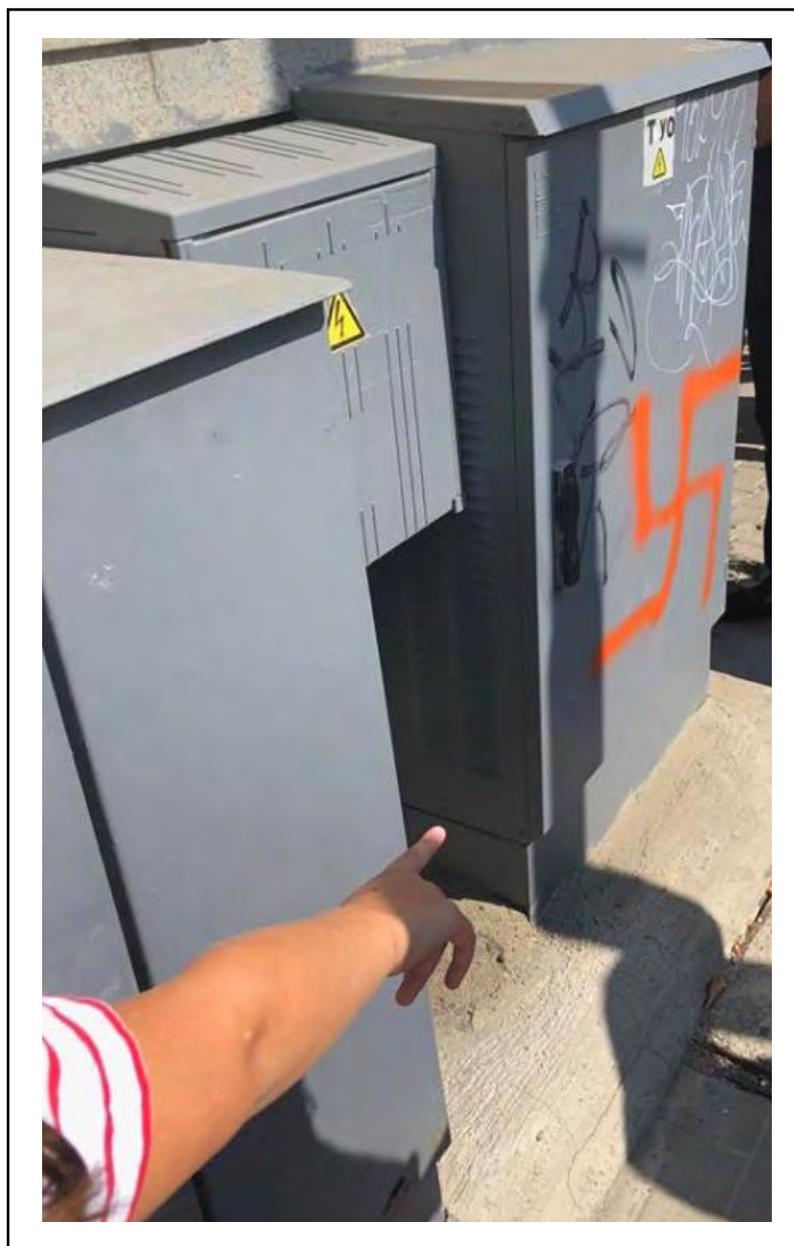


Situation Report: Antisemitism in Bulgaria



**Protecting the Future: The Second Moscow
International Conference on Combating
Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia”**

October 28 - 30 2018

The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom”

Situation report: Antisemitism in Bulgaria

The state of antisemitism in Bulgaria

It is common cause that antisemitism is on the rise across Europe and in other places in the world. Bulgaria is not exempt from this. In spite of the previous long-standing traditions of mutual tolerance, the enabling of far-right and ultra-nationalism in the political environment, as well as the effect of antisemitic sentiments being spread online, are infecting Bulgaria too.

Various actors are responding. These include the Bulgarian government itself, the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” and certain foreign embassies, notably including those of the State of Israel and the United States. There is, however, much work that remains to be done.

Antisemitism online in Bulgaria

The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” monitors, as effectively as it can, the posting of antisemitic material online, in social networks and in below-the-line comments on online media.

