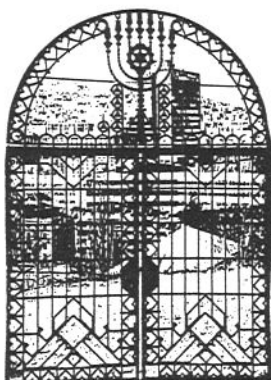


STUDIA ORIENTALIA  
PUBLISHED BY THE FINNISH ORIENTAL SOCIETY  
93

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Yugoslav Jewry  
Aspects of Post-World War II and Post-Yugoslav  
Developments

by  
Ari Kerckänen



HELSINKI 2001

Ari Kerkkänen

**Yugoslav Jewry.**

**Aspects of Post-World War II and Post-Yugoslav Developments**

Studia Orientalia, Vol. 93. 2001

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Societas Orientalis Fennica,

c/o Institute for Asian and African Studies

P.O.Box 59 (Unioninkatu 38 B)

00014 University of Helsinki

FINLAND

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ISSN 0039-3282

ISBN 951-9380-51-5

RT-Print Oy

Pieksämäki 2001

## PREFACE

Professor Tapani Harviainen of the University of Helsinki originally made the suggestion to me, before my first departure to the region on UN-service in 1993, to have a look at the situation of Jews in the former Yugoslavia. Thus the original idea behind this research was his, and I thank him for his continued interest in this subject as my academic supervisor in the Institute for Asian and African Studies, a subject which admittedly falls outside the mainstream of the research undertaken in the Institute. I genuinely believe that without his encouragement this study would not have seen the light of day. The idea eventually developed during my service in the region on my second tour of duty with the UN in 1994–95. I began to familiarise myself with Jewish history in Yugoslavia, while at same time making first my practical contacts with the local Jews in the Slavonian town of Osijek in Croatia. My thanks go to the Community's president, Darko Fischer, who welcomed me to visit their community regularly, thus enabling me to see the modest Jewish way of life in a town where Jews had once flourished. I became acquainted with the physical setting of former Yugoslavia as well as with the region's population of Serbs, Croats, Muslims and Jews. Thus this research has been born not only out of papers and documents but also out of personal knowledge of the region, its people, and above all, of many Jews who kindly agreed to be interviewed in Zagreb, Osijek, Split, Belgrade, Sarajevo and outside former Yugoslavia mainly in Jerusalem. I thank all these informants for their contribution to this study.

My sincere thanks also go to Israeli historian and retired diplomat, Zvi Loker and his wife Rachel, for their assistance, especially with the Eventov Archive in Jerusalem. Born in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, they both contributed much to my general knowledge of the history of Jews in Yugoslavia through numerous discussions both at the Archive and at their home in Jerusalem.

There are several persons who rendered their invaluable help during my research period at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1998–1999. Ivan Čerešnješ, former President of the Sarajevo Jewish community and now researcher at the Hebrew University, kindly opened his personal archive for my research and familiarised me especially with the events in the Jewish community in Bosnia before and after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. He expressed a genuine interest in this research and made considerable efforts in many ways in order to facilitate its realisation. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Professors Sergio Dellapergola and

Ezra Mendelsohn at the A. Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, and professor Igor Primoratz in the Department of Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for the many instructive talks I had an opportunity to have with them. I can only hope that some of the pitfalls threatening the researcher into contemporary Jewry were avoided because of these discussions.

In the former Yugoslavia my gratitude goes to Ongjen Kraus, President of Zagreb Jewish community, Aća Singer, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia and Jakob Finci, President of the Jewish community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, all of whom allowed me to conduct research in their communities. Further, Milica Mihailović, Vojislava Radovanović and Branka Džidić rendered their generous assistance at the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade in spite of the fact that the Museum was officially closed owing to large-scale renovations on the Museum premises.

Professor Ivo Goldstein from the University of Zagreb and Professor Seppo Zetterberg from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, read the manuscript of this study as examiners appointed by the Faculty of Arts of the University of Helsinki. I thank them for valuable comments they made about the manuscript. I must also express my gratitude to John C. Mills (M.A.) of Kuopio, who proof-read the whole text and made it readable for an English-speaking audience.

