

### 3. EMIGRATION 1948–1952

Nahum Goldman, the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, after official communication with the Soviet Embassy in New York, informed the Jewish Agency in January 1945 that the Soviet Government had no objection to Balkan Jews leaving for Palestine.<sup>160</sup> This clearly indicates that Jewish emigration from both the Balkan countries and Eastern European states was accepted by the Soviet Union, clearly for reasons of *realpolitik*, the struggle against British domination of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and also as a solution to the problem of Jewish displaced persons in Europe.<sup>161</sup> Tito's General, Vladimir Velebit, who served as Yugoslav Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in a private conversation with Eliahu Epstein, who served as a Director of the Jewish Agency Office in Washington, said that in his opinion only a small proportion of the Jews in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria would be able to adjust themselves to the changing conditions in these countries, and the Governments would be extremely relieved if at least a high percentage of the Jews were to emigrate elsewhere, and that, moreover, the Russians had come to the conclusion that Central European Jewry could only be successfully absorbed in Palestine.<sup>162</sup> These *realpolitik* considerations were behind the relatively liberal emigration policy of Yugoslavia, although the Yugoslav position was presented in public as an expression of their principle that every person had the right to choose

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<sup>160</sup> CZA/S25/486: Goldman to the Jewish Agency, January 22, 1945.

<sup>161</sup> Perhaps the most outstanding Soviet policy statement concerning Palestine, and *inter alia* concerning Jews in general, was the speech by the Soviet Delegate, Andrei Gromyko, at the Special Session of the UN on May 14, 1947, in which he outlined his Government's policy on the Palestine question. The main features of his speech were: (1) the complete departure from the traditional anti-Zionist tone of Communist pronouncements; (2) an admission that the Jewish claim to statehood was 'reasonable' and 'justified'; (3) the recognition that the problem of Jewish displaced persons was closely bound up with Palestine; (4) the recognition of the existence of a Jewish national unit in Palestine; and (5) the exposition of two alternative solutions in order of preference: (a) a bi-national state in which Jews and Arabs would enjoy equal rights; (b) the establishment of two independent states – one Jewish and the other Arab (CZA/S25/483, note on effects of Soviet policy on the Palestine question, May 29, 1947). See also Segev, Tom: 1949, *The First Israelis*. Henry Holt and Company: New York 1986 (First Owl Books Edition 1998), 101.

<sup>162</sup> CZA/S25/483: Conversation with Dr. Vladimir Velebit, Yugoslav Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, from Epstein to members of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, June 25, 1947.

his or her place of residence, and that for the Marxist and Internationalist it was only natural to help the Jews.<sup>163</sup>

Immigration to Palestine was strictly limited during the British Mandate, but the floodgates were opened after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, and during the following three years until 1951 there were 7,661 emigrants from Yugoslavia, 170,127 from Poland, 16,794 from Czechoslovakia, 41,106 from Rumania, 37,260 from Bulgaria, 14,324 from Hungary and 8,163 from the Soviet Union.<sup>164</sup> The numbers bear witness to the open-doors policy, although the Soviets changed their policy towards Israel soon after its independence, practically stopping emigration from the Soviet Union. This change did not affect other Eastern European countries and the emigration significantly reduced the Jewish population of all Eastern European countries except for the Soviet Union and Hungary.

There were two stages in the post-war emigration from Yugoslavia as well as from other Eastern European countries. The first stage was immigration into Palestine in accordance with the number of permits granted by the British Mandate and the illegal immigration (also called *aliyah bet*) until the founding of the state of Israel, and the second stage, naturally, immigration into an independent Israel. The immigration regulations<sup>165</sup> also affected the emigration from Yugoslavia during the years 1945–47. For example, after the liberation of Belgrade the Jewish Agency had sent 50 permits to Yugoslavia, but owing to the communications difficulties between Yugoslavia and the Yishuv in Palestine, these permits were not used in time. According to the Yugoslav Jews, the permits never reached Belgrade.<sup>166</sup> Actually these 50 permits were approved in May 1945, but then were temporarily mislaid and lost their validity, and so could no longer be utilised in 1946.<sup>167</sup>

Many Yugoslav Jews were already eager to emigrate in 1946. A significant number of them were in a miserable economic situation after the repatriation, often left without relatives, and without the courage, will or means to start a new life. Difficulties in finding employment either because of the lack of professional training or a 'bourgeois' background made the decision to leave more attractive. Joining

<sup>163</sup> OHD (166)2: Interview of Vladimir Velebit by Moše Mešulam on the Yugoslav-Yishuv Relations in 1943–48, on May 2, 1971; OHD (166)1: Relationship between Yugoslav Authorities and the Yishuv in Eretz Israel in the years 1945–48, interview of Ephraim Shilo by Moše Mešulam on June 7, 1971.