Disturbingly, the presence of antisemitic material online on Facebook and elsewhere, originating from or re-posted and shared by Bulgarians or people of Bulgarian origin, is widespread. Such material includes old and modern antisemitic tropes, denial or distortions regarding the Holocaust, “jokes” and material expressing admiration for Nazi or neo-Nazi figures. Social networks also are used to campaign in favour of the notorious Second World War pro-Nazi Bulgarian leader Hristo Lukov, in whose honour a march is held annually in February.

The organisers of the Lukov March have a dedicated website as well as a Facebook page, which as of September 2018 has 11 241 “likes” and a similar number of “follows”. The website has a record of hosting antisemitic comments on its forums, in particular in response to items regarding the opposition to the march; the Facebook page, in the same way, has a number of antisemitic comments. At the same time, the organisers are careful not to use antisemitic language themselves in their posts and also deny that Lukov was an antisemite.

One of the main organisers of the Lukov march, the Bulgarian National Union (BNU), seeks on its website to refute that the event is racist or antisemitic, saying that “representatives of (unnamed) Arab organisations take part”. The BNU, which preaches an extreme nationalism - its numerous platforms include not permitting any media in Bulgaria in any language but Bulgarian, and banning adoptions by foreigners - is associated in the Lukov March and similar far-right events by organisations including the Byal Front

(“White Front”), Lovchantsi, Kruv i Chest Bulgaria (“Blood and Honour Bulgaria”) - which takes its name from the motto of the Hitler Youth, which also is used by neo-Nazi organisations in other parts of the world, National Resistance Bulgaria, and Branitel (“Defender”) the last-mentioned having a name similar to that of Brannik, the pro-Nazi youth organisation in Bulgaria in 1940/44.



The uniform of the Bulgarian National Union’s “sporting organisation”. Screenshot from their website.

Regarding online posting of antisemitic material, the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” uses a mechanism developed by the World Jewish Congress to identify potentially dangerous social network profiles. Using this mechanism, OJB Shalom monitors posting of extremely large, and growing numbers, of posts that either directly or indirectly propagate antisemitism. In particular groups, the material includes not only antisemitic slurs, but also admiration for Nazi figures as well as individuals or formations

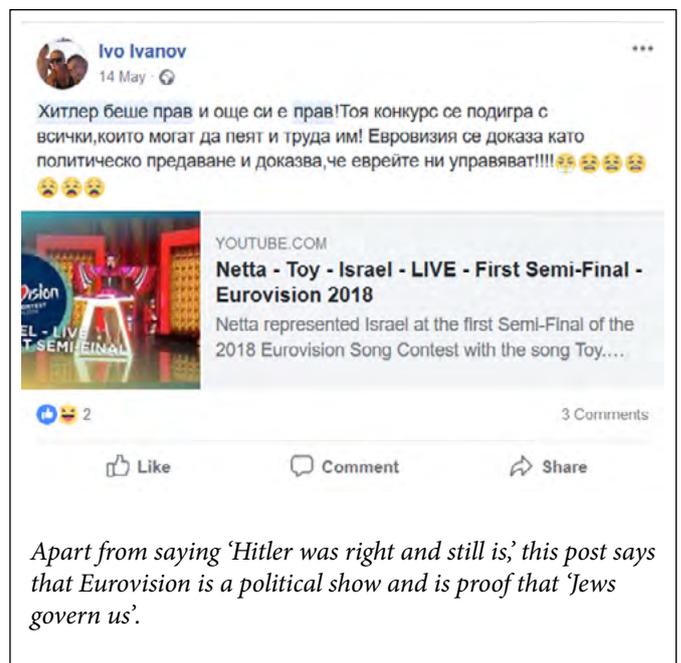
from the Wehrmacht of the Hitler era. While this latter sentiment is not directly antisemitic, because there is no actual reference to Jews, it can fairly be inferred that admiration for Nazi Germany's forces is not incompatible with antisemitism.

In these case of these posts online in social network groups of antisemitic material, it is notable that many such posts get large, sometimes very large, numbers of “shares” and “likes”. This means a considerable multiplier effect via the individuals and groups doing the liking and sharing, because their “friends” will at least see such posts, if not liking and sharing them in turn. This is, quite literally, the spread of antisemitism among Bulgarians. It must, of course, be pointed out that the users involved overwhelmingly have Bulgarian names, and use the Bulgarian language in their posts.

