ‘hate crime’ is negotiated in the context of the controversy surrounding its utility and value.

Also, the quest for a common theoretical explanation of hate crime and its causes reflects a longstanding tradition in psychological writing on prejudice. For decades, social psychologists have sought to identify the common psychological foundations of apparently dissimilar instances of intolerance and discrimination (e.g. Brown, 1995, 2002; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; for critique of this perspective, see Billig, 1996; 2002). The parallel that exists between social psychological research on prejudice and recent approaches to hate crime is unlikely to be coincidental. After all, what distinguishes hate crimes from other forms of criminal behaviour (at least in theory, see Iganski, 2001) are the perpetrators’ motives, i.e. their ‘hate’ (or, more accurately, their prejudice; Jacobs & Potter, 1998) and therefore something that is traditionally seen as the prerogative of psychological inquiry. As a result, contemporary hate crimes scholars frequently draw, even if only implicitly, on psychological theorising about prejudice (Allport, 1954; Brown, 1995), social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hogg & Abrams, 1988); authoritarianism (Adorno et al, 1950; Altameyer, 1988; see Craig, 2002) and inter-group conflict (Sherif, 1966; Sherif & Sherif, 1965, see Levin & Rabrenovic, 2001), absorbing in the process some of psychology’s generalising tendencies.

The commonly found emphasis on the shared social and psychological aspects of the causes of hate crime has important limitations. The inclination towards generalisation harbours the danger of sidelining the idiosyncrasies of particular instances of ethno-violence and of neglecting the cultural specificity of ideologies that underlie them. Ideologies of bigotry - which define the culturally relevant divisions between social groups and legitimate violence against the ‘other’ - are embedded in specific historical and social conditions and are subject to distinct discursive and rhetorical dynamics. Anti-Semitism is a relevant example. Literature on hate crime seldom distinguishes the causal dynamic behind anti-Semitic violence from that which underpins other instances of prejudice-motivated criminal activity (Levin & McDevitt, 1993; Perry, 2001, 2003). Anti-Jewish violence tends to be conceptualised as comparable to other ethnic or religious crime and its causes are seen as explicable by means of broader dynamics based on the notions of ‘intergroup conflict’ or ‘ethnocentrism’. In social psychology too, anti-Semitism is all too often seen as yet another instance of ‘routine bias’, linked to the persistence of negative stereotypes towards members of the Jewish minority, and therefore explicable by means of a general theory of intergroup relations (e.g. Selznick & Steinberg, 1969; Quinley & Glock, 1979).

Importantly however, ever since the 1940s a number of scholars of anti-Semitism have argued that certain manifestations of anti-Jewish bigotry need to be distinguished from common prejudices that plague modern society (Samuel, 1940/1988; Cohn, 1957; Langmuire, 1987; Bauman, 1999; Smith, 1996; Hockenos, 1993). For instance, at the time when anti-Jewish euphoria in Germany was at its peak, Samuel (1940/1988) drew attention to the 'obsessional exaggeration' that characterised German anti-Semitism and the discrepancy that existed between Nazi anti-Semitic ideology and 'everyday prejudice'. Samuel argued that 'in every liberal discussion of anti-Semitism which comes to my notice, I have encountered the same obstinate refusal to distinguish between anti-Jewish sentiment and anti-Semitic hallucination' (Samuel, 1940/1988, p.9-10). He contended that such a distinction is necessitated by the apparent difference between the 'dislike of Jews based on contact, direct or indirect and the primitive terror and folkloristic mental helplessness' of a true anti-Semite (ibid).

The 'folkloristic mental helplessness' mentioned by Samuel, does not refer solely to the intensity of Nazi hatred of Jews, but also points to the unique 'mythical' nature of anti-Semitic ideology which defines anti-Semitism even in the post-Holocaust world (Smith, 1986). Unlike many instances of everyday prejudice, which are based on the antipathy towards ethnic or religious minorities that may be explained in terms of competition over economic and cultural resources or in terms of established hierarchies of power, much of contemporary anti-Semitism stems primarily from a unique Manichean demonology (Smith, 1986, Hockenos, 1993, Langmuire, 1987, Blee, 2002, Pipes, 1998). The hatred of Jews is today seldom expressed in terms of demeaning stereotypes that characterise popular prejudice. Instead, the biggest 'fault' of the Jews in the eyes of anti-Semites worldwide is that they are supposedly plotting a vast international conspiracy the aim of which is the destruction of independent nations and the creation of a secular New World Order (Cohn, 1957, Pipes, 1998, Billig, 1978). What is more, the Jewish elite are seen as an omnipotent force, with almost supernatural powers, which unites communism and capitalism, freemasonry and the Catholic Church, Islam and the Enlightenment. Such a fantasy is so devoid of truth and everyday canons of rationality that it cannot be adequately accounted for by means of general mechanisms of 'stereotyping', 'reality based bias' or 'inter-group conflict' (Langmuire, 1987).

The mythical and conspiratorial nature of contemporary anti-Semitism is unique to prejudice against Jews. Jews are the *only* minority group in the world that consistently gets accused of masterminding world domination. What is more, the existence of conspiratorial anti-Semitism appears to be unrelated to the *actual* presence of Jews. Jewish conspiracy theories are expounded and believed even in cultures that have no Jewish minority, such as in Japan (Billig, 1989; Pipes, 1998; Goodman & Miyazawa, 1995). Similarly, in Eastern and Central Europe, the prevalence of conspiratorial anti-Semitism appears to be unrelated to the size of the local Jewish community or the history of relations between Jews and the majority population. Anti-Semitism in Hungary, a country with a Jewish population of some 80,000, is less widespread than in Poland, which is home to no more than several thousand Jews. Similarly, in the lands of the former Soviet Union, anti-Semitic sentiments appear to be strongest in countries never inhabited by Jews (e.g. Azerbaijan), or in parts where most of the local Jewish community perished in the Holocaust (e.g. Ukraine; Hockenos, 1993). This pattern has led a number of scholars of Eastern European anti-Semitism to refer to the local manifestations of anti-Jewish prejudice as 'anti-Semitism without Jews' (Lendvai, 1972; Hockenos, 1993, Michnik, 1992).

In the present article, it will be proposed that the cultural specificity of contemporary anti-Jewish ideology - reflected in its unique conspiratorial nature and a distinctly mythical quality – may play an important role in the causal dynamic behind anti-Semitic hate crimes. Although to establish the existence of a causal link between the rhetoric and the reality of hate crimes requires in-depth research with offenders, it is suggested in this paper that, instead of relying on general explanations of ethno-violence that are supposedly applicable to different instances of hate crime, inquiries into the causes of anti-Semitic violence in a specific social context must pay appropriate attention to the idiosyncrasies of anti-Jewish rhetoric. Also, such rhetoric needs to be examined against the backdrop of the relevant ideological and political conditions. The likely importance of this line of inquiry will be illustrated using as an example the proliferation of anti-Jewish hate crime in Serbian society in the aftermath of the ousting of Slobodan Milošević in the autumn of 2000. As will become apparent, the pattern of anti-Semitic violence in Serbia differs in important ways from other ethno-violence in that country. The paper argues that this is because, unlike other ideologies of hate in contemporary Serbia, anti-Semitism is deeply embedded in the culture and tradition of conspiracy theory. Thus, the rise in anti-Jewish activism in the past two and a half years will be shown to have accompanied important transformations in the language and orientation of anti-Semitic conspiratorial discourse, which have contributed to the legitimisation and incitement of anti-Jewish violence.