<sup>164</sup> *Immigration to Israel 1996*. Central Bureau of Statistics Publication No. 1085; *Immigration to Israel 1993*. Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics Publication, August 1994.

<sup>165</sup> Immigration permits were granted by the Jewish Agency, which had to restrict itself in line with the immigration policy of the British Mandate.

<sup>166</sup> CZA/S6/3749: Hitahdut Olej Jugoslavia to the Jewish Agency for Palestine, April 14, 1946; and the Jewish Agency to Hitahdut Olej Jugoslavia, June 6, 1946.

<sup>167</sup> CZA/S6/3749: Cable from Jewish Agency Immigration Department to Palestine Office in Geneva, June 23, 1946.

relatives living in Palestine or in the USA appeared to be one motive behind the emigration. There were also Jews who before the war had intended to immigrate to Palestine without fulfilling this intention, and who now saw the opportunity to leave.<sup>168</sup> Last but not least, remnants of the Orthodox Jewry realised the difficulties they would face in adjusting to the new regime, and emigration emerged as their only option.

Anti-Jewish laws had been removed immediately after the war and there were no persecutions which would have provided a reason for emigration, as the Yugoslav Jewish leadership explicitly emphasised.<sup>169</sup> Nor was there pressure from the authorities to emigrate.<sup>170</sup> However, Jews of a Zionist orientation were prevented by the Jewish leadership from organising independently as they wished and saw no opportunity of being integrated into the new political realities. Consequently, in spite of the lack of pressure on Jews to leave, in practice for a number emigration was the only option left. The choice, in fact, lay between emigration and adaptation.

The JDC gave the impression that most Yugoslav Jews were ready to emigrate in 1946, but a somewhat different tone was expressed by the Yugoslav Jewish leadership itself. The leadership claimed in the summer of 1947 that, first of all, there was no problem of mass emigration of Yugoslav Jews to Palestine or other countries, and secondly, only a comparatively small number of individuals wished to emigrate.<sup>171</sup> The leadership put forward the acquisition of permits as the most crucial problem for emigration, since from 1945 to 1947 only some ten immigration certificates were issued to Yugoslav Jews. The Jewish leadership regarded emigration as the problem of the few individuals who wanted to leave, not as a problem for the Jewish community as a whole.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> CZA/S25/5280: Report of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities concerning the problems of the Yugoslav Jewish Community to Mr. Lourie and Mr. Marton, February 8, 1946; CAHJP-EA/B-120: Report of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities of the Federated People's Republic of Yugoslavia concerning the problems of Yugoslav Jews, from Alcalay and Gedalja, July 19, 1947.

<sup>169</sup> CZA/S25/5280: Report of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities concerning the problems of the Yugoslav Jewish Community to Mr. Lourie and Mr. Marton, February 8, 1946.

<sup>170</sup> AJJDCA – Istanbul Box 5–10, Circulars, Emigration 1946: Yugoslavia, Jewish Community in Yugoslavia and Plans for Emigration, memorandum June 26, 1946.

<sup>171</sup> CAHJP-EA/B-120: Report of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities of the Federated People's Republic of Yugoslavia concerning the problems of Yugoslav Jews, from Alcalay and Gedalja, July 19, 1947.

<sup>172</sup> CAHJP-EA/B-120: Report of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities of the Federated People's Republic of Yugoslavia concerning the problems of Yugoslav Jews, from Alcalay and Gedalja, July 19, 1947.

*Organising Emigration*

The Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet<sup>173</sup> first sent emissaries to Belgrade as early as December 1944 in order to investigate whether immigrant ships could use Yugoslav ports.<sup>174</sup> Yugoslav Jews became more involved in the illegal immigration when a representative of the Mossad, Ehud Avriel, arrived in Belgrade in November 1945, where he met with David Alkalaj, who was already familiar with the *aliyah bet* operations. Avriel and Alkalaj were responsible for negotiating the transfer of Jews through Yugoslavia with the Yugoslav authorities. Mossad operations in Yugoslavia were accepted by the authorities on certain conditions: firstly, all the activities had to be coordinated with the Yugoslav security service, and secondly, no local Jews were to be accepted among the immigrants.<sup>175</sup> At this period the Yugoslavs permitted the transfer of Jewish immigrants through Yugoslavia, but emigration of the local, Yugoslav Jews was strongly opposed.<sup>176</sup> Ephraim Shilo arrived in Yugoslavia in October 1946 and replaced Avriel, staying there until February 1948. His task was to take care of the illegal immigration through Yugoslavia. In Belgrade Shilo met Moša Pijade, then the spokesman of the Yugoslav Parliament, with a request for him to influence the Minister of the Interior and Head of the Military and Secret Police, Alexander Ranković. Ranković was in a position to facilitate both the transport of Jews to harbours and the arrival of transport ships for transporting the emigrants. In the meantime many transportations from Rumania and Hungary through Yugoslavia were cancelled because of British pressure on the Yugoslavs. Yugoslavs did permit the Mossad to use the small harbour of Bakar close to the Italian border, and the harbour of Šibenik was also used for the transportations. Permits for departures of Jews in transit needed high-level clearance, and Shilo concluded that the Yugoslavs were given permission for departures by the Soviets.<sup>177</sup> The office of David Alkalaj, the president of the Autonomous Relief Committee, employed as the informal centre of a variety of activities connected with the illegal immigration.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>173</sup> The Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet, henceforth the Mossad, functioned as a part of the Haganah and was answerable to the Jewish Agency, an official body recognised by the British Mandatory Government. The Mossad was responsible for organising illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine.