An example of direct antisemitism online in Bulgaria is the blog of “Anonymous Bulgaria”, which uses the imagery of the international Anonymous movement. That international movement emerged in about 2003, a supposedly loosely-affiliated group of hackers. Already by 2012, reports in the Israeli media had identified a pattern of “Anonymous” malice against the State of Israel and against Jews in general. In the case of “Anonymous Bulgaria”, the blog also has a track record of antisemitism, among support for numerous domestic and international conspiracy theories. As to its reach, the “Anonymous Bulgaria” Facebook page has 45 000 “likes”, although its Twitter account has a mere 105 followers. Its materials include an article alleging a “Holocaust” by Jews of 15 million Germans, and another calling for “lifting the taboo” on talking about Jews, the latter of which repeats stereotypes about - among other things - Jewish control of the media, and alleging that Jews are campaigning against Russia.

The monitoring of the Bulgarian-language media, specifically of comments below articles, has established that there is a wave of antisemitic sentiments on a daily basis. Here are some recent examples.

One, from August 2018: “Bulgaria is commanded by Jews who are carrying out their thousands-year-old covenant to exterminate the white race ... they do not need Bulgarians in this counry, and all (their) efforts are in this direction - pressure to induce migration, to ruin healthcare, and of course, the difficulties of citizenship.”



Another, from about the same time: “Those dirty Jews who from the time of Ivan Dobroslav, that is, for 600 years, have been trying to destroy us. In the end, they may succeed”.

Bulgarian media coverage of the approval in July 2018 of the law on Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people saw numerous below-the-line comments that were

antisemitic. Of the hundreds of comments, just one example: “David Duke was 100 per cent right...the Israeli is the embodiment of racism and xenophobia and duality and terrorism...” (David Duke is a US white supremacist, antisemitic conspiracy theorist and Holocaust denier.)

It is hardly only OJB “Shalom” that has noted the increasing trend of antisemitism online in Bulgaria. The US State Department said in its report for 2017 on human rights practices that in Bulgaria, antisemitic rhetoric continued to appear regularly on social networking sites and as comments under online media articles.

Apart from online spreading of antisemitic material, below-the-line comments in Bulgarian-language media are moderated poorly, inconsistently or not at all, though in a few cases there have been individual improvements. In this sphere, antisemitic comments follow articles mentioning Jews, whether Bulgarian or foreign, the Holocaust (not a frequently-canvassed topic in the Bulgarian media) and the State of Israel. These comments frequently take the form of conspiracy theorising, Holocaust denial, the likening of Israel to a Nazi state and, of course, the aforementioned “humour”.

Antisemitism on the streets of Bulgaria

The most public manifestation of what is effectively admiration for a pro-Nazi figure is the aforementioned march in honour of Lukov. While organisers are careful not to display unlawful symbolism such as the swastika, the subtext of the admiration for Lukov is clear. Further, the practices of the march - the dark clothing, the torchlit procession, the act itself of marching, underline what lies behind the tribute to Lukov.

Anecdotally, there have been incidents of which Shalom is aware of children of Jewish origin facing antisemitism at school, from peers. The response from school authorities generally has been inadequate. It is possible that school pupils who face antisemitism at school may be reluctant to raise the matter because of a fear of continued retribution for their remaining school years. All of this takes place against a background of thus-far inadequate emphasis on the significance and meaning of the Holocaust, and the dangers of antisemitism and other forms of intolerance.

In one case at a school, the details of which were reported to OJB “Shalom”, a girl of Jewish origin experienced sustained antisemitism from her peers. A formal complaint led to a visit to the school by the inspectorate of the Ministry of Education. It is notable that the leadership of the school resented the intervention and the fact that the problem had been reported.

While there have been no reports of physical assaults, antisemitism on the streets of Bulgaria generally has taken the form of desecration of graveyards, daub-

ing on synagogues, monuments and public and private buildings - such as antisemitic slogans, direct or coded slogans in praise of Hitler, and defamatory, unfounded links between the Jewish people and bolshevism.



A screenshot of the Facebook page of the Lukov March, depicting photos from the 2018 event.

On May 17 2017, the deputy regional development minister, Pavel Tenev, resigned after a picture of him saluting a wax statue of a Nazi officer in a Paris museum nine years earlier was circulated on social media.

