

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „СВ КИРИЛ И МЕТОДИЈ“
ИНСТИТУТ ЗА НАЦИОНАЛНА ИСТОРИЈА – СКОПЈЕ
МЕЃУНАРОДНА НАУЧНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈА
БАЛКАНОТ: ЛУЃЕ, ВОЈНИ И МИР
ПО ПОВОД 100-ГОДИШНИНАТА ОД БАЛКАНСКИТЕ ВОЈНИ
(65 години ИНИ)

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THE JEWISH PRESENCE IN KOSOVO AND METOHIA DURING THE BALKAN WARS AND WWI

Abstract

This paper reports on everyday life and social-economic, political and cultural state of the Jewish communities in Kosovo and Metohia just before Balkan wars broke out and during the wars, than in short period between the end of the second Balkan war and beginning of the First World War, during Great War and finally with the liberation and cessation of war actions on territory of Kosovo and Metohia. At the same time, paper treats presence and public activeness of the Jewish figures from abroad which were engaged in Balkan from various reasons and were visiting Kosovo and Metohia because of the character of their businesses. Participation of the Jewish soldiers at the war front on this area, emigration and desertion from Kosovo and Metohia because of war skirmish, diplomatic activity of representative of the Jewish communities from the Kingdom of Serbia in aim of survival and comeback on liberated territory of Kosovo and Metohia - present integral part of this paper as well.

Key words: Jews, Kosovo and Metohia, Kosovska Mitrovica, Pristina, Balkan wars, WWI

Over the decades, the tough position of its compatriots on Kosovo, in Old and South Serbia, still under reign, or better said in the anarchic circumstances, which prevailed then as the part of The Ottoman Empire⁵⁶, led to final merging into the Balkan military alliance; Implementation of Serbia's National Foreign Policy, prevented by Austria through annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, and favourable international circumstances, which induced the Eastern question when Italy declared the war on The Ottoman Empire; outbreak of the Albanian rebellion and overtaking the state business in Balkan neighbourhood countries, which back then was governed by statesmen opened for mutual cooperation towards High Port, generated in making common decisions about taking up military operations against the rest of the Ottoman properties on Balkan - territory which belonged to Balkan people according to common folk opinion and in real possibilities of the Belgrade Government to achieve political dream

⁵⁶ More about the socio-political, economic and cultural conditions that prevailed in the area and the overall position of Serbian, Christian and non-Islamic population and intertwining interests of the great powers and the Balkan states to the territory, see *Историја српског народа, шеста књига, први том - од Берлинског конгреса до уједињења 1878-1918*, Београд 1994, 263-348.

of expansion and penetration in the south. Fast and successful Serbian army triumphs caused liberation in national districts. From the end of October and the beginning of November 1912, most of Kosovo and Metohia territory was regained and the results of the victory will be noticed not until the end of both Balkan wars from which Serbia raised bigger in terms of territories and population. Bitter taste of victory, in fairly homogenised Serbia, was taking up governing already widened boundaries, in extremely hostile-oriented Albanian communities, which were about to leap at the opportunity to show the right face for a new master⁵⁷.

Jewish population of pre-Balkan Serbia, equal in front of law in comparison to other citizens, was completely integrated into social-political life inside the community. With no discrimination, they developed a dual concept of national identity calling themselves Serbs of The Mouses's religion. Jewish youth was nurtured with patriotism, ideas of The Great Serbia and South Slavic Unity (Yugoslavia), who were educated and brought up on the foundation of the Kosovo's legacy. According to statement given by Paulina Lebl Albala, estimated national Jewish and Serbian worker, the Jewish youth ideal is best reflected in her following words: "*We were fully aware of the honour and the duty of our generation who were to be the executors of the Kosovo's testament.*"⁵⁸ At the very beginning of the war and the opening of a front in the First Balkan War, 1912, that was led by associated Balkan Christian countries against the fading feudal Ottoman Empire, as the army troops were heading towards Kosovo - source of Serbian identity based on spirituality and statehood, in the that time Serbian-Ottoman border, position Merdare, there was a man who sacrificed his life for his country by the Jewish name of Solomon Ruben Farco (Franco?). He was a private of the first military troop, batallion III, III Infantry regiment of the second Serbian army call. He was born in Pirot, on 3 May 1874.⁵⁹ Asher M. Levi, from Nis, participated in the battle by the rank of a reserve infantry lieutenant, II Infantry Regiment of the Serbian army. He also excels in disarming the Albanians.⁶⁰

Very popular and legendary cavalry lutenant in the Serbian army, Mosha A. Amar, trader by profession, showed outstanding courage, cordiality and heroism, dying for his country, near Urosevac (Ferizovic) on 12 October 1912. He was born in Belgrade, on 9 April 1887 and buried, at the same place he laid his life down, on the hill where the army barracks were settled. The hill is called Amar's hill, as the tribute to heroic death wich was named in the memory of the lost life,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 182-197.

⁵⁸ Mladenka Ivanković, *Jevreji u Jugoslaviji (1944-1952). Kraj ili novi početak*, Beograd 2009, 44; Милан Кољанин, *Јевреји и антисемитизам у Краљевини Југославији 1918-1941*, Beograd 2008, 176.

⁵⁹ *Споменица погинулих и умрлих српских Јевреја у балканским и светском рату 1912.-1918.*, Beograd 1927, 64; Ženi Lebl, *Jevreji u Pirotu*, Beograd 1990, 29. The authors of these two suggest a different family name.

⁶⁰ *Споменица...*, 97, 98.

