1. THE SETTING

The lands where the territory of the former Yugoslavia is situated consist of a rich variety of diverse geographical features typical of the West Balkans. This rich diversity provides the background and setting of the Yugoslav peoples. The topography contains natural passages and routes by which traders and invaders have penetrated from all directions into the Balkan heartland, and these same routes have provided the link between the Balkans and Alpine, Mediterranean and continental Europe, and so ensured that not only goods but also cultural influences affected the people living in the South Slav lands. Jews had, in fact, already settled in the Balkans during the Roman period, long before the arrival of the first Slav tribes. They were called Romaniots, and the evidence indicates their presence in at least two locations: near the city of Split on the Dalmatian coast, and at Stobi near Bitolj in Macedonia.

The first Slavs arrived from their previous homelands between present-day Poland and Ukraine through Hungary in the late 4th century AD and began raiding the Romanised settlements south of the Danube. Gradually they colonised areas which were occupied during the raids, and by the end of the 8th century most of the area of present-day Yugoslavia south of the Sava-Danube line had been colonised by Slav tribes. By the 10th century three distinct Slav groups, the ancestors of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, can be identified in the Balkans. The region was dominated in turn either by their own Slav kingdoms or the multi-ethnic empires of the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. An independent kingdom of the Serbs existed in the 11th century in different forms and reached its heyday in the 14th century before it was overrun by the Turks. The Croatian kingdom flourished in the tenth and 11th century. The first distinctly Bosnian state emerged in the early 12th century. Macedonia and Montenegro also had their heydays in the Medieval period.

The beginning of Christianity in this area dates to the end of 9th century. The Croats became adherents of the Catholic faith using the Latin alphabet, whereas the Serbs became Orthodox and wrote in the Cyrillic alphabet. Following the occupation by the Ottoman Empire, many Bosnian native-born and Slav-speaking inhabitants converted to Islam and thus became the ancestors of the modern Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. By the end of the 15th century, the Ottoman Empire had occupied almost all the territory later belonging to Yugoslavia. Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, whilst Slovenia and Croatia-Slavonia as well as later Vojvodina came under the

domination of the Habsburg monarchy. The Balkans were divided between Christendom and Islam and four different elements existed in the area of Yugoslavia at this time: two multinational empires, the coastlands including the independent state of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), under strong Venetian influence, and the tiny independent principality of Montenegro.[44]

The foundations of Yugoslav Jewry were laid by the major wave of Sephardic immigration that followed the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.[45] There were two major trade routes for emigrating Jews. The first led from Kusta (Istanbul) and Saloniki northwards via Macedonia along the rivers Vardar and Morava and continued eastwards towards present-day Sofia and from there to Belgrade and Vienna. The second came from Turkish and Greek towns via Macedonia and Bosnia to the Adriatic Sea (Dalmatia), and from there to the Italian ports, mainly to Venice. Jewish communities were established in Macedonia, in Bosnia and on the Dalmatian Coast.

Bosnia became part of a new, Eastern Sephardic *kulturbereich*, cultural area, together with the other Balkan regions ruled by the Ottomans, and the 'indigenous' Jews, the Romaniots, were gradually absorbed almost totally by the newcomers. The Sephardim brought their own language, Ladino (or Judeo-Spanish), with them to the Balkans. Jews were able to maintain their own ethnic-religious identity owing to the pattern of communal organisation (*Dhimma*) prevalent in the lands of Islam.[46] The *Dhimma* turned the Jews into second-class subjects in Muslim society, but on the other hand gave them toleration and protection. The Jews responded to this tolerant attitude by identifying strongly with the central authorities and placing their trade and administrative talents at the service of the Ottoman Empire.[47]

Jews were banned from residing in Slovenia and Croatia by the Habsburg authorities until the late 18th century, but during the 19th and early 20th centuries Ashkenazi Jews began to arrive in the south Slav regions from different parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially in Zagreb and Osijek in Croatia and Novi Sad and Subotica in Vojvodina. They spoke mainly German or Hungarian among themselves, and no longer Yiddish.[48] After the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina

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44 Singleton, Fred: *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985, 35–36.

45 Elazar, Daniel J.: *People and Polity. The Organisational Dynamics of World Jewry*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1989, 374.

46 Benbassa, Esther & Aron Rodrique: *The Jews of the Balkans*. Oxford – Cambridge: Blackwell 1995, xvii.

47 Benbassa & Rodrique 1995, 2, 104. The Jews not only identified with the central authorities but also 'regarded the appearance of new national options in the modern period with mistrust'.

48 Freidenreich 1979, 6–7.

by Austria-Hungary in 1878, some Ashkenazi Jews moved to Bosnia, especially to Sarajevo. Sarajevo and Belgrade became the dominant centres of the Sephardic Jews, whereas the centre of the Ashkenazi Jews was located in Zagreb. It is noteworthy that the line of demarcation between the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews continued to follow the old border between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans.[49] Jews under the Austro-Hungarian state identified with the empire in the same way as Jews under the Ottomans. This adaptation to the multi-national and multi-religious context gave to a small minority group the security it needed, and consequently gave rise to a policy tradition which was adopted and followed by Yugoslav Jewry in different periods and circumstances.

