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“ETHNOGRAPHIC RARITY“: THE JEWS OF MONTENEGRO IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA[1]

The article provides the first overview of the largely hidden and invisible Jewish presence in Montenegro during the socialist period (1945-1991). The author analyzes the relevant demographic data and the wider political, social and cultural context of Jewish life in Yugoslavia and Montenegro. Several representative individual destinies and life trajectories of people of Jewish origin who settled in Montenegro after the Second World War are discussed. Mixed (intercultural) Jewish-Montenegrin families became a rule rather than an exception in the second half of the 20th century. The article also sums up the Operation Velvetta from 1948, a secret military mission which allowed the transfer of Spitfire fighter planes from Czechoslovakia through Montenegro (airfield Kapino Polje near Nikšić) to Israel during its war for independence. The last section discusses the life trajectory of Danilo Kiš (1935-1989), Yugoslav writer of Jewish-Montenegrin origin, and his elaborations of Jewish identity.

Keywords: *Montenegro; Yugoslavia; Jews; Judaism; Jewish Communities; Israel; Socialism; Danilo Kiš; Holocaust; Minorities in the Balkans; Secularization; History; Anthropology; Literature*

As a son of a Jewish Hungarian father and a Montenegrin mother of Christian Orthodox background, Danilo Kiš (1935-1989), “probably the most remarkable and enduring writer to emerge from former Yugoslavia“ (Emery,

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2015: 391), is not only the best known but for many people in former Yugoslavia and beyond also the only personality of Jewish origin linked with Montenegro. "I did not know that there were any Jews in Montenegro, apart from Danilo Kiš, of course" – I heard variations of this statement many times during my research of the "invisible" history of the Jews of Montenegro. Without a doubt, Danilo Kiš himself contributed to this widespread conviction thanks to his literary mastery. In a well-known and frequently cited text from 1983, entitled *Birth Certificate (A Short Autobiography),* (Kiš, "Birth Cetificate", 2013: 1).[2] he portrayed his Jewish-Montenegrin family background as absolutely unique and one-of-a-kind: "The ethnographic rarity I represent will, therefore, die out with me,"[3] wrote the childess writer famously. Many of his readers, it seems, believe their favorite author and take his words for granted even today. His memorable self-mythologizing, however, should of course be taken primarily as great literature. While presenting himself as the first and last representative of a unique breed in his literary oeuvre, in real life, Kiš maintained lifelong warm relations with his sister Danica, who lived in Herceg Novi and, unlike her brother, did have children (and later grandchildren). Danilo Kiš, as a brother and uncle, was definitely aware that his rare family story will not end with him.[4] In the following chapter, devoted to the period from the end of the Second World War in 1945 until the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991, we will try to shed more light on the life trajectories of the "ethnographic rarities", in plural rather than in singular, the Jews who settled in Montenegro or were born in this land in the post-Holocaust period. Most of them were, similarly to Danilo Kiš, descendants of mixed, Jewish-Montenegrin marriages.

The claim that "there are no Jews in Montenegro" was generally accepted as valid in socialist Yugoslavia during the second half of the 20th century, and it cannot be reduced to simple ignorance. This was in fact also the official stand of the Yugoslav Jewish Community under socialism, whose leadership was certainly most knowledgeable on the subject. This was confirmed to me by Tom Price, veteran US diplomat, Jewish activist and author on Jewish topics during our conversation in Podgorica in April 2023. Price told me that in the late 1970s, he explicitly asked Lavoslav Kadelburg, who headed the Yugoslav Jewish community from 1964-1992, whether there were any Jews in Montenegro, but the respected leader of the community claimed that Mon-

[2] Original title: *Izvod iz knjige rođenih (kratka autobiografija).*

[3] Kiš repeated the same idea in one of his interviews: "I do not have children and this strange race will disappear with me," (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 228).

[4] Kiš also bequeathed a third of his author rights in former Yugoslavia to his sister Danica Mitrović, living in Herceg Novi (Bokeških brigada 17) and her children Ivica and Dejan Mitrović.

tenegro was in fact the only Yugoslav republic without Jews (Price, personal communication, 2023).[5] In an episode on Montenegro, part of his podcast devoted to the life of Jewish communities around the world, Tom Price recounted his unsuccessful search for the Jews of Montenegro under late socialism in the following words: "When I worked for the World Union of Jewish Students back in the 70s, I frequently dealt with the head of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia. (...) I was told repeatedly in the 1970s by the people who were in the position to know: don't bother visiting Montenegro, there are no Jews there. And at all the pan-Yugoslav Jewish events I ever went to, whether it was the summer camp or the Maccabiada or anything else, all the republics except Montenegro were in fact represented, so I had no reason to question the claim of the national headquarters of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia that there were no Jews in Montenegro." (*Around the Jewish World with Tom Price,* 2020) The Jews of Montenegro, few in number, territorially dispersed, religiously mostly indifferent and well-integrated into majority society during the socialist period, were therefore for all practical purposes invisible and their existence unknown even to the few who had actively sought them out.

In this chapter, we will first analyze the main demographic data and social trends of the postwar socialist period relevant for our topic, and discuss some individual destinies and trajectories of people of Jewish origin who settled in Montenegro and often also founded families under socialist Yugoslavia. We will then devote attention to Operation Velvetta from 1948, a secret military mission which allowed the transfer of Spitfire fighter planes from Czechoslovakia through Montenegro (airfield Kapino Polje near Nikšić) to Israel during its war for independence. Finally, we will focus on the story of the writer Danilo Kiš, the years he spent in Montenegro after the Second World War, and some of his elaborations of Jewish identity.

"There Is No Better Liaison Than That Between a Montenegrin and a Jew": Demographic Trends and New Jewish-Montenegrin Families

The Second World War decimated 82% percent of the interwar Yugoslav Jewish population (Gordiejew, 1999: 82). The remaining number was further significantly reduced at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, following several waves of organized and state-assisted emigration to Israel (*Aliya*). Out of some fifty Jews living in Montenegro at the end of the interwar period, only a handful of those who survived the war and the Holocaust returned to their

[5] I met Tom Price thanks to the Chief Rabbi of Montenegro Ari Edelkopf.

prewar domiciles after liberation. New people of Jewish origin from different parts of Yugoslavia periodically found employment in Montenegro during the second half of the 20th century. Some of them later moved elsewhere, while others settled permanently and founded a family. Some Jews moved to Montenegro with their spouses of local origin whom they met in other parts of Yugoslavia. In the postwar socialist period, marked by a great secularization of society, the importance of religious identity decreased. While acknowledging their roots, most Yugoslavs of Jewish origin were religiously indifferent, non-observant and disinterested in religion. Although some understood their Jewishness primarily as an ethnic and national category, it was common among the Yugoslav Jews to declare as members of larger national and ethnic groups. This was also linked with the rising number of intermarriages, which became a rule rather than an exception after 1945. The patrilinear descent of the father, for instance, could represent a decisive factor in the choice of national identity. Many simply identified with the majority nation of the particular republic (Serb, Croat, Montenegrin etc.) and also with Yugoslavia as a whole. The number of people of Jewish origin in Montenegro, as elsewhere in Yugoslavia, fluctuated during the socialist period and trying to establish their "real" number with absolute precision, while taking into account all shades of Jewishness, most of which went unrecorded in statistics, is an impossible task.

The first list of Holocaust survivors who personally reported themselves and were subsequently registered by the headquarters of the Jewish community in Belgrade (revived just two days after the liberation of Belgrade, on October 22, 1944), included six survivors from Montenegro – three adults and three children under fourteen years of age (Ivanković, 2019: 138). We do not know whether they later returned to their prewar homes in Montenegro. After the end of the Second World War, there were some thirty Jews residing on the territory under the religious jurisdiction of the Dubrovnik Jewish community, including several persons living in the southern regions of Montenegro (but we do not know the exact break-up of the total according to their place of residence). According to an official report from May 28, 1945, the entire Dubrovnik community counted 27 members and 31 according to another report from October 15, 1946. The total number of people of Jewish origin in southern Dalmatia and the neighboring part of Montenegro must had been higher, as there were also some non-observant Jews, especially former participants of the National Liberation Movement originally from other parts of Yugoslavia, who did not establish any contact with the Dubrovnik Jewish community. We can reasonably assume that many were not even aware that the tiny community of Dubrovnik, further decimated by the Holocaust, continued to maintain its jurisdiction over the coastal, southern and central areas of Montenegro whe-

re the majority of people of Jewish origin in this Yugoslav republic resided. The postwar demographic developments of the Dubrovnik Jewish community were summed up in the mid-1980s by historian Bernard Stulli: "Since then, during the following decades, the membership was gradually decreasing. In the beginning of 1985, there were still 15 Jews left who were registered as members of the Dubrovnik Jewish community, of which 9 lived in the city of Dubrovnik, and the remaining six in Herceg Novi, Titograd, on the island of Šipan and in Slano. In addition to them, there are a few others who are not members of the Community." (Stulli, 1989: 93) The number of Jews in Montenegro who were registered as members of the Dubrovnik Jewish community was indeed almost negligeable during the socialist period. However, the southern part of Montenegro remained under the jurisdiction of the Dubrovnik Jewish community until the violent break-up of socialist Yugoslavia and the attack against Dubrovnik and southern Dalmatia in October 1991 by the Yugoslav army, whose units were largely composed of Montenegrin reservists and volunteers. The new state border between Montenegro (together with Serbia part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after 1992) and the Republic of Croatia was officially reopened only in 1999. By the turn of the 20th and 21st century, the remaining connections between the Jews of the Montenegrin coast and the ancient community of Dubrovnik were effectively severed and lost, never to be reestablished in the post-Yugoslav period.

According to anthropologist Paul Gordiejew, "the first postwar census of the Yugoslav population was conducted in 1948. In this census there were 6853 Jews, which indicates that a little more than half of the registered communal members declared themselves as Jews. The number of individuals who declared themselves as Jews on that and subsequent state censuses was far smaller than the true number of Jews." (Gordiejew, 1999: 86) The voluntary emigration to the newly independent state of Israel, founded in May 1948, received official backing by the Yugoslav Communist leadership, partly thanks to personal involvement of Moša Pijade (1890-1957), the highest ranking Yugoslav statesman and Communist leader of Jewish origin. According to historian Mladenka Ivanković, "The total number of persons which left for Israel in the period from 1948 until 1952, as part of organized aliyas (...) reached the number of 8618 persons. Out of them, 4517 were originally from Serbia, 2747 from Croatia, 974 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 308 from Macedonia, 68 from Slovenia and 4 from Montenegro." (Ivanković, 2009: 320) The emigration was organized primarily through Belgrade, partly also from Zagreb. "The emigants from Montenegro came to the ports directly, according to a timetable they received." (Ivanković, 2009: 323) After the Second World War and the establishment of the State of Israel, in Montenegro, there was a very small

number of self-declared Jews living in just four towns: two people in Cetinje, Tivat and Herceg Novi, and one person in Kotor. In total, there were just seven people of Jewish nationality in Montenegro according to official records at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s (Ivanković, 2009: 340, 346). This was the lowest number of all the Yugoslav republics and autonomous provinces (1474 Jews in Serbia proper, 1091 in Vojvodina, 14 in Kosovo, 2070 in Croatia, 100 in Slovenia, 1264 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 99 in Macedonia).

In official documents related to postwar *aliyas* from Yugoslavia to Israel, available at the website of the Jewish Museum in Belgrade, we find information about several Jews (and their family members who were not necessarily of Jewish origin) who emigrated from Montenegro. During the Second Aliya in 1949, Andrija Šefer, born in 1918, residing in Titograd, emigrated together with Darinka and Boris. The dates of birth of Darinka and Boris are not given, and it is not clear whether they were Andrija's wife and son or perhaps his two children. During the Fourth Aliya in 1951, four members of the Kac (Katz) family from Titograd emigrated to Israel: Djuro (Leopold), born in 1915, Dragica (*1924), Saša (Djuro) (*1948) and Djurdjica (Djuro) (*1950). According to additional information, Djuro and Dragica were married on August 15, 1947 and theirs was categorized as a mixed marriage (*mješoviti bračni par*), which suggests that Dragica was not of Jewish origin. (*Digitalizovana baza podataka (Alija)*) In any case, these family names and individuals are not known to us from interwar or wartime sources. The Šefer and Kac families probably arrived in Montenegro only after the Second World War and did not, according to our present knowledge, belong to the Montenegrin Jews who had lived in the country already before the Second World War.