This research has been supported financially by the following scholarships and institutions: a scholarship from the State of Israel for a research period of eight months at Hebrew University, a Rector's Scholarship at the University of Helsinki for revising the dissertation manuscript, and the Middle East Institute Foundation Scholarship for one research trip in the former Yugoslavia. The main bulk of the writing was made possible by a period of ten months as a Graduate School Student at the Institute for Asian and African Studies at the University of Helsinki. I thank all these contributors.

My own family have had their share in this endeavour. Irina and Kreetta, my daughters, have moved from Tampere to Helsinki to Jerusalem to Kuopio in their early childhood because of their parents' studies. I can only wonder at the patience and understanding of my wife, Mervi, during this period when I have been so engaged in this research. I dedicate this book to Mervi with love. Last but not least, I thank my parents in Tohmajärvi for their financial support from time to time.

Kuopio, March 2001,

*Ari Kerkkänen*

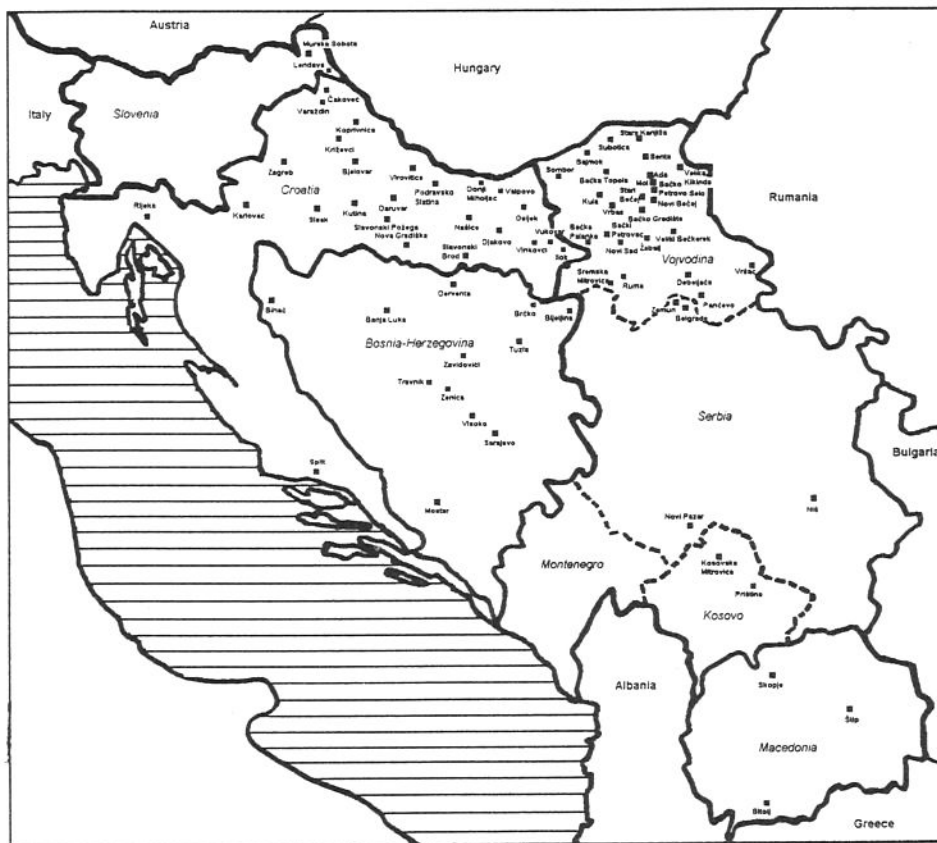
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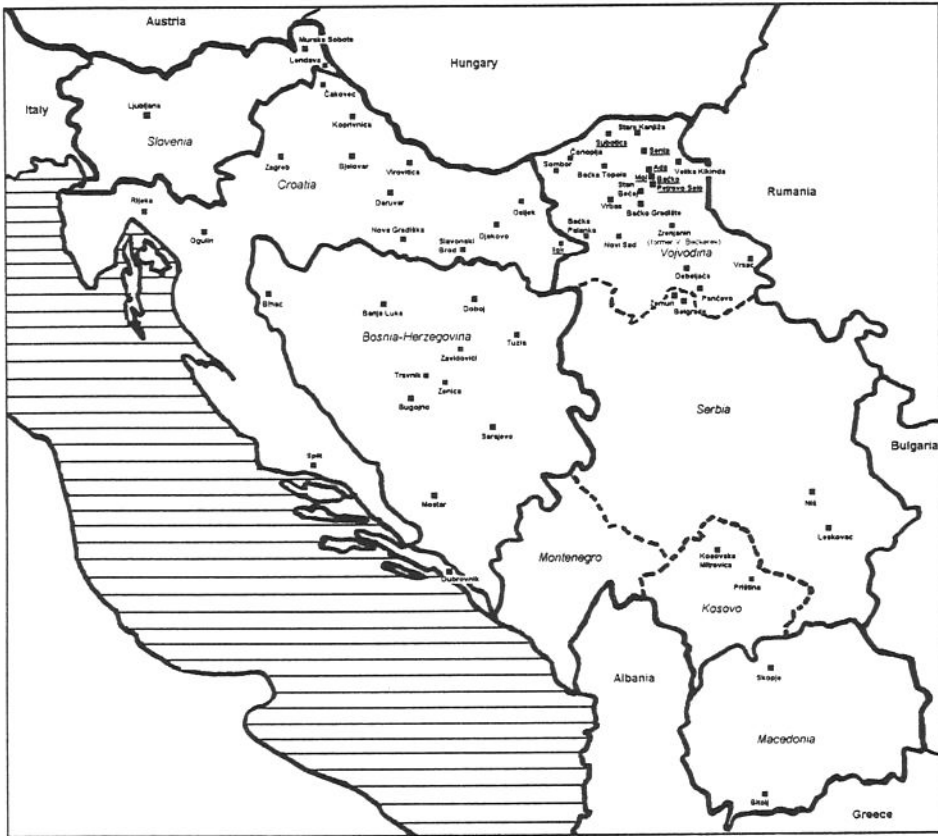
## ABBREVIATIONS