Deputy Prime Minister Valeri Simeonov - a member of the government from the quota of the far-right political grouping which he co-leads - defended Tenev, commenting that, as a student in the 1970s, he himself visited the Buchenwald concentration camp and might have taken “fun-poking pictures” there, the report said.

Also in May, Ivo Antonov, who is head of the social affairs directorate of the Bulgarian Defence Ministry, publicly apologised after a photograph emerged of him giving a Hitler salute next to a Second World War German Maybach tank in the grounds of the Military History Museum. Bulgarian Prime Minister Boiko Borissov had called for Antonov to be dismissed. However, the political principal of the ministry, Defence Minister Krassimir Karakachanov - also a co-leader of the same far-right grouping as Simeonov - did not act on Borissov’s request.

In June, a popular television show revealed similar pictures of presidential advisor Plamen Uzunov wearing a Nazi uniform. Uzunov refused to resign, explaining that he had dressed that way for a Christmas party.

In November 2017, antisemitic (along with anticommunist) slogans and symbols were daubed on monu-

ments to the Soviet army in Sofia and in Plovdiv. The monuments commemorate the 1944 Soviet invasion of Bulgaria, and date from the period of state socialism in Bulgaria, when the invasion was portrayed as a liberation. The conjunction of antisemitic and anti-Soviet symbolism is linked to the conspiracy theory that bolshevism was initiated and organised by Jews.

In February 2018, communist-era monuments in Bulgaria’s second city Plovdiv were vandalised overnight, the day after the country observed the annual day in commemoration of the victims of the communist regime. A memorial tomb to communist partisans was daubed with slogans including “we remember the People’s Court” and “prosecute all communists”. Also painted on to it were swastikas and the symbol of the SS.

In August 2017, a monument erected in northern Bulgarian town of Vidin by Israelis from the town was defaced, daubed with the words “Allah”, “Palestine”, “Hamas” and the star and crescent moon symbol. The Thanksgiving Monument was put up in 2003 by Jews as an expression of gratitude to the Vidin community for acting to prevent the deportation of Bulgarian Jews from the town to the Nazi Holocaust death camps.

A month later, in September 2017, a number of Jewish graves in Sofia Central Cemetery were vandalised. The incidents of vandalism in 2017 are notable because they represent an increase over 2016, while not being unprecedented.



Ivo Antonov’s salute did not cost him his job.

In May 2018, at a children's book festival in Sliven, one of the items on sale was a book entitled "Hitler: The man behind the monster". The regional organisation of "Shalom" wrote to the district administration of Sliven and the regional library informing them that it was disturbed by the inclusion of such a book in a children's book festival. The responsible institutions arranged the removal of the book from the festival.

In September 2017, it was brought to the attention of the Foreign Ministry of Israel, and in turn to OJB "Shalom" and the Bulgarian authorities, that souvenirs with Nazi symbolism were widely available in popular tourist areas in Bulgaria. One particular case that month, mugs with the likeness of Hitler, along with other Nazi symbolism, were found to be on sale in Sunny Beach at the Black Sea coast. OJB "Shalom" wrote to the mayor of Nessebur, Nikolai Dimitrov, asking him to take action against the sale of such souvenirs. The matter also was taken up by Georg Georgiev, Deputy



Memorabilia from Nazi Germany on sale at the Bulgarian Black Sea.

Foreign Minister and Bulgaria's national co-ordinator against antisemitism.

Unfortunately, in summer 2018, there were at least two further complaints of the sale of Nazi memorabilia at the Black Sea coast, that were drawn to the attention of OJB "Shalom" and in turn to the national co-ordinator against antisemitism.

In the public space

The years 2016 and 2017 saw a number of cases of antisemitic comments by figures in Bulgarian politics. In all cases, OJB "Shalom" responded.

In one, in a television interview, member of Parliament Alexander Metodiev said: "Our little Roma also are Bulgarian children - they are not Jews, they are not Pakistanis, they are not Nicaraguans".

In a second case, in December 2016, MP Metodi Andreev said in a television interview that "Rothschild financed the communist revolution" and thus the red star symbolised the sons of Rothschild.

In February 2017, a candidate MP, Professor Ivo Hristov, addressing an election meeting in Plovdiv, said that a "Jewish pogrom, backed with Jewish money, led to the liquidation of the Russian empire".