Anti-Semitic hate crime in Serbian society since October 2000

On 5th October 2000, following the largest public protest in Serbian history, Slobodan Milošević resigned as president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Abandoned by his henchmen in the police and the army, and under pressure from an angry crowd gathered in central Belgrade, Milošević conceded defeat to his political rival, the then opposition presidential candidate Vojislav Koštunica. Milošević's resignation not only signalled the end of his bloody political career, but also offered a promise that, after ten years of state sponsored ethnic conflict and nationalist euphoria, the Serbian nation might embark on a more peaceful and reconciliatory journey to democracy and civil society.

In spite of widespread optimism regarding Serbia's political future, the transfer of power in Belgrade was accompanied by a disturbing and in many ways puzzling development. In spite of the overall liberalisation of Serbian society that followed the events of October 2000, the country witnessed an unexpected rise in anti-Semitic hate crime. In February 2001, anti-Semitic graffiti and stickers bearing Nazi symbols appeared on the walls of a synagogue in Belgrade. A month later, vandals desecrated the monument erected in the town of Zrenjanin in honour of Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Jewish cemeteries and Municipality buildings in a number of provincial towns and cities suffered similar defilement, while graffiti displaying messages such as 'Death to Jews', 'Jews out' etc. became increasingly common throughout Serbia. Personal threats to members of the country's Jewish community also became more frequent. According to civil rights groups and other NGOs which monitor instances of ethnic hatred in Serbia, the number of threatening letters to Jewish households, attacks on Jewish owned property, as well as physical assaults on members of the Jewish community, all increased in the Spring of 2001 (Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, 2002; Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2001). [2]

Partly because of the inefficiency of the Serbian security forces, the perpetrators of these acts are seldom apprehended and brought to justice. The police tend to dismiss prejudice-

motivated incidents as the working of idle youths and consequently devote few if any resources to solving them. However, according to many observers in Serbia the proliferation of anti-Jewish incidents should not be taken lightly, as this development is inextricably linked with the surfacing of a number of extremist Christian right-wing political organisations which also accompanied Milošević's fall from power. The emerging Orthodox Christian Right, which propagates a mixture of political conservatism and clerical nationalism, anti-Semitism and homophobia, consists of a collection of Christian youth organisations, including the Patriotic Movement Dignity (Otačastveni Pokret Obraz); the Association of Students 'St. Justin the Philosopher' (Udruženje Studenata 'Sveti Justin Filozof'), the Serbian Assembly 'Doorway' (Srpski Sabor 'Dveri') and the Serbian Orthodox Youth (Srpska Pravoslavna Omladina). Apart from the youth movements, the ideology of Christian Right wing extremism is disseminated by the veteran anti-Semite Dr. Ratibor Đurđević, octogenarian retired clinical psychologist and former émigré to the US, whose writings on the Jewish conspiracy (over 30 titles in total) are published by Ichtys Press, a small company he himself owns. Although Đurđević is not affiliated to any group, there appear to be strong organisational and ideological ties between him and Christian right organisations. Book promotions and public talks held by Đurđević are regularly attended by sympathisers of Christian right-wing organisations. Also, leaders of the Christian Right have on a number of occasions expressed positive views of Đurđević and his writings.[3]

The ideological roots of the contemporary Christian Right in Serbia are to be found in the religious teachings of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (1881-1956), one of the most highly esteemed religious figures in early 20th century Serbia. Velimirović was the principal ideologue of 1930s Serbian populism which spawned numerous fascist movements, most notably Zbor, led by the pro-Nazi collaborationist politician Dimitrije Ljotić. Velimirović's political outlook consisted of a denunciation of individualism, parliamentary democracy, science, and other Enlightenment values. Velimirović saw the West and its belief system as Satanic, and as irreconcilable with the spiritually superior values of the 'Orthodox East' (Čolović, 1997; Subotić, 1993, 1996; Tomanić, 2001, Cohen, 1996).

The publicity material of the Christian Right in Serbia is inundated with quotations from Velimirović's writings, and the Bishop is repeatedly cited as the main political and spiritual authority. Significantly, the anti-Semitic rhetoric of the Christian right-wing movements can also be traced to Velimirović's teachings (especially Velimirović, 1998, 2000). In the Bishop's works, the uncompromising traditionalist and anti-modernist stance is justified and rationalised by reference to a vast Masonic, Communist and Jewish conspiracy against Serbs and other Orthodox Christians (see Byford & Billig, 2001; Byford, 2002b; Tomanić, 2001).

It is noteworthy that in spite of the Bishop's anti-Semitic leanings, the Church authorities in Serbia never officially condemned Velimirović's anti-Semitism. What is more, the Serbian Church regards Bishop Nikolaj as one of the most respected national religious figures (e.g. Bigović, 2001, Subotić, 1996, Radosavljević, 1986/2001). The anti-Semitic aspect of Velimirović's work appears to be taboo within Serbian theological circles, and the ideological implications of his teachings are largely ignored.

As has already been noted, there is little concrete proof that any of the newly formed Christian Right-wing groups, which propagate Velimirovićesque religious ideology, were directly implicated in the aforementioned instances of anti-Semitic violence. Nonetheless, 'Dignity' 'St. Justin' and 'Doorway' are widely recognised as the principal exponents of anti-Jewish prejudice in post-Milošević Serbia (see Byford, 2002b). Most importantly,

representatives of the local Jewish community perceive the continuing presence of the Christian Right as the greatest threat to the peaceful existence of Serbia's Jews (Aca Singer in IWPR Balkan Crisis Report, no. 288, 6 August 2001). This is partly because state authorities continue to treat 'Dignity' and similar organisations as legitimate 'patriotic' political movements, consistently ignoring calls for them to be outlawed. Moreover, Christian right-wing groups maintain close organisational and ideological links with influential mainstream institutions in Serbian society, most notably with the Serbian Orthodox Church and the right-wing element of the new Serbian political establishment. This connection with the mainstream, which is dealt with in more detail elsewhere (see Byford, 2002b), enables the Christian Right to preserve extremist political ideas on the visible margins of Serbian political culture, thus creating an enabling environment (Perry, 2001) for acts of anti-Jewish violence and intimidation.

Before moving on to examine the causes of the proliferation of anti-Semitic hate crime, it is important to place this development in the broader context of civil rights violations in Serbian society. Although reliable and systematic data about the prevalence of ethno-violence is not available, it can be confidently stated that Jews are not the most vulnerable ethnic group in Serbia. According to civil rights organisations, most victims of hate crime belong to the country's Gypsy and Muslim communities. Although state sponsored violence against the Muslim population ceased since the ousting of Slobodan Milošević, old prejudices appear to have survived, especially in regions with a sizeable Muslim minority. Also, as in much of Eastern Europe (Brearley, 2001), racism towards Gypsies is endemic in Serbian culture. Frequent acts of violence and intimidation against the Romany community are seldom investigated by the authorities and convictions for the 'incitement of ethnic hatred' - the only hate crime related legal provision in the Serbian penal code - remain few and far between (Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, 2001, 2002; Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2000, 2001).[4]