issued by the Third Serbian Army command and soon a street in liberated Skoplje was given a name by the deceased hero. Much later, in May 1940, one street in Zvezdara, part of Belgrade will be named - Brothers Amar. Mosha Amar was the first to lead his squadron into the liberated Urosevac in which the residents served him with bread and salt as a gesture of surrender. However, on the same day, he got treacherously attacked by two thousand Albanians. He led a bitter and difficult struggle in which he heroically died, along with his entire squadron, to the last soldier. The remains of the Serbian hero, Mosha Amar, were transferred to Belgrade with the highest military honours, in the presence of the military and civil authorities, with participation of the honourable Belgrade Serbian citizens, were buried at the army part of the Jewish cemetery, on 8 November 1912. The king sent his first adjutant to represent him at the funeral and express condolences to the family of the fallen hero. The Royal Government did the same; the Ministry of Defense did it in particularly solemn way, and other ministries and various government offices also. Amar's death and bravery, shown during the war, was described and glorified in Serbian daily newspapers but illustrated magazines brought, in addition to his picture, even the picture of his death presented. Besides Mosha, the wars in Serbia 1912-1918 will take the lives of his two brothers, Solomon - Moni and David, and cousins - Isaac and Joseph.⁶¹ Here, it's worth mentioning that the Albanians in Kosovo Front in 1912 used additional inhumane means and ways in fighting against military rivals. Among the first wounded soldiers, who came from the battle at Merdare, which was led against fanatical Albanians, there were a lot of rifle injuries with mouldy bone fractures and purulent infections, which were caused by old martin guns with large grains of lead in bullets. Albanians had a custom to cut the grain open and thus create a serious trauma. Another way in which the Albanians caused greater traumas to the soldiers of the opposite side was the use of even older type of gun "ostragusha"; merging of the grain extracted from a bullet with the grain in another bullet, after getting two shots fired, the two-chained bullets tied in thin chain "sindzir" would fly parallel to each other tightening the chain more or less, which would cut off the soft parts of the tissue when touched the body and the wounds would get early contaminated and terribly painful.⁶² The result of the Allied armies, in the First Balkan War, was a huge military success, numerous great and big victories. The liberation of its countrymen from enemy territories, territorial expansion of the Balkan Country Alliance in the war and a favourable peace treaty signing were some of the results achieved. "Having retaliated" Kosovo, the Serbian army continued with

⁶¹ Споменница..., 76, 77; Небојша Поповић, *Јевреји у Србији 1918-1941*, Београд 1997, 23, 141; Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји за слободу Србије 1912-1918*, Београд 1995, 48, 49, 52, 60; Јаша Алмули, *Страдање и спасавање српских Јевреја*, Београд 2010, 292, 293; Радовије Davidović, *Od Daviča do Čelebonovića. Ulice beogradskih Jevreja*, Beograd 2010, 32, 33; Игњат Шланг, *Јевреји у Београду*, Нови Сад 2006, 110, 111, 112, 117; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије - биографски лексикон* (ур. Александар Гаон), Београд 2011, 22.

⁶² Бранислав Поповић, Вељко Тодоровић (пр.), *Српски војни санитар у Балканским ратовима*, Београд 2012, 154, 155.

the winning spree and set off into conquering neighbouring territories, populated mostly by the Albanians, who were hostile to opponents of the Ottomans, especially the Serbs. This led to massive armed uprising, in the region of Ljuma, against the present Serbian Army. That revolt, in the literature often referred as Albanian's rebellion, engulfed a small part of the border region of Metohia, around Prizren and Djakovica, integral part of the wider area of Ljuma. Among the local stationary Serbian soldiers, who took part in the suppression of the rebellion, overcoming and disarming the Albanian rebels, there were Jewish Serbs participating such as Raphael Finci⁶³, private of the supernumerary regiment IV. During the fateful days of the completion of the First and the outbreak of the Second Balkan war, Heinrich Satner, a cashier in the additional fifth battalion of the Drina division, from Belgrade, died of typhoid fever in Pristina, on 14 April 1913. He was temporarily buried in Pristina and, later, after the war ended and country was normalised, his remains were transferred to Belgrade and buried in a Jewish warrior cemetery in May 1914.⁶⁴ In the Balkan wars, quite a number of Jewish doctors were going to be in Serbian military medical service often deployed or on an assignment in the territory of Kosovo and Metohia. The commander of the medical troop in Prizren was, captain class II, Raphael Alfandari, a Jew from Pozarevac.⁶⁵ In the same town, medical reserve class captain, troop doctor of the regiment XII, call I, Dr. Bukus Alkalay, a Belgrade's Sephardi, held a central clinic where soldiers of command XXII went for medical examination and hospitalisation. During the rebellion of the Albanians in Ljuma, he represented a troop doctor of regiment VI, call II, troop doctor of regiment X and overabundant regiment V.⁶⁶ Medical reserve captain, class I, Dr. Raphael Bidjerani, a Sephardi from Kraljevo⁶⁷, was a Pristina's military hospital administrator in period between two Balkan wars. A Jew from Novi Pazar, originally from Russia, medical lieutenant Dr. Jacob Brik participated in Serbian army, over Kosovo and Metohia and northern Albania, and indeed he was going to be a hospital administrator in Ljes⁶⁸. A field hospital doctor in Shumadia division, call I, in liberated and newly mounted Ferizovic (Urosevac), Dr. Chaim Rousseau, a Sephardic county physician in Donji Milanovac, was going to be a reserve medical captain, class II, until February 1913.⁶⁹ During the Secon Balkan War, The Central clinic in Prizren would be managed by Mosha - Bukus Alkalay, a captain of the second and then the first class, who was a troop doctor in Infantry regiment XII, call I, during the First Balkan War.⁷⁰ While serving in the Serbian army, the Jews faught for liberation

⁶³ *Споменица...*, 150.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶⁵ Александар С. Недок, *Балкански ратови 1912-1913. Рад српског војног санитета*, Београд 2012, 233.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁷⁰ *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 11.

of enslaved compatriots and return of the lost territories in the First Balkan War, and, in the Second Balkan War, for preserving the same acquired territories from the previous war until then, in the back of the front, civilian Jewish population acted through establishing and operating the hospitals, putting their potential and capacities into the service of saving, healing and helping the wounded and sick soldiers. Only in Belgrade, during the Serbo-Bulgarian War, there was 36 military hospitals working continuously or temporary, among which was the reserve hospital XXII - an Ashkenazi Jewish municipality private hospital under the stewardship of Ignjat Shlang.⁷¹ Before the completion of the First Balkan War in January 1913, Union of Jewish societies with headquarters in Berlin, having worried about the fate of their compatriots in the territories affected by war, sent a delegation to the war zone, among which were some of the famous leaders of that period, such as Elkan Adler from London, Dr. Paul Natan and Dr. Bernard Kahn from Berlin, in order to get familiarize with the situation of the Jewish communities. After visiting and getting detailed information on all the issues that the delegation was interested in, a report was made and sent to the head office in order to call for emergency aid for the vulnerable compatriots. Later, in July the same year, the report would be published in Berlin. Based on it, we got to know that at time of report writing, there were 452 Jews in Pristina, 80 Jews in Urosevac, and 50 in Kosovska Mitrovica.⁷² Somewhere around that time, we had data on people from Pristina, father and son Chaim and Shabbetai Ruben (Ruven). It was about the intention of the father's act that was important in educating his son to be a rabbi, by sending him to the rabbinical seminar in Thessaloniki. However, taking this step would greatly change further life path for both son and his family. Since Dojran Jewish community found out about a young rabbi, they urged him to come to their city for service, and Shabbetai gladly accepted the request. He persuaded his father and other members of his family to join him and move to Dojran, where the family would get another member, a son, 21 years younger than his brother Shabbetai. After Dojran was evacuated in the Great War, Shabbetai moved in Pirot.⁷³ At the same time, other people from Pristina went on much longer trips and more distant destination. That was the case with Joseph Behar, famous and later Zionist leader in the areas of southern Serbia, who was born in 1900 in Pristina, and who would leave the town before the outbreak of the First World War. He would leave the town and go to Eretz Yisrael, where his grandmother lived. She had gone there from Pristina guided by the premonition that her life was coming to an end and with the wish and intention of a deeply religious person to die in Holy Land and be buried at the Mount of Olives. Motives for leaving the earlier place of residence could be multiple and he probably had decided to take this step guided by each of them. It can be assumed that the family sent him to his grandmother to help

