

PART 2

Holocaust

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and Anne Frank House project

Teaching material to
combat anti-Semitism

1. Europe and Yugoslavia in the interwar perioda

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SAMPLE



1. Europe and Yugoslavia in the interwar period

1.1 Europe

Interwar Europe

After the World War I, defeated nations sought to revise (amend, modify) the result of the war, which was conducive to the establishment of authoritarian regimes. The model of Fascist Italy was followed by others, and the Great Economic Crisis contributed to this process. When the Nazis, led by Adolf Hitler, seized the power in Germany, disintegration of the international order began, spiraling into the World War II. Persecution and discrimination of German Jewry reached its climax on Kristallnacht (Crystal Night).

The World War I fundamentally changed the political map of Europe, and the new states emerged on the territories of great monarchies. After the October Revolution in Russia, the Soviet state was instigating revolutions in other European countries. Defeated countries, Germany, Hungary and Italy, were dissatisfied with the new relations in Europe. In 1922, Fascist regime came to power in Italy, and became a model for other authoritarian regimes. The Great Economic Crisis (1929–1933) contributed to this and resulted in high unemployment, which was conducive to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime rise to power in Germany, in the early 1933. Their program was racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Slavic. They immediately started preparing for the war, needed to introduce a “new order” to Europe, with the German people as rulers..



Guernica is a masterpiece of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso. It was inspired by the massacre of civilians and the devastation of Guernica, a village in Spain, which was bombed by the German aviation, in 1937. During the Spanish Civil War, Germany and Italy supported fascist regime of General Franco, while the Soviet Union provided help to the Republic. International Brigades fought on the Republican side, with 1775 Yugoslavs in their ranks.

After the end of the World War I and the October Revolution, several new states were created from the parts of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and German empires. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, appeared on the new map of Europe. Ireland and Iceland also gained independence. New political ideologies and movements appeared on the European scene: on the one hand, **fascism** and **Nazism**, and with other hand, **communism**. The foreshadowing of the new great war was the Civil War in Spain (1936-1939). The new, significant changes of the borders began with the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany (Anschluss) in March 1938, and the breakup of Czechoslovakia, in March of the following year.



- The new states emerging after the World War I and October Revolution
- ⚡ Nazism in Germany
- P N F Fascism in Italy
- ★ USSR
- ✊ Spanish Civil War

EUROPE IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

As soon as they took power, in the late January 1933, the Nazis began to discriminate against the Jews, and in 1935 passed the Nuremberg Race Laws, defining who is to be considered Jewish and who is German, based on their consanguinity and ancestry. These laws institutionalized the persecution of Jews, Roma and other “opponents” of Hitler’s new world order. Jewish emigration was constantly growing, after the plundering of their property, but very few countries were ready to receive them. Mass violence against the Jews began on 9 November 1938 (Crystal Night), when Jewish shops were systematically destroyed, synagogues were burned, nearly one hundred Jews were killed, and thousands were taken to concentration camps. In October 1938, Germany occupied a part of Czechoslovakia, with the consent of Great Britain and France, and in March of next year, controlled entire Czechia, while Slovakia became an “independent” state. The German attack on Poland, on 1 September 1939, marked the beginning of the World War II.



Mass support for the Nazi party at the rally in Nuremberg, September 1938



Jewish pogrom throughout Germany began on the “**Crystal Night**” (Kristallnacht), on 9 November 1938. The streets were covered with broken glass from Jewish houses, shops and synagogues. 267 synagogues were burnt down or destroyed, 7500 Jewish shops were demolished and robbed, and more than 90 members of the Jewish people were killed.

Broken window on the Jewish shop in Magdeburg during the “Crystal Night”

In the book *My Struggle*, **Adolf Hitler** labeled his enemies and accused them of being guilty for the World War I and the collapse of Germany:

“Wherever in the world we read about attacks on Germany, Jews are their fabricators; indeed, just as both before and during the War, the Jewish stock exchange and Marxist press deliberately added fuel to the hate for Germany / ... / the exploitation of German labor power in the yoke of world Jewish finance is thereby facilitated ... as a preliminary to a further extension of this Jewish tendency to conquer the world.”

“We had a feeling that no one wants us and that feeling was correct. The whole world closed, the doors were shut everywhere for Jewish immigration. Exclusion from society, economy and school, on the one hand, and the prevention of immigration to other countries, on the other hand, caused anguish that cannot be imagined today.”

(Memories of **Erich Feier**, refugee from Vienna in “Kladovo Transport”; Gabriele Anderl, Walter Manoschek, Failed Flight, The Jewish “Kladovo Transport”, On the Way to Palestine 1939–1942, Belgrade, Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade, 2004, 37)

“We had a feeling that no one wants us and that feeling was correct. The whole world closed, the doors were shut everywhere for Jewish immigration. Exclusion from society, economy and school, on the one hand, and the prevention of immigration to other countries, on the other hand, caused anguish that cannot be imagined today.”

(**Ernst Pawel**, *Life in Dark Ages*, A Memoire, Belgrade, Klio, 2014, 9-10.)

Anti-Jewish measures



The inscription on the bench reads: "For the Aryans only".

Within the framework of a series of anti-Jewish laws and measures adopted in the period between 1933 and 1939, the Jews were systematically discriminated against and excluded from all spheres of life – from the economy, through education, culture, sports, to the public life in general: Jews were fired from their jobs in public services, marriages between Germans and Jews were prohibited, Jewish children were forbidden to attend German schools, Jews were banned from owning shops or workshops, Jews were banned from selling in the markets, Jews were forbidden to leave their homes after 8 p.m., etc.