<sup>174</sup> Hadari 1991, 99. In addition to this, their task was to build up contacts with the local Jews and to study the attitude of the new regime towards Zionism (Shelah 1994, 135).

<sup>175</sup> Shelah 1994, 150–153.

<sup>176</sup> Shelah 1994, 143.

<sup>177</sup> OHD (166)1: Relationship between Yugoslav Authorities and the Yishuv in Erets Israel in the years 1945–48, interview of Ephraim Šilo by Moše Mešulam on June 7, 1971.

<sup>178</sup> Avriel, Ehud: *Open the Gates! A Personal Story of 'Illegal' Immigration to Israel*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1975, 239.

Both the mandatory limits on immigration and the illegal immigration came to an end with the independence of the state of Israel. Jewish emigration from Yugoslavia itself was on a small-scale basis until August 1948, when preparations were launched by the Federation for the first major wave of immigrants. The delegation of the Jewish Federation visited Moša Pijade in order to discuss the coming emigration. The matter was presented, interestingly enough, to Pijade as the departure of volunteers to aid the Jewish struggle in Palestine. Other matters on the agenda at this meeting were the question of the possibility of collecting material assistance for Israel's war effort and also the proposal to form a Yugoslav-Israeli Friendship Society. Pijade's response to the two first matters on the agenda was positive, but he considered the founding of a Friendship Society to be premature.<sup>179</sup> In addition, Bencion Levi conducted talks on emigration with the Ministry of the Interior, and according to his report their position was to allow the departure of every Jew who wanted to fight in Israel.<sup>180</sup> There is no doubt that the authorities were well aware that not all the emigrants were going to contribute to the fighting, because there were many elderly people and children among those intending to leave. Perhaps the political word-play of 'going to fight in Israel' suited well both the regime and the Jewish leadership. At least it sounded very progressive in spirit, and the fight against British imperialism in the Middle East united Jews and Yugoslavs.

Thus the Federation, which only a year earlier had estimated the number of willing emigrants as insignificant, was facing the task of organising a mass emigration. Special emigration commissions were set up in the larger centres by the Executive Committee of the Federation. The preparatory work was carried out in four months, and as a result in the course of November and December 1948 a total of 4,115 persons left for Israel. There remained a group of people interested in emigration, and after the Yugoslav authorities approved preparations for further measures, the second wave of immigrants, another 2,567 persons, departed for Israel only six months later, in June and July 1949. In less than a year the Yugoslav Jewish community had been reduced by 60 per cent and a total of 6,682 persons had emigrated from Yugoslavia. Yugoslav Jewry after these emigrations numbered about 5,500 people.<sup>181</sup> This emigration, particularly the first three *aliyahs*, was financed by the JDC.<sup>182</sup> A third wave of emigration was carried out in 1950 with

<sup>179</sup> JHM/K-769: Minutes of the XXXIII Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Federation, June 5, 1948.

<sup>180</sup> JHM/K-781: LIII Meeting of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities – the Executive Committee, June 29, 1948; JHM/K-781: Minutes from the Conference of the Executive Committee of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities of FNRJ with the representatives of the largest communities, July 4, 1948.

<sup>181</sup> CZA/C2/1722: Letter from the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia to the World Jewish Congress, October 26, 1949.

<sup>182</sup> AJJDCA – Geneva I, 2A/1, C-89.003: Vajs and Kadelburg to AJJDC, December 5, 1951.

420 emigrants, and a year later in the fourth emigration group altogether 658 Jews left for Israel. This meant that the total number of emigrants was 7,664 persons since 1948.<sup>183</sup> The Federation estimated after the third *aliyah* that there would no longer be any organised mass emigrations, but instead applicants would have to obtain permission individually.<sup>184</sup> This assessment proved inaccurate since later a fifth *aliyah* had to be organised.