With this in mind, the focus of anti-Semitism in the present paper should not be taken as an indication that anti-Jewish violence somehow eclipses all other instances of intolerance in Serbia. In fact, in the context of the country's recent past and the war crimes committed during the 1990s by Serbian forces in Bosnia and Kosovo, the recent attacks on the Jewish community may even appear comparatively trivial. At the same time, a number of characteristics of anti-Jewish hate crime make it worthy of special attention. Firstly, it is directed at a community that is not a demographically, economically or politically conspicuous minority in Serbian society. The local Jewish community is between 2,000 and 3,000 strong, which is less than 0.04% of the country's total population. Most of its members are descended from mixed marriages, and are fully assimilated into the local culture. Also, for the most part, Serbia's Jews belong to the middle socio-economic class, which was hard hit by Milošević's mismanagement of the state economy in the 1990s. They do not fit the classic stereotype of rich and powerful Jewry and as such do not constitute a likely object of resentment for the country's majority. Secondly, anti-Semitic hate crime is a relatively novel phenomenon which, somewhat curiously, accompanied the marginalisation of extremism in Serbian political culture. Since the end of the Second World War, anti-Semitism had been a marginal occurrence in Serbia. Even for much of the 1990s, when xenophobia and ethnic intolerance dominated Serbian political culture, anti-Jewish prejudice remained on the fringes of society, and criminal acts against Jews were virtually unheard of (Sekelj, 1997). For these reasons, an explanation for the recent emergence of anti-Semitic hate crime cannot be sought in either the tradition or the present character of Serbian-Jewish relations. Instead, as will become apparent, it is to be found in the interplay between the conspiratorial character of anti-

Semitism and the specific features of the ideological and political milieu in post-Milošević Serbia.

It is also noteworthy that anti-Jewish violence in Serbia coincided with the resurgence of anti-Semitism throughout the Western World. Anti-Semitic incidents comparable to those that have occurred in Serbian towns and cities have been recorded in recent years in France, Belgium, Greece, the United Kingdom, Germany and elsewhere (Sacks, 2002, Iganski & Kosmin, 2002). Yet, recent developments in Serbia cannot be explained simply as part of this broader, pan-European political trend. In a recent article, Chief Rabbi of Britain Professor Jonathan Sacks identified three sources of the 'new anti-Semitism':

'First, a radicalized Islamist youth inflamed by extremist rhetoric; second, a left-wing anti-American cognitive élite with strong representation in the European media; third, a resurgent far right, as anti-Muslim as it is anti-Jewish. It is being fed by the instability of globalization, the insecurity of the post-Cold War international arena, and the still undischarged trauma of 11 September. It has been allowed to grow unchecked because of a general unwillingness among Europe's political leadership to confront the problem head on ('For evil to triumph', said Burke, 'it is necessary only for the good man to do nothing'). It has been aggravated by the breakdown of a morality of right and wrong acts in favour of a therapeutic ethic that 'feels the pain' of the perpetrators of violence. Taken in combination, these are powerful forces, to which the countervailing influences of reason, responsibility and restraint are as unequal now as they have been at any other time of populist ferment and generalized fear.' (Sacks, 2002, p.1)

In the Serbian context, none of the three factors mentioned by Chief Rabbi Sacks are to be found. Firstly, radical Islamic youth is an insignificant political force in Serbia. Secondly, anti-Semitic rhetoric is devoid of references to Israel or the Middle East and cannot be traced back to the ideological tradition of left-wing anti-Semitism (for a discussion of left wing anti-Semitism, see Billig, 1987). Finally, Serbian anti-Semites do not justify their argument through the rhetoric of sympathy with the Palestinian liberation movement or the Arab world. Anti-Jewish discourse in Serbia is entirely self-absorbed, focused solely on the victimisation of Serbs (and sometimes other Orthodox peoples) in the hands of the imagined international Jewish conspiracy. Anti-Semitic arguments are coated in the quasi-religious rhetoric of ultra-Orthodoxy, which is rooted in the tradition of Serbian right-wing ideology of the 1930s. Finally, unlike in other parts of Europe, the rise in anti-Semitic hate crime in Serbia was not a by-product of the resurgence of the far Right. In fact, the opposite is the case, in that anti-Jewish violence accompanied the marginalisation of extremism in Serbian mainstream political culture.

In the discussion that follows, the emergence of anti-Semitic hate crime in post-Milošević Serbia will be explored in the context of the aforementioned cultural specificity of anti-Semitic prejudice. The causal dynamic behind the rise in violent incidents towards Jews will be shown to have consisted of two distinct but related stages both of which are linked to the conspiratorial and mythical character of contemporary anti-Semitism. The first phase – which culminated at the time of the Nato bombing of Yugoslavia – involved the revival of the belief in a Jewish conspiracy. Significantly, at this stage anti-Semitism retained a distinctly 'abstract' quality, so the proliferation of conspiracy theories did not, in itself, lead to anti-Jewish hate crime. The onset of anti-Semitic violence is associated with the second phase - which followed Milošević's downfall - when the belief in a Jewish conspiracy, as an abstract

ideological position, became reified and transformed into concrete instances of violence against the local Jewish population.

Phase I: The emergence of conspiratorial anti-Semitism

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 (Sekelj, 1995, 1997, Institute for Jewish Policy Research report, 1997). The principal exponents of anti-Semitism were a relatively small number of activists (e.g. Đurđević, Dragoš Kalajić, Radmilo Marojević, etc.) and isolated right-wing members of the Orthodox clergy (e.g. Father Žarko Gavrilović; see Sekelj, 1995, 1997, see also, IJPR report, 1997; Yugoslav Helsinki Committee for Human Rights Report on Anti-Semitism, 2001). In the media, expressions of anti-Semitism were restricted to fringe nationalist and religious publications such as *Logos*, *Pravoslavni Misionar (Orthodox missionary), Kruna (The Crown), Glas Srpski (Serbian Voice), Ovdje (Here)* and *Velika Srbija (Greater Serbia)* as well as to magazines with a more esoteric and mystical orientation, such as *Treće Oko (Third eye)* and *Nostradamus*. Overall, the impact of these publications on public opinion in Serbia was limited.

The status of conspiratorial anti-Semitism changed significantly with the advent of the Nato bombing in the spring of 1999. This can be illustrated using the example of the country's mainstream media. Prior to the Western military intervention, anti-Jewish themes were largely absent from the mainstream press. This was especially true of *Politika*, Serbia's oldest daily newspaper, which was for many decades the most widely read and most trusted publication (Thompson, 1994). Although the credibility of *Politika* has suffered since the late 1980s, when it was usurped by Miloševic's propaganda machine, the paper has never been a medium for the transmission of anti-Semitic political ideas. What is more, in the mid 1990s the paper often provided a forum in which liberal intellectuals and mainstream institutions could voice their concerns regarding the re-emergence of anti-Semitism in some of the aforementioned less reputable publications.[5] And yet, in June 1999, in the final days of the Nato campaign, *Politika* published a series of texts which alleged, in a rather matter-of-fact way, that Serbia was the victim of a Satanic conspiracy orchestrated by the 'Emperor of Davidian stock' David Rockefeller ('Invisible clique rules the planet', *Politika*, 4-6 June 1999). In addition to this coded reference to the Jewish nature of the alleged plot, the articles in *Politika* also publicised the writings of two known anti-Semites, the 'parapsychologist' Spasoje Vlajić and publicist Pavle Matić, who were cited as credible and respectable authorities on international relations (Byford & Billig, 2001; Čolović, 1999).