⁷¹Бранислав Поповић, Вељко Тодоровић (пр.), *Српски војни санитет...*, 111, 112; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 268, 269.

⁷²Ženi Lebl, *Plima i slom. Iz istorije Jevreja Vardarske Makedonije*, Gornji Milanovac 1990, 200.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 204.

her in her final days of life but also to avoid any kind of death threats, if he stayed in the area where terrible and devastating military conflicts had recently erupted and were prone to repeat. The doubts were confirmed when the First World War started. At the same time, he avoided possible future mobilization into his country military ranks, or any other belligerent or occupying side in war. In addition, he would continue with education where he would certainly have greater choice of profession and better teachers, all which is beneficial and making it become an unbelievable life experience.⁷⁴ During the war on Kosovo, in the First Balkan War, some Jewish families from Kosovka Mitrovica and Pristina had left their homes for security reasons in order to be temporary sheltered in Skoplje, among its relatives and friends.⁷⁵ Some Jews from Kosovo and Metohia, who had found refuge in Skoplje, often lived without any help, left to their own in finding the way to survive. The destruction and damage of Jewish private and business property were numerous. In addition to the devastation of property in armed conflict and severe damages by the firearms, there were cases of Ottoman requisition of goods, for which, in many cases, the certificates weren't even issued. Indirect loses were usually related to debts of Albanian and Ottoman debtors who later moved with the Ottoman army.⁷⁶ Upon completion of the Balkan War, part of the displaced Jews would return to their homes, and the number of the Jewish permanent residents in Pristina and Kosovska Mitrovica would, by the next year, 1914, stabilize. In Pristina, which then counted 10,000 inhabitants, only 450 were Israelites. That same year, on the territory of Kosovo and Metohia, 50 Jews were listed in Kosovska Mitrovica and 80 Jewish citizens in Urosevac.⁷⁷ In the same time, after conquere and integration of new territories to Serbian state and establishment of it's institutions we have a data about confirming of profession to three Jewish rabbis from new-adopted regions, among them one was from Pristina.⁷⁸

Foreign correspondents and newspaper reporters, from the front on Balkans, informed the world public about the most recent developments in those years from that part of Europe. The Jews engaged in these tasks had also a prominent role, of which the most distinguished was Leo Trotsky (Lev Davidovich Bronstein) who would later describe certain war crimes against civilians in the territory of Kosovo and Metohia, Vardarian Macedonia and Montenegro committed by the regular armed forces of the Balkan countries. Trotsky reported next: „*That's how all this looks when you see it close up. Meat is rotting, human flesh as well as the flesh of oxen; villages have become pillars of fire, men are exterminating „persons not under twelve years of age”;* everyone is being

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 253, 254.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁷⁶ “The Balkan wars and the Jews“, *American Jewish year book*, 15 / 1914, 192, 205.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁷⁸ *Македонскій голось*, годъ I, No 7, С. – Петербургъ, 4. Ноября, 1913., 128. Another two rabbis were from Skoplje and Bitolj.

*brutalised, losing their human aspect“.*⁷⁹ Another photograph and correspondent for the Russian and the French press, Samson Chernov, a Russian Jew, reported from the Balkans during the wars from 1912-1913. Chernov was hired by the Serbian government which used his work extensively, as well as his material for propaganda purposes. He had crossed the road all the way from Belgrade to Kosovo and Metohia along the Serbian army. Both „*Officers` Cooperative*„ and Serbian Government purchased Chernov`s works in the first place to use them for didactic and publicity purposes. Chernov came to Serbia at the very beginning of the War. After that, we may easily follow his movements with the Serbian Army, from Belgrade, through Southern, Old Serbia and Macedonia, all the way to Kosovo and Metohia. His contemporary, a great friend of Serbian people too, Dr. Archibald Reiss, an Swiss Jewish, probably gave the most realistic although somewhat uncritical portrait of Samson Chernov: „*When I speak of Marjanovic, whom I consider to be the most meritorious photographer in this phase of war, I must mention another one, a Russian photographer who really had as much talent and who was a master of his craft. What a strange and mysterious person was that Chernov, who already followed the Serbian Army during the Balkan Wars. Was he a Russian or a cosmopolitan Jew, as claimed by many? I do not know. That short, square built man with a shaved skull could be as much a Russian as a Jew. However, what I know is that besides real courage he also had infernal impertinence. Did not he dare bring to the front his girlfriend, who was a fat and full-blooded Hungarian? Was he really a true friend of Serbia? I do not know, but I do know that he knew very well how to transform into money his true or pretended friendship. This man disappeared after the retreat through Albania, and I saw him just once in Thessalonica, in 1916, in a phantasy-like Russian style uniform. No one has seen him ever since*“.⁸⁰

After the liberation and the annexation of Kosovo and Metohia and other territories to the new country, Ashkenazi Jewish municipality in Belgrade, headed, then, by in future the famous President of the Federation of Jewish religious communities in Yugoslavia - Friedrich Pops, had worked to ensure that the Jews from newly liberated parts of the Old and Southern Serbia integrate as good as possible in general national community.⁸¹ While diplomatic representatives to the recently warring parties in Bucharest, at scheduled talks of

⁷⁹ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans from the end of Byzantium to the present day*, London 2001, 14. More about Trotsky`s mission in Balkan wars, see ``Кад лав пружи канџе – Троцки у Београду`` *Политикин забавник* (Београд), бр. 3236, 14. 2. 2014, 4-6.

