

## ORIGINAL TRANSLATION

<https://www.hkv.hr/vijesti/dokumenti/31347-p-j-cohen-srbija-ima-povijest-duboko-ukorijenjenog-antisemitizma.html>

Published: February 27th 2019

We publish the letter that Philip J. Cohen, the American publicist of Jewish origin and former advisor to the UN in Bosnia and Hercegovina, addressed to rabbi Abraham Cooper at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre on February 27th 1992. In his letter Cohen successfully unmasks the propaganda of 'Greater Serbia', which at the start of the nineties accused Croatia of fascism and antisemitism. Cohen points out that antisemitism is deeply ingrained into Serb history. (hkv)

## **Philip J. Cohen on propaganda for Greater Serbia and Serb antisemitism**

Dear rabbi Cooper,

A campaign is taking place that aims to convince the American Jewish community of the Serb love of Jews. It also aims to propagate the idea that there is growing fascism and antisemitism in Croatia. The purpose of this letter is to recognize it for what it is, a propaganda campaign. I furnish proof that: 1. Serbia has a history of deeply ingrained antisemitism, which still operates undiminished, today in 1992;

2. The Serb love for the Jews is politically motivated – their aim is to win the support and backing of the Jews for Serb terrorist ambitions; 3. The Serbs abuse the victims of the Holocaust in neighbouring Croatia and Bosnia for propaganda purposes, but do not offer an honest account of the Holocaust that took place in Serbia.

The Jewish communities that lived in the part of the Balkans, which were under the Ottoman rule, enjoyed relative stability and security for centuries. This came to an end at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated and the state of Serbia emerged. The Serb deportation of Jews from Belgrade and its surroundings started with the ascension of Karadjordje Petrovic, soon after the successful Serb uprising against Turkish rule in 1804. Further persecution of the Jews occurred in 1846 and 1861. Serb antisemitism came to the

fore prominently in October 1940, six months before the German invasion of Yugoslavia when the Serb monarchy brought out a law that limited Jewish business and university enrolment (A). The following year, in October 1941 the Serb authorities, who collaborated with the Nazi, brought out postage stamps on which the Jewish-communist-masonic conspiracy for world domination is depicted. These stamps prove that the Jews were humiliated, deemed evil and were ultimately subjugated. I submit an enlarged copy of one of those stamps (B) and their detailed description (C).

For the past 50 years the Serbs have tried to convince the world that all of the evil in Yugoslavia was done by the Croats. At the same time they have denied that the War government of Milan Nedic was fascist; that Serbia had a significant military and civil government at the time of the German occupation; that it declared laws on ethnic purity; that it participated in eliminating the Jews in Serbia and that the Serbs had concentration camps. However, published and verified proof, which Serbia tried to hide, clearly corroborates all afore mentioned. (1)

The Serb quisling government cooperated with the Nazis from start to finish, from the time of WWII between April and August 1941, headed by Milan Asimović and later Milan Nedić. Nedić personally worked closely with local Nazi officials and met Hitler in person (2) in his commander bunker on 19 August 1943. (D)

The Serb newspaper Obnova stated that „no other occupied country is allowed that which Serbia is, i.e. to declare law and order to its own military forces“. (3) Nedić founded the Serb State Guard with Nazi blessing, as an integral part of the Serb State Security, which was under the command of Dragomir Jovanović (former official of the town of Belgrade). (4) The second in command directly below Nedic was Dimitrije Ljotić, a fascist ideologist who founded the Serb Fascist Party many years before the Nazi occupation. Ljotić organised Serb volunteer troops whose main duty was to capture Jews, Roma and partisans and take them to be executed. In January 1942, the newspaper Obnova praised how the 12th troupe of Serb Volunteer Forces captured seven Jews in Nis. (5) It was not just the Germans who were killing Jews in Serbia, during 1941 the newspapers Obnova (6) and Naša Borba (7, 8) published articles on Jews being old enemies of the Serb people and that the Serbs should not wait for the German to start exterminating the Jews. The concentration camp Banjica in Belgrade was in exclusive Serb 'ownership and administration'. The adaptation of the local military barracks of the 18th Infantry division into a concentration camp, including the running cost of the camp, was financed from the Belgrade Town budget. (9) The governor of that camp was a Serb policeman Svetozar Vujević. (10) All data of the survivors of the Banjica concentration camp were written exclusively in Serb language and Cyrillic alphabet. (11) These records show that at least 23,697

victims passed through this camp. (12) Amongst them were many Jews including at least 798 children. (12)

The Serb guards shot to death at least 120 children. (13) A Serb firm struck a contract with a Nazi Gestapo office in Belgrade to buy off clothes of Jewish women and children (14) who were murdered in portable Nazi gas chamber lorries while being driven on roads outside Belgrade in 1941 and 1942.