The Jews did not form a unified group in pre-Yugoslav times, i.e. before 1918. They came from different geographical areas and backgrounds. Thus it is proper to speak of diverse Jewish histories and communities in the territory which became known as Yugoslavia. As a result pre-Yugoslav Jewry was no coherent entity, but rather a collection of fragments of different Jewish elements, each of them with their own history, background and tendencies, which was consequently transformed into Yugoslav Jewry with the establishment of the Kingdom. Although they were tied together in the form of one common federation (except for a number of Orthodox communities) their historic divergence continued to exist below the surface, at least in their memories, before emerging again to some extent at the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

1.1. THE FIRST YUGOSLAVIA AND THE JEWS WITHIN

The Corfu Declaration signed on 20 July 1917 affirmed the unity of the Serb, Croat and Slovene peoples. It guaranteed equality of the three national groups named in the title as well as the free exercise on an equal basis of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Islamic faiths.[50] The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was announced on the first of December 1918, bringing together the former Austro-Hungarian territories of Slovenia, Croatia-Slavonia, Vojvodina, Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the kingdoms of Montenegro and Serbia (including territories approximately corresponding to present-day Macedonia and Kosovo).[51] From 1929 until World War II it was known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The inhabitants of Serbia and Montenegro are mainly Orthodox, with an Albanian Muslim majority in Kosovo. The inhabitants of Croatia-Slavonia, Dal-

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49 Elazar 1989, 374.

50 Singleton 1985, 127.

51 Poulton, Hugh: *The Balkans. Minorities and States in Conflict.* London: Minority Rights Publication 1993, 5.

matia and Slovenia are Catholics, but pockets of Orthodox Serbs lived along the old Austrian military frontier (Krajina) in Croatia until 1995. Vojvodina, formerly part of Hungary, had a mixed population of Hungarians, Germans (who fled or were expelled after World War II) and several different Slav groups, the majority being Serbs. The Muslims form the largest group in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the majority of the rest being Orthodox Serbs or Catholic Croats. The territory known historically as Macedonia was divided in 1912 between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, the largest part going to Serbia. The population is mixed but Orthodox Macedonians and Muslim Albanians form the majority.

The new kingdom also included a large number of non-South-Slav inhabitants such as over half a million German-speakers, almost half a million each of Magyars and Albanians, a quarter of a million Romanians and 150,000 Turks. Besides the three main religious groups, Jews, Protestants and Uniate Christians were found among the inhabitants. The variety and diversity among the newly united inhabitants, national groups or religious groups could not have been more of a mosaic. The population of the Kingdom, according to the census of 1921, was almost 12 million.

The uniting of separate histories and identities was not a success story. There were many opponents of this new national unity, and the Croats, the Slovenes and the Muslims did not want to become submerged under Serbian domination. The Serbs had become dominant in the Kingdom owing to their experience of independence, acquired formally in 1878 as a result of the treaty between the Russians and Turks, and also because they were the largest single group. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia became in fact a royal dictatorship.

The post-war ruler, the Yugoslav Communist Party, operated illegally during most of the inter-war period. By 1932 its membership had been reduced to a few hundred dedicated revolutionaries in Yugoslavia. Josif Broz, nicknamed Tito, became Secretary-General of the Communist Party in 1937, and in the four years before the Axis invasion he built up the illegal Communist Party into a highly effective revolutionary force with 12,000 full members and a further 30,000 involved in the youth movement.[52] During the royal dictatorship thousands of alleged communists were thrown into prison, among them Tito himself and one of the founders of the Yugoslav Communist Party, the Jewish-born Moša Pijade, alias Janko. Pijade fought against Zionism during the inter-war years and sought to turn Jewish youths away from the Zionist youth organisation into the ranks of the Communist youth movement.[53] Later, as Chapter 4 of this study shows, his role was crucial to the Zionist enterprise itself as he assisted behind the scenes in the post-war emigration of Yugoslav Jews, first to Palestine (disguised as participation

52 Singleton 1985, 190, 192.

53 Shelah 1994, 136.

in an anti-imperialist struggle against the British) and later to the independent state of Israel.

The Kingdom brought together in one political unit two distinct groups of Jews, the Sephardim of the former Ottoman territories and the Ashkenazim of the Habsburg lands.[54] This new geopolitical reality imposed upon the Jews living within the Kingdom in fact created Yugoslav Jewry.[55] With the birth of the Kingdom, Yugoslav Jewry became a distinct territorial unit among the South Slav and Balkan Jewries. According to the first population census of 1921, there were 64,746 Jews by religion in the Kingdom, half a percent of the total population.[56]

The Federation of Jewish Religious Communities in the South Slav Lands was established in 1907 indicating aspirations towards unity among the Jews.[57] Immediately following the establishment of the Kingdom, the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities of Yugoslavia was founded at Osijek in 1919. It served both as an umbrella organisation for the local Jewish communities and as a representative body of the Jewish community to the outside world. Together with the Chief Rabbinate, founded in 1923, and the Rabbinical Council, it supervised religious and educational affairs and settled religious and other disputes within the Jewish community.[58] Isolationist tendencies in the Zagreb Jewish community leadership initially opposed the establishment of the Federation. They fostered friendship and rapprochement between Jews and Croats and their opposition to the unity of the South Slav Jews must be seen against this background. However they only received support from the Novi Sad Jewish community and their efforts withered.[59] The Federation of Jewish Religious Communities operated from 1921 to 1929 according to its own constitution without the recognition of the Kingdom, although in general Jews were regarded as an ethno-religious minority.[60] The Law on the Religious Community of Jews in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Zakon o Verskoj Zajednici Jevreja u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji) finally provided formal recognition in 1929. Thus the Jewry of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were recognised *de jure* as a religious community, although *de facto* they were also recognised as having an ethnic and national minority status. Although a formal recognition in a form of a law only came in 1929, their status was recognised on the basis of the St. Vincent's (Vidovdanski) constitution of 1919, which provided for religious equality and freedom of worship for all groups.[61]

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54 Freidenreich 1979, 5.