### 3.1. EMIGRATION POLICY

The Yugoslav emigration policy was liberal up to a point, and the understanding was given that all Jews were permitted to emigrate freely if they so desired, and that only a certain number of professionals were discouraged from leaving.<sup>185</sup> This slightly distorts the picture of the real situation. A number of medical doctors were denied permission to leave in the beginning, and in 1951 there were still doctors who had not received emigration permits, although this was explained as a delay due to the shortage of medical doctors in Yugoslavia, rather than a permanent refusal to grant permits.<sup>186</sup> The Yugoslav Jewish leadership for their part announced only that an insignificant number of individuals were indispensable experts and as such not allowed to leave.<sup>187</sup> All in all, there were through the years a number who were not allowed to emigrate for unknown reasons. In the Sarajevo Jewish community, the number of those who never received permission to leave was about 60.<sup>188</sup>

Interestingly enough, it was not only the Yugoslav authorities who restricted emigration, since Israel for her part also exercised a selection process. This appears in a letter of the Federation of Jewish Communities to the World Jewish Congress in which it is stated that 'except for a small number of seriously ill persons and the aged without families' Israel accepted all the other applicants.<sup>189</sup> In other words,

<sup>183</sup> AJJDC – Geneva I, 2A/1, C-89.003: Survey of Aliyahs 1948–1951.

<sup>184</sup> CZA/C2/1722: Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia to the World Jewish Congress, October 26, 1949.

<sup>185</sup> See for example Freidenreich 1979, 193. The President of the Federation, Albert Vajs, even said that the Yugoslav authorities considered Jewish emigration to be repatriation to their homeland (CZA/Z6/324: World Jewish Congress – Minutes & Reports 1950, Part III, Short Minutes of Meeting of the London members of Executive of the WJC, November 28, 1950.

<sup>186</sup> ISA/FM 2494/6: Report no. 155, immigration of medical doctors, May 10, 1951.

<sup>187</sup> CZA/C2/1722: Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia to the World Jewish Congress, October 26, 1949; ISA/FM 2498/3: Hitahdut Olej Yugoslavia to the Foreign Ministry, April 17, 1950.

<sup>188</sup> Ivan Čerešnješ 26.5.1999.

<sup>189</sup> CZA/C2/1722: Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia to the World Jewish Congress, October 26, 1949. This is noteworthy since Israel, despite her Zionist principle of allowing every Jew (except those with a criminal record) to immigrate, did not accept everyone. Thus there were individuals whose permission to emigrate was denied either by the

selection was applied by Israel to the above-mentioned category. In one case the Israel Legation in Belgrade influenced a person to cancel his immigration because he was seen as a 'social case' and therefore undesirable, and in several other social cases a postponing of emigration was recommended by the Legation.<sup>190</sup>

In general, the attitude of Yugoslavia was favourable with respect to emigration and when the first emigration was carried out through Italy in 1952, the Yugoslavs even placed special railway wagons at the disposal of the emigrants and their personal belongings, for example.<sup>191</sup> Jews serving up to ten years of imprisonment were also allowed to leave. Those in court custody for lesser offences who desired to emigrate to Israel were released by amnesty, or given conditional release, or the proceedings against them were dropped. As far as property was concerned, the emigrants were allowed to take with them their entire movable effects.<sup>192</sup>

Intermarriage emerged as a problem in the course of emigration, for the Israelis and their Ministry of Immigration wanted to restrict the immigration of non-Jewish spouses, and in fact there were at least two cases in which immigration permits were denied because of a non-Jewish spouse.<sup>193</sup> The Israeli delegate in Belgrade strongly opposed the policy of the Ministry of Immigration, stating that it would be

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Yugoslav authorities or the state of Israel. It is true that the Law of Return was enacted only in July 1950 but the Declaration of Independence describes Israel as the state of all the Jews, whose main goal was the ingathering of the exiles. Actually an argument about 'selecting' the immigrants had already arisen in 1948 in Israel. There was a problem of the quality of the 'human material' coming into Israel. Therefore in December 1948 it was decided to prepare a list of diseases, sufferers from which would not be allowed to come. However, in spite of these arguments, according to Tom Segev, all were brought to Israel in the end (Segev 1986, 97, 142–143, 147). The case of Yugoslavia refutes this conclusion. A number of Jews were 'selected' to stay out of Israel by the Israelis. The expressions used by the Legation of Israel in Belgrade indicate what they were looking for, namely 'good human material', and a group of 1952 emigrants was perceived as excellent for immigration since they made 'a good impression in general and represented a positive age and profession structure', for example (ISA/FM 2503/6: Immigration of 1952 from Yugoslavia, Loker to the Interior Ministry, October 26, 1952).

