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The Status of Judeo-Spanish in Yugoslavia until 1941

Abstract: In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Sephardic Jews were one of a few ethnic and religious minorities. They were the descendants of the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula who came to the Balkans with their vernacular language based on pre-classic Iberian-Roman dialects. They had preserved Judeo-Spanish for several ages and enriched it with influences of Balkan and other languages. Nevertheless, after its Golden Age in the 16th and 17th centuries, Judeo-Spanish could not avoid a slow decline caused by political, social and cultural changes that took place on the entire Balkan Peninsula and which accelerated in the second half of the 19th century.

The chapter deals with the status, role and condition of Judeo-Spanish among Sephardic Jews in three Sephardic centres in Yugoslavia: Belgrade, Sarajevo and Bitola, in the period between 1918 and 1941. In Belgrade the representation of Judeo-Spanish was indeed poor: the level of westernization and acculturation of the Jews was so high that since the 19th century they had called themselves “Serbs of the Jewish faith”. In multicultural Sarajevo, Judeo-Spanish remained the only vernacular language of the Sephardim until the 1880s, which resulted from the isolation they lived in under Ottoman rule. Even after they joined the stream of state education introduced under Austro-Hungarian rule, Serbo-Croatian did not supersede Judeo-Spanish and most Sephardic Jews were bilingual at that time. In the Jewish communities of Macedonia, mainly because of their low economic position and low level of acculturation, the usage of Judeo-Spanish remained prevalent even longer — until the outbreak of World War II.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Judeo-Spanish language, Sephardim, Diaspora language, co-territorial languages, sociolinguistics.

The descendants of the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula (according to Sephardic studies: *Sepharad 1*) who came to the Balkans (*Sepharad 2*¹) with their vernacular language based on pre-classic Iberian Romance dialects, preserved Judeo-Spanish for several ages and enriched it with influences of Balkan and other languages (like French, German, Slavic). Nevertheless, after its Golden Age in the Ottoman Empire and the phase of its importance in education and trade in the 16th and 17th centuries, Judeo-Spanish could not avoid some changes caused by political, social and cultural developments that took place on the entire Balkan Peninsula and which accelerated in the second half of the 19th century (Harris 1999: 119–122).

The Jews entered the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as one of a few ethnic and religious minorities and citizens with equal rights. It is widely known that in some bigger Jewish centres in Yugoslavia, such as Belgrade or Zagreb, the Jewish inhabitants called themselves “Serbs or Croats of the Jewish faith” (Vidaković-Petrov 1986: 21) and they declared a high level of assimilation with Yugoslav public life, culture, etc. In 1931, just before the population census in the Kingdom, one of the greatest Jewish journalists from Zagreb, Lavoslav Schick, appealed to the Jews:

[...] da se iskažu kao Jevreji po vjeri i narodnosti, a po državljanstvu i jeziku Jugoslaveni. [...] Nije odlučno da li se u pojedinoj našoj obitelji govori jugoslavenski jezik, španjolski, francuski, njemački, grčki ili talijanski [...]. Nevjerovatno bi bilo, kad Jevreji Jugoslavije, koji uživaju potpunu jednopравnost, ne bi uz isticanje svoje jevrejske narodnosti, naglasili također svoju pripadnost jugoslavenskoj kultury. (Šik 1931: 5)².

According to him, for the Jewish citizens of the Kingdom the Jewish language was not a determinant of Jewish identity any more. Was this the case in all Jewish centres? The paper presents the status and role of Judeo-Spanish in the period between 1918 and 1941 in three main Sephardic centres in Yugoslavia: Belgrade, Sarajevo and Bitola (Monastir). The condition of the language in these centres depended, of course, on social and cultural circumstances, and varied not only among regions but also different social strata.

Before 1941 the Sephardic Jews’ mother tongue in the Balkans was given very different names, which is visible in articles from local Jewish periodicals:

¹ Terms introduced in the classic studies by Max Weinreich, also used in contemporary works (Hassán 1981: 51–69; Riaño 1993: 94–95).