55 Loker, Zvi: "From Jews in Yugoslavia to Yugoslav Jewry". In Loker 1991, 22.

56 Perić 1977, 267.

57 Loker 1988, 13.

58 Freidenreich 1984, 28–29; Freidenreich 1979, 106.

59 Loker 1991, 24–25.

60 Loker 1988, 10.

Alongside the Federation, German- and Croatian-speaking Zionists formed an organised body in Osijek and Zagreb, and the latter became the centre of Zionist activities in Yugoslavia[62], indicating the strengthening of Yugoslav Jewry's nationalistic identity. The Zionist organisation was preceded by the National Association of Zionists of the South Slav Lands of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy founded in 1907 in Slavonski Brod.[63] The Zionists strongly favoured the establishment of the Kingdom and saw in it an opportunity to spread Zionist propaganda among all the Jews of the newly united country. Zionist branches spread eventually to every locality where Jews were settled, and so these activities made a significant contribution to the self-consciousness and unity of the Jews in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Yugoslavia. The structure of the Zionist organisation itself shows the federative orientation of the Jews: National Council conferences rotated every other year from region to region. The Zionists were divided into different parties, of which Hashomer Hatzair was the most important. They established more than 20 training centres which operated in the Kingdom in the inter-war period, training those who planned to emigrate to Palestine, not only from Yugoslavia but also from Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria, by teaching, among other subjects, agriculture and Hebrew.[64] The Zionist organisation was, in fact, the strongest of the various Jewish organisations of the inter-war period, and the leadership of the Federation, for example, was largely in their hands.[65] According to Zvi Rotem Zionism was perhaps the most important instrument in binding the previously fragmented Jewry together in the Yugoslav context.[66]

The remnants of the Hungarian Orthodox Jews in Vojvodina set up their own small Union of Orthodox Jewish Religious Communities in Subotica, Vojvodina, in 1924. Thus the establishment of separate Orthodox and Neologue[67] communities was accepted by the Yugoslav Jews. Three different community types could be distinguished during the inter-war period: the Ashkenazi-Neologue, the Ashkenazi-Orthodox (mainly in the Vojvodina region) and the Sephardic communities.

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61 Sekelj, Laslo: "Antisemitism and nationalist conflicts in the former Yugoslavia". *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 27, No. 2, October 1993, 64.

62 Loker 1988, 13. The Jewish Agency for Palestine had its Yugoslav office located in Zagreb, for example.

63 Freidenreich, Harriet: "Sephardicm and Ashkenazim in inter-war Yugoslavia: Attitudes toward Jewish nationalism". *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. XLIV, 1977, 67.

64 Loker 1988, 15–17.

65 Loker 1988, 15.

66 Rotem 1976, 148.

67 The majority of the Ashkenazi Jews in the Habsburg areas joined a Reform movement in the second half of the 19th century and became known as Neologues.

Within a relatively short period of time, the Jewish communities in Yugoslavia were able to create a strong and centralised umbrella organisation uniting the local communities. The degree of integration of Jews into the surrounding society is evidenced by the fact that former speakers of Yiddish, Hungarian or Ladino began increasingly to use Serbo-Croat, and during the inter-war period about half the Jews used Serbo-Croat as their language. In consequence this language became the most important factor in uniting the Jews of Yugoslavia.[68] Other unifying factors were the mutual solidarity among Jews, the freedom of activity guaranteed by the authorities, the reorientation of the Jewish leadership towards Yugoslavia and away from former links with Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, Saloniki and Bulgaria, and also the strong Zionist movement which welcomed the creation of Yugoslavia, advocated the unity of the South Slav nations and emphasised unity among the Jews.[69] In fact, the basic principle of the Federation of Zionists of Yugoslavia throughout the inter-war period was the necessity of 'absolute unity of Sephardim and Ashkenazim' in order to help achieve the Zionist goal of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.[70]

The division of labour between the Federation and the Zionist organisation was clear: the Federation was in charge of all legal and budgetary matters and the leadership of Yugoslav Jewry, and was also responsible for fighting antisemitism. The Zionist organisation was in charge of teaching Judaism, spreading Zionist propaganda, teaching Hebrew, and training and organising the emigrations.[71] Zionism was, therefore, the spiritual essence of inter-war Yugoslav Jewry, while the formalities were taken care of by the Federation.

In general, the Jews adapted themselves successfully to the surrounding society. However, they managed to preserve their own socio-economic character with a heavy concentration on commerce and white-collar employment by comparison with their fellow citizens. This was largely due to the higher standard of education and urbanisation[72] among the Jews. Although many Jews already regarded Serbo-Croat as their mother tongue, many of them were still bilingual.[73]

The entire period between the two World Wars marked the heyday of Yugoslav Jewry. Jewish communities and organisations functioned actively, and the relationship between the state authorities and the Jewish minority was a cordial

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68 Levinger 1987, 218.

69 Loker 1991, 26.

70 Freidenreich 1977, 66.

71 Loker 1988, 18.

72 During the inter-war period three-quarters of the Yugoslav Jews lived in 11 towns, and so they were urbanised city-dwellers *par excellence* (Vajs 1954, 21).