<sup>190</sup> ISA/FM 2503/6: Immigration of 1952 from Yugoslavia, Loker to the Interior Ministry, October 26, 1952.

<sup>191</sup> ISA/FM 2503/6: Immigration of 1952 from Yugoslavia, Loker to the Interior Ministry, October 26, 1952.

<sup>192</sup> CZA/C2/1722: Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia to the World Jewish Congress, October 26, 1949.

<sup>193</sup> ISA/FM 2503/6: Reports no. 118 and 119, immigration of mixed marriages, October 19, 1950. The second family was from Czechoslovakia and waiting in Yugoslavia for permission to immigrate. A negative answer would have meant sending them back to Czechoslovakia and the fate of Jews there was questionable at that time, as the Israeli Delegate reminded readers of his report. In fact, the Delegate threatened to pull the Legation out of the immigration process if the policy of the Ministry for Immigration with regard to non-Jewish spouses failed to change.

received negatively and without understanding both by the remaining Jewish population and by the Yugoslav authorities, who had approved the emigration of non-Jewish spouses. Moreover, as the delegate expressed, non-Jewish spouses were not regarded as active believing Christians. Apparently the dispute on this matter remained unresolved since the First Secretary of the Legation, Zvi Loker, noted in relation to the emigration of 1952 that in the absence of specific instructions regarding the immigration of non-Jewish spouses, a policy of family unity was applied, as was also applied in Rumania.<sup>194</sup> The correspondence clearly indicates that the Israeli Legation in Belgrade strongly advocated a human approach in the case of intermarriage, in opposition to the hawks of the Ministry of Immigration in Israel.

Not all immigrants from Yugoslavia were satisfied with Israel and a small stream of dissatisfied Jews returned to Yugoslavia. Albert Vajs hinted to the delegate of Israel as early as 1949 that hundreds of emigrants had applied directly to the Yugoslav Ministry of the Interior with the request for permission to return to Yugoslavia should they decide to do so.<sup>195</sup> As a matter of fact, few ultimately decided in favour of return, and the Yugoslav press reported the returnees quite prominently. These articles in 1952 were seen as the first negative publicity for Israel in Yugoslavia. It was judged that one purpose of these articles was to propagate how well things were going in the New Yugoslavia – so well that even Jews wanted to return there. Perhaps the articles were also trying to convince those who planned to emigrate in 1952 to stay in Yugoslavia. For example *Politika*, a Belgrade-based daily, reported the return of 20 Jews from Israel to Yugoslavia in June 1952.<sup>196</sup>

These articles taken together with other signs in 1952 began to indicate that a slowing down of emigration was seen to be in the interest of both the Yugoslav Jewish leadership and the Yugoslav authorities. Emigration propaganda was no longer viewed favourably by the authorities, and the Federation leadership was encouraged to concentrate solely on its own activities within the Federation. The assessment of the Israeli delegate was that the Jewish leadership wanted to ensure the continuation of the existence of Yugoslav Jewry, and further emigration would have seriously undermined this aim.<sup>197</sup> In fact, the pace of emigration slowed down after these five waves of emigration and continued afterwards only on an individual

<sup>194</sup> ISA/FM 2503/6: Report no. 119, immigration of mixed marriages, October 19, 1950; ISA/FM 2503/6: Immigration of 1952 from Yugoslavia, Loker to the Interior Ministry, October 26, 1952. The latter document indicates the liberal concept of Jewishness applied in the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia with regard to immigration, that in most cases of non-Jewish spouses Jewish communities recommended their immigration and confirmed their Jewishness!

<sup>195</sup> ISA/FM 2503/6: the Delegate to the Foreign Minister, December 2, 1949.

<sup>196</sup> *Politika* 15.6.1952; ISA/FM 2494/6: Report no. 57, a matter of *yordim*, June 26, 1952.