² “... the Jews in the Kingdom should call themselves Jews on account of religion and ethnicity, but Yugoslavians on account of citizenship and language. [...] It is not relevant whether a particular Jewish home is a place where Yugoslavian, Spanish, French, German, Greek or Italian is spoken [...] . It would be very incongruous if the Jews of Yugoslavia, citizens with equal rights, did not underline their connection with Yugoslav culture and language along with their Jewish nationality”. Translation from Judeo-Spanish and Serbian (Serbo-Croatian) — A.T.

lingva žudia, *lingua žudia-spaniol*, *lingua espanjola* (Jud.-Sp. “the Jewish language”, “the Judeo-Spanish language”, “the Spanish language”), *judío-español* (Sp. “Judeo-Spanish”), *španjolski jezik*, *španjolski žargon*, *jevrejsko-španjolski*, *sefardski idiom*, *jevrejsko-španski idiom* (Serb.-Cr. “the Jewish language”, “the Spanish jargon”, “Judeo-Spanish”, “the Sephardic idiom”, “the Judeo-Spanish idiom”). As we can see, articles in the press from that time most often define the Sephardic Jews’ speech as a “language”, but the terms “idiom” and “jargon” are also used. We should also note that, as indicated by their usage, the terms “jargon” and “idiom” do not seem to have any negative connotations³.

However, as it will be presented, Judeo-Spanish in Yugoslavia and its speakers went through many stages of a language in contact. The stages of the language in the Balkans were recently researched, among others, by Ivana Vučina Simović (Вучина Симовић 2016) who thoroughly described Balkan Judeo-Spanish before World War II through the phenomena of language maintenance, language shift, the stage of diglossia and language decline.

Belgrade: The Loss of Judeo-Spanish

Belgrade Jews were the first to become citizens of the non-Ottoman, national rule in the 19th century. The new Serbian governmental powers wanted to eliminate old Ottoman elements from public life quickly and strove for development and modernization. Belgrade Jews went along with the stream of changes, the Sephardic community was emancipated and started to function within public administration. Although a separate Sephardic community and Sephardic associations were maintained in Belgrade, non-linguistic aspects, such as ancestry and religion, were far more important indicators of Sephardic/Jewish identity, so, like many other Jewish diaspora groups (Mill 2004: 13–54), the former Judeo-Spanish speakers in Belgrade easily went through the process of language shift starting from the second half of the 19th century.

As Vučina Simović indicates, quoting Uriel Weinreich in her study (Вучина Симовић 2016: 55), the language shift from the perspective of the language of a minority is the process of the language of the minority progressively giving way to the language of the majority (then we talk about language decline). The language shift process happens when one of the languages has no access to relevant social and educational resources and has to go through the stage of diglossia. Of course, the language shift first appears in external contacts, and then the language of the

³ Moreover, these names do not include the most popular name of the language — *Ladino*. It was characteristic of the Balkan Sephardic Jews that they did not call their spoken language that before World War II. To learn more about the names for the vernacular language of the Sephardic Jews in the Balkans and the way its speakers perceived it, see Olszewska, Twardowska 2016: 91–100.

majority penetrates inner communication. Judeo-Spanish speakers in Belgrade went through the entire process mainly for two reasons: the Serbian government had no interest in supporting minority languages (so Judeo-Spanish did not exist in public life and education), and Serbian was obviously the key to emancipation and acculturation. Since the Belgrade Jews wanted to create a Jewish middle class, already in 1847 Jewish schools for future office workers introduced German and Serbian classes as obligatory subjects. As Harriet Pass Freidenreich writes (Pass Freidenreich 1979: 33), in 1866 the first formal Jewish community introduced Serbian as a language of administration for Jewish affairs and a Serbian secretary was hired to keep records and correspondence. The language shift process continued, so by the end of the 19th century all non-biblical subjects were taught in Serbian even in the Jewish schools in Belgrade. At the same time, Judeo-Spanish was obviously still used in inner Jewish communication, as in 1888 *El amigo del pueblo* (The People's Friend), the first Judeo-Spanish magazine in the former Yugoslavia, was published (Mihailović 2000: 41).