In July 1952, after all phases of government-assisted aliya to Israel were already terminated, there were 6175 Jews left in all of Yugoslavia according to official statistics. "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 have left for Israel, there were still 6224 Jews on the records of the communities living in 187 localities. Of the 1372 were living in Serbia, 1271 in Vojvodina, 2262 in Croatia, 1122 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 51 in Slovenia, 121 in Macedonia, 23 in Kosovo-Metohija, and only 2 in Montenegro. (…) Estimations of the number of Jews who were not registered with the Jewish communities varied from 500 to 1000 at the beginning of the 1950s." (Kerkänen, 2000: 75-76)

The population census conducted in 1953 included categories of nationality as well as religion. There were 2565 self-declared Jews left in Yugoslavia by religion. As Gordiejew points out, surprisingly, the number of Jews by

nationality was somewhat lower – 2307 people (Gordiejew, 1999: 87). However, their Jewishness was obviously often understood as a religious, ethnic and cultural background, as is best demonstrated by the diversity of their modern national consciousness in the context of postwar Yugoslavia: "... two hundred claimed to be Serbs, one Montenegrin, 693 Croats, 193 "Yugoslavs undetermined", five Macedonians, fifty-three Slovenes, 1165 Yugoslavs, thirty-six others-Slav, and 1364 others-non-Slav," according to Francine Friedmann (Friedmann, 2020: 573).

The "real", exact number of Jews under socialist Yugoslavia is practically impossible to determine, as Gordiejew confirms: "No doubt more Jews lived in the country than declared themselves on official censuses. There was considerable fluctuation of declaration on the censuses themselves, including the sharp increase from 2,100 in 1961 to 4,811 in 1971 and the sharp decrease from 1971 to 1981." (Gordiejew, 1999: 69) The population census of 1971 recorded 26 Jews in Montenegro. (*Popis stanovništva SFRJ 1971*) According to the following census from 1981, there were only five self-declared Jews living in Montenegro, the smallest number out of the six republics that together, in addition to two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, composed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Gordiejew, 1999: 73). However, Gordiejew also highlights the "problem of the "lost," "marginal" and assimilated Jews" (Gordiejew, 1999: 90), as a consequences of the fact that not all Yugoslav Jews became members of organized Jewish communities after the Second World War. Membership, unlike in the interwar years, was no longer obligatory in the new socialist state. "The other option was to attempt to pursue Jewishness through self-constitution or self-situation, that is, an individuated Jewishness." (Gordiejew, 1999: 86) We can reasonably assume that in Montenegro, the only Yugoslav republic without an organized Jewish community life for decades, the share of the "lost" and at least outwardly fully assimilated Jews and their descendants was by far the largest, as only several individuals continued to maintain links with the small Jewish community of Dubrovnik, itself reduced to a few members after the Holocaust.

In socialist Yugoslavia, the Jews were recognized as a nationality and also enjoyed the freedom of religion. Anthropologist Ari Kerkänen argues that "the position of the Jewish minority in post-war Yugoslavia became well-established, largely due to the policy of adaptation. It was one of the rare examples where being a minority was not manifested in religion. Jews were a non-religious minority, although they were also recognised as a religious group on the basis of the Basic Law of 1953. They were regarded mainly as Yugoslavs, whose legitimisation in post-war society was based on the paradigm of partisanship." (Kerkänen, 2000: 102) Many Jews who remained in Yugoslavia

actively participated in the Partisan resistance during the Second World War, many were members of the Communist Party and achieved professional success and acclaim in different fields, from the military (there were 14 Jewish generals in the Yugoslav People's Army, including Rosa Papo from Bosnia, the first female general in the Balkans) to sciences, arts and education. The Polish journalist Konstanty Gebert (David Warszawski) observed that "socialist Yugoslavia, lasting almost half a century, had largely unified and homogenized the social and political attitudes of the country's different Jewish communities. They were shaped by the mythos of the partisan struggle, in which several thousand of them had particiapted, sometimes reaching top commander positions, and the official secularism and anti-nationalism of the postwar era." (Gebert, 2020: 274) Gordiejew, along similar lines, argues that even to those Jews who did not directly participate in the National Liberation Struggle of the Second World War and did not join the Communist Party after 1945, "the new state offered societal goals they believed in, those of equality, tolerance, punishment of discrimination, and freedom of cultural expression. Moreover, they were free to leave the country at any time, which set them apart from the rest of Eastern Europe." (Gordiejew, 1999: 114).

At the occasion of the 50th anniversary since the formation of the Jewish community in Yugoslavia, the chairman of the Federation of Yugoslav Jewish communities Lavoslav Kadelburg (1910-1994) summed up the official view of the overall situation and succeses of the organized Jewish community. He especially stressed the fact that during the preceding years, the generational continuity which ensured further existence of the community had been achieved, as young people were becoming involved in community life and identified as Jewish. However, even he felt the need to stress that the community was primarily secular. He did not represent the process of secularization as a threat that could endanger the Jewish identity but rather as a natural development: "The greater part of the Jewish community in Yugoslavia is secularized. Its connection with faith and specific traditions has remained only among a part of the older generation educated in that spirit, which considered it as a crucial part of Jewish life. Among the young, the content is largely different and is based primarily on a fateful connection with its nation, its cultural values, the consciousness of belonging and love for everything that is Jewish and positively so. In the context of contemporary developments in the world and in our country this is understandable, and it is possible to realize this in the social and political reality of today's Yugoslavia, the homeland of its nations and nationalities, in which no one intends and no one can deny to the Jews the right to Jewish orientation, identification, activity and solidarity." (Kadelburg, 1970: 10-11)

Mixed marriages between Yugoslavs of Jewish origin and their partners from other backgrounds became prevalent after the Second World War. The Jews represented only a very small share of the Yugoslav population, many of them lived quite dispersely after the Holocaust and were generally well-integrated and accepted as equal members of the society. In comparison with the interwar period, there were no more confessional barriers and no need to officially convert for the sake of marrying a partner of one's choice. Most marriages assumed the form of secular civil ceremonies without religious connotations. According to Gordiejew, "the postwar marriage practice has been one of ethnic exogamy, because of the smaller probability of finding a mate who is Jewish and of individual preference and choice. (…) The kinship ideology stopped operating as a regulator of spouse selection. That came about not only because of demographic constraints, but also because of ideological change. Ethnic exogamy became acceptable in the new state in which a key symbol was the "Brotherhood and Unity of the Yugoslav Peoples." For its part, the organized community did not attempt to curtail such practice but instead adopted a non-interventionist approach." (Gordiejew, 1999: 79-98) The high level of intermarriage also affected the organized Jewish communities, as the number of non-Jewish members increased due to the liberal attitude which accepted even non-Jewish members committed to the life of the Jewish communities, which largely assumed social, cultural and educational rather than religious forms. Anthropologist Nina Ginger Hofman characterizes, for example, the Zagreb Jewish Community in socialist Croatia as a "diminished community, consisting primarily of members from intercultural marriages or parentage." (Ginger Hofman, 2006: 28)

Only a few survivors, mostly descendants of local families from the Bay of Kotor, decided to stay in Montenegro after the Second World War. We are not aware of any problems that they might had been possibly facing upon their return.[6] Just like the Jewish survivors in Yugoslavia in general, the Jews who settled in Montenegro in the socialist period and often founded families there were largely people of humanistic, internationalist and secular orientation, who mostly identified with the official ideals of brotherhood and unity. Many were former members of the Partisan movement and Communists. There was no "Jewish capital" in Montenegro, no big businesses and companies owned by Jews that could be targeted by nationalization after the establishment of Communist rule. In the interwar period, most Jews in Montenegro belonged to what would amount to an equivalent of a socialist middle class

[6] For more on post-war returns of the Jews and reconstruction of Jewish communities in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, see: (Králová – Kubátová, 2016).

and made their living as civil servants rather than businessmen or owners of the means of production, as the Marxists would put it. However, according to some unconfirmed oral testimonies, gathered at the final stage of my research, a Jewish family which owned a sawmill and wood production plant in Nikšić already before the war was allegedly subjected to Communist retribution and most likely even punished for collaboration with the enemy. Namely, the said family continued to operate their business under the Italian occupation (1941-1943). According to one second-hand oral testimony, the Jewish owners of the sawmill were accused by Communist Yugoslav justice that they had willingly provided wood to the Italian army for the erection of gallows used for executions of Partisan fighers who fell into the hands of the enemy. Marko Popović, researcher of the Jewish history of Montenegro, also recounted to me a story based on oral testimonies, regarding a Jewish family which allegedly survived the entire German occupation in Cetinje until liberation without being deported, assuming the identity of a *Volksdeutscher* refugee family from Vojvodina, which was possible due to their flawless command of German. These Jewish refugees, who were acting in accordance with their new identity in order to save their lives, were often seen by Cetinje locals in the company of members of the German occupation forces, and their "friendship" was even captured on photographs. After the war, this Jewish family allegedly had to cope with official accusations of wartime collaboration with Nazi occupiers. (Popović, interview, 2023) However, both these cases would have to be confirmed by further research which I could not pursue due to time constraints.

Soon after the liberation from the German occupation army and Četnik collaborationist forces at the end of 1944, new people of Jewish origin found their way to Montenegro, mostly again as experts in fields where there was an acute lack of local cadres. Some of them settled permanently, while others later moved to other parts of the Yugoslav federation, usually for the same professional reasons and in the name of the same state and public interest which stimulated their arrival. Physician Tibor Šalamon (1914 Zrenjanin, Vojvodina – 1995 Zagreb), specialist in dermatovenerology, accompanied by his wife Greta (born Adler, 1913 Grosspetersdorf, Austria – 1994, Zagreb), was first sent by the Yugoslav government as a physician to Ivangrad (Berane) in 1946 and then to Cetinje in 1948. From 1949 to 1952, Tibor Šalamon worked as a director of the hospital in Podgorica and subsequently relocated to Bosnia and Herzegovina with his family for professional reasons again. During their stay in Ivangrad in northern Montenegro, Greta Šalamon gave birth to their first son Vladimir on May 7, 1946. Vladimir spent most of his adult life in the Croatian capital, where he worked as an internist and specialist in gastroenterology and hepatology, and where he still lives today. He also became a

notable Jewish activist in the post-Yugoslav period and served as chairman of the Jewish religious community Bet Israel in Zagreb in 2012-2015. (*Židovski biografski leksikon*) According to our present knowledge, Vladimir Šalamon is probably the first Jew born in Montenegro after the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Mina and Vojo Kovačević, a Jew born in Kaunas, Lithuania and a Montenegrin from Grahovo near Nikšić, prominent participants in the Partisan resistance during the Second World War, were relatively well-known in post-war Yugoslavia as a rare example of a Montenegrin-Jewish intermarriage. Mina Kovačević (1919-2013) was born as Mina Braude in Kaunas, capital of interwar Lithuania,[7] in a Jewish family. During her studies in Paris in the late 1930s, she met Spasoje Spasojević, Serb Communist from eastern Herzegovina and student of law at the Sorbonne. They married and moved to Yugoslavia in 1940. Both joined the armed resistance against the occupation in Herzegovina from the start in 1941 but were later captured, jailed and tortured by the Četniks. Mina's first husband Spasoje was executed by the Italians. She survived thanks to an accidental meeting with an Italian soldier, who testified that she provided him with first aid while he found himself in Partisan captivity with a wounded arm. Mina later managed to join the Partisans again, and fought in the ranks of the National Liberation Movement succesively in Herzegovina, Montenegro, Bosnia, Croatia, Istria, and Slovenia (Kovačević, 2005: 17), (Kovačević, 2001) Her native Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union, and her search for relatives revealed that her entire family was massacred in Nazi-run ghettos and concentration camps. Already during the war, she met the Montenegrin Partisan commander Vojo Kovačević. They got married in 1945 soon after they accidentaly met again after the war in the Macedonian capital of Skopje. They had two children, son Goran and daughter Planinka (both are South Slavic first names derived from terms for mountains, a fitting choice for a family of Yugoslav Partisan heroes). Just like his wife, Vojo Kovačević (1912 Grahovo – 1997 Belgrade) joined the resistance against the occupation from the first oubtreak of the uprising in 1941. After the war, he was promoted to the rank of the general of the Yugoslav People's Army, and was conferred the Order of the National Hero, one of the highest Yugoslav awards for outstanding participants in the National Liberation struggle during the Second World War. All of his six brothers fought valiantly in the Partisan ranks, and two of them, Mirko Kovačević (1916 Grahovo – 1941 Košuta kod Sinja) and Vasilije Kovačević-Čile (1911 Grahovo – 1961 San Francisco), were also

[7] Vilnius (Polish: Wilno), the present-day capital of Lithuania, was part of Poland in the interwar period.

awarded the Order of the National Hero, a unique case of three brothers – national heroes in the all-Yugoslav context. Mina Kovačević was, in turn, the only person born beyond Yugoslavia who became the bearer of the memorial medal awarded to participants of the National Liberation active from its very beginnings, Commemorative Medal of the Partisans 1941 (Partizanska spomenica 1941). Vojo and Mina Kovačević mostly lived in Belgrade, but Vojo also served for a time as a deputy of the Montenegrin National Assembly in Titograd. (Mandić, 2017) Mina worked as an interpreter for OZNA (Yugoslav secret service) shortly after the war and then for the Belgrade Interpol office until her retirement (Kovačević, 2005: 17). She continued to identify as Jewish and she continued to speak Hebrew when she had a chance. Her daugher Planinka moved to Israel as an adult, and Mina visited Israel many times with her Montenegrin husband (Pavićević, 2013).