In recruitment advertisements published in newspapers for the Serb police forces it was stressed that „the candidates must not have any Jewish or Roma blood“. (15) At the same time the Serb Orthodox Church openly collaborated with the Nazi and a large proportion of the clergy publicly defended the persecution of the Jews. In November 1941 in the church of Sv. Marko in Belgrade, the Serb Orthodox priest Dušan Popović declared „We are betrayed and sold. The worm of betrayal and corruption, which is embodied in Judaism, entered the core of Yugoslavia“. (16)

On 30 January 1942 the Metropolitan Josif, temporary leader of the Sacred Synode of the Serb Orthodox Church, published a decree which forbade Jews to pass on to Serb Orthodox faith. (17) This decree, issued in collaboration with the Nazi military government, prevented a way to save Jewish lives. In August 1942 Nedic' military council issued a statute by which all Jewish property in Serbia became Serb. (18) The same month, dr. Harald Turner, SS assignee for Serbia, boasted that Belgrade had become the first European city to become 'free of Jews'. (19) Of the 11,970 Jews who lived in Belgrade only 1,115 survived the War. (20) Of all the Jews who lived in Serbia a total of 94% were exterminated (21), partly due to the high level of collaboration with the Nazis by the Serb government, the Serb Orthodox Church and the Serb people. At a public gathering in Krusevac, minister Mihajlo Olcan, who collaborated with the Nazis „thanked God that the strong fist of Germany did not hit the Serb nation in the head“ but instead „the head of the Jews who lived in our midst“. Olcan was then blessed by the Serb Orthodox priest Hranislav Popović, who was present there. (22) Since the end of World War II, the Yugoslav authorities in which Serbs held the majority, have not been a friend to Israel or the Jewish people. When the Israeli head of government Ben-Gurion originally asked that Israel be part of the Non Aligned Movement, Belgrade refused because it had sided with the Arabs. The Belgrade government helped and trained the PLO terrorists for years. Soon after the murder of Leon Klinghoffer on the ship Achile Lauro, Abu Abas was joyously received in Belgrade. During the Gulf War, Belgrade supported its ally Iraq. A detailed account of Yugoslav support for terrorism is shown in a special Report of the Congress Working Group (E). Regretfully, antisemitism continues in Serbia still today. The paper Pravoslavlje, which is the official messenger of the Serb

Orthodox Church, published an article dated January 15th 1992 under the title: „The Jews are crucifying Christ again“ (F).

---



Four anti-Jewish postal stamps displayed on the Ant masonic exhibition organised in Belgrade between 22 October 1941 and 18 January 1942 by Serb authorities.

---

At the beginning of this month the official state press agency Tanjug, based in Belgrade, announced that Russia acknowledged Croatia, thanks to the manipulation of the Jewish lobby. This was commented upon in Moscow press Izvestia (G).

Bearing in mind all that was said here, it is inappropriate that an article by dr. Klara Mandić of the Society for Serbo-Jewish Friendship in Belgrade, is lately much publicized in Jewish press throughout North America (H). The article says that allegedly the Croats in Petrinja in August 1991 killed a Jew named Ankica Konjuh and concludes: „Who of us will be next?“ However, the truth is that Ankica Konjuh, God rest her soul, was not Jewish, a fact that doctor Mandić learned on December 23rd 1991, or around that date, when the Federation of Jewish communities of Yugoslavia met in Belgrade and told doctor Mandić to stop wrongly presenting Ankica Konjuh death as true Jewish victim. (I) I met doctor

Mandić and heard her speech of February 20th 1992 at the Hillel House University in Georgetown, Washington D.C. I witnessed doctor Mandic hand over the above article to the local rabbi without any commentary. She admitted that there are few Jews in the Society of Serbo-Jewish Friendship, but quickly attributed that to the simple fact that there is a much greater number of Serbs in Serbia as a whole.

It is true that the activities of doctor Mandic do not have the blessing or support of the Serb Jewish community. In fact, Jewish intellectuals in Serbia doubt the motives of that Society (J). Doctor Mandić states herself that she is aware of this conflict (K). Yet from the start of the War she did not have any direct contact with any of the nine Jewish communities in Croatia. In view of this, I furnish statements of two *bona fide* Jewish witnesses, Nenad Porges and Darko Fischer (L, M).