73 Freidenreich 1979, 68. The Sephardim spoke Serbo-Croat and Ladino, and the Ashkenazim Serbo-Croat and German or Hungarian, and to a lesser extent, Yiddish.

one. The Serbs regarded the Jews as patriotic citizens because they had taken part in the Balkan Wars and in World War I. There was no organised antisemitic movement before World War II, although the situation in this respect began to change in the nineteen-thirties owing to German influence.[74]

During the inter-war years Yugoslav Jewry was legally defined as a religious minority, as observed earlier, but because of their distinct socio-economic traits they were clearly separate from their fellow Yugoslavs and remained quite unlike all the other ethnic or religious minorities in Yugoslavia. This difference between the Jewish minority and other minorities was further reinforced by the fact that Jews were, albeit unevenly, distributed throughout the country and not concentrated in any one border area.[75]

The Jews of the inter-war period in Yugoslavia can be divided into five separate clusters according to their geographical concentration. Three of them were major cities, i.e. Zagreb, with the largest Ashkenazi concentration, and Sarajevo and Belgrade, which were predominantly Sephardic centres, while two of them were regional i.e. Vojvodina and Macedonia. The Jews of Vojvodina were mainly under Hungarian influence and were affected by both Hungarian language and culture. They were also divided between the Neologues and the Orthodox. German and Serbian were other languages of the Jews in Vojvodina in addition to Hungarian; for example, the Zionist publications were mainly written in German. Macedonian Jews meticulously preserved their religious adherence and observance, the Sephardic folklore and Ladino as the language of communication between them, and were the poorest of the Yugoslav Jews in terms of economic status. These five concentrations made up the mosaic of Yugoslav Jewry during the inter-war period. In summary, on the eve of World War II there were altogether 117 Jewish communities in Yugoslavia, of which 12 were Orthodox.[76] The major existing Jewish organisations were the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities in Yugoslavia, the Federation of Zionists of Yugoslavia and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Religious Communities.

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74 Freidenreich 1979, 179, 184.

75 Freidenreich 1979, 67.

76 *Spomenica 1919–1969*, 204–206. There is, however, some variation in the number of Jewish communities in the inter-war period. According to Zvi Loker there were 110 communities affiliated with the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities and 12 communities with the Union of Orthodox Jewish Religious communities, making a total of 122 (Loker 1988, 10, 18). According to the census of 1931 the Ashkenazim comprised 57% of the total Jewish population, the Sephardicm 38.3% and the Orthodox 4.7% respectively (Perić 1977, 268).

1.2. INTER-WAR JEWISH POLITICS – THE QUEST FOR IDENTIFICATION

Several identification orientations became apparent among Yugoslav Jewry during the inter-war years. This study uses the term 'identification' instead of the term 'identity' as identification as a term which connotes more measurable and visible behaviour better suits a historical study. To some degree identification is an expression of an individual's identity, of course. Identification is a way to externalise the individual's or group's sense of identity through measurable behaviours and clearly defined attitudes, whereas identity is the deeper inner-felt sense and as such difficult to measure.[77] On the basis of measurable markers estimates of identity can be made, but they remain, however, mere estimates. In addition, according to Simon Herman most studies of Jewish communities in the Diaspora turn out to be at best studies of Jewish identification, which is the process by which the individual comes to see himself or herself as a part of the Jewish group, and of the formal act by which identification is expressed.[78] This research uses a distinction between three modes of Jewish identification introduced by Sergio Dellapergola[79] in order to analyse the Jewish identification of Yugoslav Jews and its transformation during transitional periods. These modes are *religion, ethnicity/community* and *cultural residue*.

Religion is the most traditional means of Jewish identification and refers to the holding of shared beliefs, norms and values, and the celebration and/or performance of religious rituals and symbols. Less traditional in comparison with religion is identification with a shared *ethnicity or community*, which usually consists of a predominantly Jewish association network. In this mode the focus is on the Jewish community centre. The third mode of Jewish identification is defined as *cultural residue*, and is typical of the individual who is not affiliated with any Jewish community organisation. This mode naturally fails to provide such an exclusive bond with regard to outsiders as the modes of *religion* and *ethnicity/community*.[80]

Attitudes towards Jewish nationalism during the inter-war years came to reflect patterns of Jewish identification in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Three major streams of Jewish identification can be discerned which were attractive to Jews of that period: Zionism, integrationism and Diaspora nationalism. The origins of the evolving Jewish nationalistic ideology in the South Slav lands can be traced to two

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77 Dellapergola, Sergio: *Jewish Assimilation/Continuity: Three Approaches*. Jerusalem: The A. Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry 1997, 1.

78 Herman, Simon N: *Jewish Identity. A Social Psychological Perspective*. Beverly Hills – London: Sage Publications 1977, 28.

79 Dellapergola 1997, 6–8.

80 Dellapergola 1997, 6–8.

organisations founded by Jewish students from the Balkans in Vienna. *Esperanza*, established in 1898, an 'academic society for Sephardic Jews', was founded for the purpose of developing an awareness among its members of their Sephardic heritage through study of their history and language, namely Ladino. *Esperanza* was sympathetic to Zionist ideals, whereas *Bar Giora*, founded in 1902, was based entirely on Zionist principles and defined its aim as 'the raising of Jewish national consciousness among Jewish students, the cultivation of their national language (Hebrew) and literature' and comprised both Ashkenazim and Sephardicm.[81] *Bar Giora* was the spiritual predecessor of Yugoslav Zionism whereas *Esperanza* laid the foundation for integrationism and Diaspora nationalism, and as a result, according to Freidenreich, attitudes towards Zionism, integrationism and Diaspora nationalism came to indicate the orientation of Jewish identity in Yugoslavia.[82]