During my research, several of my informers summed up their narative about the genesis of the Jewish population of Montenegro in the decades following the Second World War in a similar, almost anecdotical way. Usually, I was told, a Montenegrin man, Partisan fighter, officer or intellectual, met an educated Jewish woman, typically in a big town elsewhere in Yugoslavia, the pair later settled in Montenegro and founded a family. Most Jewish women who married Montenegrins after the Second World War, as some of my informers specified, originally came from Hungarian speaking Jewish families. Jaša Alfandari, the founder and first president of the Jewish Community of Montenegro in the second decade of the 21st century, made an assesment that cca 70% of the Jews of Montenegro were descendants of Hungarian speaking Ashkenazi Jews and the remaining 30% descendants of Balkan Sephardim Jews. In our interview from November 2017, Alfandari summed up the story of origin of the current, post-WWII population of Montenegro in these words: "Ninety-nine percent of the Jews who have been living in Montenegro today come originally from Vojvodina, Slavonia, Serbia and Bosnia. Their typical story goes more or less as follows: they survived the Second World War in Montenegro, they came back home after the war but they did not find anybody and anything. Many later returned back to Montenegro, the women got married here. If a minority is not threatened, it does not gather. Montenegro was a tolerant milieu. The Jews who settled here after the Second World War and their children became Montenegrins. The feeling of gratitude also played a role: since they saved my family, I will also become a Montenegrin. However, privately many still kept speaking Hungarian or Yiddish." (Šístek, 2021: 322)

Under socialist Yugoslavia, the new Jewish-Montenegrin families were, as a rule, results of intermarriages between persons of Jewish origin from other parts of Yugoslavia (mostly women) who found partners from Mon-

tenegro (mostly men) of different cultural and religious backgrounds (Christian Orthodox, Muslim, Catholic). Among the Jewish women who settled in Montenegro during the period for professional and family reasons, we most frequently encounter descendants of Jewish Hungarian-speaking families from Vojvodina. This can be partly explained by the fact that the survivors from Vojvodina represented a numerically significant group among the Jewish Holocaust survivors in Yugoslavia. As Ari Kerkänen reminds us, "…after the war, the Vojvodina region was home to almost one-third of the surviving Jews, with the highest number recorded in November 1946, a total of 3729 Jews." (Kerkänen, 2000: 45) Vojvodina was an autonomous part of Serbia and lies geographically close to the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade, where many Montenegrins found employment in the new federal structures and other institutions, and where many also pursued their university studies (the University of Montenegro, with faculties in Titograd and Nikšić, was not founded until 1974). Besides, several thousand Montenegrins also settled in different localities around Vojvodina after the Second World War by the Yugoslav government, mostly in formerly German (*Volksdeutscher*) villages which remained empty due to the flight and expulsion of the sizeable German population from the province at the end of the war. The cataclysmatic wartime upheavals and post-war demographic developments resulted in increased contacts between the Montenegrins and other Yugoslav populations, and eventually contributed to the formation of many mixed families over the following decades.

Miodrag M. Marović, biographer of the liberal Montenegrin Communist politician Veljko Milatović (1921-2004) who greatly contributed to the development of Montenegrin educational, cultural and scientific institutions, recorded a conversation between Milatović and writer Mirko Kovač (1938-2013) which took place sometimes in the second half of the 1970s. The anecdote, recounted to the author by Kovač, testifies to the fact that some Yugoslavs were aware of the existence of a certain number of Montenegrin-Jewish marriages already under socialism, and that mixed marriages such as these were generally regarded in a positive light: "Milatović had a strong wish to meet Danilo Kiš, he repeatedly praised him in my presence and once he said that there is no better liaison than that between a Montenegrin and a Jew, and that such a mixture produces talents. I told him that there are many Montenegrin men who married Jewish women, but it is rare, if not unique, as is the case with Danilo, that a Montenegrin woman marries a Jewish man. Milatović reacted in his quirky and thoughtful way and said: "It is a great miracle that a Montenegrin woman gets married at all, let alone to a Jew. One marries a Montenegrin woman out of necessity, only to avoid the fate of a recluse." (Marović, 2006: 436)

Several people of Jewish origin from other parts of Yugoslavia arrived in Montenegro already during the Second World War where they sought safer refuge and often also joined the resistance activities. One of them was Ljubica – Ibika Dajč (later Medigović), born in a Hungarian Jewish merchant family in Subotica (Hungarian: Szabadka) in 1913. After graduating from local high school in 1932, she earned her diploma at the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade in 1938. After the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941, Ibika Dajč left Belgrade for Ulcinj where she remained for most of the war until the last several months before the liberation. In June 1941, she became a member of the Medical Chamber at Cetinje, which allowed her to practice medicine in Ulcinj. The town became part of Italian-controlled Albania (Martinović, 2017: 677) Her private medical practice was primarily covering the illegal resistance activities of dr. Dajč. Upon orders of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Ibika Dajč organized secret courses of first aid for resistance members, took care of wounded partisan fighters in their secret hiding places, and procured medicine and sanitation material to the National Liberation Movement. After she settled in Ulcinj, Dajč married Dejan Mijušković, a Montenegrin and fellow resistance activist. He was murdered by members of the Albanian collaborationist forces in the beginning of 1944. Ibika, along with their fourth-month old son Mirko, managed to esacape to Bar, where she was provided refuge by the Catholic Archbishop of Bar Nikola Dobrečić. For a period of time, dr. Ibika and baby Mirko lived secretly in the Arhcbishops residence, before the Partisans took them to a new shelter in the village of Mikulići (Martinović, 2017: 688). At the end of 1944, dr. Ibika Dajč Mijušković reached the village of Brčeli where she joined the Partisan troops as a sanitation clerk. Following the liberation and demobilization in 1945, she first worked as a physician in Bar. After her marriage to a former partisan fighter and later Montenegrin Communist politician, she was best known as dr. Ljubica Medigović (Martinović, 2017: 688).

After the war, doctor Medigović settled in Montenegro permanently. She worked in the coastal town of Bar at different positions and in 1955 went on to become the first director of the newly founded modern hospital (Dom narodnog zdravlja). (Martinović, 2017: 689) She was involved in organizing health care and health education, especially among women, in the rural areas of the Bar county. In 1965, Medigović was employed in Titograd for several months but retired at the end of that year upon her own request. Apart from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1954), she was an active member of many professional organizations, serving as President of the Association of Female University Graduates of Montenegro (Društvo univerzitetski obrazovanih žena Crne Gore), and

a leading member in the Association of Physicians of Montenegro (Društvo ljekara Crne Gore), the Antifascist Front of Women of the People's Republic of Montenegro, the Red Cross and other organizations. Ibika Medigović spent her retirement in Budva and died in 1987. (Martinović, 2017: 691-692)

After the foundation of the Jewish Community of Montenegro at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, Vera Pavićević, Ibika's daughter from her second marriage to Milo Medigović, recalled what it was like growing up in a Montenegrin-Jewish family under socialism: "It is well known that the Jews who found themselves as a result of different circumstances in these parts often decided to form a family in Montenegro. I am an offspring of one such marriage. My mother is a Jew, father a Montenegrin. Similarly to most members of our community, we were reminded of our Jewish origin, more or less, by our parents and the parents of our parents. That often was not enough to develop to a necesary level the consciousness of the Jewish heritage as a base of our own identity. Especially for us who belong to a generation which grew up at the time of the reconstruction of the country, when painful memories of the Second World War were still fresh, and the dynamics of life did not leave much space for a search for family roots." (Pavićević, 2014: 33)

Montenegrin ambassador and diplomat Bojan Šarkić shared with me the following story of his family, interesting example of a family of Jewish Hungarian origin from Vojvodina on the maternal side, and Montenegrin Christian Orthodox as well as Montenegrin Muslim paternal lineages. His maternal grandmother was Arabela Bela Rozenberg (Rosenberg), daughter of Eugen Rosenberg, who earned his law degree at the University of Vienna and Zlata (Golda) Polak. The Rosenbergs were a Hungarian and German speaking Jewish Ashkenazi family, settled in Vojvodina and northern Serbia after the creation of the interwar Yugoslav state. Arabella married Stevan Vukčević, a Montenegrin. She converted to Christian Orthodoxy and took a new name of Vera Vukčević. They had three children, daughter Anica, son Milenko and daghter Ljubica. Stevan died before the Second World War in his mid-thirties and Vera later remarried. After the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941, Vera-Arabela was imprisoned in the Banjica concentration camp in Belgrade as a Jew. Following a number of interventions from friends and acquaintances, and also thanks to the fact that she had converted to Christian Orthodoxy in the interwar period, she was later released. However, her two brothers and sister remained in the camp and were all executed. According to Bojan Šarkić, "that obviously left a deep scar on the life of the whole family and none of the children (my mother was very young, 7-8, her brother 11-12, and oldest sister 13-14 at that time) were never happy to talk about that. My mothers' sister died

in 2021, aged 94, and when I asked her about something from that period, she would always avoid to talk about it, hiding her Jewish origins. It was easier to talk with my grandmother, but only when I found out (in the 1980s) that she was receiving packages from the Jewish community (of Matzes etc.) for holidays.“ (Šarkić, interview, 2023) Vera – Arabela lived in Pančevo in Serbia after the Second World War until her death in 1995. “My grandmother with her mother were communicating mainly in Hungarian and less in German. With her children and us, grandchildren, she would speak in Serbo-Croat, but mixing mainly genders and sexes. Great-grandmother Golda was only speaking Hungarian, but she was very sick and died in the mid-1960s, so I remember her very little.“ (Šarkić, interview, 2023)

Bojan’s mother, Ljubica Beba Šarkić, neé Vukčević, was born in Belgrade on March 19, 1934 and died in Podgorica in July, 2004. “My mother Ljubica, as a very talented young girl, was accepted to the Theater Academy in Novi Sad and graduated at the age of 19 in the class of the famous Russian theater pedagogist Yuriy Lvovich Rakitin, who emigrated to Yugoslavia after the Revolution in Russia. Yuriy Rakitin was one of the closest assistants of the famous Stanislavsky, and Rakitin left a significant influence on the Yugoslav theater education. She graduated in 1953. My mother’s cousin was then the mayor of Podgorica, and got instruction from the Communist Party to open the theater in Podgorica (Titograd). He persuaded her to come after her studies and to start to work in Titograd as an actress. So she came with a top theatre education (which was quite rare) and started a new life in Montenegro. Then, as happens in life, she met a young journalist, former football player, and war veteran from a famous (and one of the oldest) Muslim families in Podgorica, Alija Aljo Šarkić, and they spent their life together till my mother’s death in 2004. My father never recovered from that loss and died ten years later, aged 89 (See also: Šarkić-Todd, 2023) My mother retired from acting soon after the National Theater burned down in 1989 saying that her career will stop with that. She was a doyenne of the Montenegrin theatre who had performed leading roles in many classical plays as well as films. Religion was never practiced in my family, but respected very much, as it was me who would be “sent” to greet my cousins and eat baklavas, and other dishes, from whatever side they were coming to mark festive occasions,“ recalls Bojan Šarkić (Šarkić, interview, 2023).