According to statistics cited by Pass Freidenreich (1979: 38), in 1895, 77% of Belgrade Jews declared Judeo-Spanish as their mother tongue, 4% declared Serbian. At the beginning of the 20th century there was a significant change — 46% of the Jewish minority opted for Serbian⁴. In 1931, after the population census, it was clear that 54% were for Serbian, 30% for Judeo-Spanish (the Sephardim declared Serbian as their mother tongue and the Ashkenazim declared non-Slavic languages).

So, in spite of the fact that before 1941 the majority of nearly 6,000 Jews in Belgrade were Sephardim and that a separate Sephardic community and Sephardic organizations existed, it seems that Judeo-Spanish did not play a significant role in Jewish life anymore and it was not a significant issue in the Jewish public discourse. After 1914 there was no Jewish weekly published in Judeo-Spanish and, despite a great number of Jewish institutions and associations in the city, it seems that not many significant cultural activities were devoted to the heritage of this language.

In 1931 the Bosnian Jewish weekly *Jevrejski glas* (The Jewish Voice) mentioned that the amateur Jewish theatre group Maks Nordau from Belgrade arrived in Sarajevo, and the Bosnian editors underlined with pleasure that the Belgrade delegates used “decent Judeo-Spanish” for their official speech (“Boravak...” 1931: 5), which can give an impression of a still vivid language among the Belgrade Sephardim. But when an amateur Jewish theatre group from Sarajevo called Matatja performed in Judeo-Spanish in Belgrade three years later, the Belgrade Sephardim wrote in one of the weeklies:

⁴ Pass Freidenreich (1979: 38) does not find these declarations reliable, but she thinks that the results of the questionnaire can at least serve as evidence of the changing social and cultural situation of the Belgrade Sephardim and the attitude towards Judeo-Spanish.

[...] podvlačimo ponovo da je »Mataja« svojim pozorišnim priredbama uspeo da i beogradskom sefardskom građanstvu, kod koga se već gubi jevrejsko-španjolski jezik i folklorno blago, protumači lepotu sefardskih tradicija, jezika i romase⁵ (“Uspela poseta...” 1934: 5).

This short note also indicates the actual condition of the language in Belgrade at that time.

Sarajevo on a “Double Track”

The emancipation and westernization of the Sarajevian Sephardic Jews after nearly 400 years of living under Ottoman domination started with the beginning of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Hercegovina. As in Belgrade, the emancipation was supported by access to secular, public education in the course of which Jewish students had to do with everyday usage of non-Jewish languages, first and foremost Serbo-Croatian. At the end of the 19th century Serbo-Croatian classes were introduced even in the Talmud Tora Jewish religious school (Vidaković-Petrov 1986: 35). As Eliezer Levi remarked (Levi 1927a: 2; 1927b: 1; 1927c: 2; 1929a: 1–2), inevitable changes were introduced at old, religious Sephardic schools in Sarajevo: courses in Serbo-Croatian became as important as religious education, and Sephardic children, unlike their parents and grandparents, became familiar with the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. He also underlines that young Sephardim attended state schools from the beginning of Austro-Hungarian domination in Bosnia, having extensive contact with their non-Jewish peers. During the following decades even the Jewish theological seminary did not avoid cultural changes: in the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, non-Jewish teachers taught Serbo-Croatian classes for four hours per week (“Rad u jevrejskom srednjem...” 1929: 2).