⁸⁰ *Балкански ратови, Фото-запис Самсона Чернова*, (приредили: Мирослав Перишић, Милић Милићевић, Бранко Богдановић), Београд 2010, XX, XXIII, XXXI; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 259-261. For more informations about Chernov, see Горан Малић ``Деловање јеврејских фотографа у српској култури у XIX и XX веку``, *Годишњак града Београда*, 2006, књ. 53, 113-173; ``Краљ Петар на бојишту`` *Политикин забавник* (Београд), бр. 3069, 3. 12. 2010, 4-7.

⁸¹ Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 115.

truce, contracted terms of the peace treaty and the future outcome of the state borders, the leaders and the spirituals of the Serbian Jewish community were undertaking actions towards their compatriots residing in the territories conquered before and now connected with the homeland. With the ongoing legal and institutional integration of the newly acquired territories, which was conducted by the state, a Jewish lodge “*Serbia*” of the Independent Order of B’nai – B’rith was activated in order to inform the Jewish brethren, who now became full citizens, about actual situation in the state, and enlist a national program and their patriotic ideology, stepping into contact with The Jews from Pristina as well. For its success, the Belgrade Jewish elite could primarily thank to the fact they stood up for the Jewish prisoners from the southern parts in the military command of the Serbian army, so they provide them with cosher food, clothes and shoes, and The Serbian government did everything to help the displaced Jewish population of Stip to return to their homes. In this way, the Jews in newly liberated regions – of the Old and South Serbia, more precisely Kosovo and Metohia, had full confidence in the Jewish delegates and they firmly believed the words they said, so most of them obeyed the appeal to stay in their homes and cities and refrain from moving out. Among the most influential and most active Jews in those days was, chief rabbi of the Sephardic Community in Belgrade, Dr. Isaac Alkalay, who in the winter of 1913-1914 travelled and visited the main southern regions bringing comfort and hope to new brothers in The Kingdom by introducing them to the new circumstance in which they found themselves. Beside him, teachers Mosha Pinto and Salom Rousseau had a prominent role as well.⁸² Until then, the Jews in the area of the Old and Southern Serbia lived a relatively steady, habitual and secure way of life, keeping away from the inter-ethnic conflicts, trying to stay neutral and committed to community life. In addition, they nurtured a deep sense of loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, and in the days of its collapse, they sympathyzed with the sufferenigs and losses of their country. Further, with the change of the situation on the ground, they had to rapidly get over the beloved Ottoman Empire and change it overnight into affection for The Kingdom of Serbia. The Jewish dignitaries, from Belgrade, helped them in the process by direct propaganda in their common language- “*djudezmo*” but, at the same time, they were also the target of the political activists attacks, who were constantly recruiting members for the ruling Radical Party. In addition to the all positive changes induced by the change of the government entities, in lives of the Jewish communities on Kosovo and Metohia, there were some unfavourable as well, which were mainly concerned with the economic policy. The new state imposed monopoly on some goods - tobacco, petroleum, salt etc., which directly affected those Jewish petty traders, who worked with these products, causing thereby economic and business disaster. At the same time, in Serbia, the price of the goods increased 4-5 times based on the tax rates, and their best customers – the local Turks

⁸² Игњат Шланг, *Јевреји...*, 113, 114.

emigrated during the war, which significantly reduced the volume of trade. There had to be some people, who had to forget the goods given on credit, the debts and loans, to now already evicted neighbours and friends. A new command by authorities, not to work on Sundays and on public holidays, certainly influenced the economic decline of the Jews from Kosovo and Metohia. Change took place in the military field as well, because from now on, The Jews from Kosovo and Metohia had to be obligatory mobilized for military service, of which they were exempted in the Ottoman state. They found this very hard because it took away their work force and changed their habits and plans.⁸³

The period of peaceful life for the Jews from Kosovo and Metohia didn't last long in the new social environment. The inhabitants of Serbia caught a new war, which will turn into the war of global proportions. That would lead to new challenges and announce the arrival of the painful war times of uncertain duration and outcome. Those first years of World War I, Serbia provided a successful resistance to the aggressor, so the life of the Jewish community took more or less the usual course. Except for those who were mobilized and sent to the front, the Jews who stayed at home, continued to work, give birth, raise children, go to school, celebrate... On the other hand, there were those who had foreseen the arrival of uncertain time or had been wise enough to predict it and hastily retreated from the area heading to safer places. The teacher of Hebrew language and haham - rabbi from Pristina knew where to go and shelter. He headed to Tiberias, where he came from to Pristina on the initiative of Asher Ben Samuel Bahar, former member of the "medzlis" - municipality. When the war ended and the peace, security and order were brought back, he returned to Pristina, where he continued teaching local Jewish children Hebrew language.⁸⁴ There is evidence that a Jew named Abraham Manuel Rubenovich, a future trader from Belgrade, was born in Urosevac, during the war, in 1914.⁸⁵

In the fateful days of the Serbian state and nation, during the war in 1915, the outnumbered and technically backward Serbian army vigorously resisted to the Austro-Hungarian aggressor, on line Skoplje - Kacanik, the far south of Kosovo, the guardian Shabbetai Testa, born on 12 January 1885, in Skoplje, who was a Serbian army private, call III, was killed by the Albanians.⁸⁶ With regard to the place and year of his death, it can be reasonably assumed that he was killed during an armed rebellion of the ethnic Albanians, who, thus, stabbed in the back of the Serbian army, government and retreating people, by occupying an important strategic gorge Kacanik.⁸⁷ It seems, unfortunately, that a tragic victim

⁸³ Ženi Lebl, *Plima i slom...*, 206, 207.

⁸⁴ Pavle Dzeletović Ivanov, *Jevreji Kosova i Metohije*, Beograd 1988, 185, 186.

⁸⁵ Jaša Romano, *Jevreji Jugoslavije 1941-1945. Žrtve genocida i učesnici NOR*, Beograd 1980, 474.

⁸⁶ *Споменица...*, 40.

⁸⁷ *Историја српског народа, шеста књига, други том - од Берлинског конгреса до уједињења 1878-1918*, Београд 1994, 97.

of the rebellion, who served in the Serbian army, was a 30 year old Jew from Skoplje, Shabbetai Testa.