AJDCA	= American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive, Jerusalem
AVNOJ	= Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia
CAHJP-EA	= Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People – Eventov Archive for Yugoslav Jewry, Jerusalem
CMG	= Crisis Management Group
CZA	= Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem
FNRJ	= Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia
HDZ	= Croatian Democratic Union
ISA	= Israel State Archive, Jerusalem
JHM	= Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade
JNA	= Yugoslav Federal Army
JDC	= Joint Distribution Committee
NDH	= Independent State of Croatia
NOB	= National Liberation Struggle
OHD	= Oral History Division, Jerusalem
SJFS	= Serbian-Jewish Friendship Society
SJOJ	= Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia
SFRJ	= Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
UDBA	= State Security Administration
WJC	= World Jewish Congress

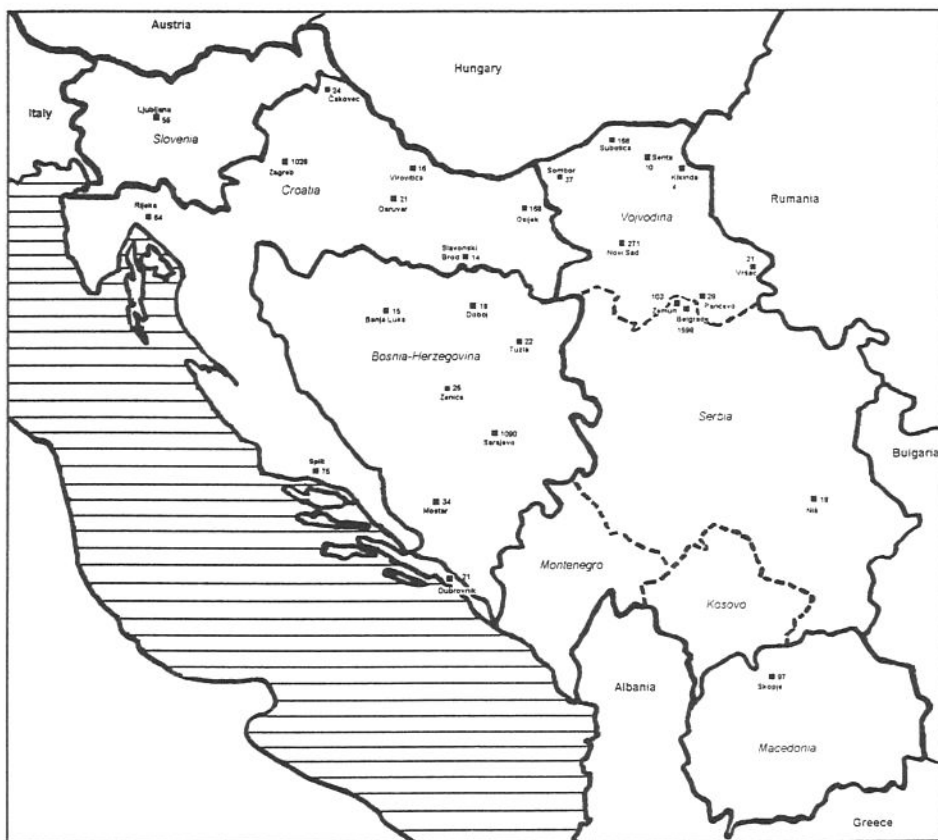