<sup>197</sup> ISA/FM 2494/6: Report no. 33, January 3, 1952.



basis. Between 1952–60 only 320 Jews emigrated from Yugoslavia to Israel i.e. approximately 40 per year.<sup>198</sup>

### 3.2. CONSEQUENCES OF EMIGRATION

After the last group of emigrants departed in July 1952, the total remaining Jewish population according to the community's membership records was 6,175 Jews.<sup>199</sup> Thus emigration reduced the post-war Yugoslav Jewish population in three years by approximately 60 per cent. According to the census of the Jewish population arranged by the Federation on April 1, 1950, after the biggest groups had left for Israel, there were still 6,224 Jews on the records of the communities living in 187 localities. Of them 1,372 were living in Serbia, 1,271 in Vojvodina, 2,262 in Croatia, 1,122 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 51 in Slovenia, 121 in Macedonia, 23 in Kosovo-Metohija and only 2 in Montenegro. They were organised in 56 communities<sup>200</sup> distributed as follows: Serbia with 4 communities, Vojvodina 14, Kosovo-Metohija 1, Croatia 24, Slovenia 2, Bosnia-Herzegovina 9 and Macedonia 2 respectively.<sup>201</sup> A small fluctuation in numbers in different sources is natural as the situation was continuously changing because of emigrants, natural increase and inter-marriage. It was also observed that the independence of Israel gave an impetus to some individuals to be registered in the Jewish communities.<sup>202</sup> Among those who returned to the Jewish community in the immediate post-war years were also a few former converts who decided to return their roots because of social aid received there, and were accordingly known as 'Joint-Jews'<sup>203</sup> (after the JDC).

As noted above, the total Jewish population was 6,175 after the last group of organised emigrations had left in July 1952. Geographically considered, in comparison with the situation two years earlier, this represented a small increase in the number of Jews in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia and a decrease in Vojvodina and Croatia.<sup>204</sup> This was mainly due to migration inside the country,

<sup>198</sup> *Immigration to Israel 1996*, 42.

<sup>199</sup> Perera 1971, 138.

<sup>200</sup> See Map 2 on page xi, reconstituted Jewish communities in Yugoslavia. Note that some changes, in comparison to the information in the map, had taken place. Orthodox communities did not exist any more in 1950, and in Croatia there were more communities than the map shows.

<sup>201</sup> ISA/FM 2498/3: Report no. 86, Jewish population in Yugoslavia, May 5, 1950.

<sup>202</sup> AJJDCA – Geneva I, 2A/1: Vajs and Kadelburg to AJJDC, December 5, 1951.

<sup>203</sup> *Davar* 16.11.1952, *Dor acharon li-yhudey Yugoslavia*. (a copy of the article is also in CZA/S71/1418).

<sup>204</sup> AJJDCA – Geneva I, 2A/1, C-89.003: Report on Yugoslavian visit by Judah J. Shapiro, September 3–8, 1952.

mostly in search of jobs. Estimations of the number of Jews not registered in the Jewish communities varied from 500 – 1000 at the beginning of the 1950s.<sup>205</sup>

During the inter-war period Jews had been strongly engaged in commerce and credit as well as in free enterprise professions in comparison to industry, crafts and public service. Taken proportionally their occupational structure was strikingly different from that of other Yugoslavs: almost 60 per cent of Jews were engaged in commerce, credit and communication, whereas only about 4 per cent of the general population was involved in these occupations. On the other hand, whereas about 76 per cent of the general population was engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing, only 0.6 per cent of Jews were to be found in this category.<sup>206</sup>

This situation was considerably altered with the creation of the new Yugoslavia with its socialist principles, which was in many ways unfavourable to the occupational structure of the Jewish remnant.<sup>207</sup> The far-reaching changes in the economic structure of the country made the task of rehabilitating Jews extremely difficult: foreign trade and domestic credit had been made state monopolies, free enterprise had disappeared, and the new state economy provided insufficient opportunities for the reintegration of the Jewish element, whose abilities had been developed under vastly different economic conditions. Therefore the major role of the Yugoslav Jews shifted to the field of the professions, and professionals came to make up no less than 68 per cent of the Jews who were gainfully employed or economically independent in the 1950s.<sup>208</sup> This led inevitably to a decrease in the proportion of Jews in the private sector of the Yugoslav national economy. Firstly, numbers of Jewish merchants and artisans perished in the Holocaust, and secondly, opportunities in the private economic section were limited due to the stronger role of the state in economic matters. On the other hand, the number of Jews employed as civil servants and officials rose rapidly.<sup>209</sup> The development in 1946 is clearly seen in the trade sector, which still employed 575 Jews i.e. 4.6 per cent of the Jewish population. While the grip of the state on this sector strengthened, the number of these professionals decreased, and in 1948 only 3.1 per cent of Jews, 374 persons, were engaged in trade. After emigration, in 1952, no Jews were counted in this category.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>205</sup> ISA/FM 2498/3: Report no. 86, Jewish population in Yugoslavia, May 5, 1950; AJJDC – Geneva I, 2A/1, C-89.003: Vajs and Kadelburg to AJJDC, December 5, 1951.

<sup>206</sup> Freidenreich 1979, 60, 219.

<sup>207</sup> AJJDC – Istanbul Box 5–11: the ARC of the Federation of Jewish Community of Yugoslavia to AJJDC, European Executive Council, November 18, 1946.