Serbian military and civilians that retreated in front of the successful offensive attack of the conquering army surged to Kosovo and Metohia. Thence, the further route that they took led to three directions: the first was along the line Pec-Andrijeвица-Podgorica-Skadar, the second direction led along Prizren-Ljum tower-Spis-Fleti-Puka-Skadar-Ljesh and the third led along Prizren-Ljum tower-Pishkopeja-Debar-Elbasan.⁸⁸ There were a lot of Jews among the staff of the Serbian state administration, military and ordinary people who were retreating before the onslaught of the Austro-Hungarian army. Most of the men retreated across the territory of Kosovo and Metohia, then Albania, to the final goal - Greek ports and islands where they could expect repose, recovery, rest and help of its military allies. Through this collective *via dolorosa* and general calvary followed by massive famine, freezing, serious infectious diseases, treacherous attacks by local Albanians criminals, robbery and risk of cannibalism, many people, among whom were the Jewish citizens, passed the Albanian Golgotha, where the pandemic death engulfed the mass of the unfortunates. They had been forced to move from its beloved country, "*leaving their bones*" in the rugged Albanian mountain range. Some were wounded on this road. Nevertheless, they managed to reach the target and move on, like Mordechai Bora Alkalay, a private, troop IV, the second battalion, XVI Infantry regiment, call I, originally from Nis.⁸⁹ Others, however, who were severely wounded died of wounds in due time, as was the case with Isaac A. Albahari, from Sabac, The Serbian army infantry sergeant who was injured by a grenade, near Prizren.⁹⁰ The third, again, died of wounds on Kosovo, when withdrawing, as was the case with Samuel H. Conforti, a private, troop I, the second battalion, II Serbian army regiment, originally from Skoplje, who died in Kosovska Mitrovica in 1915.⁹¹ Besides them, there were those who didn't suffer gunshot wounds but were affected by often no less dangerous and deadly diseases, as was the case with Raphael H. Abramovich, conscript of clerical order in the Ministry of Defence, of the Kingdom of Serbia, Department of disability, who died of typhoid in Kosovska Mitrovica, during the withdrawal of the Serbian army through Albania, in October 1915.⁹² On this painful journey of withdrawal, there were also cases in which some Jews, because of the age and exhaustion, gave up, retaining and staying temporarily on Kosovo and Metohia, later returning to their homeland. Chaim Naftali Kariyo, who was a chamberman during the war in the Serbian army, stayed in Prizren due to exhaustion while withdrawing. He originally was from Leskovac, where he later returned and died.⁹³ Some successfully passed

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 99, 101.

⁸⁹ *Споменица...*, 73.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁹² Tombstone picture; the Jewish cemetery, Belgrade, in author's ownership; *Споменица...*, 155.

⁹³ *Споменица...*, 88.

the thorny path. On the other hand, the severe consequences of the hard journey caused death of those who were waiting for the opening of the front and the offensive action in order to liberate the occupied ancestral land and return home. Such was the war path of Isaac J. Kalmich, from Smederevo, a reserve infantry captain class II, commander of the troop IV, Infantry regiment IV, call III in the Serbian army, who crossed Albania (I believe previously crossed the territory of Kosovo and Metohia) and arrived in Thessaloniki front, in the rank of the battalion commander. He got sick of tropical malaria there, and was transferred to Thessaloniki for treatment, unsuccessfully, because he died on 2 July 1916.⁹⁴

The Serbian Jews in the civil service, who retreated following the route through Kosovo and Metohia, along with the Serbian army, officialdom and nation, were: a private Abraham B. Demayorovich⁹⁵; a private of the pursuing enemy army detachment, call III, Joseph Benvenisti⁹⁶; a private in a troop III, the first battalion, Infantry regiment VII, Matthias B. Rousseau⁹⁷; Dr. Chaim Rousseau⁹⁸; a command chaplain in Vostarane, Thessaloniki, Shalom Rousseau⁹⁹; a reserve major Isaac Baruh¹⁰⁰; a major, battalion commander, in Infantry regiment of Timok division, call II, Abraham Beraha¹⁰¹; a colonel Alexander - Sasha Aharonovich¹⁰²; a medical officer Dr. David Albala¹⁰³; a reserve medical lieutenant colonel Solomon Alkalay¹⁰⁴; the first head of the Ministry of Finance in the Kingdom of Serbia Abraham Levich¹⁰⁵; lieutenant Stanislav Vinaver¹⁰⁶; Isaac Isaacovich¹⁰⁷; medical lieutenant, artillery troop physician Mordechai Novogorodsky¹⁰⁸; Azrael Levi¹⁰⁹; a soldier of the Infantry

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 95, 96.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹⁸ Miloš Jevtić (priredio), *Šabac i Jevreji u susretu*, Beograd 2003, 73, 74.

⁹⁹ More information about Shalom Rousseau, see Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 65-68. Јаша Алмули, *Страдање...*, 288-291.

¹⁰⁰ Andrija Gams, Aleksandar Levi, *The truth about „the serbian anti-semitism“*, Belgrade 1994, 73.

¹⁰¹ Ženi Lebl, *Jevreji...*, 36, 83; Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 61, 62.

¹⁰² Ženi Lebl, *Jevreji...*, 36.

¹⁰³ Ђорђе Н. Лопичић (приредио), *Др Давид Албала - специјални делегат при југословенском краљевском посланству у Вашингтону 1939-1942.*, Београд 2010, 17, 18, 137, 138; ``Албала Давид``, *Српска породична енциклопедија*, књ. 1, Београд 2006, 73, 74; Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 85-94; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 6-8.

¹⁰⁴ ``Алкалај Соломон``, *Српска породична енциклопедија*, књ. 1, Београд 2006, 101. More about Solomon Alkalay see Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 79-81; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 16-17.

¹⁰⁵ Небојша Поповић, *Јевреји...*, 127; Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 110-112; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 139,140.

¹⁰⁶ Небојша Поповић, *Јевреји...*, 180; Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 102-108; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 56, 57.