In April 2018, The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" has expressed deep concern about a statement at a news conference by the head of Bulgaria's specialised anti-corruption prosecutor's office Ivan Geshev following the high-profile arrest of a Sofia district mayor in connection with alleged corruption.

At a special news conference on April 18 about the arrest, reporters challenged Geshev about the procedures in the operation. He sought to defend, among other things, the time she spent next to a car in which the alleged bribe was found.

At one point, Geshev told reporters: "If we had moved the car somewhere, she again would have said somebody had planted this money. There was a box in the car, not in the boot as you (the media) have written, but on the back seat.

"If we had removed the accused so that she was not present, you again would have accused us of a PR stunt,

and we are just fighting for people's rights. Again, they would have said that they are very good people, and some world power like the World Jewish Congress would be interfering. It is always good that the owner of the car is present during the search," Geshev said.

Reacting, the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom", which represents the Bulgarian Jewish community in the framework of the World Jewish Congress, expressed deep concern at what it called the completely inappropriate reference made by Geshev.

Shalom President Dr Alexander Oscar said that the organisation had always expressed its support for the legitimate actions of the Bulgarian authorities in terms of the law. "It is unclear how and why the World Jewish Congress was given as an example of a world power that would intervene in the domestic affairs of the country if the law enforcement authorities did not strictly observe the Code of Criminal Procedure," Dr Oscar said.

"Such a comparison undermines the prestige and damages the reputation of one of the most authoritative Jewish organisations in the world, one that has a special friendly attitude to Bulgaria and has always appreciated the state's efforts to fight anti-Semitism and the language of hatred.

"Unfortunately, this specific case shows precisely the opposite and creates a sense of alarm," he said.

On May 11, a meeting was held between Dr Oscar, Sofia Cohen - the President of the Central Israelite Religious Council of Bulgaria, and Ivan Geshev and his deputy Dimitar Petrov. At the meeting, Dr Oscar pointed out that the Bulgarian Jewish community supports the institutions of law enforcement and the judiciary and their fight against corruption. The representatives of the Bulgarian Jewish community conveyed the message that they were against speculation in the public domain about a conspiracy by world Jewry, which would hinder investigations and cast a shadow over the work of the judiciary.

It should be added that manifestations of antisemitism in the public space are not confined to the statements of a few politicians and public figures but appear inextricably linked to a sub-culture in football. In May 2018, in a well-publicised incident, two young boys - by appearance, less than 10 years of age - were photographed wearing Nazi insignia painted on them at a football match, while one also appeared to be giv-

ing a Hitler salute. Although the parents were identified, a subsequent investigation does not appear to have produced effective results, as the parents admitted no culpability and said that the insignia had been painted on the children without the knowledge of the parents.



In August 2018, OJB "Shalom" drew to the attention of the national co-ordinator against antisemitism the content of lectures by Vesselina Borissova, in Sozopol and Bourgas, that accompanied a photographic exhibition concerning the life of the Russian imperial family at the time of Tsar Nicholas II. Borissova told her audience that the murders of the Russian royal family were a particularly brutal Jewish ritual killing.

At the close of September 2018, the same organisations behind the "Lukov March" held a march as part of their "Day of Bulgarian Youth" campaign. The march, attended by several hundred young people, saw them in white T-shirts emblazoned with the name of the campaign, with participants each issued with a Bulgarian flag. While publicly the organisers made no overtly antisemitic statements on social network, the meaning behind the dog-whistle language was clear.

The organisers spoke of their message being that "Bulgaria is perishing, our homeland is in its death agonies and the only ones who can restore it to life are young Bulgarians with national thinking. We are the last generation that can stop the physical and spiritual destruction of the Bulgarian people".

While saying that the procession had "no demands on anyone or anything", it added that "those who have ruled Bulgaria over the past 70 years neither can nor want to save what we love...that is why, with this event, we declare our firm conviction to take the fate of our Fatherland in our own hands and build the future about which we all dream".