The example of anti-Semitic themes in *Politika* demonstrates how conspiratorial anti-Semitism, which had been previously confined to the margins of Serbian society, in the spring of 1999 penetrated the country's mainstream political and media culture and acquired the status of an acceptable and plausible explanation of the nation's predicament (see Byford & Billig, 2001; Byford 2002). Significantly, this development cannot be attributed to any noticeable shift to the right in Serbia at that time. Although the regime of Slobodan Milošević actively promoted Serbian nationalism, it never endorsed the right-wing nationalist tradition reminiscent of the Velimirović-style 1930s populism in which Serbian anti-Semitic discourse is rooted (Popov, 1993). Milošević - a former communist apparatchik whose political thinking was heavily influenced by his wife and unrepentant communist Mirjana Marković - tended to view the traditional Serbian Right with contempt and derision. There is no indication that this

lasting ideological stance altered as a result of Nato intervention, at least not in a way that might explain the emergence of anti-Semitism in a mainstream newspaper.

An alternative explanation is that the surfacing of right-wing conspiratorial myths in the late 1990s was the consequence of a specific ideological dynamic that is linked to the general proliferation of conspiracy theories in Serbian society at that time (Byford & Billig, 2001). Ever since the early 1990s, the notion of an international anti-Serbian plot was a regular occurrence in the Serbian media, as well as in pronouncements by the country's political establishment. For the most part, conspiratorial explanations disseminated by the Milošević regime were not anti-Semitic. The focus of attention was not the Jews, but the conspiratorial machinations of real life transnational elite organisations, such as the Bilderberg group or the Trilateral Commission. The emphasis on existing political organisations made these explanations seem 'reasonable' and acceptable. Specifically, since Bilderbergers and other conspiratorial bodies were said not to be controlled by Jews, world elite conspiracy theories could be presented as departing from the long-standing tradition of anti-Semitic conspiracy notions.

However, the ostensibly innocuous and non-anti-Semitic conspiracy explanations, which featured in Milošević's propaganda, were neither historically nor ideologically isolated. In accounting for the Nato bombing of Yugoslavia, Serbian writers of 'reasonable' conspiracy material were not inventing radically new explanations. Instead, they were drawing on the established ideological tradition of conspiracy theory, which dates back to the time of the French Revolution (Billig 1978, 1987, 1988, 1989; Roberts, 1974).[6] Crucially for the present discussion, the conspiratorial tradition of explanation, which informed the thinking of Serbian conspiracy theorists, has a strong anti-Semitic component. For approximately one hundred years of its history - from the mid 19th Century until the end of World War II – the conspiracy tradition was dominated by the notion of a Jewish plot to rule the world (Cohn, 1957; Billig, 1978, 1988; Lipset and Raab, 1978, Katz, 1980, Poliakov, 1974). During that period, anti-Semitism became firmly embedded in the conspiratorial culture and remains a continuing aspect of its ideological heritage. Thus, a conspiracy theorist, even if not overtly anti-Semitic, operates in an ideological space with an anti-Semitic legacy that cannot be easily discarded. Anti-Jewish themes persist - often in very subtle ways - even in the outwardly innocuous versions of conspiratorial discourse.

This anti-Semitic legacy of the conspiracy tradition has been shown to have contaminated the writing of Serbian conspiracy theorists (Byford and Billig, 2001). As a result, the proliferation even of the seemingly non-anti-Semitic versions of conspiracy theory gradually brought into the open the less acceptable aspects of the conspiratorial ideological tradition.[7] Specifically, the overall popularisation of conspiracy theories - which culminated in the Spring of 1999 - contributed to the gradual shifting of boundaries which separate the respectable from the unacceptable in politics, in a way that promoted various controversial aspects of the conspiracy culture - such as anti-Semitism - into the realm of acceptable explanations of Serbia's fate (Byford and Billig, 2001). Thus, anti-Semitic themes, as manifested in the aforementioned articles in *Politika*, were not invoked because of their political relevance, but emerged in some sense inadvertently, as the legacy of the conspiratorial cultural tradition.

One consequence of this dynamic, which is considered in more detail elsewhere (Byford and Billig, 2001; Byford, 2002), was that many exponents of conspiratorial anti-Semitism, who were previously confined to the margins of politics, found a wider platform in Serbian society. Representatives of the Orthodox Right were among the principal beneficiaries of this

change. Nebojša Krstić, the founder of 'Dignity' - currently Serbia's largest and politically most active anti-Semitic Christian Right-wing organisation – had regular access to the mainstream media. His articles were published in the culture supplement of *Politika*, as well as in numerous independent national daily and weekly publications such as *Blic*, *Glas Javnosti*, *Reporter* and *Glas Nedelje*. Krstić was typically introduced as 'author, publicist, theologian, analyst of globalisation and geopolitics' without any reference to his anti-Semitism and right-wing credentials ('In the name of the Cross and Freedom', *Glas Nedelje,* 3 March, 1999). Similarly, Ratibor Đurđević, Serbia's most virulent anti-Semitic author, was able to write openly for the magazine *Pravoslavlje,* the official publication of the Serbian Orthodox Church ('Serbs in Europe - Yes, Europe in Serbs - God forbid', *Pravoslavlje*, no. 775, 1999).

Significantly, the proliferation of conspiratorial anti-Semitism did not in itself lead to increased violence against the local Jewish community. Anti-Jewish themes retained a distinctly abstract and symbolic quality, commonly found in the Eastern European brand of 'anti-Semitism without Jews'. As Hockenos (1993), Michnik (1992) and others argue, in Eastern Europe the word 'Jew' is often used merely as a euphemism for the 'alien', Western values of Modernity and Enlightenment. Thus, the allusion to a Jewish conspiracy, evident in the explanations of the Nato bombing, might be seen more as a manifestation of a discredited and anachronistic way of articulating the opposition to Western influence (and military intervention), than as an expression of a racist attitude in the traditional sense.

The seemingly abstract meaning of the word 'Jew' in Serbian anti-Semitic rhetoric was reflected in a curious semantic distinction, maintained in much of the local anti-Semitic literature, between the evil 'world Jewry' (or the 'Judaists') and the apparently innocent 'ordinary Jews'. In the book *Five Bloody Revolutions by Judeo-bankers and their Judeo-Masonry*, Đurđević (1999) outlines the difference between the two categories:

'Before I move on and quote the analysts and critics of Jews, I think it would be appropriate to draw the reader's attention to a fact that is often overlooked. We are talking about the crimes committed by Jews, and that is a fact: criminals known as Jewish financiers and their allies Pharisees-Rabbis have been some of the chief planners of crimes in the form of the majority of contemporary wars and revolutions. However, in some sense, this statement is false, since these deeds were not committed by all Jews, but by a small number of Jewish activists, perfidious conspirators, *who do not comprise more than 1 to 2% of the Jewish people*. We do not blame all Italians for the crimes of the Mafia, or all Irish Catholics for the crazy bombings and murders committed by the IRA. In the same way, ordinary Jews must not be blamed for the crimes of Judeo-bankers.' (Đurđević, 1999, p.23, original emphasis).

In an earlier book, Đurđević (1997a) refers to Serbia's Jewish community as 'our Jews, adapted to life in the Balkans [who] do not pose a threat to Serbs, or any other people on Yugoslav territory' (p.30) and contrasts them with 'Judaists',

'The spawn of Satan, the descendants of the Pharisees, nihilist conspirators against God and man in the Western world: Judeo-Masons, Judeo-bankers, leaders of the New World Order, directors of financial institutions, proprietors of World media and industry, destroyers of morals and good customs, masterminds of revolutions and world wars, proponents of decadent culture, poisoners of Christian youth' (Đurđević*,* 1997a, p.29).

