

THE HOLOCAUST IN SERBIA

The beginnings of the Holocaust in the territory of Serbia, then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, can be traced back to 1938, when the first signs of relatively open antisemitic policies began to emerge. Legal measures against Jews were enacted on October 5th 1940—Jewish people were prohibited from trading in all foodstuffs, and their enrollment in universities, vocational schools, and other educational institutions was restricted, known as *numerus clausus*.

World War II in these territories began on April 6, 1941, with the bombing of Belgrade. The territory of present-day Serbia was divided into occupation zones: Bačka was under Hungarian control, Srem under the administration of the Independent State of Croatia, and Banat was overseen by the Banat Germans, while Kosovo and Metohija were under Italian occupation; Belgrade and other territories were under the control of German occupying authorities with the help of local collaborators.

Already on April 16, 1941, the registration of all Jews was ordered, and they were required to wear yellow badges with the inscription JUDE and the seal of the governor of Belgrade. By April 25, 1941, a curfew was imposed from 5 PM to 7 AM, they were forbidden from buying groceries at markets until 11 AM, and visiting public places or using public transport that had "Für Juden verboten" (For Jews prohibited) written on it.

By the end of April, forced labor was organized for Jews—men were forced to remove rubble from bombings and retrieve bodies from the ruins, while women were sent to work as laundresses and cleaners. They were allowed to move only an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening, before and after curfew. Their movable and immovable property was confiscated.

In August 1941, the "Topovske Šupe" camp was formed, where Jews from Banat, as well as Jewish men from Belgrade and other German-occupied zones, were interned. At the beginning of the camp's existence, if there were partisan sabotages, a certain number of prisoners would be taken for hostage shootings. With the introduction of rigorous German measures involving the retaliation of over 100 civilians for one German soldier killed and 50 for one wounded, beginning in September 1941, the Topovske Šupe camp became the central place from which hostages were taken for such purposes. Under the pretext of being transferred to another camp or going to forced labor, by November 1941, when the camp was disbanded, most of the prisoners were taken to mass shootings that took place at the Jabuka execution site near Pančevo, in Jajinci, Deliblatska Peščara, and other locations. In December 1941, between 200 and 300 of the remaining male Jews were transferred from the Topovske Šupe camp to the newly established camp at Staro Sajmište (the Old Belgrade Fairground) – Judenlager Semlin,

as the last refuge for Jewish women, children, and Roma before being transported in gas vans to their certain death. A total of 6,400 Jewish and around 600 Roma women were interned at this concentration camp. In May 1942, Belgrade was declared "liberated from Jews."

In Novi Sad and southern Bačka in January 1942, a raid was carried out in which the Hungarian army and gendarmerie shot Jews and Serbs in the streets. Then the arrested were taken to the city beach along the banks of the Danube, shot, and their bodies thrown into the frozen Danube. Over 2,000 people were killed in three days. Camps were opened throughout the country. About 83% of the Jewish population in the former Yugoslavia was killed during World War II.

In all occupied territories in Serbia, about 33,000 Jews lived, and over 80% perished during the Holocaust.

Despite the activity of Nazi policy in the territory of Yugoslavia and Serbia during the war years, a large number of Serbian civilians and families provided shelter and refuge for Jewish families. To date, 139 certificates of "Righteous Among the Nations" have been awarded to individuals from the territory of Serbia.