*Map 1.* Locations of Jewish communities of more than 100 members (Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Orthodox) in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1940.

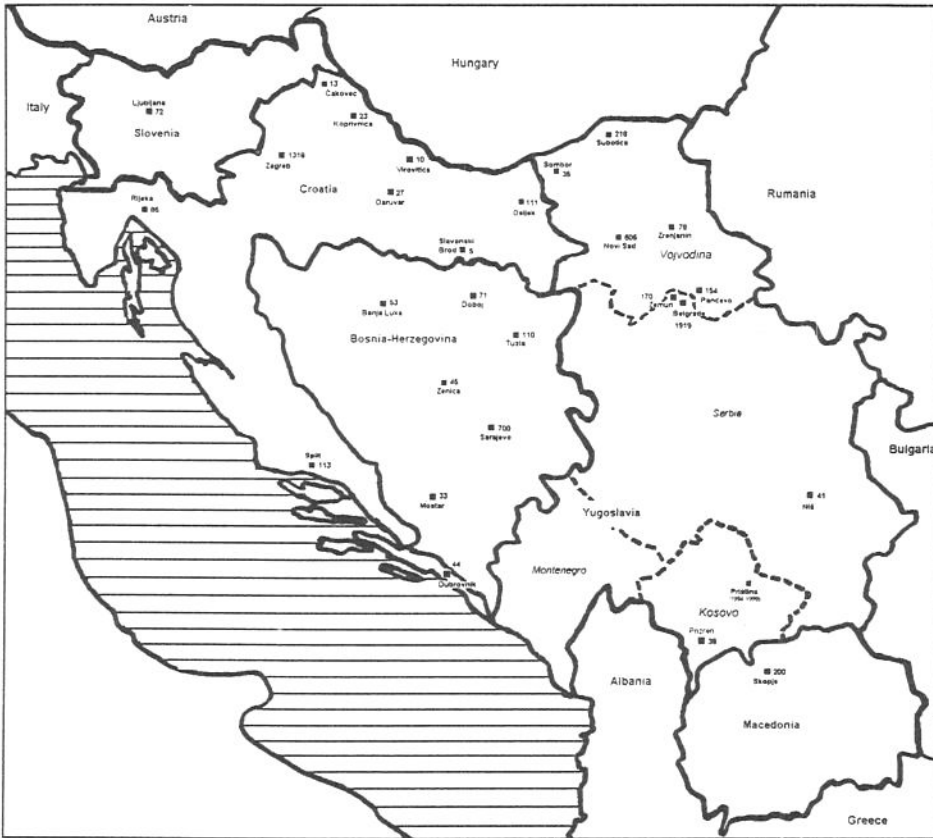




Map 2. Localities where Jewish communities were re-established after World War II in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Re-established Orthodox Jewish communities are underlined



Map 3. Jewish communities in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1989 with the number of members. Source: *Jevrejski Kalendar 5749 (1988–1989)*. Beograd: Izdanje saveza jevrejskih opština Jugoslavije.



Map 4. Post-Yugoslav Jewish communities and the Prizren-group in the independent Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia and Macedonia. Figures indicate the number of members in the year 2000, except for the communities of Zemun, Banja Luka and Ljubljana where the figure reflects the situation in 1995.



For Mervi