The actress Zlata Raičević also came to Montenegro for professional reasons and stayed for the rest of her life. She was born as Zlata Levi in Ždala near Koprivnica in northern Croatia in 1920, to Hungarian Jewish parents Sandor (Aleksandar) Levi and Ilonka, born Policer (Politzer), who settled in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes shortly before their daughter

was born. She studied chemistry and biology at the Polytechnic in Zagreb. After the beginning of the Second World War, which interrupted her studies, Zlata was interned at the Sajmište concentration camp. Her first husband, a lawyer from Zrenjanin in Vojvodina, managed to have her freed thanks to his connections and she spent the rest of the war in his hometown. After the war and the death of her first husband, she first worked as a professor at primary schools in Vojvodina but also increasingly more often as an actor in local theaters. From 1952, when she was employed at the National Theater in Banja Luka in Bosnia, she devoted herself entirely to acting. "She performed at the National Theater in Mostar from 1958 to 1961 when she moved to Titograd with her spouse Radomir and son Đorđe. She was a member of the ensamble of the Montenegrin National Theater in Titograd, as a drama leader until her retirement, but she was, actually, active until her death. Throughout her career, she played dozens of theater, film and television roles. For her artistic merits, among other recognitions, she was awarded the biggest Montenegrin recognition, the Thirteenth July Prize, as well as the Mostar Liberation Prize. Being a worthy citizen of Podgorica, a street in the capital city is named after her." (*Interreg – Danube Transnational Program*) Zlata Raičević died in Podgorica in 1996. Her son Đorđe Raičević later became an active member and functionary of the new Jewish Community of Montenegro, and also served as its second president in 2018-2020.

Edita Klein, born in the mid-1950s in Varaždin in northern Croatia, pursued a professional carreer in business and tourism after graduating economy, largely thanks to her good knowledge of languages, especially German. She grew up knowing that her father's family was of Jewish origin, but apart from this knowledge, they did not keep any Jewish traditions and customs and Jewish issues were not discussed. Later in life, she learned that her native town also had a Jewish history her father must had been well-aware of all her childhood. Only as an adult, when she no longer lived in Varaždin, did she discover that there was a preserved, if derelict, Jewish cemetery at the outskirts of the town. Nevertheless, Edita Klein always attributed some of her most valued personal traits and inclinations to her Jewish heritage, especially the ability to master foreign languages, organizational skills, flexibility, dedication to work, talent for business and advertising. During late socialism, Edita worked in the tourist industry in southern Dalmatia and on the Montenegrin coast. She married a Montenegrin and remained in Montenegro even after the break up of Yugoslavia and her first marriage, living in Podgorica and Budva. Eventually, she started her own company, Pingvin, a dry-cleaning chain with subsidiaries in Budva and Podgorica, which has remained her main preoccupation until today. Together with her second husband Đorđe Čumić, native of

Zlatibor in Serbia, she was among the founders of the Jewish Community of Montenegro in the beginning of the 21st century (Klein, interview, 2022).

Jelena Đurović was born in Belgrade in 1973 as a daughter of a Montenegrin lawyer Vukašin, who left his native republic for Belgrade to study at the Law Faculty and mother Svetlana, descendant of a Jewish Serbian family on her maternal side. "My great-grandmother and my great-grandfather met in the Bund, a Jewish socialist movement. They were among the founders of the Peoples Workers Party (Narodna radnička partija) with Moša Pijade and Trišo Kaclerović. My great-grandfather would bring food for Moša to the prison at the expense of his own children "for an idea." My great-great-grandmother Lotika Celermajer (Zellermeier), as everybody who read the book *The Bridge on the Drina* by Andrić knows, organized and took care of everything that concerned the family.[8] Grandpa from Montenegro was a Partisan." (Đurović, 2015: 16) Her grandmother survived the Nazi occupation of Serbia under a false identity thanks to a fake Christian Orthodox birth-certificate, while her great-grandparents spent the war hiding in a village cellar in the countryside. However, many other family members were murdered in Nazi concentration camps or in Serbia. Her grandmother, according to Đurović, was deeply marked by her traumatic war experiences until the end of her life. She was afraid that the Nazis could return one day: "She would sometimes get up at night because she dreamed of soldiers who were kicking her." That is why she for a long time insisted that her granddaughter must not find out about her Jewish roots. The grandmother even threatened to leave the house if anyone told little Jelena that she was Jewish. However, Jelena Đurović described her childhood in Tito's Yugoslavia as a pleasant period and confirmed that she never encountered antisemitism back then. The main problem concerning the Jews at the time was, according to her opinion, the absence of diplomatic relations with Israel, but this was not motivated by antisemitism but rather by political and ideological concerns of the Yugoslav Communist leadership. (Lazarević, 2016) "I was eleven when they told me that I am Jewish for the first time, took me to the synagogue and since then I have been learning about the tradition of my nation. (...) I never lost my relation to Montenegro as a fatherland, as a place where I learned so many important things about life, how to be strong but not rough. It was here where I first started to walk, swim, form my first sentences..." (Đurović, 2014: 36) After founding out about the Jewish identity of her maternal family, she developed a lifelong interest in Jewish history and Jewish issues, and later,

[8] At other occassions, Jelena Đurović specified that Lotika Zellermeier was actually her great-grandaunt, sister of her great-grandmother.

during the 2010s, became actively involved in the newly founded Jewish Community of Montenegro.

The life trajectory of Hadassa Levi Radimiri represents a rare story of a Jew who came not just from beyond Yugoslavia but from beyond Europe. Hadassa Levi was born in Haifa in 1946, two years before the independence of Israel, to parents who moved to Palestine under British Mandate from Aleppo in Syria. As a young woman, she met a Yugoslav sailor from the Bay of Kotor, Pavle Radimiri, decscendant of an old Catholic seafaring family whose ancestors were raised to the status of minor nobility under the Venetian rule. Hadassa and Pavle were married in Haifa in June 1973 and in October of the same year again in Kotor. They settled in Tivat in 1975, at the time when Yugoslavia and Israel had no diplomatic relations. Hadassa Levi Radimiri was among the founders of the Jewish Community of Montenegro in the beginning of the 21st century and unfortunately also the first person who died as a member of this community in 2015 in Tivat. The Radimiri family cherished both the Jewish and Catholic traditions. According to the memory of Hadassa's daughter Anuška Vlahović, artist from Tivat, written after her mother's death, "In our house, Hanukkah and Christmas were celebrated, Pesach and Easter… and we thank her for this because she was unique, because she was a Human!!!" ("In Memoriam Hadassa Levi Radimiri", 2016: 105-106) Slaven Radimiri Levi, Hadassa's son, has also become an active member and functionary (vice-president at the time of writing) of the Jewish Community of Montenegro.

Naturally, we are better informed about the destinies of people of Jewish origin who founded families and had children than about those who died without offspring and are today practically forgotten. Researcher Marko Popović described to me a case of a Holocaust survivor, born around 1900, who had been living in Budva prior to the Second World War and returned to town after liberation. Thanks to his organizational skills and knowledge of languages, he was employed in Hotel Avala and worked in the tourist industry. He married a Catholic woman from the coast after the war, who predeceased him. The Jewish widower died in the 1970s. "When he died, they broke into his appartment and stole everything, because they did not have any children. His name is not listed on the gravestone, only that of his wife, although he is buried in the same grave next to her." (Popović, interview, 2022) Obviously, there was no one who would take care of adding his name to the gravestone after his death and funeral. However, Marko Popović was able to locate his last resting place thanks to Catholic church burial records.

Secret Operation Velvetta (1948) and Yugoslav Relations with Israel

The small military airfield of Kapino Polje, located some three kilometers from the Montenegrin town of Nikšić, played a key role in the secret Operation Velvetta, conducted by the Israeli Air Force during the Israeli War for independence in 1948. As part of this secret mission, which lasted for several months, sixty Spitfire military planes, purchased by Israel in Czechoslovakia, were transfered to the Middle East through Yugoslavia, with the approval and support from both the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Communist governments. However, this fascinating story started to surface only after the beginning of the 21st century and the break-up of Yugoslavia, thanks to the efforts of Serbian, Israeli and other historians and the testimonies of remaining witnesses, when Operation Velvetta finally ceased to be a well-kept state secret.

"Built in the 1930s to repel an expected Italian attack from across the Adriatic, the airfield earned a footnote in history as the site from which Yugoslavia's last king and his government fled abroad in April 1941 to escape the Nazi onslaught. By an odd coincidence, the government-in-exile ended up in Jerusalem, the capital of British-held Palestine. ("New Info on IAF Birth", 2008) In the later phase of the Second World War, the airfield was used by the German military aviation. Several years after the war, charred remnants of German military planes destroyed in an air raid by American aviation in 1944 still lined the landing strip at Kapino Polje (Gajić, 2018) Oded Abarbanell (1926-2022), one of the Israeli aviators involved in Operation Velvetta in 1948, recalled his impressions of the small Montenegrin airport from what seems to be primarily an aereal view many decades later in his memoirs: "It was a huge green meadow surrounded by hills. A river passed on the west side of the airfiled and the town was on the east side. A railway-track passed from north to south just on the outskirt of town." (Abarbanell, 2014)

Shortly after the declaration of independence in May 1948 and the ensuing attack by neighboring Arab countries, the new state of Israel found itself fighting for its very existence. The Israeli government decided to purchase the badly needed military planes from Czechoslovakia. The Yugoslav Communist government of Josip Broz Tito agreed on June 15, 1948 that the airfield near Nikšić can be used as a waystation for the 60 Spitfire military planes during the transfer. Apart from sympathies for the Israeli cause among some of the leading Communist politicians in both countries at the time, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were also motivated by financial profit, as Israelis offered them the much needed dollars in cash for the purchase of planes in Czechoslovakia and also as a fee for their transfer through Yugoslavia. (Galović – Vukićević, 2008) The first group of Spitfires left the airfield of the Czech town

of Kunovice on September 24, 1948. In internal communication of the Israeli aviators, the airfield of Kapino Polje received the code name Alabama, and the entire operation became known as Velvetta. Gideon Shoshad was named as commandant of the Israeli detachment, stationed in one part of the Yugoslav airport. (Gajić, 2018) The pilots were flying in Israeli uniforms, but literally with empty pockets, without documents and any personal belongings. In case of an emergency landing on Yugoslav territory, they were advised to seek the Yugoslav Secret Police immediately and not to confide anything to anyone else they could encounter. Galović – Vukićević, 2008) After landing at Alabama, Montenegro, every plane was thoroughly searched and all signs of its previous presence in Czechoslovakia were carefully eliminated, as well as all sings of the stopover in Yugoslavia prior to the second, more difficult part of the flight from Nikšić over the Balkans and the Mediterranean to Israel. Czechoslovak and Yugoslav cigarettes were especially targeted out by the controls in order to destroy any possible proof of the real trajectory of the planes in case of an accident or emergency landing, according to Serbian historian Bojan Dimitrijević. (Gajić, 2018) "To protect secrecy, the newcomers were forbidden from fraternizing with the locals or with Yugoslav guards stationed outside the base. "We knew something strange was going on because nobody was allowed to get near the field," said Rade Banović, who as a boy used to shepherd his family's goats and cows in the hills overlooking the site. "Later we heard rumors that 'Israelis' were around, but at that time nobody knew what Israelis were,"" confided this eyewitness to *Jerusalem Post* sixty years later. ("New Info on IAF Birth", 2008)

The Yugoslav and Montenegrin chapter of the secret operation Velvetta was successfully terminated on December 31, 1948, after the gradual transfer of all planes was completed, when a special plane was sent to bring home the Israeli staff stationed at Kapino Polje airfield. This last group arrived safely in Israel on January 5, 1949. (Gajić, 2018) The Spitfire planes purchased in Czechoslovakia and transfered through Yugoslavia were immediately used in Israeli offensives in October and December of 1948. According to Israeli military historian Meir Pa'il, these planes played a crucial role in the defense of Israel. Without them, Israel very likely would not be able to win the war of independence in 1948-1949 and its very existence would had been put into question, Pa'il believed. (Galović – Vukićević, 2008) However, due to utmost and very understandable secrecy that surrounded Operation Velvetta in 1948, it is quite certain that its details were not known to any of the few local Jews who lived scattered around Montenegro at the time. Many details related to Operation Velvetta still remain to be discovered and pieced together by historians from documents and testimonies available in Israeli, (post)Yugoslav and

Czech archives, and it is primarily a taks for military historians and historians of diplomatic relations to reconstruct this interesting chapter of modern history.