In Yugoslavia, as in Western and Central Europe, the phenomenon of Zionism to a large extent attracted into its ranks those who had already broken away from Jewish religion, and were seeking a solution to their identity crisis in the concept of Jewish nationhood, realising at the same time that they could never fully assimilate into the surrounding culture. For the Ashkenazim, the adoption of Zionist principles meant the rejection of the notion of Jews as 'Croats of the Israelite faith' and the opportunity to put up specifically Jewish lists in municipal elections.[83] Some Jews took part in local politics, thus marking the transition of Yugoslav Jewry from a religious minority into the Jewish-nationalistic identification.[84] Among the Sephardim, especially in Belgrade, being a Zionist was seen as compatible with being a Serb patriot. Serbian patriotism was strong among Jews as they had taken part in the Balkan Wars and in World War I and were regarded by the Serbs as patriotic citizens.[85] Thus Jews considered Jewish nationalism as a legitimate response to this multi-national environment of Yugoslavia.

Jews who identified as Zionists came from the ranks of both the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. They advocated blurring the boundary between these groups, were already involved in the process of secularisation, and wanted to be identified as Jews by nationality rather than by religion. In general, the Zionist ideology offered Jews a secular national identity, as Tamir has noted,[86] and this was especially so in the Yugoslav context. It is noteworthy that most of the post-war Jewish

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81 Freidenreich 1977, 66.

82 Freidenreich 1977, 53.

83 Freidenreich 1977, 72.

84 Loker 1988, 19.

85 Freidenreich 1979, 72–73, 179.

86 Tamir, Yael: "Some thoughts concerning the phrase: A quest for identity". In Yitzhak Kashti et al. (eds.): *A Quest for Identity. Post War Jewish Biographies*. (Studies in Jewish Culture, Identity and Community.) Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University 1996, 22.

leaders were former Zionists. The fact of this secular orientation of the leadership partly explains the relatively smooth adaptation of Yugoslav Jewry to post-war conditions. The secular post-war leadership merely shifted from the Zionist to the Yugoslav platform and underlined national i.e. *ethnicity/community* identification at the expense of *religious* identification, which naturally suited well the authorities of the New Yugoslavia. By the nineteen-thirties, the Zionists had by and large taken over the local communities, the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities and almost the entire Jewish youth movement, in addition to virtually monopolising the Jewish press. Without doubt, during the inter-war period the Zionist Federation proved to be the strongest organised force within the Jewish community of Yugoslavia.[87] In spite of being such a strong movement within Yugoslav Jewry, Zionism was never expressed in mass emigration to Palestine, and barely 1.5 per cent of the Jewish population, at most, had emigrated to Palestine by the time of World War II.

Integrationist ideas succeeded in gaining considerable popularity among the Ashkenazim in Croatia around the turn of the century. The integrationists represented the 'assimilated' type of Jew prevalent in Western and Central Europe in the post-emancipation era, who generally preferred to regard themselves as Jews by religion only, and not by nationality. They had, however, acculturated themselves linguistically and otherwise to the 'master nations' of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Germans and the Magyars, rather than the surrounding Slavic peoples. Many of the younger generation of Ashkenazim considered themselves neither national nor political, while others, especially the sons or daughters of the wealthy, turned to communism. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia took a stronger stand against Nazism and Fascism after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935, which increased even further the attraction of the Party among the Jews.[88] The integrationists were as a movement, however, much weaker than the Zionists and were defeated by the Zionists, for example, in the first post-war communal elections, which took place in 1920.[89] The so-called Diaspora nationalism was advocated by the Sephardim: the recognition of Jews as a separate national entity within the multinational Yugoslavia.[90] Until the late 19th century, the Sephardim continued to speak Ladino as their native tongue and tended to live in an almost exclusively Jewish milieu within their own quarter. Religious piety formed an integral part of their life-style and Jewish customs were strictly observed.[91] Thus they formed a much more distinct group than the Ashkenazim and their Diaspora nationalism can

87 Freidenreich 1977, 70.

88 Goldstein, Slavko (ed.), *Jews in Yugoslavia*. Zagreb: MTM 1989, 106.

89 Freidenreich 1977, 56–60.

90 Freidenreich, 1977, 64.

91 Freidenreich 1977, 55.

be called as the 'sephardist' movement in Yugoslavia.[92] This Sephardism can be classified as a combination of *religious* and *ethnicity/community* modes.

The above-mentioned streams and ideologies made up the rich tapestry of Jewish politics during the inter-war period, and offered a convenient solution to different modes of Jewish identification. Although Jews were still officially regarded as a religious minority in inter-war Yugoslavia, Jewish nationalism transformed their position and they also came to be recognised as a national minority. Zionism and integrationism were alternative solutions for Jewish identification of the Ashkenazim, the former emphasising nationality but the latter religion as a mode of identification; Zionism and diaspora nationalism were alternatives for the Sephardim. Zionism as the strongest ideology of the inter-war years among Yugoslav Jewry testifies that the main mode of Jewish identification is to be found in the domain of *ethnicity/community*, while the *religious* mode of identification was already on the decline.