Nenad Porges is the president of the Jewish Community of Zagreb, where 1,200 of the 2,000 Croatian Jews live. Darko Fischer is the president of the Jewish community of the Town of Osijek, where the Centre of Jewish Community was bombed by the Yugoslav army governed by Serbs (N). When doctor Mandić was asked to comment on the bombing of the synagogue in Dubrovnik, she said that the local synagogue was not damaged at all. However, Jewish witnesses disagree (O). Therefore, it is difficult not to get the impression that doctor Mandić may be more interested in Serb propaganda interests than the wellbeing of the Jews. In truth, her North American tour of February 1992 was not promoted by any American or Canadian Jewish organisation, or the Jewish community of Belgrade. This tour was promoted by the firm Wise Communications with headquarters in Washington, who deal in public relations and represent the Serb oil company Jugopetrol, which is a mask under which the communist government in Belgrade is represented. The American Jewish-Serb Friendship Society, the Belgrade sister organisation, uses the Holocaust in a most dishonourable manner. This Californian branch tried and is still trying very hard to make both Serbs and Jews appear as Croatian victims during WWII. Their bulletin is full of stories about Ustasa atrocities (P). However, such selective display of the past contains serious shortcomings, namely: the Serb collaboration in the Holocaust or the Serb genocide over Croats and Slavic Muslims is never mentioned. It is worthwhile to consider the Bosnian Muslims, who for 500 years lived peacefully with the Jewish Sephardic community. During WWII the Serb Chetniks, under the explicit orders of their chief Draža Mihajlović, attempted to uproot all non-Serbs from Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Croatia, and in this mission slaughtered between 86,000 and 103,000 Slavic Muslims (23, 24). Today many Serbs proudly point out that the Chetniks were their defensive force in WWII, but that is simply historical revisionism. In reality, the Chetniks primarily wanted to restore the Serb crown and the territorial expansion of the Serb state. In terms of morality, they were a

version or the Croatian Ustashe, both were totally guilty of genocide. Furthermore, the Chetniks also collaborated with the Nazis and fascists, which is why Jewish soldiers decided to abandon the Chetniks and join Tito's partisans.

In August 1991, after I discovered the aforementioned bulletin of the American Jewish-Serb Friendship Society (P), I telephoned the editor Mr. Grujić. He first denied that the Holocaust ever happened in Serbia. When I mentioned several concentration camps, he said that the Croats came to Serbia and governed those camps, which is too ridiculous to warrant further comment. With such deceptive revisionism of history it is hard to believe that some Serbs have learnt a lesson from the Holocaust. Today, Croats in parts of Croatia under Serb rule are forced to wear red-white ribbons on their sleeves, which is a ghastly reminder of the yellow ribbons that the Jews had to wear in Serbia during the Holocaust (Q). Doctor Mandić is the main patron of the view that antisemitism is on the rise in Croatia, and her accusations are centred around Dr. Tuđman. However, the Jewish leaders in Croatia and those Jews who visit Croatia, witness that there is no proof of any State antisemitism. The accusations against Tuđman do not originate so much from his moves towards the Jews, which are totally benevolent (R i S), but from the translated excerpts of his controversial book. (T, U, V). It is worth noting that practically all of those excerpts graciously arrive to the American readers from mainly one source – Belgrade. However, no one has so far correctly translated the title of that book, whose theme are the „Wastelands of historical reality“ and is a discussion on the history and philosophy of the iniquities of war. This book in fact, researches man's inhumanity towards man and gives a review of genocide over human history. Despite the fact that the Jews are not the focus of this book, the slaughter of Jews is described in many historical periods. Unfortunately, the deep themes of this book were handled rather awkwardly. The book certainly contains parts which lack sensitivity towards Jewish feelings and the Jewish leaders in Croatia were the first to voice a sharp critique on account of this. Nevertheless, each honest reader can testify that this book is not an apology for the Holocaust, for which it is being accused by some, or for any act of genocide of any period. The author also praises the Jews. In one of the chapters, which is never mentioned in Serb sources, Tuđman says that the Jews are the most civilized people on Earth. It would be reasonable therefore, to take the translated excerpts with caution, since that book can be an object of deliberate manipulation. Future evaluation of this book has to wait for a *bona fide* translation. As we know, Truth is the first victim of war and communism. Regretfully, in Yugoslavia in which the Serbs governed, both war and communism were present. We have to be aware that the Jewish community is the propaganda's favourite target. Belgrade particularly abuses the Jewish sensitivity to the Holocaust in the attempt to win Jewish sympathy towards the Serbs, who present themselves as victims while hiding their role as criminals and anti-

Semites. In view of the aforementioned evidence, one has to investigate the true nature and meaning in the newly forged love of the Serbs toward the Jewish people.