The political, economic and cultural relations between Yugoslavia and Israel were developing well in the first years after Israeli independence. The Yugoslav public generally regarded Israel in a positive light, and there was considerable interest in the kibbutzim and other experiments with socialist-inspired ideas in economy and social life. Two Montenegrin diplomats served as Yugoslav ambassadors to Israel between 1948 and 1967. The first of them was Jovan Vukmanović (1909 Virpazar – 1998 Belgrade), who headed the Yugoslav mission in Tel Aviv from May 25, 1954 until the beginning of July 1956. Vukmanović, a high school professor before the Second World War, fought in the ranks of the Partisan resistance, was interned by the Italians in Albania and later in Italy, joined the Partisans again after the capitulation of Italy in 1943 and entered the diplomatic service after liberation in 1946 (*Leksikon diplomatije Crne Gore,* 2022: 701). Following the Suez War of 1956, the Yugoslav political establishment increasingly came to regard Israel as a state serving the imperialist interests of Western capitalist powers, first Great Britain and France, and later primarily the USA. During the same period, Yugoslavia was developing and deepening its friendly ties with the Arab countries and other non-alligned states. At the same time, the Yugoslav leadership, including President Josip Broz Tito, never questioned the right of Israel to exist and disagreed with the calls of extreme Arab circles to expell or annihilate the Jews from their newly founded modern homeland in the Middle East. (Lebl, 2001: 43-44)

Following the Six-Day War from June 1967 between Israel and several neighboring Arab states, Yugoslavia, similarly to the Soviet Union and the East European Communist satelites of Moscow, decided to break its diplomatic relations with Israel as a sign of support for the Arab (officially anti-imperialist) countries in the Middle East. On June 13, 1967, the Israeli ambassador to Yugoslavia Avigdor Dagan[9] received an official note about the termination of relations and informed his government about the Yugoslav decision (Lebl, 2001: 39). As part of reciprocal measures, Israel expelled members of the Yugoslav mission headed by Vojimir M. Šobajić (1915 Nikšić – 1996 Belgrade), Montenegrin diplomat who served as ambassador to Israel from September

[9] Avigdor Dagan (1912-2006) was the Hebrew name adopted after his emigration to Israel by Viktor Fischl, who before the Communist coup d'état in 1948 assistant to Czechoslovak foreign minister Jan Masaryk. Apart from Yugoslavia, he served as Israeli ambassador to Poland, Norway, Iceland and Austria. He was also a well-known and recognized Czech writer and translator from Hebrew to Czech, and continued to publish in his native language under his old name until the end of his life.

1964. Šobajić, a prewar member of the Communist youth organization SKOJ, was a political comessar in the Partisan resistance during the Second World War and member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia since 1949. (*Leksikon diplomatije Crne Gore,* 2022: 658) According to journalist Aleksandar Lebl, his personal opinion regarding the break up of diplomatic relations between the two countries remains unclear: "Some believe that he consistently supported the official line, while others say that he was privately against the break up of relations. When the news was published, he was inaccessible for journalists." (Lebl, 2001: 64) The governments of both countries did not insist that all diplomats and staff leave the country right away. "Ambassador Dagan informed /the Yugoslavs/ that he will leave for Vienna on June 17. Šobajić left for Rome on June 18. His son and daughter were allowed to remain in Israel until the end of the son's schooling..." (Lebl, 2001: 52)[10] Until the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, diplomatic relations with Israel were not reestablished. Despite this hindrance, relations between the two countries were never entirely hostile. In the 1970s and 1980s, Yugoslavia maintained its official stand that the existence of the State of Israel in the Middle East is a reality, and endless confrontations and attempts at its destruction by its radical enemies in the Arab world are pointless. Essentially, the diplomacy of socialist Yugoslavia believed that the heart of the problem is a classical border issue and the lack of willingness to discuss and accept the final delimitation of frontiers. (Lebl, 2001: 39)

In the 1980s, the last Yugoslav ambassador to Israel Vojimir M. Šobajić published an extensive and well-researched monograph on the history of the Jews, the genesis of Sionism, the formation of the State of Israel and the Israeli-Arab conflicts, entitled *Jevrejstvo i Izrael* (Jewry and Israel). (Šobajić, 1986)[11] A publication of such a book would be unthinkable in most Communist countries at the time, and it also testified to author's deep and long-lasting interest in the Jews and Israel. Apart from literature, he also certainly drew upon his experiences as a head of the Yugoslav diplomatic mission in 1964-1967, but did not reflect them directly. Writing as an employee of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time when socialist Yugoslavia still existed, Šobajić did not mention anything about the Yugoslav stand and the stand of the socialist countries toward Israel, nor any personal opinions and concrete experiences from his mission. Interestingly for a Communist diplomat, Šobajić displayed a lively interest in the religious core of Jewish and Israeli identity: "Before my

[10] Vojimir's son Miloš Šobajić (1945-2021) became a well-known Serbian and French painter and sculptor.

[11] First edition in Serbo-Croatian and a translation to Slovene (*Judje in Izrael,* Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1982) were published four years earlier.

departure for Israel, one friend of mine, who carefuly read the Bible in German war captivity, advised me to do the same, because without the knowledge of the Bible, I will not be able to understand the specific being of Israel. Although his advice seemed somewhat strange and even incomprehensible to me at first, over time it proved to be very useful.“ (Šobajić, 1986: 2)

In the 1980s, there was an upsurge of interest in Jewish history, religion and literature in Yugoslavia, which was also notable in other socialist countries. In many ways, this interest and raising awarness continued into the 1990s and the post-Yugoslav period. The increased curiosity was lively especially in intellectual and cultural circles, and was not limited only to people of Jewish origin. Despite this, the Jewish religious life in late socialist Yugoslavia was not very intense, and the rites of passage such as bar mitzva or religious marriages were requested and performed very rarely. While the local Jewish communities around Yugoslavia accepted as their members a relatively large number of people who were not themselves of Jewish origin, usually spouses and other family members from mixed families, attempts to convert to Judaism by non-Jews were extremely rare and almost unheard of. Despite that, curiously, Gordiejew notes the case of “a young Montenegrin man who wanted to convert“ in the late 1980s. (Gordiejew, 1999: 14)

The “Wandering Jew“ Danilo Kiš

Mark Thompson, author of *Birth Certificate: The Story of Danilo Kiš*, the best English-language biography of the Yugoslav writer Danilo Kiš (Thompson, 2013), provided a vivid, detailed and well-researched portrayal of the Montenegrin side of the writer's family and cultural heritage, the years he spent in Cetinje after the Second World War, and his life-long friendship with many artists, writers and intellectuals of Montenegrin origin.[12] Apart from that, Thompson also paid sufficient attention to his Jewish roots on the paternal side, and to his reflections and elaborations of Jewish identity. Those with deeper interest in Danilo Kiš should definitely consult Thompson's biography for a more detailed account of the author's life and times. Indeed, it happens quite rarely that a great personality of modern Balkan and Central European culture finds such an insightful biographer, as is the case with Thompson and

[12] Thompson belonged among a handful of Western authors who followed and analyzed the developments in Montenegro already at the time of the break-up of Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990s, when most foreigners generally overlooked the smallest republic of the federation as less important and also less “problematic“ than Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia, see his chapter on Montenegro: (Thompson, 1992: 147-185).

Kiš.[13] In the following section, we will discuss the fate of Danilo Kiš from the perspective of his Jewish and Montenegrin identities, and focus on similar issues as with other life trajectories we have dealt with previously. This said, Danilo Kiš is of course a very special case: in the words of literary scholar and Slavicist Andrew B. Wachtel, "if there was a Yugoslav literature, than its most powerful representative was undoubtedly the half Montenegrin, half Hungarian Jewish writer Danilo Kiš." (Wachtel, 2006: 136) As a writer and public personality, he wrote and spoke more often about his heritage and identity than most other descendants of mixed Jewish-Montenegrin marriages during the socialist Yugoslav period.

Danilo Kiš was born in Subotica (Hungarian: Szabadka) in the Vojvodina region of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on February 22, 1935. His father was born as Eduard Mendel Kohn on July 11, 1889 in Kerkabarabás in the Zala county in western Hungary, as the sixth of seven children of the only Jewish family living in the village. His father Miksa Kohn, Danilo's grandfather, owned a general store in Kerkabarabás. According to family tradition, their distant ancestor, a goose-feather merchant, came to Hungary from Alsace (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 103). From 1907, Eduard was employed at the railways. Similarly to many other Jews, he Hungarianized his last name and became Kis instead of Kohn. In 1920, he settled in Subotica, at that time still a predominantly Hungarian-speaking town with a sizeable Jewish population, and worked as a state railway inspector (Thompson, 2013: 7). Apart from his native Hungarian, he also fluently spoke and wrote Serbo-Croatian by that time. At an unknown occassion in 1930, maybe randomly in a café, or perhaps thanks to common acquaintances, Eduard met Milica Dragićević from Cetinje, Montenegro. She was visiting her sister who was living in Subotica with her husband, a Montenegrin also employed at the railways. Danilo Kiš later described the first meeting of his future parents in Subotica in this memorable and mythologizing account: "In this town, therefore, two crucial facts of my life caused by God or Coincidence occured: it was here that my father Eduard Kiš, higher inspector of the state railways and author of the Yugoslav National and International Travel Guide, met my mother Milica Dragićević, a Montenegrin beauty, /who was/ far away from her native Cetinje for the first time, visiting her sister. A rare encounter, perhaps unique at the time." (Kiš, 1995: 315)

The Dragićević family originally stemmed from the region inhabited by the Piperi tribe in the vicinity of Podgorica. At the beginning of the 20th century, Danilo's maternal great-grandfather Bajo Dragićević moved from his

[13] The book was published in several editions in the South Slavic languages and the author also personally presented his work in the National Library of Montenegro in Cetinje in August 2015.

ancestral village of Potpeć to Cetinje, where he bought a house on Bajova Street (Baja Pivljanina) from the Montenegrin tribal leader and politician, vojvoda Mijajlo Vučinić (1834-1910), a fellow tribesman from Piperi. Bajo was employed by the royal Montenegrin post and oversaw the construction of new telegraph lines. Through his maternal line, Bajo was related to the sister of Marko Miljanov (1833-1901) from the neighboring Kuči tribe. Miljanov was a Montenegrin warrior and commander from the anti-Ottoman wars of the 1860s-1870s and a distinguished writer in his later years, "a legendary Montenegrin hero who learned to read and write at the age of fifty, adding the glory of the pen to the glory of his sword," according to Kiš (Kiš, "Birth Certificate", 2013: 1).[14]

Milica and Eduard were married in a civil ceremony in October 1931. Their first daughter Danica was born in August 1932 in Zagreb. Danilo was born as their second child in February 1935 in Subotica. Soon after his birth, the Kiš family moved to Novi Sad (Hungarian: Ujvidék) where they lived until the Second World War. Both children had Montenegrin first names. Danilo was registered as Jewish at birth.[15] According to Viktória Radics, Hungarian biographer of Danilo Kiš, the following entry written in Serbo-Croatian was found in a Subotica town register by researcher Boško Krstić: "February 22, 1935. Danilo /male/ Jewish. Parents: Kiš Ede, railway inspector, Jewish, 45 years and Dragićević Milica, Serbian-Orthodox, 30 years." (Radič, 2005: 37), (Krstić, 1999) In the Hungarian-language record of the Subotica Jewish community, the name of the future writer was likely registered in accordance with Hungarian usage as Kiss Dániel,[16] but it is not certain. Unfortunately, the original birth records from the synagogue have not survived. Eduard Kiš was

[14] For more on Miljanov and his cult, see: (Šístek, 2018).

[15] Some authors claim that Danilo's older sister Danica was also registered as Jewish. This is plausible but there is no written proof that would confirm this assumption. Unlike her brother, baptized as a four year old in the late 1930s explicitly in order to avoid potential persecution in the atmosphere of deepening antisemitism, she was baptized in a Serbian Orthodox Church at the age of one when the prospects of another world war and anti-Jewish persecution that could also affect Yugoslavia were still distant. She was born in Zagreb where her parents arrived after visiting Eduard's relatives in Trieste. It therefore cannot be excluded that she was not registered as Jewish at all prior to her baptism in Novi Sad. Danilo Kiš himself mentioned in some of his interviews that before the Second World War, he as a male was expected to follow the religion of his father, while his sister that of her mother. However, such "custom" contradicts the Halachic traditions of Judaism and there is no evidence that a similar unwritten rule was followed by mixed families in Yugoslavia or Hungary. It was probably a personal agreement between Eduard and Milica rather than a true "custom" shared by families of mixed origin at the time.