It is to be noted, however, that the rich variety of different identification options was one of the reasons for internal disputes among Yugoslav Jewry. According to Freidenreich, the fact that the Federation comprised both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities bears witness to the minor character of the differences between these communities,[93] although she admits that the symbiosis between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, while growing, was incomplete in the inter-war period.[94] In reality, identification between Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities as well as the main centres of the inter-war period of the Yugoslav Jewry, Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo was a matter of more than merely minor differences. Ivo Goldstein points out that the process of identification between different groups of Jews created sufficient problems to have an influence on the post-war development in Yugoslavia.[95]

1.3. WORLD WAR II, THE HOLOCAUST AND THE SECOND YUGOSLAVIA

Soon after the beginning of World War II Yugoslavia found herself isolated and surrounded on all sides except the south by Axis-occupied countries or by regimes sympathetic to the enemy. The German attack on Yugoslavia began on April 6, 1941. The Germans advanced into Yugoslavia with their Bulgarian, Hungarian and Romanian allies. The Italians entered Slovenia and Dalmatia. The occupying forces

92 Freidenreich 1977, 66.

93 Freidenreich 1979, 113.

94 Freidenreich 1977, 79.

95 I. Goldstein 9.1.2001.

exploited the Serb-Croat division as they set about the task of dismembering the Yugoslav state. Zagreb fell on 11 April and the so-called Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, henceforth NDH) was proclaimed under the Ustaša leader, Ante Pavelić. The NDH consisted of Croatia and most of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Slovenia was divided between Italy and Hungary with a small part staying under German administration. Vojvodina was divided between Hungary and Romania, Montenegro occupied by Italy, and Kosovo and western Macedonia attached to Greater Albania. The rest of Macedonia and part of southern Serbia were taken over by Bulgaria. Serbia proper came under direct German military occupation, although in August 1941 a civilian administration led by General Milan Nedić received permission to function. General Nedić formed a Government of National Salvation. Thus the Germans created in fact two puppet-states, those of Croatia and Serbia, but with the fiction that Croatia was formally more 'independent', in the same way as the other German puppet-state creation Slovakia. This independence was, however, pure illusion. Almost half of the inhabitants were not Croats, the economy was subordinated to the needs of the German war machine, and the government could only act with the consent of the occupying powers.[96]

The destiny of the Yugoslav Jews followed the fate of the Jews in other German-controlled areas of Europe. They were registered and imprisoned in the labour and concentration camps located in Serbia, Croatia, Poland and Germany. The best-known Croatian concentration camp was in Jasenovac, where about 20,000 Jews lost their lives. Not only human lives, but also almost all the synagogues and other public Jewish buildings were targets of hate, and accordingly destroyed. On the eve of World War II, there were between 71,000 – 82,000 Jews in Yugoslavia, depending on the source, of whom about 67,000 perished.[97] If the higher figure for the Jewish population is taken into account, altogether 82 per cent of Yugoslav Jews were killed. The Holocaust in Yugoslavia forms the background for the post-war transition of the Yugoslav Jewry dealt with in the following chapters of this research.

Most of the officers of the Army of the Kingdom were taken as prisoners of war to Germany; among whom were about 500 Jews, most of them reserve officers. They were held in Germany for 4 years, and survived. This group came to form the nucleus of the post-war recovery of Jewish communities and their leadership. About 4,500 Jews participated in the National Liberation Struggle, and

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96 Singleton 1985, 175–177.

97 Shelah 1990, 465–467. The higher figure, exactly 82,242, is based on Dr. Jaša Romano's research, whereas the lower figure is given by Harriet Pass Freidenreich. Shelah tends to believe that the higher figure is more accurate, because Freidenreich does not include in her calculation those Jews who were not members of Jewish communities or those who arrived there as refugees from neighbouring countries.

of these about 1,300 died.[98] Those who survived received honourable positions in the regime after the war. Eleven of them were declared national heroes, and from the Jewish ranks also emerged the first female general, Dr. Roza Papo.[99]

The Communist Party seized its opportunity amid the disintegration of Yugoslavia and succeeded in creating a national movement capable of leading the resistance.[100] At the beginning of 1944 it was already obvious that the Germans were losing the war and that the future government of Yugoslavia would be dominated by the Communists. The Red Army entered Yugoslavia on October 1st, and on October 20th 1944 a joint Partisan-Red Army force entered Belgrade. Zagreb fell to the Partisans on 9 May 1945. The Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) declared itself to be 'the supreme legislative and executive body in Yugoslavia' on November 29, 1944. A National Committee was elected, to act as a 'temporary government', with Tito as Prime Minister and Minister of War. The Constitutional Assembly approved the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The 1946 constitution was modelled on the one introduced into the USSR by Stalin in 1936.[101] The constitution established a federation of six republics, each with equal status, the boundaries of which corresponded closely to the historic units which had originally come together in 1918.[102]

The years between 1945–51 are described as the years of the consolidation of power in the hands of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which controlled the structure of government. The federal administration in Belgrade was responsible for defence, foreign policy, economic planning, the currency and banking system, communication, law and the maintenance of the social system. There was little left over for the republics, although theoretically they had a degree of cultural autonomy. Outwardly the Yugoslavs between 1945–48 appeared to be the aptest pupils and most loyal allies of the Soviet Union. One of the first tasks of the Yugoslav government was to establish its authority over the war-torn country in order to begin post-war reconstruction. The consolidation of the regime's strongly centralised authority required the elimination of all forms of political opposition.[103] This period between 1943–53 was the period of 'system destruction' in Ramet's terms when the Communist Party sought to uproot traditional culture and elites in

98 S. Goldstein 1989, 119.

99 Loker 1988, 20–21, 24.

100 Singleton 1985, 192.

101 Both included guarantees of civil liberty: all citizens are equal before the law; there can be no discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin, property, status, level of education or religious belief; and political and religious freedom are protected, including freedom of the press and freedom of assembly.

102 Singleton 1985, 201–209.

103 Singleton 1985, 212.

order to construct a new society.[104] On the international scene Yugoslavia was recognised immediately by the international community, became a founder member of the United Nations and was elected to one of the non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council.