Thus, at this stage, the wrath of Serbian anti-Semites was directed at some vaguely defined category of 'Judaists' located outside Serbia. This position was, from a rhetorical perspective, doubly advantageous. Firstly, by situating the enemy in the Western World, these radical explanations could absorb more easily the popular anti-Western sentiment that was prevalent in Serbian society at the time. Also, the distinction between 'Jews' and 'Judaists' constituted an attempt at dismissing accusations of anti-Semitism frequently thrown at those who propagate the idea of a Jewish plot. Đurđević's fifty-page pamphlet *On the senselessness of anti-Semitism and anti-anti-Semitism* (1997b) is devoted, in its entirety, to explaining how anti-Semitism is 'in fact' the hatred of *all* Jews, while he, and others like him abhor 'only' the evil 'Judaists'.

A further reason why the rise in conspiratorial anti-Semitism in the Spring of 1999 did not result in anti-Jewish hate crime lies in the fact that, at the time, Serbian conspiracy culture lacked the seditious dimension that links conspiracy theories with anti-Semitic violence. According to Hofstadter (1966) after the Second World War, conspiracy culture, primarily in the US but also elsewhere, acquired a conspicuously subversive character. Exponents of conspiracist ideology no longer saw themselves as protectors of a well-established way of life, under threat from alien forces. Instead, they came to believe that their country was already in the hands of the enemy, the 'communists', 'international bankers' or 'Jews' (Davis, 1972). Anti-conspiratorial activity turned into a quest for the 'fifth column' in domestic politics, big business, or the media. From McCarthy to McVeigh the goal of conspiracy theorists has been to expose the ruling establishment for what it is: a façade for the machinations of 'Communists', 'New World Order', or the 'Zionist Occupational Government'. Unsurprisingly, in anti-Semitic versions of conspiracy theory, Jews are treated as the 'enemy within' and as such are singled out as prime targets for verbal and physical threats. [8]

In Miloševic's times, Serbian conspiratorial discourse was devoid of the subversive and rebellious spirit characteristic of present day conspiracism in the Western World. This is because, unlike their Western counterparts, Serbian conspiracy theorists did not feel dispossessed. Milošević's Serbia was the self-proclaimed last bastion of resistance against the global conspiracy and the New World Order, and as such, was the ideal dwelling place for conspiracy theorists of all denominations. Therefore, for as long as Miloševic was in power - saying 'no to the New World Order' - conspiratorial attention could remain focused on the machinations of the enemy outside, the Bilderberg group, the 'Judaists' or simply 'the West'. The crusade against the 'fifth column', although by no means entirely absent, was overshadowed by an overwhelming obsession with the 'external threat' (Durkheim, 1964).

As will become apparent shortly, this outward looking stance of Serbian conspiracy theories disappeared in the aftermath of Milošević's downfall. As soon as conspiracy theorists, especially those with anti-Semitic leanings, found themselves marginalized by the new political reality, conspiratorial explanations acquired the aforementioned subversive overtones, leading to the revival of the quest for the 'enemy within'.

Phase 2: reification of the 'mythical Jew'- transformation from 'Judaists' to Serbia's Jews

In the previous section, it was noted that Serbian anti-Semitic literature attempted to distinguish between, on the one hand, the evil 'Judaists' who were supposedly the hub of the world conspiracy, and on the other, the blameless 'ordinary Jews'. A closer inspection of anti-Semitic conspiratorial accounts reveals that the differentiation between the terms 'Jews' and 'Judaists' was never strictly enforced. The blurred nature of the boundaries between the two categories is particularly apparent when the writer of anti-Semitic conspiracy theory attempts to explain the origins of the anti-Christian, demonic and Satanic aspect of the 'Judaist' plot. All too often the sinister nature of the scheme is traced back to the core of the Jewish religion or to some imagined characteristic of the Jewish people. Thus, the 'evil' character of the 'Judaist' becomes at least implicitly extended to all Jews.

For instance, in *Five Bloody Revolutions by Judeo-bankers and their Judeo-Masonry* Đurđević (1999) attributes the 'brutality of the bombing of Yugoslavia' to the 'psychopathology' of Western leaders which is said to be uniquely Jewish. He claims that

'Jews are susceptible to intense and sadistic hatred. Like the proverbial elephant, they never forget, and in accordance with their satanic subjection they never forgive. They are not a spiritual people, as Russians and Serbs used to be and to an extent still are' (Đurđević, 1999, p.111).

In this instance no distinction was made between Jews and 'Judaists'. Similarly, even on occasions when Đurđević offers a seemingly positive evaluation of 'our' Jews, the wording of these reconciliatory assertions is ambiguous. In the earlier section, Đurđević (1997a) was quoted as saying that Serbia's Jews are positive characters in the conspiratorial morality tale because they are 'adapted to the life in the Balkans'. In referring to the 'adapted' nature of Jews, Đurđević was probably alluding to the relative secularisation and assimilation of Serbia's Jewish community. Therefore, even though Serbian Jews are placed on the 'good' side of the moral divide, they are seen as 'good' and unthreatening only for as long as they appear to have abandoned their Jewish cultural roots.

The contradictory representation of Jews plays an important role in the rhetoric of conspiratorial anti-Semitism. According to Fenster (1999), the Manichean distinction between Good and Evil, which is ubiquitous in conspiratorial narratives, always falls short of establishing a final and absolute Order. The porous nature of the borders between apparently irreconcilable moral categories facilitates the process of endless interpretation, or the 'epistemophilia' (Fenster, 1999) characteristic of the conspiratorial worldview. The element of doubt and vagueness reinforces the belief that things are 'never as they seem' and confirms the only certainty in conspiracy theory, namely that new instances of betrayal, treachery and collusion will sooner or later have to be exposed and explained. In the present case, the persistent fluctuation between positive and negative depiction of 'ordinary Jews' contributes to the overall 'paranoid' image of the conspiracy theory. Although the honourable majority of Serbian Jews are praised and celebrated, their inherent link with the conspirators (through religious and ethnic ties) offers the possibility (and probability) that their 'true colours' will eventually have to be revealed.

A noticeable shift in the stance towards Serbia's Jews became apparent in the aftermath of Milošević's downfall, when conspiracy theories once again found themselves on the margins

of Serbian society. Within days of Milošević's resignation, conspiratorial interpretations of Serbia's conflict with the West were by-and-large banished from the mainstream media. Gone were the lengthy editorials, in the press and the electronic media, which revealed, on a daily basis, new 'evidence' of the existence of an anti-Serbian conspiracy orchestrated from Washington or Brussels. Instead, *Politika*, state television and other media that were once under Milošević's control became preoccupied with the diplomatic activities of the new leadership, praising the improved relations between Serbia and the international community. [9]

Exponents of the wilder reaches of Orthodox Christian right-wing ideology were a major casualty of this development. Nebojša Krstić, whose journalistic career flourished in the aftermath of the Nato bombing, ceased to be perceived as a respectable analyst of world affairs. Instead, he came to be referred to as leader of a 'far-right', 'extremist' or 'nationalist' organisation (e.g. *Impression of the week,* TV show on *Studio B* channel, 28 July, 2001). Ratibor Đurđević found himself in the dock, charged with 'inciting ethnic hatred' in one of his publications.