<sup>208</sup> Robinson 1956: 186–190.

<sup>209</sup> CZA/S25/5280: Report of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities concerning the problems of the Yugoslav Jewish community. The Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia to Mr. Lourie and Mr. Marton, February 8, 1946.

<sup>210</sup> Perera 1971, 146.

The occupational distribution of the Jewish population in 1952 indicates that generally speaking Jews represented the white-collar occupations. There were 221 medical doctors<sup>211</sup>, 54 professors, 48 teachers, 72 lawyers, attorneys and judges, 32 journalists, 78 army officers and 875 persons holding administrative positions, for example. This corresponded to a considerable share of the Jews of working age, since almost half the Jewish population consisted of children, students and housewives.<sup>212</sup>

Immediately after the war many Jews were impoverished, because their property was plundered during the war or because of unemployment. Although a large number were employed in the civil service, there were also a considerable number of unemployed who could not be absorbed by the civil service and who could not, as they were viewed as unproductive, include themselves in the economic life of the new Yugoslavia.<sup>213</sup> The emigration attracted, of course, this sector of the Jewish population who saw difficulties in occupational adaptation to the new system, which even increased occupational differences between the inter-war and post-war periods. The number of Jews in the private sector diminished, whereas the number of Jews in public service was extremely high. This consequence of emigration led the Jewish leadership to express, however, their fears concerning the social structure of the Jewish community as a result of the emigrations. The main reason for this was that mainly younger, able-bodied people left for Israel as emigrants: those who had little need for social assistance, and on the contrary contributed to the community as long as they belonged to it. Therefore the number of needy people among those who stayed became proportionally even higher.<sup>214</sup> This led to the following clear-cut division in the social structure of the post-war Jewish community: the Jewish population employed in public service with a relatively good standard of living on the one hand, and the aged Jewish population who survived mainly thanks to donations by foreign Jewish institutions channelled through local Jewish communities.

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<sup>211</sup> The popularity of medical studies is to be noted. For example in 1946 40% of Jewish male students and 34% of female students were studying medicine (AJJDC – Istanbul Box 5–11: the Autonomous Relief Committee of the Federation of Jewish Community of Yugoslavia to AJJDC, European Executive Council, November 18, 1946). Moreover, about 30% of Jewish physicians were serving in the army thus following a familiar tradition of Jewish medical doctors in Yugoslavia (AJJDC – Geneva I, 2A, C-89.010: Medical Yugoslavia. Minutes of a Jewish Physician Medical Conference in Zagreb, September 28, 1947).

<sup>212</sup> AJJDC – Geneva I, 2A/1, C-89.003: Report on a visit to Yugoslavia by Judah J. Shapiro, September 3–8, 1952.

<sup>213</sup> CZA/S25/5280: Report of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities concerning the problems of the Yugoslav Jewish community. The Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia to Mr. Lourie and Mr. Marton, February 8, 1946.

<sup>214</sup> AJJDC – Geneva I, 2A/1, C-89-003: Vajs and Kadelburg to AJJDC, December 5, 1951.

### 3.3. REMAINING COMMUNITIES

The number of reconstituted Jewish communities during the immediate post-war years had risen to 56, almost half the pre-war figure. Communities were, however, smaller and even before the emigration there were only 15 communities with more than 40 members out of a total of 56 communities. These communities were Belgrade with 1180 members, Zemun 76, Niš 46, Novi Sad 372, Sombor 99, Subotica 443, Zrenjanin 43, Zagreb 1397, Osijek 192, Rijeka 50, Split 101, Ljubljana 41, Sarajevo 891, Mostar 53 and Skopje 105.<sup>215</sup> As a result of the emigration, during 1952–53 the number of Jewish communities declined to 35. The small number of Jews left in the localities where Jewish communities ceased to exist was included in the membership of the larger communities.<sup>216</sup> As the following list of 36 communities based on *Spomenica 1919–1969*<sup>217</sup> shows, there were even fluctuations in these figures. One of the reasons is that the status Bačka Topola's was later changed from community to agency, for example. Thus earlier records refer to it as a community, while later ones do not.

- (a) Jewish communities in the Republic of Serbia:  
Belgrade, Niš and Zemun.
- (b) Jewish communities in the Republic of Croatia:  
Zagreb, Osijek, Rijeka, Split, Dubrovnik, Bjelovar, Čakovec, Daruvar, Slavonski Brod and Virovitica.
- (c) Jewish communities in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina:  
Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla, Mostar, Zavidovići, Banja Luka, Doboj, Jajce and Travnik.
- (d) Jewish communities in the Vojvodina region:  
Novi Sad, Pančevo, Sombor, Subotica, Velika Kikinda, Vršac, Zrenjanin, Bačka Topola, Bečež and Senta.
- (e) Jewish communities in the Kosovo region:  
Novi Pazar and Priština.
- (f) Jewish communities in the Republic of Slovenia:  
Ljubljana.
- (g) Jewish communities in the Republic of Macedonia:  
Skopje.