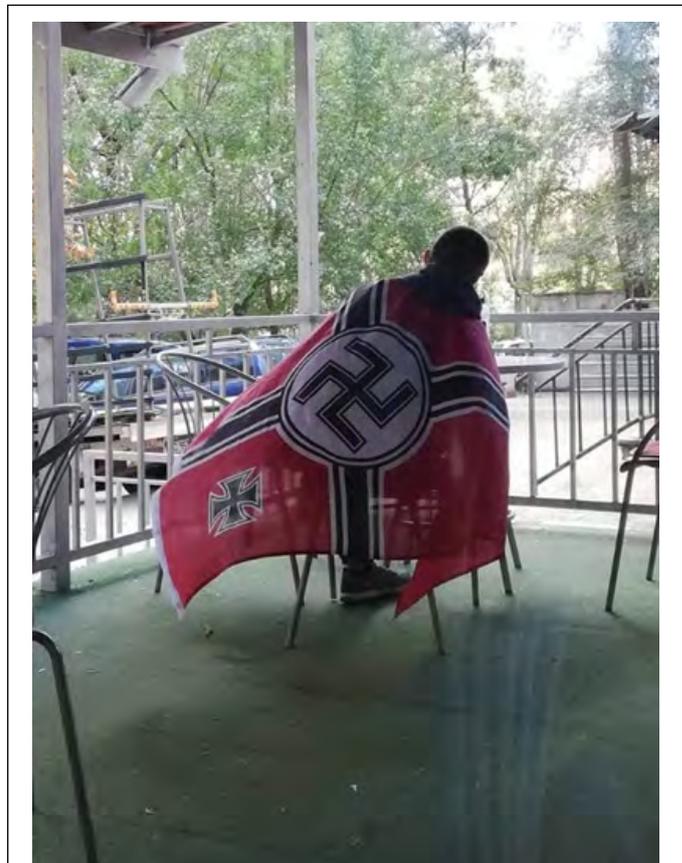
It may be pointed out that, over the past 70 years, Bulgaria was under a communist regime for about four decades, which was succeeded by an era of a transition to democracy, which has seen a succession of governments arrived at in democratic elections. This makes the reference to “those who have ruled Bulgaria over the past 70 years” rather questionable.

A controversial figure is Dyanko Markov, who in October 2018 received an honour from the Defence Ministry, over the objections of two Bulgarian Jewish organisations, “Shalom”, and the Sofia Lodge Carmel 3355 of B’nai B’rith. Markov, veteran of the Union of Bulgarian National Legions which was headed by Hristo Lukov, was given the honour on his 96th birthday. Notably, among the organisers of the ceremony honouring Markov was the social policy institute of the Defence Ministry - headed by Ivo Antonov, referred to earlier in this report, the official whose Hitler salute in 2017 did not cost him his job.

Markov has lost court actions that he lodged against Yuliana Metodieva, editor-in-chief at human rights NGO and features website Marginalia, after she described him in writing as an antisemite. In the year



The invitation to the ceremony honouring Markov. The Defence Ministry’s institute of social policy, headed by Ivo Antonov, is listed among the organisers.



This photo appeared in September 2018 on the page of the Facebook group ‘Seen in Sofia’. The page hosts various photos of scenery and incidents from the capital city.

2000, when an MP, Markov, referring to the deportation of the Jews from the “new lands” in northern Greece and Yugoslavia – said: “The deportation of a hostile population is not a war crime. The United States deported the Pacific coastal population of Japanese origin during the Second World War. And no one gave a damn about it”. The more than 11 000 Jews deported from the “new lands”, then under Bulgarian administration, were murdered in 1943 at the Nazi death camp Treblinka.

The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” said that Dyanko Markov’s life was inextricably linked to the Union of Bulgarian National Legions, a fact that he was proud of. “Shalom” said that under Lukov’s leadership, the legion had issued a programme for 1943 that included as its first point, “to fight those ruining the Bulgarian national state, in the form of Jewry”.

According to a report by Balkan Insight, the Defence Ministry said on October 4 that it saw nothing wrong with its decision to give the award to Markov, and refused to comment on the specific positions of the two objecting organisations.

The response of the authorities

At national level, the year 2017 saw the Bulgarian government take steps that have both symbolic and practical importance in the fight against antisemitism.

In October 2017, the Bulgarian government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism, becoming one of the first European Union countries to do so, and at the same meeting, appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Georg Georgiev as the National Co-ordinator for Combating antisemitism.

