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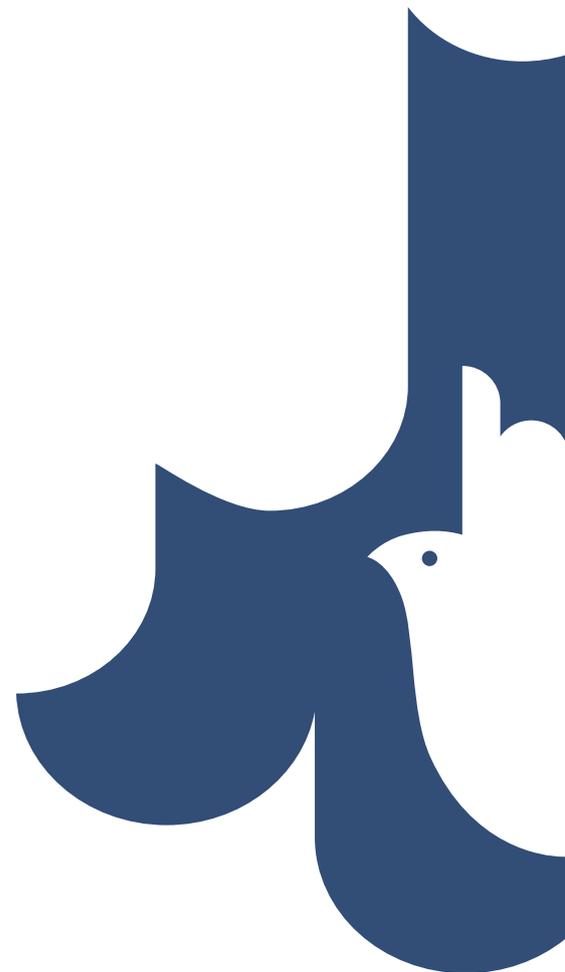
SOVA

CENTER FOR
INFORMATION
AND ANALYSIS

ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN RUSSIA

III QUARTER (JULY — SEPTEMBER)

2020



THE MOST EXTREME MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTISEMITISM

From July to September 2020, we are not aware of any attacks motivated by antisemitism. However, in September, law enforcement agencies announced that they had discovered a plot to kill the head of the Jewish community of Krasnodar, Rabbi Yuri Tkach. Two participants of the movement “Citizens of the USSR” (Grazhdane SSSR) were detained. They have been charged under part 2, points “g”, “h” and “k” of article 105 of the Criminal Code along with part 1 of article 30 and part 3 of article 33 of the Criminal Code (the organization of preparations for murder by a group of persons for hire based on religious hatred). According to the investigation, they found a potential killer for hire, to whom they gave Tkach’s personal information, as well as a “*craft knife and the details of the conspiracy*” and promised them a high position in their organization. Although the assassination attempt was interrupted at this stage, since the “killer” turned out to be a special agent on a mission and they did little more than stage the assassination attempt, the order itself can be considered real, since the “citizens of the USSR” in Krasnodar were only noted for aggressive antisemitism and being a marginal group prior to this.

During the reporting period, at least two antisemitic acts of vandalism were committed. At the end of July, in the Jewish section of the Cemetery in Memory of Victims of January 9 in St. Petersburg, vandals damaged more than 30 gravestones. In September, a drunken hooligan shouting antisemitic slogans, unable to enter the premises of the Shamir community center in eastern Moscow, threw a menorah from the porch, tore off a plaque with the organization’s name on it, broke a mailbox, and knocked the number plate off the rabbi’s official car.

PUBLIC ANTISEMITIC COMMENTS

From July to September, we noted almost no antisemitic statements in the media. The only case we know of is the July article by APN — North-West, which referenced a quote from Dmitry Bykov’s interview with another publication about his yet-to-be-published novel *Istina* (Truth), which talks about the Beilis case. The main reason why the book will not be published in the near future is that the writer named it “*The monstrous growth of antisemitism in Russia*”. The authors of the APN article, who had previously and repeatedly published antisemitic materials, as a commentary on this interview, mentioned Bykov’s “real” family name and tried to refute the antisemitic component of Andrei Yushchinsky’s murder: “*The stabbed boy, Andrei Yushchinsky, was a friend of the son of the buyer of stolen goods, Vera Cheberyak. Yushchinsky had learned from him about the family’s criminal*



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activities and, having got into an argument, threatened to report everyone. And the monstrous growth of antisemitism only exists in Zilbertrude's head, where a plethora of demons now dwell."