Thus, starting from the last decades of the 19th century, the Sarajevian Sephardim, like those from Belgrade, underwent a process of social progress and language shift, but it was not as sudden or as complete. The Sephardim from Sarajevo seemed to stay longer, as Todor Kruševac (1966: 76) writes, on a “double track” — assimilation was inevitable, but at the same time, affection towards the old Sephardic heritage was noticeable and the stage of bilingualism seemed to last longer than in Belgrade. Despite Jewish participation in secular public education, the first Sephardic magazine, *La Alborada* (The Dawn) published entirely in Judeo-Spanish, appeared in Sarajevo in 1900 and 1901. As Eliezer Levi (Levi 1929b: 2) wrote 30 years later, the choice of this language was reasonable, because it was still vivid and widely used at that time.

⁵ “...we want to underline again that through its performances Matatja managed to present the beauty of the Sephardic tradition, language and romance to the Belgrade Sephardim, among whom Judeo-Spanish and the treasure of folklore are almost lost”.

That is why before 1941 the linguistic situation of almost 7,000 Sarajevar Sephardim indeed presented an image of following a double track. Levi explained in his essay published in *Jevrejski glas* that in the process of language shift and the stage of diglossia in the period of Yugoslavia:

Jezik je osiromašio ili bolje reći: on se nije razvijao; broj se pojmova i spoznaja (preko škole, novina i uopće preko dodira sa evropskom civilizacijom) povećao, no za njih se nije neposredno našao adekvatan španjolski izraz, pa se zamenio izrazom iz onog jezika [...] (Levi 1929b: 1).

Nevertheless, in spite of the slow decline of Judeo-Spanish in Sarajevo, in the 1930s some Jews (workers, craftsmen, housekeepers) still did not speak Serbo-Croatian very well. Therefore, the Jewish local association La Benevolencija started “educational courses” in Serbo-Croatian (2 hours per week) in order to improve the level of communication and writing (“Prosjetni tečajevi...” 1932: 6).

The period until 1941 was also a time when Jewish weeklies contained Judeo-Spanish passages placed next to the articles in Serbo-Croatian, Judeo-Spanish literature and journalistic writings were published (e.g. Laura Papo Bohoreta, Avram Romano Buki, Benjamin Pinto, Kalmi Baruh), and many cultural events devoted to the Sephardic language and tradition were organized in the city, for example performances by the above-mentioned Matatja amateur theatre group.

Unlike in Belgrade, the question of Judeo-Spanish was clearly present in the public discourse of Jewish intellectuals in Sarajevo. At that time Jewish Sarajevo saw at least three sociocultural and political tendencies and movements: acculturation, the so-called Sephardic Movement (striving to encourage the Judeo-Spanish language and culture) and Zionism (Vidaković-Petrov 2013: 31–37). All three movements promoted various ideologies of the Judeo-Spanish language.

The Sephardic Movement showed a certain level of language loyalty. The term, according to Francisco Gimeno Menéndez quoted by Vučina Simović (Вучина Симовић 2016: 65), means concern over and desire for maintaining a language when it has already become questionable. Its supporters do not want to allow changes in function, structure or vocabulary. That was also characteristic of Sarajevar supporters of the Sephardic Movement. They called for gathering the corpus of the Judeo-Spanish language and folklore, and they saw that the language still played a significant role in Jewish life and identity. The Conference of Sephardic Youth held in Sarajevo provoked a very lively discussion on the language and was referred to in a statement from 1927 published in *Jevrejski život* (The Jewish Life):

⁶ “The language [Judeo-Spanish] became poor or, to be precise, it did not develop anymore; the number of terms and ideas was growing (through access to education, the press or contacts with European civilization), but there were not adequate words for them in Judeo-Spanish, so they were borrowed from other languages”.

Konferencija sefardske omladine smatra špansko-jevrejski jezik, koji je još uvijek materinji jezik velikog dijela sefardskog jevrejstva, a ima i svoju istorijsku, kulturnu i nacionalnu vrjednost, sastavnim djelom sefardske ideologije i važnim faktorom u sefardskom pokretu⁷ (“Rezolucije” 1927: 8).