Yugoslavia was outwardly a faithful follower of the Soviet Union until 1948, but the friction developing below the surface brought them onto a collision course, and as a result Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform in 1948. This constituted the most serious setback for Soviet foreign policy since the end of the war. A large number of party members, however, still held pro-Soviet attitudes, and in autumn 1948 a prison camp was established on the desolate island of Goli Otok, where some 15,000 party members were 're-educated' during the next five years. However, the majority of Yugoslavs stood by Tito. About a year after the Cominform resolution, economic and military aid was sent by the western powers, who soon realised that it was in their interest to see that Yugoslavia survived, and consequently for the next decade Yugoslavia's growing trade deficit was largely covered by western credits and other forms of aid.[105] Yugoslavia, the most heterogeneous of all the European countries,[106] came to be known for its own unique Yugoslav variant of communism. Yugoslavia's ideological deviation from the Soviet line and ties with the West secured Yugoslav Jews more equal treatment than their co-religionists in other Eastern European countries.

Before the disintegration of Yugoslavia its main Christian denominations were the Serbian and Macedonian Orthodox Churches, with an estimated eight million adherents, and the Roman Catholic Church with some six million adherents, mainly Croats and Slovenes. There was also a large Muslim community of about four million, including ethnic Slavs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, most Albanians and the Turkish minority. During the inter-war period the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church were established churches and certain religious communities, such as the Lutherans, Muslims and Jews, had a certain legal standing and protection. On the other hand, groups such as Baptists and Methodists were tolerated but with

104 Ramet 1998a, 12–13.

105 Singleton 1985, 222, 224.

106 The national rights of the multinational federation consisted of a three-tier system of the 'Nations of Yugoslavia', the 'Nationalities of Yugoslavia' and finally 'Other Nationalities and Ethnic Groups'. The nations of Yugoslavia were the officially recognised nations: Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Muslims (from 1971), Serbs and Slovenes; the nationalities of Yugoslavia were the Albanians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Gypsies, Italians, Romanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks and Turks; and other nationalities and ethnic groups included beside Jews also Austrians, Greeks, Germans, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Vlahs etc. From 1961 onwards it was also possible to be classified as 'Yugoslav' as opposed to other classifications (Serb, Croat etc.) and the number of people doing so dramatically increased in the last census of 1981, when 'Yugoslav' already consisted of 5.4 per cent of the population. (Poulton 1993, 5, 98).

distinctly limited rights.[107] All in all, besides the major religious dominations there were over 30 often small, mostly Protestant, religious communities in the former Yugoslavia.[108] During the Communist regime, the Yugoslav Communists followed a more enlightened line than their Eastern Europe and Soviet neighbours with regard to religion, and the religious communities benefited by having fewer restrictions imposed upon them.[109] After Tito's death Yugoslavia entered a long period of crisis, and the large religious groups began in this situation to identify more closely with ethnicity. Generally during this period many people who were formerly uninvolved or uninterested, including many young people, became much more active participants in the life of the churches. They were generally not stigmatised for this involvement and ethno-religious identity was gaining support. Towards the end of Yugoslavia, the Partisan paradigm was replaced by the patriot paradigm.[110]

1.4. TOWARDS DISINTEGRATION[111]

Tito's death in 1980 left a power vacuum in the Yugoslav political scene. His political platform of 'brotherhood and unity' failed to survive without his powerful persona and authority. Nevertheless, his politics of unity had been to some extent successful, especially among the younger post-war generation in Yugoslavia, who regarded themselves as Yugoslavs rather than Croats, Muslims or Serbs.

By the late nineteen-eighties Yugoslavia's six republics and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina) functioned independently to a considerable extent. Slovenia and Croatia wanted to establish a western market mechanism whereas Serbia and Montenegro advocated state control of the economy. The country's economy was in bad shape in the eighties. Slovenes and Croats were the most prosperous nations, and complained that they were 'subsidising' the other republics. The Serbs claimed that their lower standard of living resulted from unequal economic treatment by Tito's regime. Nationalistic sentiments had already begun to spread in the mid-eighties, especially in Serbia. The situation in Kosovo, which by the early nineteen-eighties had reached a state of permanent crisis and military occupation, became the main focus for the revival of Serbian nationalism. Late in 1986 a 'Memorandum' was drawn up by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and

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107 Mojzes 1997, 214.

108 Poulton 1993, 7.

109 Mojzes 1997, 225.

110 Mojzes 1997, 221–222, 228.

111 See a short but clear account of the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia by Sabrina Ramet in her article "Yugoslavia" in Sabrina Ramet (ed.): *Eastern Europe. Politics, Culture, and Society since 1939*. Bloomington – Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1998, 174–189.

Arts (SANU), the spiritual centre of Serbian intellectual re-nationalisation, in which grievances about Kosovo were combined with the open accusation that Tito's policies had aimed at the weakening of Serbia.[112] On 28 June 1989 several hundred thousand Serbs celebrated the six-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. The Serbs had lost the battle to the Turks, but the day was commemorated by the promise of revenge and resurrection. Slobodan Milošević, as head of the largest and most powerful Yugoslav Republic, worked aggressively to defend and expand Serbian borders. In 1989, he abolished the autonomous status of Vojvodina and Kosovo. His aim was a federal government under the domination of Serbia. He skilfully employed a mixture of Serbian nationalism and the Orthodox Christian religion in order to achieve his political ends.