Marginalized and dispossessed by the new political reality, promoters of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories interpreted the change of regime as yet another success of the mondialist oligarchy on the road towards world domination. More importantly, Serbia's enemies were no longer seen as residing abroad, in Washington, New York or Brussels. The threat was now coming from within Serbia. The new political elite, media and education establishments, even parts of the Serbian Orthodox Church all came to be seen as stooges of the Judaist plot. Đurđević's post-Milošević writing refers to Serbia as Judeo-Serbia, in the same way that his earlier work routinely referred to Britain as Judeo-Britain or America as Judeo-America. (e.g. Đurđević, 2002). The Serbian people, who, much to the dismay of the Christian Right, appeared enthusiastic about the changes, came to be seen as 'dupes' who

'Rely for information on the Judaist media and the press, secular education and "science"; [They are] little more than a herd of people, hoodwinked by Jewish influence' (Đurđević, 2002; p.136)

In this newly found state of 'occupation', exponents of radical forms of right-wing conspiracism organized themselves into a small number of radical organisations such as Dignity, St Justin and Doorway. Although some of these organisations existed before Milošević's departure, until October 2000 they were largely unknown and inactive. As Nebojša Krstić acknowledged in an interview, Milošević's downfall was a wake-up call to Dignity (founded in 1997) to 'increase its activities' and fight the new peril that had befallen Serbia ('Racism defies Serbian democracy - violence grows despite change in leadership', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 April 2001).

As has already been noted, the development of the subversive tone in Serbian anti-Semitic rhetoric accompanied the shift in focus from 'Judaists' abroad to their exponents within Serbia. In defining the enemy - i.e. the 'Judeo-Serbs' - anti-Semitic writers continued to show reluctance to use overtly ethnic or religious criteria. The Judaist conspirators tend to be described in apparently non-prejudicial and mainly political terms. They are said to include all those 'who put the European, Judeo-Masonic culture before traditional Serbian values, reflected in the worldview of [the medieval Serbian] Saint Sava' (Đurđević, 2002, p196). In these instances the reference to 'Judaism' continues to be used as a symbolic allusion to the liberal and pro-western political orientation of the new Serbian leadership. Predictably however, with the elaboration of the conspiratorial argument, there is a slippage from

metaphor to literal meaning. Gradually, the term 'Judaist' looses its symbolic link with democracy, liberalism or capitalism, and comes to signify things that are concretely and literally Jewish. Thus, when citing those who are thought to be responsible for the alleged ongoing spiritual destruction of the Serbian nation – i.e. the 'Judeo-Serbs' – writers like Đurđević exhibit a preoccupation with members of the Serbian Jewish community. For instance, in the book *The nationalism of St Sava in Judeo-Masonic surroundings*, which consists of a polemic between Đurđević and his ideological enemies, the author's rage is directed exclusively at well-known Serbian Jews, including the deputy Prime Minister Žarko Korać, writers Filip David and David Albahari, sociologist Laslo Sekelj, and the leaders of the Union of Serbian Jewish Communities, Aleksander Lebl and Aca Singer. What is more, the political or intellectual activity of these individuals - which is said to be in the function of the anti-Serbian conspiracy – is presented as directly related to and stemming from their ethnic and religious background. The liberal political stance (towards human rights, sexual orientation, etc.) of Žarko Korać, is attributed to the fact that he is a '*believer in Judeo-democracy'* (p.161, original italics). The choice of the word 'believer' ('vernik') is noteworthy as in the Serbian language that term has uniquely religious connotations. Thus, Korać's religious affiliation is offered as justification for his political disqualification. Similarly, the liberal views on the legalisation of cannabis expressed by the author David Albahari (who is by no means the only person in Serbia with such views) are interpreted as a manifestation of 'negative Jewish influence in modern society' and a poison from the 'secularist ideological pharmacy' of the 'Talmudic sage and so called author' David Albahari (p.179). Also, when discussing the writing of the late Laslo Sekelj, a well known expert on Serbian antisemitism, Đurđević dismisses Sekelj's writings on the grounds that they were written by a 'Hungarian Jew' (p.197). Furthermore, Đurđević contends that, by highlighting the problem of Serbian antisemitism, Sekelj revealed himself as an 'invisible agent in the Judeo-Masonic offensive against Serbian society'.

An even more direct link between the alleged Jewish conspiracy against Serbia and the representatives of the local Jewish population is made when Đurđević attempts to dismiss the statement by the Serbian Orthodox Church, issued in the summer of 2001, in which the latter denounced the rise in antisemitism in Serbian society. Đurđević sees this statement as proof that even parts of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the definitive guardian of Serbian culture and tradition, have been subverted by the Jewish conspiracy. He alleges that the denouncement of antisemitism was the work of the 'cunning Jew, president of the Union of Serbian Jewish communities, Aca Singer' who infiltrated the Church and 'hoodwinked a number of Bishops' (Đurđević, 2002, p123). In the same book Đurđević reprinted a letter allegedly written by the right-wing anti-Semitic priest Žarko Gavrilović (who was criticised in the statement by the Church), in which the latter asserts that Aca Singer personally 'dictated the statement to the Holy Synod' (p.135).

From words to deeds: The rhetoric and reality of anti-Semitic violence

The shift in focus from 'World Jewry' and the vaguely defined category of 'Judaists' to individual members of Serbia's Jewish community, apparent in anti-Semitic discourse, was not limited to rhetoric. In post-Milošević Serbia, the Christian Right, ostracised from the mainstream media and political culture, turned to the type of activism typical of dissident movements. The activity of Christian right-wing organisations became characterised by greater reliance on the Internet, graffiti, street protests as well as violent intimidation.[10] In November 2000, just over a month after the regime changes, Dignity announced their arrival

on the political scene by disrupting, by means of violence, a meeting of the Serbian Writer's Union during which a group of liberal intellectuals attempted to challenge the authority of the Union's much compromised nationalist leadership. Seven months later, in June 2001, members of the Christian right were involved in a much more brutal attack on Belgrade's first Gay Pride parade, which left dozens of participants seriously injured. In both cases, 'Dignity' justified their activities by claiming to be protecting Serbian 'national interests' from the treacherous and perfidious new political establishment. This shift towards violence and coercion apparent in the tactics of the Far Right is reflected in a letter which Đurđević wrote to the leaders of 'Dignity' in 2002, in which he appealed for the 'unification of Christian forces', and the use of 'guerrilla warfare' against 'Judeo-Masonry' (re-printed in Đurđević, 2002).

Importantly, Serbia's Jews became, directly or indirectly, the targets of the newly adopted seditious and insurgent activism of the Christian Right. In the winter of 2000, the message 'Korać-Jewish conspiracy-Resistance'', accompanied by the Dignity coat of arms was sprayed on the building that houses Belgrade's Philosophical Faculty, where Žarko Korać works as a lecturer. The tone of other anti-Semitic graffiti ('Death to Jews', 'Jews out', etc) reflects a similar shift from abstract world Jewry to a concrete and easily-reached enemy. Also, both of the aforementioned instances of public disorder involving the Christian right - the disruption of the meeting of the Writer's Union and the attack on the Gay Pride parade - had a more or less apparent anti-Semitic dimension. In the case of the meeting of the Writers Union, members of Dignity explained their presence by the need to 'supervise the activities of the Jewish lobby', thus equating the impending liberal reform of the Union with the Jewish conspiracy (*Whose is Obraz?*, *Danas*, 20 November, 2000). Considering that Jews did not play a role in this meeting, the reference to the 'Jewish lobby' can be said to reflect the aforementioned figurative use of the adjective 'Jewish' as interchangeable with the word 'liberal'. However, the metaphorical meaning was less apparent in the case of the Gay Pride parade, during which activists of the Christian right ransacked the premises of the Social-Democratic Union, the political party led by Žarko Korać. The reasoning behind this act of intimidation was unmistakably anti-Semitic. It was aimed at intimidating and silencing Korać. As Ratibor Đurđević later explains in one of his books:

'In our *Serbian* milieu, Dr Korać, a Jew, *has no right* to speak or act against our Christian traditions and beliefs. We Serbian nationalists think, believe and demand this of *all foreigners*, whether in faith or in blood, regardless of the wretched Judeo-Masonic 'democracy' in Euro-America' (2002; p.160, original italics)

In the above-mentioned cases of prejudice-motivated acts of violence, the involvement of specific Christian right-wing groups such as Dignity is apparent and demonstrable. In other and arguably more serious instances of anti-Semitic hate crime - including the defilement of graveyards and monuments, intimidation of Jews in the towns of Čačak, Kikinda, etc. - the culpability of Christian Right-wing organisations is not so easy to prove. In fact, these acts are unlikely to have had explicit institutional backing or endorsement from groups such as Dignity or St Justin, which have claims to mainstream status (see Byford 2002b). They are more likely to have been perpetrated by individual members, sympathisers, even outcasts from these groups, the 'lone wolves', who acted on their own accord, although undoubtedly inspired and directed by the rhetoric of the Christian right. Đurđević - the main ideologue of anti-Semitic activism - openly supports and condones anti-Jewish violence. While claiming to 'denounce any form of violence', he remarks that he fully understands the motives of those who attacked the 'Judaised perverts' participating in the Gay Pride Parade (2002, p117). In

the same spirit, he judged the attacks on Korać's party headquarters to be 'morally, spiritually, and politically healthy'. The perpetrators' behaviour – he continues - was 'aggressive, but ethically and religiously commendable' (ibid., p.159). Finally, in commenting on the campaign to ban the distribution of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* in Serbia, Đurđević declares that the 'fear' of the *Protocols*, apparent among Serbia's Jews, is 'understandable'. This, according to Đurđević, is because 'once the Goyim realise that Jews were responsible for all the revolutions and wars, the response could be cataclysmic' (p.204). Coming from someone whose writing reflects the spirit of the *Protocols*, one cannot help but detect, in the tone and subtext of Đurđević's assertion, a certain amount of joyful anticipation at the prospect of anti-Semitic violence, which he clearly incites and condones in his writing.

Conclusion:

In the above examination of the onset of anti-Semitic hate-crime in post-Milošević Serbia, it has been suggested that insight into this development requires the recognition of the cultural specificity of anti-Jewish prejudice. Contemporary antisemitism is underpinned by a distinct ideology which is rooted in ancient Jewish demonology and which, in its contemporary form, is intrinsically linked to the conspiratorial culture and tradition. By mapping the vicissitudes of conspiratorial antisemitism in recent years, the proliferation of anti-Jewish violence since October 2000 has been shown to have accompanied noticeable transformations in the rhetoric and the orientation of local versions of anti-Semitic ideology. It is suggested therefore, that our understanding of the causes of anti-Semitic violence can benefit from the examination of the specificities of anti-Jewish prejudice and a close scrutiny of the discredited language of its legitimatisation.

It is noteworthy however, that the connection between anti-Semitic rhetoric and anti-Jewish violence inferred in this paper remains to some extent hypothetical. Establishing a direct causal link between the two developments would require a different kind of inquiry, one that would involve working with offenders and exploring the ways in which they articulate the motives and intentions behind anti-Jewish activism. Such research might offer more concrete evidence (even if only in retrospect) of whether the thought processes behind specific hate crimes reflected the shifts in anti-Semitic rhetoric. At the same time, 'bias', 'prejudice' and 'hate' which underpin ethno-violence should not be seen as reducible to individual psychology and the perpetrator's motives. These motives reflect ideas, norms and values which are embedded in and constitutive of specific political ideologies and even of society as a whole (Perry, 2001). In that sense, the examination of relevant belief systems and the way in which they are articulated is bother legitimate and useful.

The link between conspiracy culture and antisemitism, considered in this paper, is not unique to the Serbian cultural context. Blee's (2002) study of women members of Far-Right movements in the US alludes to a similar link between conspiratorial antisemitism and anti-Jewish activism in the American context. Also, in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1999) Zygmunt Bauman emphasises that, the 'dominant form of antisemitism' today is the myth of a Jewish conspiracy, consisting of 'facts normally inaccessible and unknown to the masses, and certainly not located in the realm of their daily and unmediated experience' (Baumann, 1999, p.80). Baumann hints at the fact that the persistence of anti-Jewish hatred requires an explanation which goes beyond the notion of intergroup relations and which distinguishes between antisemitism and everyday prejudice or 'heterophobia'. Implicit in this view is that anti-Jewish hatred may be hard to distinguish, either ideologically or psychologically, from a

belief in a Jewish conspiracy and the omnipotence of Jewish economic and political power. Therefore, although the present paper deals with the particulars of the Serbian conspiracy culture, it is possible to suggest that an understanding of the causal dynamics behind the persistence of antisemitism in other contexts might also benefit from a closer examination of the interplay between the discourse of anti-Semitic hatred and the changing socio-political conditions.

Going back to the Serbian cultural and political milieu, it is noteworthy that a greater appreciation of the complexity of the rhetoric of antisemitism, and a closer scrutiny of the language of anti-Jewish hate can help inform the development and implementation of relevant legal provisions. For instance, the fluctuation between the figurative and concrete meanings of the words 'Jewish' or 'Judaist', evident in Serbian anti-Semitic discourse, is potentially problematic for legal practitioners. It creates a dilemma about whether a criminal act be considered anti-Semitic if its Jewish dimension appears purely symbolic. For instance, should the violent disruption of the meeting of the Writers Union, aimed at distracting the activity of the 'Jewish lobby' be classified as an anti-Semitic hate crime? In one respect, treating it as such would be stretching the boundaries of the concept of 'racially-motivated crime' to the limit. After all, the Oklahoma bombing or the Tokyo underground attack were both motivated by the belief in a Jewish conspiracy while not being aimed *directly* at Jews. Yet few would characterise these atrocities as instances of hate crime.

On the other hand, as the earlier discussion indicates, the 'symbolic' manifestations of antisemitism should not be dismissed lightly. In the language of antisemitism, metaphors tend to slip all too easily into literal meaning. Moreover, overemphasising the apparently symbolic dimension of antisemitism harbours the danger of asserting the very logic that underpins the ideology of hate. This is apparent in the case of the recent attempt to ban the publication of a Serbian translation of *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In 2001, an edition of *Protocols,* preceded by an introduction which alleged that Jews masterminded the Nato bombing of Yugoslavia, appeared in Serbia's bookshops. The union of Jewish Communities filed a law suit against the publishers, on the grounds of incitement of ethnic hatred. The legal action failed when the district public prosecutor Milija Milovanović declared that neither the book, nor its introduction 'contain elements of the stated criminal offence' (Morning News, Radio B-92, 28 July 2001).

On one level, it is difficult to see how the most notorious anti-Semitic document in history, which Norman Cohn (1957) characterised as Hitler's 'warrant for genocide' could be judged not to incite ethnic hatred. This is especially so given that the history of the *Protocols* and its legacy was clearly outlined in the writ issued by the representatives of the Jewish Community. Also, an earlier edition of the book was successfully banned in 1994 on the same grounds (Sekelj, 1995, 1997). And yet, although Milovanović never elaborated his decision, with some background knowledge of Serbian conspiracy culture it is possible to speculate on the nature of his reasoning. A likely explanation is that Milovanović simply failed to make the connection between the mythical Jewish elite mentioned in the *Protocols*, and the tangible Jewish community in Serbia, and consequently did not see Serbia's Jews s the object of hate in the book. In doing so, Milovanović effectively endorsed and perpetuated the Đurđevićesque differentiation between Judaists and Jews - which has been shown to be demonstrably flawed. In some sense, Milovanović's decision could be seen as a relic of former times when the boundaries of acceptable opinion were stretched to the point that made the notion of a global Jewish conspiracy seem acceptable and plausible. However, in post-Milošević Serbia, the suggestion that the message of the *Protocols* is acceptable and does not

incite ethnic hatred fails to take into account the new reality, and the way in which the book would be interpreted by those who are most likely to buy and read it.