There were also statements of the movement’s followers who were aware of the inevitable decline of Judeo-Spanish, but were sure of its important role:

La konferensja de Saraj si okupo lo mas de la demanda de la lingua žudia-espanjol, iso grandes sfuersos por dalde la valor ke le apariente komo lingua nacionala de los Sefaradim, no perdiendo ni un punto de los ožos la importansja univerzela del hebreo por entero el puevlo žudio. Lingua esta amenzada kon su disparer. [...] se enpesaron la đente a okupar mas profundo kon el, se vido su valor⁸ (“A las comunidades...”1927: 2).

At the same time, in the dispute of intellectuals before 1941, Judeo-Spanish was recognized as a kind of competition in relation to assimilating and developing Serbo-Croatian language skills, and even as an obstacle to these phenomena. On the other hand, it was seen as competition in relation to the promoted revival of the Hebrew language (in connection with Zionist trends).

What also needs noting is that in public discourse the local Jewish press raised awareness of Judeo-Spanish and expanded knowledge about it and its history. Interestingly enough, the local Jewish press illustrated what attitude Judeo-Spanish speakers had towards their language and how they evaluated it. The grading of the condition of the language is very broad. Some descriptions of the language idealize its origin, its function and even the way it sounds. That sentimental perception results in the wording: “žudio espanjol moderno, riko, elastiko, kapače” (“Judeo-Spanish modern, rich, flexible, capacious”). It is also seen as the national Jewish language, an integrating factor (“lingua nasjonalá”, “segundo hebreo” — “the national language”, “the second Hebrew”), the language of the family circle (“de nuestra madre”, “smo čuli taj jezik još od naše koljevke” — “of our mother”, “we heard this language from the cradle”), the language of inner group communication with those “ke konosen espanjol i solo poko serbo-kroato” (“who know *espanjol* and only a little Serbo-Croatian”).

⁷ “The attendees of the conference of Sephardic youth think that Judeo-Spanish is still the mother tongue of a great part of the Sephardic Jewry, has its own culture, historical and national value, is an integral part of Sephardic ideology and an important factor of the Sephardic movement”.

⁸ “The congress in Sarajevo focused, above all, on the question of the Judeo-Spanish language, made great effort to give the language value that showed it as the national language of the Sephardim, not neglecting, even for a moment, the universal importance of Hebrew for the entire Jewish nation. The language is endangered [...]. People started to study it deeper, its quality started to be visible”.

According to some Judeo-Spanish speakers, the language was also competing with Hebrew and Serbo-Croatian, but it could still develop along with the other two (Olszewska, Twardowska 2016: 93–98; Вучина Симовић 2016: 235–240). Last but not least, Judeo-Spanish speakers considered their language an endangered and dying language in very poor condition. According to the editors of the magazine *Narodna židovska svijest* (The National Jewish Awareness), followers of Zionism who used to have quite harsh opinions, the status of Judeo-Spanish before 1941 was already so low that there were few attempts to cultivate and promote it, as the language had degenerated and faded away and could barely be called a language (“Sefardski Jevreji i španjolski jezik” 1927: 2).

To adequately sum up the status of the language, let me quote an excerpt from Eliezer Levi’s essay presenting quite an objective image of Judeo-Spanish in Sarajevo in the late 1920s and its slow decline:

Uzmimo npr. naš idijom i promotrimo stanje, u kojem se nalazi. On postaje sve siromašniji. Broj rječi u svakidašnjem saobraćaju sveo se na minimum. Nema nikakvih sredstava da ga prirodnim putem obogatimo, tj. putem pružanja lektira našim ljudima na španjolskom jeziku. Razumljivo je da bi takva lektira morala biti laka i pristupačna širim slojevima. Ali, dakako, prilike su takve da na časopis ovakve vrsti ne smijemo ni misliti. Ne smijemo ni misliti ni na osnutak ma kakve institucije koja bi se pozabavila pitanjima današnjeg sastava jezika, njegove gramatike, historije i teritorijalne rasprostranjenosti. Ništa se radikalno ne da uraditi⁹ (Levi 1929d: 2).