Several antisemitic publications on social media have generated a public outcry. In August, users were outraged by the announcement of the play "The Bourgeoisie" (Meschane) by Elizaveta Bondar, based on the play by Maxim Gorky and published by the A. Bryantsev Youth Theatre in St. Petersburg: "There is a lot of "today" present in the play. There are liberals and Hebes, people of the system and the Russian Orthodox Church, holding rallies, and everything that we can see today, living in Russia", — the author of the announcement quoted the director (spelling and punctuation preserved — Ed.). Social media users noted the openly antisemitic nature of the text. After that, theater critic Elena Volgust addressed the theater management. It turned out that the director, Elizaveta Bondar, did not approve the text of this announcement.

This announcement remained on social networks for at least two days and was reprinted in the Kultura (Culture) newspaper. After the scandal, the announcement was removed from social networks, but its reposts and publication in Kultura remained.

Tatiana Tsvetkova, deputy director of the Youth Theater, apologized to the director and to everyone who was offended by the text of the announcement, but noticed that the word "Hebes" was used in Gorky's text. However, social media users rightly pointed out that the use of this word in a modern text without quotation marks and explanations is unambiguously perceived as antisemitism.

The publication on Youtube.com of the sermons of Schema-hegumen Sergius (Romanov), who was banned from holding a ministry, continued, almost all of which contained antisemitic statements. However, in this case, the publications not only caused public outcry, but also a reaction from law enforcement agencies. In July, the preacher was fined 90 thousand rubles "for spreading false information about the coronavirus" under part 9 of article 13.15 of the Administrative Offense Code of the Russian Federation (dissemination in the media, as well as via information and telecommunication networks, of deliberately inaccurate socially significant information under the guise of reliable messages), and then by a further 18 thousand rubles for incitement to hatred, under article 20.3.1 of the Administrative Offense Code.

In August, at the request of Roskomnadzor, Sergius' channel on Youtube was deleted. However, Vsevolod Moguchev, the representative of the former schema-hegumen, immediately announced the creation of a new channel.

We also note that the church authorities, for their part, reacted to schema-hegumen Sergius' actions: in July the diocesan court deprived him of his priesthood and in September they excommunicated him. However, the reason for such harsh reprimands was insubordination to the hierarchy and not the xenophobic statements.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

During the described period, we know of two sentences in criminal cases related to the propaganda of antisemitism, and in one case, a real sentence was given in punishment.

A resident of Tula in September was sentenced to two years at a penal colony under part 1 of article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (incitement of ethnic hatred after being found responsible by the administration for a similar act within one year) for the publication of anti-Semitic materials on the social network. He was fined under article 20.3.1 of the Administrative Offense Code (incitement to hatred) in June 2019, but published antisemitic posts twice during the year and as a result was convicted twice in a year with criminal offences, in April and in September 2020 (he refused to pay the fine awarded in April).

A resident of Perm, who published a commentary against Jews and immigrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia, was sentenced in August to a year of restriction of freedom under part 2 of article 280 of the Criminal Code (public appeals to extremism) along with article 64 of the Criminal Code (imposition of a more lenient punishment than that provided for by the given crime).

It is also known that at least four penalties were given in administrative cases for antisemitic propaganda. All of them were connected with on the Internet, and a fine was chosen as a punishment in all cases. The most resonant of these court decisions is the above-mentioned decision based on article 20.3.1 of the Administrative Offense Code in relation to ex-hegumen Sergius (Romanov).

In three more cases, those convicted under the same article received a fine of 10 thousand rubles: a resident of Bryansk D. Aksyutin for making a comment that offends Jews and Orthodox Christians; a resident of Penza S. Diveev for anti-Semitic comments and images; S. Mochalov, a resident of the city of Berezovsky, Kemerovo Region, for posts on social networks that were insulting towards Jews and people from the Caucasus.

We also note the verdict against Anna Vortelo, a resident of Kemerovo, who was fined the same amount in August under the same law, article 20.3.1 of the Administrative Offense Code. She was convicted of sticking a "Citizens of the USSR" leaflet on a bus stop, which the Russian police equated with treason and collaboration. However, her anti-Semitic posts on VKontakte did not attract the attention of law enforcement agencies and went unpunished.

As before, information about cases of incitement to hatred in most cases are published without details, so it cannot be ruled out that there were more sentences given for the propaganda of antisemitism.



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THANK YOU
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

WE WILL BE HAPPY
TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS

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