The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and Franjo Tudjman had won the elections in Croatia in April 1990 and Serbs living in Croatia were convinced that the Croats were beginning to install the infrastructure of a fascist state in Croatia, reminiscent of the quisling NDH-state of World War II. Indeed, Croatia wanted a state in their Yugoslav borders which they could call their own in every respect. Tudjman's policy meant, for example, demoting the Serbs from their status as a majority Yugoslav nation to that of a minority nation within Croatia; it entailed pronouncing literary Croat as the only language of administration in Croatia and also demoting the Serbs' Cyrillic script.[113] In addition, many Serbs were replaced by Croats in the state administration. During 1990 and 1991, discussions between the presidents of the six Yugoslav republics became the central forum through which the country's disintegration would be regulated. Milošević's tactics were clear: he would not accept the transformation of the Yugoslav federation into a loose association of sovereign states.[114] Milošević, unlike Tudjman, insisted on the maintenance of a tight Yugoslav federation. For all practical purposes (legislative, economic and cultural) Yugoslavia had already ceased to exist by late 1989, and instead there emerged four national environments claiming the primary loyalty of their citizens, those of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia.[115]

Slovenia held a referendum on independence from Yugoslavia in December 1990. An overwhelming majority voted predictably for independence, and independence was declared in both Slovenia and Croatia on 25 June 1991. The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) was pushed into the Slovenian war to fight secessionism, as it was called, but after a few days it was ordered to withdraw to Croatia.

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112 Malcolm, Noel: *Bosnia. A Short History*. London: Papermac 1994, 205, 206.

113 Glenny, Misha: *The Fall of Yugoslavia. The Third Balkan War*. London: Penguin Books 1992, 11–12.

114 Glenny 1992, 37.

115 Ramet, Sabrina Petra: *Balkan Babel. Politics, Culture, and Religion in Yugoslavia*. Boulder – San Francisco – Oxford: Westview Press 1992, 21.

The JNA helped Croatian Serbs to declare their own 'The Republic of Serbian Krajina' in Croatia, which was never recognised by the international community. About one-third of Croatia remained occupied until the summer of 1995. The conflict spread to Bosnia in spring 1992, the population of which was the most mixed in the former Yugoslavia. 44 per cent were Muslim, 31 per cent Serbian Orthodox Christian and 17 per cent Croatian Catholic Christian[116] with the remainder calling themselves 'Bosnian Yugoslavs'. The referendum for independence was held on 29 February and 1 March 1992 in Bosnia, and the majority of the electorate voted almost unanimously for independence, which was consequently declared on 3 March 1992 and recognised by the European Community the following month.

The war in Bosnia was violent and bloody. It began about a month after the referendum with the Serb paramilitary forces bombarding and shooting up villages in northern Bosnia. The obvious aim of the Serbs at the beginning of war in Bosnia was to occupy and secure all the territories inhabited by Serbs, including many places where they constituted a small minority. By early 1993 the Serbs had created 'facts on the ground' in the form of military control of about 70 per cent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Dayton Accord signed in November 1995 maintained Bosnia as one entity, but divided between the Serb Republic and the Muslim-Croat Federation. These entities, according to the Accord, should eventually be integrated. The fighting ended and a fragile peace has been maintained mainly due to the presence of the international forces. The latest round of violence took place in Kosovo in the form of Serbian terrorism against the Kosovars which consequently led to the NATO intervention in 1999. Beside the casualties and displaced persons, the war caused large damage to infrastructure all over Serbia. The countries of the former Yugoslavia are still in a process of transition from totalitarianism towards democracy.

The following quotation, though a lengthy one, deserves to be given in this context. It is from the Jewish intellectual Mirko Mirković, former chairman of the Croatian PEN-club and an editor of *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, and explores the very essence of the former Yugoslavia and its disintegration.

> Let me emphasise one thing. I have no regrets whatsoever for the collapse of the one party state of the former Yugoslavia dominated by communists. I, personally, had my share of suffering from their regime. Yet, within the boundaries of the former Yugoslavia there was being developed multicultural society. A Croatian or Slovene writer could have his book published in Skopje or Belgrade. A Serbian or Macedonian playwright could have his play performed in Zagreb or Ljubljana. There were links between intellectuals of all nationalities. In Bosnia-Herzegovina mosque, Catholic and Orthodox churches and Jewish synagogues were standing undisturbed in each other's neighbourhood. People of different ethnic communities speak the same language, they

116 Malcolm 1994, 223.

were neighbours, school-friends, work mates and they were lovers. There were hundreds of thousand mixed marriages. So what prompted them to start hating and destroying their neighbours? What prompted a Serbian sniper in Sarajevo to kill two lovers, a Serbian boy and a Muslim girl, as they tried to escape from the hell of mutual hatred? Shakespeare's well known tragedy of the star-crossed lovers in Verona comes to mind. Only this time on the Sarajevo stage the blood spilled was real. What prompted Serbian gunners to blow to pieces Sarajevo children and citizens by indiscriminate cannon-fire? What prompted the destruction of Vukovar, of Mostar with its century old bridge? What prompted the Serbian massacre of Srebrenica, the summary killings of Muslim peasants at Ahmici and elsewhere by Croatian soldiers? All the senseless bloodshed and destruction were the result of a morbid disease, the virus of nationalist rabies having entered the brain of too many people. Nationalism is by definition exclusive. And, as the horrors in the former Yugoslavia have demonstrated, it is in practise, if not in theory, narrow and bloodthirsty.[117]

117 Mirković, Mirko: "Ravages of a Deadly Virus". Speech at the International meeting of writers organised by the Slovenian PEN, May 1999.