Therefore, it can be argued that in order to combat antisemitic hate crime and prevent the dissemination of the ideology which legitimises it, it is necessary to raise awareness among legal professionals - judges, prosecutors and the police - about the idiosyncrasies of conspiratorial antisemitism and its rhetoric, and to heighten the sensitivity of the public in general with regard to the way in which, in the appropriate context, even a seemingly abstract reference to a Jewish conspiracy can be, and is interpreted as a justification for antisemitic violence.

Notes

[1] In the US for instance, the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990 and the Sentencing Enhancement Act of 1994 cover different bias crimes, as do State laws aimed at tackling hate crime (see Perry, 2001 for an overview an overview of the divergence in the scope and definition of the concept between different states in the US);

In the UK on the other hand, a general hate crime law does not exist at present. However provisions against racially motivated violence and harassment originally included in the Crime and Disorder Act (Home Office, 1997; House of Lords, 1998) are showing signs of expansion. In 2002 racial motivation was supplemented with provisions relating to prejudice based on religion. Also, in spite of the absence of specific legislation, the concept of 'hate crime' is often employed in the criminal justice system in the UK as a general term denoting bias crimes. For instance, in a document on 'identifying and combating hate crime' produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO, 2000) hate crimes are 'taken to mean any crime where the perpetrator's prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor determining who is victimised' (p. 10). This definition includes homophobia, as well as 'hate crimes against faith groups, groups within faiths (sectarianism), asylum seekers, disabled people, refugees, Romany peoples, Irish travellers and many other groups' (p. 11).

For a summary of legal and constitutional provisions against national, racial and religious discrimination in Serbia see below, note 4.

[2] The rise in antisemitic incidents provoked a reaction from representatives of the Union of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia and various human rights organisations, which started to devote more attention to the resurgence of antisemitic prejudice in Serbia. Also, there was some reaction from the country's political establishment. In February 2001, in response to a number of anti-gypsy and antisemitic 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 antisemitism (for a critique of the somewhat equivocal tone of this condemnation, see Byford, 2002).

[3] In the book *Win or Perish* which contains a collection of articles by Nebojša Krstić (2001), Đurđević is referred to as a 'Serbian Christian patriot' (p.139). Also, Ichtys Press has recently issued a video entitled *Others on Ratibor Đurđević* in which Đurđević's work is praised by Nebojša Krstić, a number of other exponents of the Christian right-wing ideology in Serbia including Momir Lazić, Željko Poznanović, Dragoslav Bokan.

[4] The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia considers unconstitutional any 'incitement or encouragement of national, racial, religious or other inequality' (Article 50). This broad formulation, which appears to outlaw all forms of prejudice, is widely considered to be 'a declarative political stance rather than a obligatory legal norm' (Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, 2003)

In contrast, the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia does not proscribe the incitement of hatred directly. Instead, 'the incitement of national, racial and religious intolerance' is mentioned either as a justification for banning political and trades union organisations and activities (Article 44), or as a reason for preventing the dissemination of the press and other forms of 'communication' (Article 46). Thus, the Serbian constitution mentions ethnic and

religious hatred solely in the context of the abuse of the freedom of information and freedom to form political organisations, while excluding other manifestations of ethnic prejudice.

Finally, the country's Penal Code (Article 134) prohibits 'the incitement of national, racial and religious hatred, discord or intolerance against constitutive nations and ethnic minorities in Serbia'. Such acts are deemed punishable by between one and five years of imprisonment. However, in cases where force and coercion is used, or where the crime involves 'defamation of national, ethnic or religious symbols, damage to property of others, desecration of monuments, memorials or graves' the prescribed sentence is imprisonment in duration between one and eight years. The maximum custodial sentence in cases where the incitement of hatred involves abuse of authority or an official position is 10 years.

Notably, provisions covering hatred against individuals based on sexual orientation, disability and other non-ethnic or religious minorities are still absent from the Serbian Penal Code (source BCHR, 2003)

[5] For example, in December 1994, following the publication of an antisemitic text in Logos, a theological periodical published by the students of the Orthodox seminary in Belgrade, a group of Orthodox Christian intellectuals chose *Politika* as the medium through which to publicise a petition denouncing the article's antisemitic content (Sekelj, 1997). Also, in 1995, following the publication of the first edition of Đurđević's book *On the senselessness of antisemitism and anti-antisemitism* an editorial in Politika criticised the book as a manifestation of rising antisemitism in Serbia (Ranković, *Who is inciting antisemitism?,* Politika, 18 October, 1995). The next day, Politika published an interview with Aca Singer, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia in which Đurđević was further criticised (*Antisemitic incidents must be taken care of*, Politika, 19 October, 1995).

[6] One of the reasons why conspiracy theorists regurgitate older material instead of inventing new plots is that it is easier to build on existing explanations than to create new ones (Billig, 1989). This is especially so given that it is very difficult to invent a radically new, and yet credible allegation of a world plot. A conspiracy theory, regardless of whether it focuses on the world's political and financial elite, the Freemasons or Jews, has at its core what Karl Popper called the 'conspiracy theory of society': the assumption that things happen because people, groups or organisations want them to happen (Popper, 1966). The 'conspiracy theory of society' as a general metatheoretical conjecture of conspiratorial explanations, is a view of the world not only as it is at present, but also as it always was. Therefore, the writer on conspiracies must place his 'discoveries' and revelations about the present within a broader historical context. Rather than 'inventing' a whole new history of the conspiracy, writers typically draw on the work of their predecessors, and refer to, cite and quote articles, books and pamphlets, which have attained the status of 'classics' within conspiratorial culture (Billig, 1978, 1989). In this way, interpretation of contemporary events are assimilated within the existing tradition of explanation.

[7] The way in which the antisemitic legacy of the conspiracy tradition affects contemporary conspiratorial thinking has been demonstrated in the past using the examples of the British far-Right and far-Left (Billig, 1987, 1989, 1978) the American Right (Lipset and Raab, 1978) and Arab political culture (Pipes, 1996).

[8] Rumours that Jewish employees were absent from the Twin Towers on the day of the Al Qaeda attack on New York disseminated by the far right in the US reflect the tendency to view not just powerful Jews, but Jews generally as participants in the overall anti-American scheme, the aim of which is world domination.

[9] Content analysis of Serbian electronic and printed media, conducted by the Belgrade-based Media Centre (http://www.mediacenter.org.yu) in the months after October 2000 reveals that references to the West became largely neutral, emphasising the need for reconciliation and co-operation.

[10] Although right-wing and sometimes even overtly antisemitic Web sites in the Serbian language existed in the past (e.g. the notorious www.compuserb.com), these were typically owned by members of the Serbian expatriate community, primarily in the US. Obraz was the first Christian right-wing group based in Serbia to establish itself in cyberspace and use the Internet as the main medium for promoting its views and for accessing its mainly young supporters.

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