¹⁰⁷ Михаило Б. Милошевић, *Јевреји...*, 42.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 63, 64.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 116-118.

regiment VII, Otto Gabrielovich Fisher¹¹⁰; Aleksa Robichek¹¹¹; a reserve Lt. Col. Almozlino Joseph Nissim¹¹²; Marcel Shtern¹¹³; Heski Piyade¹¹⁴; Moritz Demayo¹¹⁵; Moritz Tayatzak¹¹⁶; Isaac Kalmich¹¹⁷; Marc Spritzer¹¹⁸; Solomon Baruh¹¹⁹; Joseph Nayman¹²⁰; Mosha Munch¹²¹; (?) Albahari¹²²; Isaac Eshkenazi¹²³; Gabriel Navon¹²⁴; Mosha Mevorah, a sergeant in the Timok cavalry battalion division, call II¹²⁵; Samson Chernov¹²⁶; class captain I, medical lieutenant colonel Mosha - Bukus Alkalay¹²⁷; Parliamentary deputy Bencion Buli¹²⁸; a medical colonel Moritz Buli¹²⁹; a reserve colonel Leon Co(h)en¹³⁰; medical assistant Jacques Confino¹³¹; captain class II Mosha Mevorah¹³²; a volunteer Joseph Nayman¹³³; a reserve officer Friedrich Pops¹³⁴; a war correspondent Rudolph Archibald Reiss¹³⁵; a medical colonel Roman Sondermayer¹³⁶; a doctor Ludwik Hirszfeld¹³⁷ and many others, known and unknown. One of those who did not survive to reach the goal, succumbing to exhaustion and difficult withdrawal, even got captured sick by Austro-

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 126-132.

¹¹¹ *Mi smo preživeli...3. Jevreji o Holokaustu* (odg. ur. Aleksandar Gaon), Beograd 2005, 469.

¹¹² Радисав С. Недовић, *Чачански крај и НОБ - слободари на стратиштима 1941-1945*, Чачак 2009, 453, 454; Јаша Алмули, *Живи и мртви - разговори са Јеврејима*, Beograd 2002, 214, 215; Јаша Алмули, *Остали су живи*, Beograd 2013, 25.

¹¹³ Јаша Алмули, *Живи и мртви...*, 172.

¹¹⁴ *Mi smo preživeli...Jevreji o Holokaustu* (odg. ur. Aleksandar Gaon), Beograd 2001, 356.

¹¹⁵ *Mi smo preživeli...2. Jevreji o Holokaustu* (odg. ur. Aleksandar Gaon), Beograd 2003, 351, 352.

¹¹⁶ *Mi smo preživeli...4. Jevreji o Holokaustu* (odg. ur. Aleksandar Gaon), Beograd 2007, 275, 276.

¹¹⁷ Милан Ристовић, *У потрази за уточништем. Југословенски Јевреји у бекству од Холокауста 1941-1945*, Beograd 1998, 97.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 154-155.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 264-265.

¹²² Јаша Алмули, *Страдање...*, 149. He was a father to Abraham Albahari.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 254, 269.

¹²⁴ Pavle Dzeletović Ivanov, *Jevreji...*, 143.

¹²⁵ Ивана Вучина Симовић, Јелена Филиповић, *Етнички идентитет и замена језика у сефардској заједници у Београду*, Beograd 2009, 188.

¹²⁶ *Балкански ратови...*, XXII; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 259-261. His famous photos include the one featuring transit through the territory of Kosovo and Metohia such as: “*From Pec to Andrijevica*” and “*The Serbian army crosses Chakor*”.

¹²⁷ *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 11. He was a participant in the both Balkan and First World War. He was a troop doctor in Infantry regiment XII, call I, in 1912, and in the Second Balkan War, he managed central clinic in Prizren, during which he was ranked a captain II then I class.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 116, 117.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 120, 121.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 152, 153.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 186, 187.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 198, 199.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 223, 224.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 248, 249.

Hungarian soldiers in Pec 1915, was Raphael Margulis.¹³⁸ The same fate of falling into the hands of the enemy had the Belgrade Jew Menachem Rousseau, a reserve captain class I and the military doctor. On the orders of the High Command, he would remain in Pec, in the local Montenegrin military hospital where he'd be captured when the hospital was taken over by the Austro-Hungarian army.¹³⁹ There were a lot of Jews in the army of Black-Yellow Monarchy, the ranks of the opposite army camps, who were mobilized from different sides of the large, ethnically and religiously diverse empire. It can be assumed, they were also in the military ranks and civil service in the Austro-Hungarian occupation zone, area that included part of Kosovo and Metohia today. On the border with Albania, in the military ranks of the Austro-Hungarian imperial army, a future known Yugoslav writer, Isaac Samokovliya, from Gorazde, would be assigned to military service.¹⁴⁰

At the end of the war, after the liberation of all Serbian countries and unification of South Slavic people into a new joint state union, the Serbian Jews in the civil service had ended their lives and succumbed to the diseases as a result of variety of deadly infectious epidemics, that raged during the war situation on the territory of Kosovo and Metohia. Influentza virus and its gripping state was fatal for Mosha A. Kalef, a sergeant, chief of pharmacy at the reserve military hospital in Kumanovo, who died after returning from Thessaloniki front, in 18 December 1918, in Kosovska Mitrovica, where he was buried.¹⁴¹

Among the Jewish population in Kosovo and Metohia, which recently continued its life as part of the new state and only began the integration of the new social framework, there was a sincere desire and a need not to stand aside, got isolated from events in the surrounding environment or felt indifferent to the tragic fate of the Serbian compatriots. Avoiding the neutral position in the new democratic state, where they enjoyed full rights and freedom, many younger Jews, in Pristina, acted with desire to contribute to the victory of the Serbian army and defend the occupied country, often by signing up as volunteers in the Serbian army. An example of such a youthful vigour the patriotic enthusiasm and activism was demonstrated by Nissim Zachariah Levi, who was born in Pristina on 16 November 1887, a private volunteer in Serbian army. Having not wanted to welcome the enemy and continue his life relatively quiet but pretty unsafe, Nissim followed most of Serbian army retreating to Thessaloniki, where

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 210,211; Александар С. Недок, *Повлачење српске војске ка албанском приморју и њена евакуација на Крф 1915/16. Рад војно-санитетске службе*, Београд 2006, 95.

¹⁴⁰ *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 217, 218. He was mobilized in July 1914, and sent to Galicia. Later, he was assigned to Pec and Palishchaba, where he worked in the infirmary. At the end of 1916, he was transferred to the front in Romania. During 1917, he was withdrawn from the front in order to finish college. He graduated in July, the same year. He was sent to work in Belgrade and then to the border with Albania. During the war years 1916-1918 and in the postwar period, he worked on combating the epidemic of typhoid fever in his hometown Gorazde.