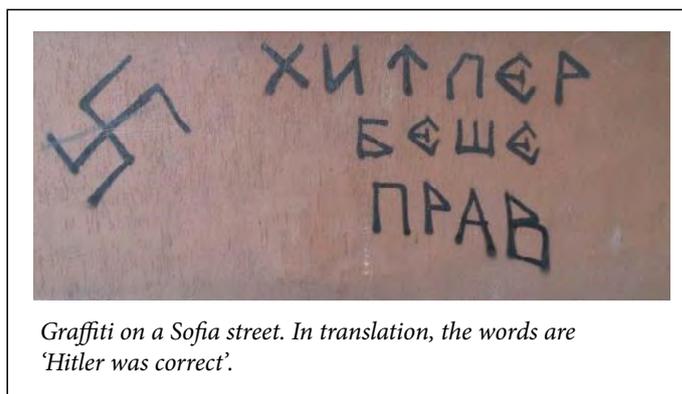
The main function of the national antisemitism co-ordinator is to liaise and interact with the European Commission's co-ordinator and other EU national co-ordinators, with other partner countries as well as with international organizations with relevance and activities in the fight against antisemitism and hate speech, such as the UN, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Council of Europe, Unesco and others, a Bulgarian government statement said at the time.

The fact of the appointment was welcomed by numerous international Jewish organisations. Deputy Minister Georgiev expressed hope that the following year, 2018, would see Bulgaria accepted as a full member of the IHRA. At the end of June 2017, Bulgaria was accepted as a liaison country of the IHRA, following a decision by the Bulgarian government in March 2017 to apply for full membership of the alliance. Acceptance as a liaison country is an important penultimate step towards full membership.

Apart from the symbolic importance of these moves, they represent practical importance, because of the political guideline that the working definition of antisemitism of the IHRA provides, but also because of the significance of the appointment of a top official to take political responsibility for combating antisemitism.

At municipal government level, a number of municipal authorities have been acting appropriately in the fight against antisemitism and intolerance. The leadership of Sofia municipality have attempted to ban the Lukov March and also are closely involved in initiatives to promote tolerance. In the municipality of Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second city, the municipality generally has responded swiftly to erase antisemitic graffiti.

It may be added that, the response of the authorities to specific high-profile incidents such as the daubing of monuments, there is the continuing problem of graffiti



Grffiti on a Sofia street. In translation, the words are 'Hitler was correct'.

depicting swastikas and neo-Nazi symbolism (for example, "88") in Sofia and other cities and towns. Removal of such is usually a matter of initiatives such as Shalom's annual cleaning off of such graffiti.

In the September 2017 case of the selling of Nazi-themed souvenirs, the municipality in question worked with the Interior Ministry to cease the selling of Nazi memorabilia at a souvenir stall, once the alert was given by an Israeli citizen. However, as noted above, the selling of such memorabilia at popular tourist resorts and even in the capital Sofia persists.

There have been other cases in other municipalities where the local authorities responded swiftly to vandalism or daubing of monuments or cemeteries. In the cases noted above in this report, daubing of monuments was the subject of quick responses by local authorities who had them cleaned as soon as they became aware of the incidents.

It is important to note that the steps being taken in Bulgaria on its path to full membership of IHRA appear possible to result in achievement of this goal. That may be considered in the context that building awareness of the Holocaust and the fight against antisemitism exist in close relation to each other.

The organization has a committee specifically to deal with incidents of antisemitism, to make rapid decisions on responses and to liaise with national and local authorities to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

As noted above, the organization monitors antisemitic material online and is currently working on a specific report that will cover this and "offline" manifestations of antisemitism in Bulgaria.

The work of ‘Shalom’

The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” has been working consistently and actively with authorities at government and municipal level to encourage appropriate responses to antisemitic incidents.

The organization works not only with national and municipal government authorities, but also with diplomatic representatives who support the cause of fighting antisemitism and building tolerance.

In 2018, the year that marks the 75th anniversary of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews from the death camps of the Holocaust, and the same anniversary of the deportation of Jews from Second World War-era “new lands” then under Bulgarian administration, Shalom has held numerous events of commemoration, at all of which not only is history commemorated, but also the message of contemporary rejection of antisemitism is underlined.

There also have been cases in the past two years (and before, of course) in which “Shalom” has chosen to speak publicly. For example, in the Simeonov case mentioned above, “Shalom” condemned Simeonov’s comments, expressing “regret and concern that such people are holding leadership posts in the government”.