Bitola: Isolated and Vivid Language

The two main Sephardic centres in the south-east of the Kingdom, Bitola (Monastir) and Skopje, remained under Ottoman rule for the longest time, and this influenced the social, cultural and economic situation of the Jewish inhabitants. The local Sephardic minority, living mostly in isolated family circles, pursued the old, patriarchal and oriental way of life. After 1918, Macedonian Jews and Jews from other parts of the Kingdom had more opportunities to make contact, for example during youth rallies for a Zionist organization (Mihailović 1995: 8–12). Cultural activists from Belgrade, Zagreb or Sarajevo (like Karlo Fridman, Jakica Attijas, Jakov Maestro, Moric Koen), as well as researchers from outside

⁹ “Let’s consider our language, for example, and let’s review its condition. It is becoming poorer and poorer. The number of words in everyday usage has been brought to a minimum. There are no measures to enrich it in a natural way, that is by offering texts for reading in Spanish. It is understandable that Judeo-Spanish would have to be light and accessible to every social class. Nevertheless, the present conditions do not allow one to think of a periodical of that kind. We cannot think of founding an institution which would become occupied with the contemporary structure of the language, its grammar, history and territorial distribution. It is impossible to do something radical”.

of the Balkans (for example Max Luria) started to visit Bitola, and their reports, published in the Jewish press or in separate research works, are a rich source of knowledge about the condition of the Bitola Sephardic Jews of that period.

All those reports underlined the very difficult economic conditions; as Luria noticed (1930: 8), there was a small number of wealthy Jews in Bitola and a vast majority of the lower class living in extreme poverty and very bad conditions (who worked in small-scale trade or crafts). At the same time, there was hardly any middle class between the two groups. In the Jewish press from Bosnia we can find a lot of articles calling for financial help for Bitola's Jewish quarters or orphanages (Alfandari 1937: 2–3; Koen 1933: 1–2). Living in isolation, the local Sephardim were particularly affected by the economic crisis of the town — due to migrations after 1918 the number of members of the Bitola Jewish community was constantly on the decline. According to the reports, it was reduced by 50% in the course of 20 years (“Omladinski život...” 1933: 4–5; Luria 1930: 4).

What was characteristic of the Sephardim from Bitola was that they hardly assimilated at all. As Jakov Maestro wrote in his reports in the 1920s and 1930s, they avoided any contact with the state administration and they did not have any representatives in it (Вучина Симовић 2016: 121). What is important, even the majority of young Jews did not have much interaction with the non-Jewish environment: “По своме mentalitetu jevrejski omladinac bitno se razlikuje od svojih sugrađana drugih narodnosti. Držeći se sasama rezervisano, izbjegava svaki bliži kontakt s omladincima drugih vjera i nacija. Asimilacija ovde je potpuno nepoznata¹⁰” (“Omladinski život...” 1933: 5; Вучина Симовић 2016: 266).

Articles about Jewish life underlined that in the current economic and social circumstances Jewish cultural life in Bitola hardly existed at all. No newspapers were published there (some members of the community shared Sephardic periodicals from Salonika with others) and there was no Jewish library in the town. The first local periodical publication was a Zionist brochure in Judeo-Spanish, *La renessansia djudia en Escopia* (The Jewish Revival in Skopje), published in Skopje from the 1920s. As one Jewish activist said, it was the lack of a Jewish intelligentsia that was the most painful in Bitola. There were no skilled, qualified workers in the community. The very small middle class followed the ideas of Zionism, but its intention was to emigrate (Вучина Симовић 2016: 187; “Omladinski život...” 1933: 4; Luria 1930: 7).