[16] This Hungarianized version of his name was later used at the Hungarian primary school during the years he spent in western Hungary (1942-1947).

not a believer and did not have his son circumcised. (Thompson, 2013: 69-70) The fact that Danilo was registered as a Jew and in extension as a member of the Jewish religious community, despite the obvious fact that both children could not be considered Jewish according to Halacha, raises the question whether we are dealing with a rare case or whether this was an example of a more widespread practice and liberal attitudes regarding children of paternal rather than maternal Jewish origin. In socialist Yugoslavia after the Second World War, as we have already seen, it was quite common that people of paternal Jewish origin as well as people without any Jewish roots, often non-Jewish spouses and other family members, became members of Jewish communities. However, there has been no discussion of this practice in the interwar period in scholarly literature to my knowledge. In available works on Kiš, the question to which of the Jewish communities present in Subotica in the interwar period Eduard Kiš, Danilo and perhaps also Danica officially belonged has not been discussed. We can reasonably assume that it was not the small Orthodox community but most likely the largest and more liberal Neolog community which included most of the Hungarian speaking Jews.

At the time of rising antisemitism in Hungary and Yugoslavia, on January 4, 1939, Danilo Kiš was baptised in a Serbian Orthodox church in Novi Sad. This was a "pre-emptive baptism", as his biographer Mark Thompson rightly put it. "His sister Danica already possessed this safeguard. She had been baptised in Subotica in 1933, two days before her first birthday, following the custom that daughters took the mother's confession." (Thompson, 2013: 75)[17] After the Axis attack against Yugoslavia in April 1941, Novi Sad and much of the Vojvodina region were annexed by Hungary. According to Hungarian racial laws, both Danica and Danilo were considered Jewish. In January 1942, a police patrol took Eduard Kiš away from their flat, but Milica and the kids could remain home. On January 22-23, 1942, almost 900 people, including some 550 Jews, were brutally massacred in Novi Sad. The main place of executions was on the bank of the frozen Danube where many of the dead bodies were dumped. "Survivors of the killing beside the Danube recalled that many victims begged their captors to shoot them because the cold was unbrearable. One survivor was Eduard Kiš. According to his son, the hole in the ice had become jammed with corpses, forcing the killers to pause, when the order came to stop." (Thompson, 2013: 82) As Kiš later recalled, "as a seven year old, I already saw dead bodies, I was scared, my friends from class were being murdered." (Kiš, *Čas anatomije*, 2012: 247) In February 1942, the whole

[17] Thompson actually repeats the claim of Danilo Kiš himself. However, we have already discussed the fact that this practice was not widespread enough in order to merit the label of custom or habit.

family, traumatized by the horrible experience, moved to Eduard's native village of Kerkabarabás in western Hungary, in the hope that they will be safer there. Unlike the multicultural and multilingual Vojvodina, this was a predominantly Catholic and linguistically uniformly Hungarian rural milieu. Danilo and his sister learned Hungarian, which they had not spoken before, and attended Hungarian primary school. They lived in poverty in a dismal small shack behind the original house of the Kohn (Kon) family. According to his later testimony, although generally mistreated as a Jew despite his Orthodox baptismal certificate and Catholic religious education was receiving at school in Kerkabarabás, he and his sister – unlike their father – were never forced to wear a yellow star. (Thompson, 2013: 178) The arrival of German troops in Hungary in March 1944 marked the beginning of the Holocaust in this satellite country, where almost a million Jews still managed to survive despite the limitations imposed by racial laws and antisemitism. In the spring, Eduard Kiš was ordered to move to the ghetto set up in the county capital of Zalaegerszeg. He was deported to Auschwitz on July 5, 1944 and probably murdered soon after his arrival. Milica and her children were not deported and lived to see the liberation of western Hungary by the Soviet Army. Danilo Kiš believed for the rest of his life that they survived thanks to their Christian Orthodox baptismal certificates. However, while it cannot be excluded, there is actually no proof that this was indeed the real reason. The Nazis and the Hungarian fascists (the Arrow Cross) based their policy on essentialist, pseudobiological notions of race, which in their eyes could not be altered by a conversion. Very often, survivors from mixed families escaped the worst fate simply thanks to the fact that the Nazis did not have enough time and resources to fully complete their project of the "final solution" before the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945.

As was often the case, it took many months after the war before it became clear that Eduard did not survive. In the beginning of 1947, Milica Kiš wrote a letter to the mayor of Cetinje in which she asked him for an information "whether there is someone left alive from the family of Jakov Dragićević which lived in Cetinje, Bajova street 43." (Đurović – Radulović, 2005: 5-6) As it turned out, her father Jakov and all members of his immediate family survived the war and were still living at the old address. Milica, Danica and Danilo were subsequently repatriated from Hungary to Cetinje by the Red Cross in 1947. Danilo visited Montenegro only once before, in 1939, as is testified by a few family photographs and several references in his literary oeuvre. After their arrival in Cetinje, Milica and her two children moved into the family house at Bajova street 43, where Danilo spent the next seven years of his life until graduation from Cetinje high school (Cetinjska gimnazija) in 1954. Apart from the patriarchal figure of grandfather Jakov, veteran of the Balkan

wars of 1912-1913 who recited and occassionally also composed traditional Montenegrin folk poetry, Danilo was profoundly influenced by his maternal uncle (*ujak*) Risto Dragićević (1901-1980), well-educated intellectual, historian and in the post-war years, until his retirement in 1965, also director of the State Museum in Cetinje (Državni muzej), the main museum in Montenegro, composed of several major historical buildings and expositions with central role for national history, including the Palace of King Nikola and Biljarda – the residence of the most famous ruler and national poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš. Dragićević was a notable cultural historian who wrote several works on Njegoš and different topics from Montenegrin history. In contemporary historiography, he is still recognized, apart from other contributions, for his scholarly deconstruction of the long-standing myths and lies surrounding an alleged secret treaty between Montenegro and Austria-Hungary, published in the late 1960s. (*Istorijski leksikon Crne Gore*, 2006: 570-571) Risto Dragićević had a large personal library, stacked with books in several languages on a number of subjects, including the French encyclopedia *Le Petite Larousse Illustré.* Thanks to uncle Risto and his library, Danilo received an informal "paralel education". Despite his public position of a cultural worker in the new Yugoslav socialist system, Dragićević maintained a critical distance from official Marxist ideology and Communist practice, and this stand undoubtedly influenced the later worldview of his nephew. (Radič, 2005: 21) The published testimonies of writer's friends and those that I heard from Cetinje locals familiar with the Kiš and Dragićević families in the 1950s suggest that the relationship between Danilo and his uncle was intellectualy stimulating and respectful but not warm and close in the conventional sense. Risto Dragićević, it seems, communicated with his nephew often indirectly, by recommending him to dvelve into this or that book where he could find the right answers to particular questions rather than engaging in a direct discussion with him. However, as an old capital of an independent kingdom before 1918 and an administrative center of a large Yugoslav province before the Second World War, the Banovina of Zeta, Cetinje had far more to offer to a young person with "bookish" inclinations than an average small provincial town of its size. The National Library of Montenegro, with books from all over Yugoslavia and from abroad, was located there, and many books were also available in the museum libraries, in adition to the municipal library. In this milieu, Danilo became an avid reader and also wrote and published his first literary works – poems – still as a high school student in Cetinje.

Not long after they settled in Cetinje, Milica Kiš became seriously ill. She was diagnosed with spine cancer and spent an extended period of time in the local hospital as her health declined. She died in Cetinje in 1951. The

long suffering of his mother understandably represented another trauma for Danilo which cast a dark shadow on his Cetinje years in his memory. One year before her passing (1950), according to Kiš, his mother tried to "liberate" her son from what she perceived as a traumatic and potentially harmful Jewish heritage: "One year before her death, when I was fifteen years old, she forced me to tear apart my birth certificate, written in a synagogue in Subotica, saying that being a Jew only brings misfortune. Although I agreed with her, I did not want to swindle with my life and disavow the suffering of one whole world. A world that vanished." (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 167-168) In this testimony, we recognize the echoes of a widespread view of Jewishness as a fateful "family misfortune" (*ein Familienunglück,* as the poet Heinrich Heine famously put it), quite widespread in Central European Jewish milieu since the 19th century and detectable even today. The tearing apart of his Jewish birth certificate by the bedside of his mother in Cetinje hospital was just one heartbreaking episode out of many during the years of her terminal illness. Until the end of his life, Danilo Kiš repeatedly attributed his consistent lack of faith in God and resentment to metaphysical speculations to the agonizing experience of his mother's long suffering and death. However, he did not fulfill the wish, allegedly expressed in her last will, in which she asked him to burn all the documents related to the life of his father Eduard. Some of them later served him as an inspiration for his major literary works.

Eduard Kiš, similarly to many other Jews from the northern and northwestern parts of Yugoslavia that had belonged to the Habsburg empire before 1918, spoke Hungarian, German and Serbian with equal proficiency. At home, however, members of the Kiš family spoke only Serbian. Danilo Kiš started to attend a Serbian elementary shool in Novi Sad in the autumn of 1940, just several months before occupation and dismemberment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941 (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 178). After years spent first in Hungarian-occupied Vojvodina and then in Western Hungary, in Cetinje, as Kiš recalled, "I first had to learn my maternal language again, Serbo-Croatian, the language in which I am writing and I had to be accepted by my school peers, in which I succeeded thanks to heroic deeds completely in line with the epic spirit of the Montenegrin tradition: I was fist-fighting with the strongest from the class. This was a liberation of the anger I had been accumulating and suppressing for long. A Jewish child in Hungary during the war was beaten even by the weakest." (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 177)

During the entire period he spent in Montenegro, until he left for Belgrade to study literature at university in 1954, the role of his official legal guardian (*staratelj*) was performed by his grandfather Jakov, who died the

following year, in 1955.[18] On November 29, 1950, not long before the death of his mother, the presidium of the People's Assembly of the People's Republic of Montenegro (Narodna skupština Narodne republike Crne Gore), upon the initiative of the Association of Fighters of the National Liberation War (Savez boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata) issued an official document confirming that "Eduard K. Kis, during the period of the national liberation war and revolution of 1941-1945, fell as a victim of fascist terror. The grateful homeland, liberated by the heroic struggle of the people under the leadership of the Communist Party and commrade Tito, will never forget the martyrdom of victims upon whose bones the freedom and independence of the peoples of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia has been built". The confirmation was signed by Blažo Jovanović as head of the fighters association and chairman of the parliament assembly N. Kovačević. (Radič, 2005: 124) The recognition of Eduard Kiš as a victim of fascist terror entitled his children Danica and Danilo to a modest pension.

The first half of the 1950s was later characterized as "years of learning" (*godine učenja*) by Kiš himself. In an interview first published in 1972, the writer claimed that "learning the literary trade" (*učenje književnog zanata*) was easier in the 1950s, where distractions and attractions were few. "And especially in Cetinje. There, as you know, rains fall for months, or at least used to fall back then. That is a convenience if one stays at home or crawls into a library." For Kiš, literature, reading and writing was the only way how to escape the provincial atmosphere, bad weather and lack of other impulses. (Kiš, *Gorki talog iskustva,* 2012: 7) Apart from books and libraries, he also found friends among his classmates and other peers with similar inclinations. Several of them, such as Pavle Đonović and Boško Mijanović, remained his closest friends for the rest of his life. Marko Špadijer, one of these lifelong friends from youth, three years younger than Danilo, published his first texts in the Cetinje literary magazine *Susreti* in the mid-1950s just like Kiš and later also went on to study literature at Belgrade university.[19] In his reminiscences of Kiš, first published four years after the writer's death in the Montenegrin daily *Pobjeda* (where Špadijer had served as editor-in-chief in the 1980s), he characterized Danilo Kiš as "urban knight" (*urbani vitez*): "Cetinje of our

[18] The grave of Jakov Dragićević (+1955) and Danilo's great-grandparents Bajo Dragićević (+1917) and Borika Dragićević (+1922), decorated with one metallic and one stone cross, can be found at the Old Cemetery (Staro groblje) of Cetinje. However, I was unable to locate the grave of Milica Kiš. Even several old friends of Danilo Kiš and other Cetinje locals familiar with the Montenegrin side of his family could not tell me where she is buried.