A step forward was taken in September 2018 through an initiative by “Shalom” and Sofia municipality, with the support of the Sofia Development Association, for leaders and society in the Bulgarian capital to distance themselves from intolerance and to embrace tolerance. The month saw the signing by “Shalom” president Dr Alexander Oscar, Sofia mayor Yordanka Fandukova and National Co-ordinator against Antisemitism, Georg Georgiev, of a manifesto “Sofia: City of Wisdom and Tolerance”. This manifesto is to be popularised and other prominent personalities and members of the public encouraged to sign it. Further, as the next step in the campaign, volunteers turned out to clean off spray-painted swastikas and other offensive graffiti from public buildings and walls in the city.

As with the “Lukov March” issue, the current situation sees a number of issues remaining to





Manifesto: Bulgarians United Against Hate Speech

In this year of 2018, a year in which Bulgaria has held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in which it commemorates the rescue 75 years of the Bulgarian Jews from the Holocaust, and yet, in which tolerance is under threat and hate speech is on the rise, we the undersigned declare the following:

We are mindful and respectful that the history of our country has running through it a golden thread of a tradition of tolerance towards others, irrespective of their ethnicity, nationality or religious faith.

We are mindful, too, that the ample lessons of the history of Europe and the world have shown the fatal consequences of intolerance and the inexorable journey to genocide that begins with the first words uttered in hatred.

We are mindful of the fact that the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews 75 years ago, while a moral good in it itself, has paid and continues to pay a dividend in gratitude, love and respect. We are mindful that the legacy of those who hate is bankrupt.

We are mindful of the responsibility of our generation to uphold the traditions of tolerance and to educate our youth in these traditions, and in the lessons of history, so as to ensure that these traditions live on in the generations to come.

We sign this Manifesto as our personal pledge against intolerance and against hate speech.

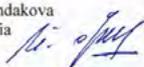
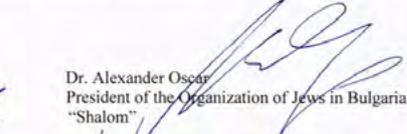
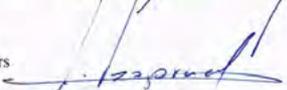
We sign this Manifesto with our understanding that the constitutional and legal protections of freedom of speech do not extend to the language of hatred.

We sign this Manifesto as our pledge, not only not to use hate speech ourselves, but also never to be silent or passive when others use hate speech.

We sign this Manifesto as our pledge to act with firmness and swiftness whenever and wherever hate speech is used, whether it be on a public or political platform, in private in our presence, on social networks, in sports arenas, in any of the buildings, boulevards and streets in Bulgaria, whether in spoken or written form.

Thus we sign this Manifesto with a vision ahead of us, a vision of our Bulgaria as a space free of hate speech, and where every one of our cities, towns and villages is a free space of tolerance; and pledge not to rest until this vision becomes reality.

Signed this day of 11.09.2018

<p>Yordanka Fandakova Mayor of Sofia</p> 	<p>Dr. Alexander Oscar President of the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom”</p> 
<p>Georg Georgiev Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs</p> 	



The 'Let's Clean away Hatred' initiative saw the participation of volunteers from, among others, Bulgarian Jewish organisations, civil society, the embassies of Israel, Russia and the United States, and members of Sofia city council.

be resolved in the campaign against antisemitism in Bulgaria. These should include a re-examination of laws to make the fight against antisemitism and hate speech more effective, and ensuring that acts of antisemitism, if the perpetrators are detected, end with appropriately harsh sentences.

In short, while some progress has been achieved and must be acknowledged, vigilance should be maintained, as noted above, with the awareness that Bulgaria is not exempt from the spectre of antisemitism arising throughout Europe. Much work remains to be done.

Acknowledgments

The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” thanks its international and Bulgarian partners in the fight against antisemitism: National Co-ordinator for Combating Antisemitism, Deputy Minister Georg Georgiev; The Bulgarian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance; Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Bourgas and other municipalities; The World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the American Jewish Committee, World ORT, the Ronald S Lauder Foundation; Marginalia, the Central Israelite Religious Council of Bulgaria, Yad Vashem International Holocaust Remembrance Centre, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; the “Negev” association of Friends of Israel in Bulgaria, the Sofia Lodge Carmel 3355 of B’nai B’rith and the Sofia office of the American Jewish Committee; and the Embassies of Israel, the United States and Russia.