It is no wonder that in Bitola “... the educational level of the older generation, it can be said that it is completely stagnant” (Luria 1930: 7). The beginnings of Jewish secular education in Bitola date back to 1895, when Alliance Israélite

¹⁰ “In terms of mentality a Jewish adolescent is noticeably different from other nationalities. Keeping a distance, he avoids any closer contact with youngsters of different faiths and origins. Here, assimilation is completely unknown”.

Universelle¹¹ was founded. In the 1920s, however, the school was not a very active institution (Luria 1930: 7). After 1918, Jewish children and youth could attend Yugoslavian schools, and some who joined the state education system were girls, who probably did so under the influence of their brothers, followers of progressive ideas such as Zionism (Luria 1930: 8). Nevertheless, as Moric Koen reported (Koen 1933: 1–2), after 1918 there were not many Sephardim who attended state schools and after some time they just gave up on education. The crucial aim for young Jews was to acquire experience in trades and crafts. Additionally, for its children the local Jewish community founded Gan Ha-jeladim — a school with classes in modern Hebrew (with a view to future migration to Palestine) and in Serbo-Croatian in order to facilitate access to the public sphere in the state.

Due to the circumstances, in the interwar period the Judeo-Spanish language in Bitola survived. In fact, it still played the role of the first language of the community. As Luria noticed (Luria 1930: 7), in the late 1920s “... this educational inertia would tend to keep intact the language as spoken by the older generation”. One of the articles in *Jevrejski glas* underlined that knowledge of the “state language” was also characteristic of Sephardic children, and their Judeo-Spanish was richer than the Judeo-Spanish of adult Sephardim in other regions of Yugoslavia (“Omladinski život...” 1933: 4; Attijas 1927: 3; Вучина Симовић 2016: 207). In the Bosnian Jewish press we can also find very interesting information that Bitola Jews used the “Ladino” alphabet, meaning Hebrew Rashi script, already neglected in Bosnia in favour of Latin script. Even during the elections to the Parliament, the posters hung in the Jewish quarter in Bitola were prepared in Rashi script in Judeo-Spanish, e.g. “Todos votandu para el primu kuti Altipa Marković” (“Everybody votes for the first list of Altipa Marković”) (Friedman 1931: 3; Вучина Симовић 2016: 187).

The evaluation of the status of Judeo-Spanish in Bitola in the Jewish press from Sarajevo or Zagreb was ambivalent. On the one hand, it was described with sentiment as the purest Judeo-Spanish, living proof of culture and heritage. To their amazement, intellectuals studying the situation of the Jewish community after 1918 discovered the Monastirli dialect intact and still vivid: “[...] lingva žudia de novideades, lingva akomodada i rika, tiene ninansas i dialektos [...]”¹². On the other hand, it was given little value as the language of the poorest Sephardic social classes living in separate districts and avoiding contact with the non-Jewish environment. Judeo-Spanish also appeared to be a fossilized language which

¹¹ The organization was founded in Paris in 1860 to accelerate the emancipation and westernization of the Sephardic Jews, also through a network of secular schools (with French as the language of instruction) for future Sephardic skilled workers. The schools were based in the regions of the Ottoman Empire, also in Bitola. To learn more about the activity of Alliance Israélite Universelle, see, for example, Benbassa, Rodrigue 1995: 73–89.

¹² “[...] the Jewish language with innovations, an adapted and rich language, with nuances and dialects [...]”.

was not developing. N.R. Alfandari, reporting on life in Bitola's Jewish quarter, remarked on the language heard there: "Na uglovima čopor bosonoge, prljave u rite obučene dece, koja galame i se prepiru na jeziku, koji su njihovi pradedovi pre nekoliko vekova doneli iz Španije¹³" (Alfandari 1937: 3), and his description of Judeo-Spanish was rather discrediting in character.