Cordially, Philip J. Cohen

---

Notes:

1 Vukovic, Tomislav, Mosaic edition, Croatian literary society of st Ciril i Metod, Zagreb, 1991 ( Mozaik izdaje, Hrvatsko književno društvo sv. Ćirila i Metoda, Zagreb, 1991.)

2 Obnova, Belgrade August 21st 1943 (Obnova, Beograd, 21. kolovoza 1943.)

3 Obnova, Belgrade November 21st 1941 (Obnova, Beograd, 21. studenoga 1941.)

4 Borković, Milan, Milan Nedić, Information and publicity Centre, Zagreb, 1985, p 236 (Centar za informacije i publicitet, Zagreb, 1985. str. 236.)

5 Obnova, January 31st 1942 (Obnova, 31. siječnja 1942.)

6 Obnova, October 6th 1941 (Obnova, 6. lipnja 1941.)

7 Nasa borba, Belgrade, November 23rd 1941 (Naša borba, Beograd, 23. studenoga 1941.)

8 Nasa borba, Belgrade, November 30th, 1941 (Naša borba, 30. studenoga 1941.)

9 „Banjica“, The historical archive of Belgrade, Belgrade 1967, p 25 („Banjica“, Historijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, 1967. Str. 25.)

10 „Banjica“, The historical archive of Belgrade, Belgrade, 1967, p.21 ( „Banjica“, Historijski arhiv Beograd, Beograd, 1967. Str. 21.)

11 Vuković, Tomislav, Mosaic edition, Croatian literary society of st. Ciril i Metod, Zagreb, 1991, pp 79-80 (Mozaik izdanje, Hrvatsko književno društvo sv. Ćirila i Metoda, Zagreb, 1991. Str. 79-80.)

12 „Banjica“, The historical archive of Belgrade, Belgrade 1967, p. 178 („Banjica“, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, 1967. Str. 178.)

13 Zorkić, Sretenije, „Terror in Belgrade during enemy occupation“, Yearbook of the town of Belgrade, 1958, p.490 („Teror u Beogradu za vreme neprijateljske okupacije“, Godišnjak grada Beograda, Beograd, 1959., str. 490)

14 Politika, Beograd, November 1st 1944 (Politika, Beograd, 1. studenoga 1944.)

15 Obnova, January 10th 1942 (Obnova, 10. siječnja 1942.)

16 Obnova, December 1st 1941 (Obnova, 1. prosinca 1941.)

17 Messenger of the Serb Orthodox Church, Belgrade, March 1st 1942. (Glasnik Srpske pravoslavne crkve, Beograd, 1. ožujka 1942.)

18 Obnova, August 29th 1942 ( Obnova, 29. kolovoza 1942.)

19 Politika, April 29th 1989. On June 8th 1942 Emanuel Schafer, German security Commander in Serbia, advised a group of German officers including the highest-ranking Nazi general Paul Bader, that Belgrade was the first town in Europe to be 'free of Jews'. (Politika, 29. travnja 1989. Dana 8. lipnja 1942. Emanuel Schafer, njemački zapovjednik sigurnosti u Srbiji, izvijestio je skupinu njemačkih časnika, u kojoj je bio i najviši nacistički general Paul Bader, da je Beograd prvi grad u Europi koji je Judenfrei.)

20 The historical archive of Belgrade (Historijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd.)

21 Shelah, Menachem, The Chetniks, Gutman, Israel, Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust, MacMillan, New York, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 288-289

(„Četnici“, u Gutman, Israel, ur., Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, MacMillan, New York, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 288-289)

22 Obnova, August 15th 1943 (Obnova, 15. Kolovoza 1943.)

23 Kočović, Bogoljub, The victims of the Second World War in Yugoslavia, Veritas Foundation Press, London, 1985 („Žrtve Drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji“, Veritas Foundation Press, London, 1985., p. 124)

24 Žerjavić, Vladimir, „The Losses of Yugoslav Population in the Second World War“, Geographical Papers, Institute of Geography, vol. 8, University of Zagreb, 1991, p. 96 („Gubitci jugoslavenskog stanovništva u Drugom svjetskom ratu“, u Geografski radovi, Zagreb, svezak 8, 1991., str. 96).

---