[19] Marko Špadijer provided a rare insider's portrayal of the cultural life and atmosphere of Cetinje in the 1950s and 1960s, including many personalities, thinly veiled by pseudonyms ("Risto Piper"), in the form of a novel, see: (Špadijer, 2017).

youth was a town where writers and painters lived, with professorial Bohemia and literary readings in the library, town with a theatre and museums… From Cetinje, which he loved as if he was born there, Kiš did not, unlike most of us, carry the myth and did not become imprisoned in the glorification of Montenegrin history and the duty to serve it faithfully, but was instead infected by the other side of the Cetinje spleen: the urban culture, respect for people, books and words, openness to European horizons, ability to stand against power and strength with spirituality. Kiš carried away with him from Cetinje his sense for strong humor and refined cynicism.“ (Špadijer, 2007: 97-98)

Apart from reading and writing, primarily poetry at first, Kiš also started translating verses from French, Hungarian and Russian already as a high school student. On April 1, 1953, the magazine *Omladinski pokret* of Cetinje published his first poem entitled *Farewell, mother* (*Oproštaj s majkom*). The same year, his *Poem about a Jewish Girl* (*Pjesma o Jevrejki*), subtitled “motif from 1941“, was published in the Montenegrin journal *Susreti.* In 1955, when he was already enrolled at Belgrade University, his poem *Biography* (*Biografija*), inspired by the fate of his father, was published in the journal *Stvaranje*: “That Eduard Kohn was a prodigious drunk / He wore eyglasses of glistening prisms and watched / the world through them as if through a rainbow. / Even as a child he had to urinate / after others at school, for he was circumcised./ (…) / The wind scattered his ashes through the narrow smokestack / at the crematorium, higher and higher, / all the way to the rainbow.“ (Kiš, 2019: 5) Kiš originally wrote in the *ijekavian* version of what was officially considered as Serbo-Croatian language, a version typical for the Western parts of Yugoslavia including Montenegro, but switched to the ekavian variant, characteristic of Serbia and the capital of Belgrade, in the second half of the 1950s.

Danilo Kiš graduated from Cetinje high school in the spring of 1954 with excellent grades. His final high school report from May 20, 1954, specifies that Kiš Danilo, of Montenegrin nationality, born in Subotica in Serbia, to deceased father Eduard and deceased mother Milica, lives with his guardian, retired Jakov Dragićević, at Bajova Street 43 in Cetinje (Đurović – Radulović, 2005: 5-6). Danilo Kiš further pursued his studies at the newly founded department of world literature at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade. This was facilitated by a modest stipend he received from the Montenegrin organization of fighters to which he was entitled to as a child of an officially recognized victim of fascism.

After 1954, Danilo Kiš never permanently settled in Montenegro again, living first in Belgrade and later between Belgrade and France, where he successively taught at the universities of Strasbourg, Bordeaux, and Lille. He left Yugoslavia for good in 1979 and spent the last decade of his life primarily in

Paris. However, he continued to visit Montenegro frequently until the end of his life and was also linked with the Montenegrin milieu indirectly, through his many friendships with people of Montenegrin origin. Apart from family members living in Montenegro (and an aunt in Belgrade, also from the Dragićević family), Danilo Kiš did not have any family members from his father's, Jewish-Hungarian side, as they all perished in the Holocaust. Apart from the family of Risto Dragićević and his wife Mileva in Cetinje and later his cousins Miško and Branko Dragićević, who later inherited the family house at Baja Pivljanina Street, Danilo Kiš was also visiting his sister Danica, who lived on the Montenegrin coast after her marriage to Krsto Mitrović from Miločer. Together with their two sons, Ivica and Dejan, they first lived in Budva for several years and later in Herceg Novi (Gregović – Kadić, 2012). In 1960, at the age of 25, in less then a month, partly in Belgrade and partly in Herceg Novi where he was staying with his sister and her family, Danilo Kiš wrote his second, “concentration camp novel“ (*lager-roman*) entitled *Psalm 44* (*Psalam 44*). (Kiš, Psalm 44, 2012), (Cox, 2012) Later that year, the manuscript won the first price at the annual literary competition for manuscripts on a Jewish theme, awarded by the Belgrade Jewish Community (since 1954), and was first published in Belgrade in 1962 (Radič, 2005: 47).

When Kiš left Cetinje for Belgrade after high school graduation, as we have seen, he was firmly on his way to becoming a writer and translator and had already published his first poems in Montenegrin literary journals. In his literary work, especially in the novels *Early Sorrows* (*Rani jadi*), *Garden, Ashes* (*Bašta, pepeo*) and *Hourglass* (*Peščanik*), in which the figure of Eduard Sam based on his father plays an important role, Kiš drew inspiration primarily from his childhood years spent in Vojvodina and western Hungary. The loose trilogy refered to as *Family Circus* (*Porodični cirkus*) by the author and his attentive readers or *Family Cycle* (*Porodični ciklus*) by some literary scholars who probably need better glasses, represents, among other things, a highly original literary elaboration of the fate of the Jews in Central Europe during the Second World War and the Holocaust from a perspective of a child. According to Aleksandar Stević, the trilogy “constitutes arguably the most important literary account of Jewish persecution within the literatures of former Yugoslavia.“ (Stević, 2015: 442). His later works, *The Tomb for Boris Davidovich* (*Grobnica za Borisa Davidoviča*, 1976) and *Encyclopedia of the Dead* (*Enciklopedija mrtvih*, 1980) are not primarily autobiographical. The two novels broadly speaking focus on totalitarian ideology, and mostly are not set in Yugoslavia. Despite this, there are many mentions and passages in his work that refer to Montenegro. The literary scholar, theatrologist and author's first wife Mirjana Miočinović also explored, analyzed and edited the Monte-

negrin and other homeland themes (*zavičajne teme*) in the manuscripts not published during his lifetime (today already available thanks to posthumous editions she had carefully prepared). Miočinović works with the concept of homeland themes which, according to her, "links two remote, by their nature completely different spaces, two opposite milieux in mentality and culture; the urban milieu of Vojvodina and the Hungarian rural milieu, on the one hand, and a very specific urban milieu represented by Cetinje, with its Mediterranean base, on the other. These are, naturally, also the two spaces of his double origin: Montenegrin and Hungarian/Jewish, a combination which Kiš himself called "ethnographic rarity."" (Miočinović, 2016: 37) According to Miočinović, Cetinje and "Montenegrin themes" appeared in his notes especially in 1978, 1983 and 1986. Most of them, usually short points refering to his youth in Cetinje ("mother: documents on Jewishness"), were most likely intended for an autobiographical text which Kiš did not manage to write after he became seriously ill. In 1986, he also wrote a text entitled *A and B* (*A i B*), (Kiš, 1994), (Kiš, *The Lute and the Stars,* 2012), (Kiš, "A and B", 2012) with a subtitle in English (surprisingly): "The magical place and the worst rathole I visited?", in which he juxtaposes the majestic view of the Bay of Kotor seen from the mountains above and the claustrophobic place where his impoverished and persecuted family lived in a Hungarian village at the end of the war. (Miočinović, 2016: 40)

As for the works published by Kiš during his lifetime, Montenegro appears in both *Early Sorrows* (1965) and *Garden, Ashes* (1969) as a half-mythical place and a potential destination of escape by the narrator, as a place where his grandfather lives and his mother spent her childhood. In the story *Fiancés* (*Verenici*) from *Early Sorrows*, Montenegro is mentioned alongside San Francisco as a possible place where the chilhood narrator could escape to, and Cetinje is mentioned as the place where his grandfather lives. (Kiš, 2019: 39-41) In the last story of the collection, the *Eolian Harp* (*Eolska harfa*), in a short passage related to the narrator's future, we learn that he will soon move to Cetinje and be reunited with his grandpa (Kiš, 2019: 40-41). In *Garden, Ashes*, Montenegro still remains a semi-mythical land, as presented to the narrator by his mother, but the image is already more elaborated. In the novel, the narrators' mother starts to talk about her native land in the lonely days after the deportation of the father to the concentration camp from which he never returned: "My mother tried to counter the fairy tales told by the autumn rains with a legend of her own, fixed in space and time: as proof, she would bring me a map of the world (on a scale of 1:500 000, found among my father's possessions) and point with the tip of her knitting needle to her Arcadia, this sun-drenched Eldorado of her idealized childhood, this illuminated Mount of

Olives, this black mountain, this Montenegro." (Kiš, *Garden, Ashes,* 1985: 150) The character of the mother also recounts the fate of legendary ancestors and relatives from the Montenegrin side, including an obvious allusion to Marko Miljanov, although he is not directly named in the novel (Kiš, *Garden, Ashes,* 1985: 151). In the novel *Hourglass (Peščanik,* 1972), recounted from the point of view of the father, Montenegrin and Jewish references are scattered throughout the book. We found echoes of the family visit to Cetinje and the Bay of Kotor in 1939 (Kiš, 2017: 266-270) references to the Montenegrin origin of his wife who dreams of Montenegrin villages and other occassional mentions. In a passage where the father fantasizes about extravagant schemes that would enable him to escape far away during the Second World War, there appears a reference which evokes the rumors that were indeed circulating among Jewish refugees in 1941, who hoped that they will be able to board ships, planes or submarines from Montenegro to safer destinations, as many testimonies of Holocaust survivors suggest: "… traveling with false papers to Montenegro, where he has family and friendly acquaintances through his wife and where he could, at night, in the Bay of Kotor, board an English submarine…" (Kiš, 2017: 352) Finally, in *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich,* in the last story entitled *The Short Biography of A. A. Darmolatov* (*Kratka biografija A. A. Darmolatova*), a sarcastic potrayal of a Soviet writer, the author appears as an eywitness of Darmolatov's visit to Cetinje in 1947, where he allegedly participated at a celebration of a Njegoš jubilee (Kiš, 2004: 128), (Kiš, A Tomb for Boris Davidovich, 1985).

Anthropologist Paul B. Gordiejew, as we have already seen, noted that for some people of Jewish origin in socialist Yugoslavia who were not members of the Jewish community, "the other option was to attempt to pursue Jewishness through self-constitution or self-situation, that is, an individuated Jewishness." (Gordiejew, 1999: 86) As for Danilo Kiš, Gordiejew provided the following observation elsewhere in his monograph: "For some, Jewishness meant continuous flight or movement; one remains in a transitional or suspended state of anti-structure. The famous writer Danilo Kiš, the product of a Jewish father and Montenegrin mother, who called himself an ethnographic rarity, was an example of such Jewishness." (Gordiejew, 1999: 203) Naturally, at closer look, the "individuated Jewishness" of people of Jewish origin living their lives beyond the official community structures could manifest itself in a number of different and very individual ways. As elsewhere, some people, although non-observant, could still be primarily attracted by the mystical aspects of Judaism, others by various elements of Jewish culture and so on. For some, the sympathies and admiration for the State of Israel formed an important part of their individual indentity, while others could construct their

own understanding of Jewishnes primarily around elements of the diasporic experience of one's immediate family and ancestors.

We have already mentioned that Kiš became a lifelong atheist and sceptic as a result of the painful childhood experiences, especially the long illness and death of his mother in peacetime, which followed the previous loss of the father in a Nazi concentration camp and personal experience of anti-Jewish persecution in wartime Hungary.[20] In the interviews included in the collection *Anatomy Lesson* (*Čas anatomije*), Kiš claimed the his Jewish origin was a decisive factor which influenced all his life and writing. "First of all because all that I experienced, I experienced as a Jewish child. I think that my destiny is a destiny of a Wandering Jew: I cannot do anything about it, that's simply the way it is. (…) I do not have any links with the Jewish Community.[21] I also do not call myself a Jewish writer. However, my Jewishness is something that I cannot deny. Even if I denied it, others would find it in my books." (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 247) There was no difference in the treatment of Jews or "half-Jews" like himself in wartime Hungary, as Kiš rightly noted, and he spent a part of his childhood in fear, experiencing hunger and injustice (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 135) "My Jewish heritage brought me great suffering. I lived in a family where the Jewish religion practically did not exist. (…) However, if I suffered from childhood and during my entire lifetime, it was because they regarded me as a Jew and they behaved according to this belief. Hungarian fascists and German Nazis discriminated me as a Jew. And when I became a writer, I started to write about Jews, because I know their milieu. Sartre once said: "A Jew is not one who was born as a Jew, one becomes a Jew thanks to others." I am, therefore, a Jew insofar as others see me as one." (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 256)

In his individual elaborations of Jewish identity, Kiš often alluded to the ideas of the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre as expressed in his influential

[20] See: (Lassley, 2015). The influence of authentic personal experiences is, in my opinion, often underestimated in the studies focusing on Jewish identity and religious practice in the socialist countries after the Second World War, including Yugoslavia. Official discourse and Marxist ideology is usually cited as the main reason for secularization of the Jews in that period. However, many (though not all) survivors later attributed their abandomnment of religious practice and faith in God to the fact that they were looking "death in the face" and witnessed unparalleled atrocities during the Holocaust.