¹⁴¹ *Споменница...*, 108,109.

he enlisted and got accepted as a volunteer in army in 1917. He soon disappeared (died) on the Thessaloniki front.¹⁴² Earlier, in 1915, in conditions of war, one more Jew from Pristina disappeared, by name Chelibi Yehuda Cohen, a private of troop III, the second battalion, Infantry regiment X of the Serbian army.¹⁴³ There were the Jews from Pristina, who were serving in the Serbian army, by name Bohor J. Ruben, a private in medical troop of Kosovo division, who died from typhoid, in Pristina, in 1914,¹⁴⁴ and Manuel M. Ruben, a private in medical troop of Kosovo division, who also died of the same disease in Pristina, in the first year of the war.¹⁴⁵ On the side of Serbia, many Jews from Kosovo and Metohia took part in the Great War: Abraham Mandil, as a paramedic, Abraham Chaim, Gabriel Navon(ovich), Into Bahar and others, many of which were awarded a numerous civil and military awards due to accomplishments in the war. Into (Yom Tov) Bahar, from Pristina, was a quilt craftsman during short peaceful times, between the end of the Second Balkan War and the beginning of the World War I. All of his family members worked in his workshop until he got wounded in the leg in the Great War, which left serious consequences to his future health. Gabriel Navon(ovich) was also from Pristina and he was born in this city back in 1895. He fought in the ranks of the Serbian army in the Great War against Austro-Hungarian invaders in the battle on Cer mountain and against the Bulgarian military in the battle on Vrska Cuka and later along with the Serbian army pulled through the territory of his homeland – Kosovo and Metohia. He, along with about thirty Jews, belonged to Kosovo additional division, which was forced to march to Cer mountain, where they would celebrate a hard-earned victory with the other units of the Serbian army. Besides the already mentioned, there were other people fighting as part of the division: Abraham Baruh, Abraham David, Asher David, Samuel Gedalja and others. By participating in the war, they ensured the stabilisation and the good position of the Jewish community, providing equal treatment by the authorities and peaceful life on Kosovo and Metohia, after the war ended. But keeping the Jews, who were not in the military, enabled them staying and survival in those areas and not eventual emigration to others. There were famous examples of cooperation and assistance which were offered by the Jews to the triumphant Serbian army in the First Balkan War in 1912. One of the examples of the case was a kitchen disposal in the wealthy Jewish family of Yehuda Josephovich. On the other hand, the life of the civilian part of the Jewish population, during the years of the Balkan and the First World War on Kosovo and Metohia, passed them by in suspense, constant fear of what would bring the next day, family and general care of the physical health safety of members the

¹⁴² *Споменица...*, 75; Pavle Dzeletović Ivanov, *Jevreji...*, 44.

¹⁴³ *Споменица...*, 83. Chelibi Cohen was born in Pristina, on 10 June 1888 and was a clock fixer by profession.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 118. Bohor J. Ruben was born in Pristina, on 18 February 1880, and was a trader by profession.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 128. He was born in Pristina, on 18 April 1884, and was a peasant shoe maker by profession.

participants in the war, weakening and stagnation of economic activity and decline in quality of life caused by the war. During those war days, only the Jews, who traded weapons and food in such high demand, necessary and often not sufficiently present in the market, could count on the economic certainty and secure financial future. At the same time, regardless the extraordinary circumstances, life would continue to unfold in its normal, natural course. When the death was everywhere, women renewed the role of mothers and activated their reproductive function by bringing many children to the world. Among the Jews from Kosovska Mitrovica, who stayed to live during the Balkan War and Austro-Hungarian occupation, there would be born: Sarina Elazar, Miriam Elazar, Vida Pardo, Stela Ruben, and Joseph Ruben, in 1912; Miriam Bivas, in 1913; Bukica Bahar, Ermoza Elazar and Miriam Cohen, in 1914; Stella Adizhes and Rachael Ruben in 1916; Lala Bahar, Sarina Bivas, Stela Elazar, Rachel Elazar, Manuel Ruben and Zlata Ruben in 1917. As you can see, during the war and years of occupation would be born more Jews in towns on Kosovo and Metohia, including Shabbetai Joseph Cohen, born in 1916 in Kosovska Mitrovica. On the other hand, new opportunities, which emerged after the Balkan Wars, drove some Jews to settle in new areas attractive for business. Thus, Benveniste Joseph Cohen moved to Kosovska Mitrovica, in 1913, where, after the collapse of the previous work, he got considerable help from the cashier of the French-Serbian bank in this city. They enabled him to get on his feet and after some time he acquired an enviable financial position.¹⁴⁶ According to the scant information that provide us reconstructed birth certificates books for municipality and area of Kosovska Mitrovica for the period 1912 - 1918, in this city were born the following Jews: Bivas Marietta, born on 15 March 1912, daughter of father Bivas Chaim and mother Alkalay Rashela; Cohen Nissim, born on 18 April 1913, son of father Joseph Cohen and mother Esther Cohen and Elazar Shalom, born in 1917, son of father Elazar Menachem, born in 1879, and mother Beraha Estherina, born in 1887. Thus, according to these registries in Kosovska Mitrovica were born also, above listed Jews.¹⁴⁷

In addition to domestic Israelites, the calvary of the Serbian people, arosed from bold decisions of the Serbian state government not to sign capitulation and retreat the state apparatus through the Albanian hostile territory, was experienced by the foreign Jews as well, who were engaged by the Serbian government for its internal, peaceful, post-war, new emergency war needs or for diplomatic and propaganda operations in leading countries of Western democracy. In the category of foreign specialists, of highly qualified and educated staff engaged for the sake of regulation of the general situation in the country in all spheres of public life, was Noah Sruļj Shneron, who would, after successful completion of the Balkan Wars and liberation along with connection

¹⁴⁶ Pavle Dzeletović Ivanov, *Jevreji...*, 44, 45, 138, 143, 153, 155, 165; Радојко Јовановић, *Бело светло на митровачке црвене записе*, Косовска Митровица / Исток 2009, 241-243.