<sup>215</sup> ISA/FM 2498/3: Report no. 86, Jewish population in Yugoslavia, May 5, 1950.

<sup>216</sup> Perera 1971, 138; Vajs 1954, 35.

<sup>217</sup> *Spomenica 1919–1969*, 208.

The following local communities changed their status to agencies at the beginning of the nineteen-seventies: Murska Sobota, Maribor, Travnik, Jajce and Bačka Topola.<sup>218</sup>

Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo were naturally the main centres of post-war Jewish life with the biggest Jewish communities and concentrations. Some communal activity and more or less regular services were also found in ten other cities: Subotica, Sombor, Novi Sad and Zemun in Serbia and Vojvodina; Osijek, Rijeka, Split and Dubrovnik in Croatia; Ljubljana in Slovenia and Skopje in Macedonia.<sup>219</sup> The remaining communities existed mainly on paper.

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that the most significant factor bringing change for post-war Yugoslav Jewry was the emigration between 1948–52. First of all, it reduced the *enlarged* Jewish population to some 7,000 and the *core* Jewish population to some 4,000.<sup>220</sup> These figures remained constant without major changes until the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Secondly, the number of Jewish communities fell to 35 or 36, and only 13 of these communities can be classified as active or semi-active communities. The phase of post-war transition, ending around 1953, transformed the Jewish community of Yugoslavia, through both structural adaptation and adaptation of the Jewish population profile as seen in the occupational sector, into an integral part of the New Yugoslavia society. In fact, the occupational structure of post-war Yugoslav Jewry became unique in the Yugoslav context. Most Jews of working age were intellectuals and government officials who resided in towns and cities.

The end of emigration came to mark the end of the transition as well. Proportionally the highest number of emigrants came from Vojvodina, the traditional cradle of Yugoslav Orthodox Jewry, and from Macedonia, traditionally the poorest of Yugoslav Jewish concentrations. The number of Jews in Vojvodina declined from about 3,700 in 1946 to about 1,100 in 1952 and in Macedonia from about 500 in 1946 to about 100 in 1952.<sup>221</sup>

Several sections of the Jewish population can be discerned among the emigrants. They were the Orthodox Jews, who had realised that their efforts to revive a religious, orthodox way of Jewish life in the new Yugoslavia were destined to fail; Jews representing the ‘wrong’ occupations, businessmen and owners of private enterprises and all those who had been engaged in commerce and business during

<sup>218</sup> *Jevrejski Kalendar 5735 (1974–1975)*. Beograd: Izdanje saveza jevrejskih opština Jugoslavije.

<sup>219</sup> Freidenreich 1979, 193, 197; *Jevrejski Kalendar 5735 (1974–1975)*.

<sup>220</sup> See Chapter 7 for more about the *enlarged* and *core* Jewish population in Yugoslavia.

<sup>221</sup> AJJDC – Istanbul Box 5–11: the Autonomous Relief Committee of the Federation of Jewish Community of Yugoslavia to AJJDC, European Executive Council, November 18, 1946; AJJDC – Geneva I, 2A/1, C-89.003: Report on Yugoslavian visit by Judah J. Shapiro, September 3–8, 1952.

the pre-war era; Jews of Zionist orientation, who found themselves representing aspirations which were not in line with the official policy of the country; and last but not least, a group of poor survivors of the Holocaust, who lacked the means and the will to renew their life in the new Yugoslavia.

The policy of Yugoslavia towards Jewish emigration was dictated by considerations of *realpolitik*. Before the founding of Israel, Yugoslavia supported the illegal immigration as part of an anti-imperial policy. Perhaps one significant reason after 1948 was also the opportunity to rid the country of those Jewish elements in Yugoslavia which were perceived as lacking the capacity to adapt. As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, this was exactly what the Yugoslav leadership considered to be the solution to the situation of Hungarian, Rumanian and Bulgarian Jews. Therefore it is highly plausible that this approach was also deliberately chosen for their own Jews. In this way the Yugoslavs eliminated the problem which would have been caused by forcing the less adaptable sections of the Jewish population to stay in Yugoslavia. To Yugoslavia's credit it must be said that, according to available sources, the Jewish Agency did not need to pay for Jews to be allowed to leave, as was the case with Rumania and Bulgaria, for example.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Abadi, Jacob: "Israel and the Balkan States". *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1996, 297.