[21] By this statement, Kiš primarily confirmed that he was not a member of the Jewish community in Yugoslavia, did not participate in its religious life and did not attend its regular, at that time primarily secular events and activities. However, in the second half of the 1950s, he published poetry in the community's youth magazine *Kadima*, and also won the first price at the annual competition for manuscripts on a Jewish topic in 1960 with the manuscript of his novel *Psalm 44.*

book on the Jewish question, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Sartre, 1954), (Judaken, 2006). As a writer and public intellectual, Kiš was anything but an uncritical admirer of Sartre and his political engagements, but Sartre's analysis of the Jewish question and his deconstruction of antisemitic reasoning obviously closely resonated with his own personal experiences. In his case, Sartre's answer to the eternal question "who is a Jew" seemed as a fitting description of the writer's personal fate: a Jew, wrote Sartre in the immediate aftermath of the Second War and the Holocaust, is primarily someone regarded and treated by others as a Jew: "*Le Juif est un homme que les autres tiennent pour Juif.*" (Sartre, 1954: 83) This was of course a very common experience of a large number of people of Jewish origin in Nazi-occupied Europe and the pro-Nazi satelite states that applied anti-Jewish measures and often directly participated in the Holocaust: children from mixed marriages, people of Jewish origin who converted to Christianity or grew up in Christian families of Jewish origin, persons with non-religious worldview fully assimilated into particular national societies were mistreated, persecuted and often murdered by the Nazis or their local fascist collaborators, whose definition of a Jew was based on essentialist, racist and pseudo-biological ideas. Kiš recalled that Judaism played a very minor role in his family when he was growing up. His father was indeed a Halachic Jew, but non-observant and secular, while his mother was Christian Orthodox. Kiš was baptized at the age of four and in his childhood was more often exposed to Christian Orthodox religious practice. Apart from that, during his childhood years in Hungary, he was subjected to Catholic education, imagery, concepts and practices at school and the surrounding village milieu. Nevertheless, in the eyes of others, especially in wartime Hungary, where antisemitic laws applied, he was still primarily regarded as a Jew. (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 136) Kiš was periodically reminded of his Jewish origin even after the Second World War, and he was sensitive (or even oversensitive according to some of his non-Jewish friends who lacked his experience and sensibility) to latent antisemitism and antisemitic objections against him and his work. Personally, apart from the traumatic aspects and ascribed identity which he partly accepted, he defined his own Jewishness primarily in cultural terms, in the context of other identities and influences: "This mixture composed of clashes and contradictions is joined by my Jewish being (*moje jevrejsko biće*), not in the religious sense, but in an essentialy cultural perspective, as a researcher." (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 228)

The figure of a "Wandering Jew", critically analyzed and deconstructed as a stereotype by Victor Kuperminc in his work on the received ideas about the Jews (Kuperminc, 2001: 19-23) seemed to reflect the writer's personal life experiences to the point that he came to regard it as an unchangeable and

unescapeable fact of destiny. The "shame of cosmopolitism" and feelings of rootlessness could not be easily cured. In the end, Kiš found "his roots and his nobility in literature." (Kiš, *Čas anatomije,* 2012: 136) The famous self-definition of the great German Jewish literary critic of Polish origin Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "my homeland is literature" (*Meine Heimat ist die Literatur*), also suits Kiš like few other authors: he was indeed a writer first and foremost, and the other identities and labels, whether Jewish, Montenegrin, Serb, Yugoslav or Hungarian, were clearly of lesser importance to him personally. "I am not a Serbo-Croatian writer, I am rather Montenegrin or maybe a Vojvodina writer, perhaps even a Jewish writer, with a completely Hungarian last name (…) My last name means "small" although I am 1,85 meters tall." (Kiš, *Posljednje pribežište,* 2012: 20)

According to Mark Thompson, "by 1985, Kiš was ready for a new project, and wondering if he could write a novel about a Renaissance poet who lived in Dubrovnik. Diego Pires (1517-1599) was a Portuguese Jew who fled the Inquisition in his homeland, converted to Christianity, studied medicine in Salamanca and then fled to Antwerp and later to Italy (Šístek, 2022: 41-46) In 1555, the persecution of Christian converts in Ancona drove him across the Adriatic Sea to Ragusa, now Dubrovnik, where a ban on Jews had been repealed. He reverted to Judaism, taking the name Isaiah Kohen or Koen, and lived as a teacher and writer, pennning Latin works in praise of his lost birthplace and adoptive home. He spent his last years in the ghetto and was buried in the Jewish cemetery. Pires was also known as Didacus Pyrrhus Lusitanus and Jacobus Flavius Eborensis; in Serbo-Croatian, his name is Didak Pir. It was a "dream project", in Pascale's[22] words, combining exile, language, Dubrovnik, persecution, Judaism, and poetry. Yet we have no idea how Kiš would have approached it. He left nothing but a few pages of jottings in Serbo-Croatian and Hungarian, a solitary translation (of Pir's poem "To a Flea"), and a little inventory of images from Pir's verses: "Jewels, a pearl, rare wood; medicinal herbs; dill: flowers; grass, lentils fruit and other fruits of the earth; different kinds of drink and food from animals; placid livestock and wild beasts; chickens; a raven; a reed; a fly; *ligna acapna*, ice and snow; a handkerchief; a gauntlet; munitions; a liar and disabled people; items for social pastimes; fever and gout; deep old age at seventy; Jesuit lodgings in Dubrovnik." (...) Mirjana Miočinović believes his creative cycle would have resumed if illness had not strucked in 1986." (Thompson, 2013: 299) The novel on Didak Pir was part of an agreement with Grassette, prestigeous Parisian publisher, which remained unfillled due to the writer's illness and premature death. His fascination with

[22] Pascale Delpech, writer's second wife, French translator and cultural worker.

this personality was confirmed in an interviw with Mirjana Miočinović, his first wife and editor of his posthumous oeuvre. Miočinović recalls that Danilo regularly visited his sister Danica, who lived in Herceg Novi with her family, and also spent some time in Dubrovnik during he summer every year, "…especially in the 1980s when he was thinking of this topic. He was close to him as a Wandering Jew, and poet of his time. Danilo was thinking about a novel or a collection of short stories about Didak Pir, because he was never obsessesed with the book form while he was writing. Didak Pir, who lived in Herceg Novi and even longer in Dubrovnik, was an ideal personality and a God-given topic for hims. Unfortunately, only a few notes remained." ("Razgovor s Mirjanom Miočinović")

In the spring of 1986, Kiš visited Israel for the first time. At the occassion, upon his personal wish, he also paid a visit to a kibbutz founded by Jews from Yugoslavia. Later that year, during a visit to New York, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. In the spring of 1989, he visited Israel for the second time with his friend, documentarist Aleksandar Mandić and a film crew from Belgrade in order to make a documentary on the fate of Ženi Lebl (1927-2009) and Eva Nahir Panić (1918-2015), Holocaust survivors and later prisoners of the Goli Otok (Naked Island) concentration camp in Communist Yugoslavia in the 1950s (Ilić, 2015: 12-15). The film was released in 1990 under the title *Naked Life* (*Goli život*) and the integral transcription of the interviews is available as a book (Kiš – Mandić, 2020). Kiš also visited again the Forest of the Martyrs near Jerusalem. The forest contains six million trees in honor of the six million victims of the Holocaust. Here, he read the Kaddish (in Latin script, as he did not speak Hebrew) for his father in front of a tree which he personally planted two years earlier in the memory of Eduard Kiš. (Lebl, 2005: 21) In August 1989, he visited Belgrade, Montenegro and Dubrovnik for the last time. He succumbed to cancer two months later, on October 15, 1989, in his Paris appartment, and was buried in Belgrade. "Danilo Kiš was buried by one of the most radical Serb Orthodox priests in a pompous church ritual," (Radič, 2005: 7) in the words of his Hungarian biographer Viktória Radics. A Christian Orthodox funeral was in accordance with his last will, although Kiš was not a believer and even some of his close friends were uneasy about this decision. According to most interpretations, it was meant as a gesture of thanks to the Christian Orthodox church because, as he believed, the Christian Orthodox baptism certificate saved his life during the Second World War.

At the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the writer's death, on October 15, 1993, a bronze bust of the writer by Montenegrin sculptor Pavle Pejović was ceremonialy unveiled in front of the National Library in Cetinje. It was the second public monument dedicated to Kiš at the time (the first one

was unveiled in his native town of Subotica several months earlier). The event, organized by the National Library, was attended by his sister Danica Mitrović, aunt Mileva Dragičević and first wife Mirjana Miočinović, his friends and classmates, the minister of culture and the local public. In 1992, a high school in Budva was named after him as a result of a local initiative, citing, among other reasons, also the fact that his sister used to live in nearby Miločer in the first period after her marriage and Kiš would often visit her in Budva (Gregović, 2012) Later, a street in the capital of Podgorica (Vijenci Danila Kiša) was also named in his honor. At the turn of the first and second decade of the 21st century, there were initiatives to place a memorial plaque on the house at Bajova Street 43 in Cetinje where Kiš lived from 1947 until 1954, which would also commemorate his uncle Risto Dragićević. However, these efforts were unsuccessful in the end.[23] Mišo Dragićević, retired employee of the National Library of Montenegro and writer's nephew, later decided to sell the house, owned by his family for over a century, and moved a few blocks away. The old house was subsequently demolished and a new concrete building with large shopwindows erected in its place. Instead of a memorial plaque to Danilo Kiš and Risto Dragićević, it is currently adorned with a large sign advertising the place as the House of Chemistry (Kuća hemije) and it now serves as a drugstore.

Conclusion

From the end of the Second World War in 1945 until the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the Jews of Montenegro were practically invisible and the few personalities of Jewish-Montenegrin origin that were known to wider public were indeed considered as "ethnographic rarities". However, this situation can be primarily atributed to secularization, assimilation and national tolerance characteristic for the socialist Yugoslav federation during this time. In fact, as a result of immigration from other parts of Yugoslavia, usually motivated by professional reasons, and a greater level of interaction between different Yugoslav populations and individuals, unhindered by religious, social, cultural and economic considerations in comparison with the interwar period, the number of people of Jewish origin who settled in Montenegro or were born there was slowly growing. Their exact numbers are difficult to establish as most did not declare themselves as Jewish in official population censuses according to nationality and religion. Many of them were not even

[23] To my knowledge, there were certain disagreements over the exact wording of the text on the memorial plaque and several other petty issues which spoiled the idea that had otherwise enjoyed more or less unamimous support among the citizens of Cetinje and received positive media attention.

aware that there are other individuals and families of Jewish origin living in Montenegro apart from their family and perhaps a few acquaintances of similar background. In socialist Yugoslavia, Montenegro was the only republic of the federation without organized Jewish religious, social and cultural life. Nevertheless, we can reasonably assume that the number of Jews, unrecorded in official statistics and invisible for all practical purposes, actually exceeded the prewar Jewish population of Montenegro (56 people according to the last official interwar census of 1931) already in the late socialist period. The silent and invisible genesis of this new Jewish-Montenegrin population, which can be reconstructed from fragmentary and insufficient statistical sources and subsequent personal testimonies, set the stage for the suprising emergence of the Jews from invisibility, the official recognition of Judaism as the fourth traditional confession of the country and the formation of a small, but vibrant, growing and increasingly visible Jewish community in independent Montenegro at the beginning of the 21st century.

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František ŠISTEK

„ETNOGRAFSKI RARITET": CRNOGORSKI JEVREJI U SOCIJALISTIČKOJ JUGOSLAVIJI

U ovome radu daje se prvi pregled uglavnom skrivenog i nevidljivog prisustva Jevreja u Crnoj Gori tokom socijalističkoga perioda (1945-1991). Autor analizira relevantne demografske podatke i širi politički, društveni i kulturni kontekst života Jevreja u Jugoslaviji i Crnoj Gori. Razmatra se nekoliko reprezentativnih pojedinačnih sudbina i životnih putanja ljudi jevrejskoga porijekla koji su se nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata naselili u Crnu Goru. Mješovite (interkulturalne) jevrejsko-crnogorske porodice postale su pravilo više negoli izuzetak u drugoj polovini XX vijeka. U radu je takođe sumirana i Operacija Velveta iz 1948. godine, tajna vojna misija koja je omogućila prebacivanje borbenih aviona Spitfire iz Čehoslovačke preko Crne Gore (aerodrom Kapino Polje blizu Nikšića) u Izrael tokom Rata za nezavisnost u Izraelu. U posljednjem dijelu rada govori se o životnoj putanji Danila Kiša (1935-1989), jugoslovenskog pisca jevrejsko-crnogorskog porijekla, i njegovih elaborata o jevrejskom identitetu.

Ključne riječi: *Crna Gora, Jugoslavija, Jevreji, judaizam, jevrejske zajednice, Izrael, socijalizam, Danilo Kiš, Holokaust, manjine na Balkanu, sekularizacija, istorija, antropologija, književnost*