¹⁴⁷ City of Kraljevo, Municipality of Kraljevo, Registry office for Kosovska Mitrovica, special birth certificates book Kosovska Mitrovica, reconstructions II, ordinal 22, pages 15, 49, 54.

of the passive, undeveloped and underdeveloped ares, start his new life in Serbia. During the next war in Serbia, Noah would be mobilised in the Serbian army in 1914-1915 and as a military physician of Personnel regiment XX would share the sufferings and misfortunes of the army and people, especially during the retreat through Kosovo and Metohia and Albania. He was awarded Albanian memorial by King Alexander I of Yugoslavia for his general merit in putting himself into service of Serbian armed forces in the First World War, on 23 November 1921.¹⁴⁸ Famous scientist of world renown, a Polish Jew who was converted in Catholicism, Ludwik Hirszfeld made himself available for the needs of a devastated and tormented Serbia. He would leave a just started, promising scientific and professional career at Zurich medical faculty, in order to, empathizing with the suffering Serbian civilians, exposed to epidemics of infectious diseases. In 1915, he came as part of a team of epidemiologists and bacteriologists to help, as much as it was in his power, prevention, treatment and struggle for every human life. On that road of war wilderness, his life companion Dr. Hanka Hirszfeld gave him support and made contribution as a nurse in the Serbian army. Along with the friends and co-sufferers from the ranks of the Serbian army and people, they were withdrawing from the valley of the river Ibar, walking during the day and oxcart at night, following the itinerary, which led through Kosovska Mitrovica, Pristina, Kosovo Polje to Prizren and the border with Albania. The withdrawal lasted around six weeks. Ludwik would, in his later written colourful, exciting but tragic biography, record this general evacuation, describing the crossing of the Kosovo field as something memorable, reminding us of the historical importance of Kosovo for the fate of the Serbs and its nationality, testifying about the ubiquitous cry of the people and soldiers who came to this holy place. Their future path would be the common path for Serbian army and people which led into withdrawal through Albania. From there, he left Drac to go to Brindizi, then Rome, and then Zurich, where he and his wife got invited by The Serbian military to come and join these people in trouble on Corfu island, where were the headquarters of the Serbian army and the government. They would organize a Bacteriological Laboratory in Thessaloniki, as part of the Crowned Prince hospital. It is interesting that he would meet and make friendship with the Serbian Jew, Colonel Roman Sondermayer, a Head of the Health Services, who was also a native Polish, from Krakow. Later, the lab would allocate associate fellow, another Serbian Jew, a bacteriologist, Dr. Buli. Mr Hirszfeld produced its own vaccine against typhoid and paratyphoid fever. As it was recorded, none of the hundreds of thousands of Serbian soldiers brought these diseases to the country, after the breakthrough of the Thessaloniki front. He left Serbia in 1920.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸More on Noah, Sarah and Shneron family see Станиша Бркић, Миломир Минић, *Јевреји у Крагујевцу - прилог историји Јевреја у Србији*, Крагујевац 2011, 45-52, 145.

¹⁴⁹*Mi smo preživeli...2...*,228; <http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/hirszfeld-ludvig> (access to the site content, on 24 August 2013); Лудвик Хиршфелд, *Историја једнога живота*, Београд 1962, 8, 53, 61, 64, 65-70, 72, 78; *Знаменити Јевреји Србије...*, 248,249.

The Jews from Kosovo and Metohia, who didn't take part in the Serbian army or decided not to withdraw through Albania with the large number of their fellow citizens but continue with their former lives in new circumstances, brought by the invaders to the territory, experienced a variety of occupiers. The Jews from Pristina, not by their decision, but by the will and the agreement of the Allies-occupiers, came under the power of the Bulgarians, while the Austro-Hungarian decision to legalize the *de facto* situation created in the field and incorporate it to already created Guvernman district, was the crucial one for the life of the Jews in Kosovska Mitrovica, in 15 March 1916.¹⁵⁰ The division of the occupied territories that included Kosovo and Metohia would be initially agreed by the Sofia contract, from 6 September 1915, between the war allies of Austro-Hungary and Bulgaria. The division was specified by the both supreme commands of the two states and was formally completed by signing of the separate agreement on the demarcation line, on 1 April 1916.¹⁵¹ Presumably, during the rule of Austro-Hungarians, citizens would be affected by the denationalisation which was taken by the occupation authorities not only against the existed Serbian population but against non-Serbian minorities as well among which were the Jews.¹⁵² According to the available data of the District Command and the civilian commissioner of the District Command Julius Ledineg, there were 70 Jews in Kosovska Mitrovica in April 1917.¹⁵³ It seems that the Jewish population in the city, who didn't withdraw with the Serbian army but remained to live under the new government, stood aside, partially willingly, partially for the will of the occupation forces, and they were equally discriminated and unequal against its Serbian fellow citizens in relation to the privileged and favoured Muslim majority, mainly Albanian population - they were given them supremacy and dominance in the local government, state institutions, the advantage of the educational and cultural policy and the monopoly in the local economy, especially in trade to certain vital foods and goods. Therefore, Albanians expressed full loyalty and allegiance to occupational rulers.¹⁵⁴

New created opportunities, after the Balkan and The First World War ended, were best used by local Jews, thanks to their mutual solidarity, lending and the capital acquired by multi-generational trade, diligence and hard work. Expanding the private and commercial property of the Jews on Kosovo and Metohia took place through the purchase of the property from the Turkish and the Muslim population who left their homes along with the Ottoman army, when withdrawing, in The First Balkan War. They preferred buying workshops and shopping facilities and they were helping each other financially in order to

¹⁵⁰ *Историја српског народа, шеста књига, други том...*, 145, 147.

¹⁵¹ Божица Б. Младеновић, *Град у аустроугарској окупационој зони у Србији од 1916. до 1918. године*, Београд 2000, 17.

¹⁵² *Историја српског народа, шеста књига, други том...*, 150.

¹⁵³ Божица Б. Младеновић, *Град...*, 32, 33.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 97, 187.

purchase as much as possible of abandoned properties owned by the fugitive Muslims. The condition, which state imposed to sellers of the property, was the settlement of all the debts or the tax payments. Thus, there was a document testifying that certain Hisen-aga, from Kosovska Mitrovica, an owner of a large property, sold a portion of the land to a Jewish family. This document is necessary for the conclusion of the sales contract, which could not allow closing a deal without a certificate of repayment of taxes, written in Arabic, noted, inter alia, the following: *“This document confirms the possession of the property of Hisen-aga, near Kosovska Mitrovica. The document confirms that there is a warehouse, house and fields of meadows. Hisen-aga paid taxes on the property for the year 1912, as evidenced by the undersigned witnesses. They signed this document,,”*¹⁵⁵ Upon completion of all these wars, a new era would start in the history of this area, which would welcome, for the first time, and become a permanent homeland to few Ashkenazi Jews from different areas of the new, large state and other European countries. They would build their careers and future in the cities on the river Ibar and the river Bistrica.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Pavle Dzeletović Ivanov, *Jevreji...*, 46, 48.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 106, 123. These are families Schenfain in Kosovska Mitrovica and family Teitelbaum in Prizren.