As we can see, in spite of Lavoslav Schick's appeal quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the linguistic situation of Sephardic Jews in the kingdom was not homogeneous and their status was not equal — the cultural and social environment of Yugoslavian Jews was not the same everywhere. Before 1941 Judeo-Spanish was either almost completely neglected or remained the language of communication. The speakers perceived the language differently and evaluated it in a variety of ways.

In Belgrade the Sephardim were in the stage of language shift leading to the decline of Judeo-Spanish, which was being superseded by Serbian. Judeo-Spanish cultural life just before 1941 was not very rich and active — there were already few examples of publications in Judeo-Spanish, and not many cultural activities involving the language. The decline of Judeo-Spanish was also visible in Sarajevo, but the local Sephardic community stayed at the stage of bilingualism longer. Unlike in Belgrade, here the Judeo-Spanish tradition was still fostered, strongly encouraged by Sephardic cultural activities. The issue of the language was present in the public discourse and was widely discussed. The discussion showed the speakers' ambivalent attitude towards the language: a certain level of loyalty (Judeo-Spanish as an issue of the Sephardic Movement) as well as an image of the language as an obstacle to complete acculturation or Zionist goals. In Bitola, Judeo-Spanish was still maintained and served as the first language of inner communication, also in Jewish public life and administration. The maintenance of the language occurred under conditions of an absolute lack of Jewish cultural life. The evaluation of the language was an issue raised by intellectuals from outside Bitola.

Without a doubt, this complex image of the status of the Judeo-Spanish language presents a fascinating linguistic and sociolinguistic topic for both Balkan and Jewish studies.

¹³ "On the corners [there is] a cluster of barefooted, dirty children in rags who make noise and quarrel in a language which their grandfathers brought from Spain a few centuries earlier".

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Status żydowsko-hiszpańskiego w Jugosławii do 1941

W Królestwie Serbów, Chorwatów i Słoweńców oraz Królestwie Jugosławii Żydzi byli jedną z mniejszości religijnych i etnicznych ze statusem pełnoprawnych obywateli. Ci potomkowie Żydów wygnanych z Półwyspu Iberyjskiego, na Bałkany przybyli ze swoim językiem mówionym opartym na przedklasycznych iberyjskich dialektów romańskich. Język żydowsko-hiszpański zachowali na Bałkanach przez kilka stuleci, wzbogacając go o wpływy z języków bałkańskich i innych. Jednakże, po Złotym Wieku (przełom XVI i XVII wieku), język żydowsko-hiszpański nie uniknął procesu powolnego zaniku spowodowanego zmianami politycznymi i społeczno-kulturowymi, które objęły cały Półwysep, a szczególnie przyspieszyły w II połowie XIX wieku.

Rozdział omawia zagadnienie statusu, roli i kondycji żydowsko-hiszpańskiego między 1918 a 1941 w trzech sefardyjskich centrach w Jugosławii: Belgradzie, Sarajewie i Bitoli. W Belgradzie, w którym poziom akulturacji Żydów był bardzo wysoki (Żydzi nazywali samych siebie „Serbami wyznania żydowskiego”) od XIX wieku kondycja i użytkowanie języka stały się dość słabe. W wielokulturowym Sarajewie, w wyniku życia w pewnej izolacji za czasów otomańskich, dla Sefardyjczyków żydowsko-hiszpański pozostał głównym językiem komunikacji do lat 80. XIX wieku. Później, kiedy od czasów austro-węgierskich włączyli się w proces państwowej edukacji, język serbsko-chorwacki nie wyparł całkowicie z użycia żydowsko-hiszpańskiego, a większość Żydów w tamtym okresie była dwujęzyczna. Wśród macedońskich gmin sefardyjskich, głównie z powodu złej sytuacji ekonomicznej i nikłej asymilacji, żydowsko-hiszpański zachował silny status języka komunikacji jeszcze dłużej — do II wojny światowej.

Słowa kluczowe: Jugosławia, język żydowsko-hiszpański, Żydzi sefardyjscy, język diasporowy, języki współterytorialne, socjolingwistyka.