Women identified as Jews with a "yellow star", in Vienna 1941.

GLOSSARY

authoritarian regime – A type of rule in which the power is in the hands of an individual or a group, whose decisions, in effect, cannot be questioned, and is based on stifling the opposition and democratic dialogue.

Anti-Jewish propaganda for children



Anti-Semitic illustration from the German propaganda magazine for children, entitled "Don't trust a fox in a green meadow, or the word of a Jew" from 1936, depicts expulsion of Jewish teachers and students from German schools. Since 1933, the number of Jewish students in state schools was limited, allegedly due to overcrowding.

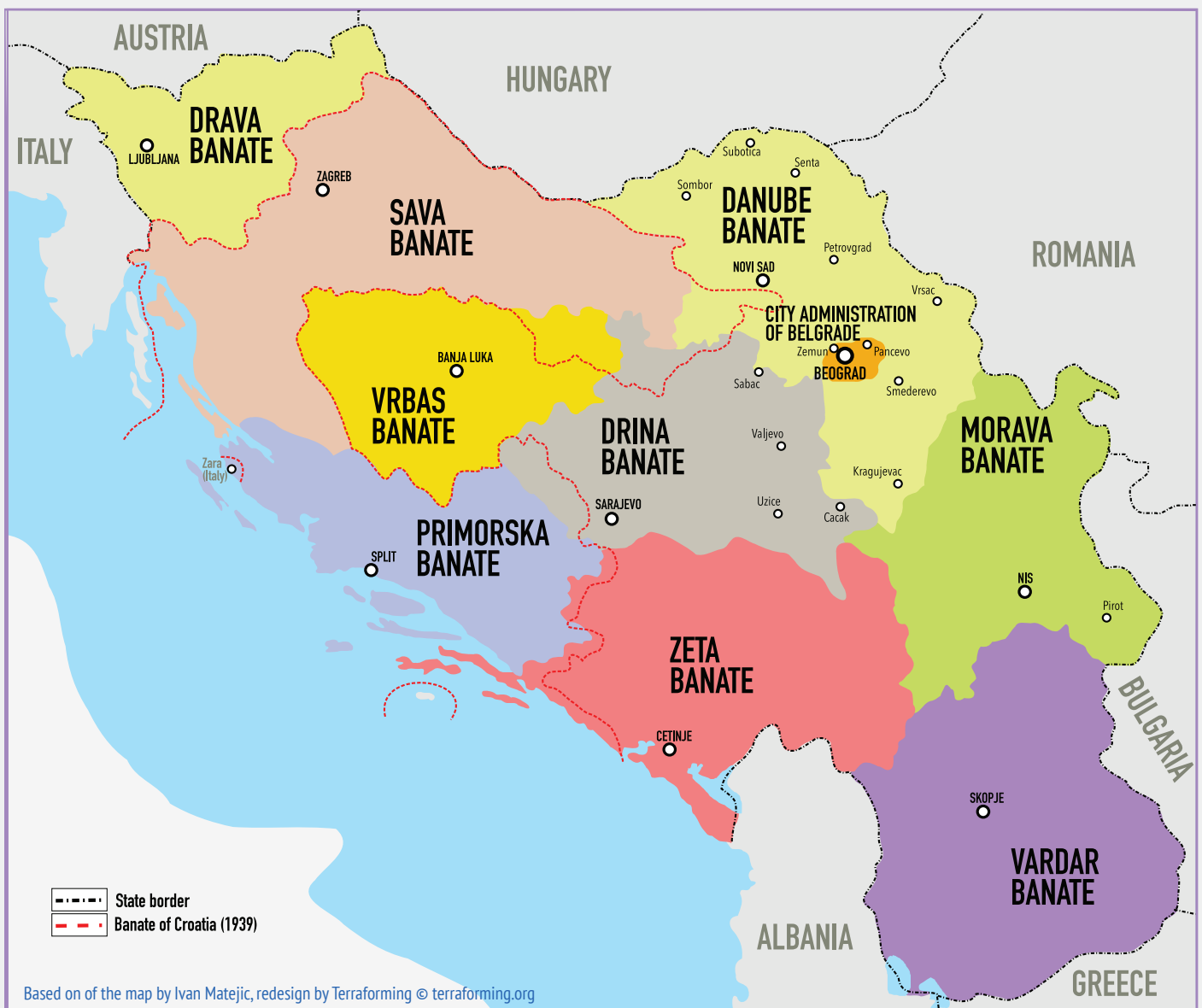
QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. Read carefully the excerpt from "Mein Kampf" and try to decide who is identified as the main enemy of the German state. Explain your answer.
2. Take a close look at the photograph of the mass support for the Nazi party at the rally in Nuremberg, in September 1938 (on the previous page).
 - a) What are the expressions on the faces of the people in the photo like?
 - b) Why are some people in the photo holding their right arm extended? What did the hand raised that way signify?
 - c) Explain with the help of a teacher why the ideology of Nazism brought together a large number of supporters across Germany.
3. Look carefully at the illustration with an example of anti-Jewish propaganda for children (*above*) and describe what it shows.
 - a) How are Jewish children depicted in the illustration?
 - b) Why were the Jewish children denied the right to education?

1.2 Yugoslavia

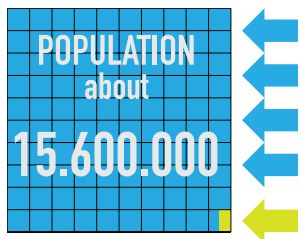
Interwar Yugoslavia

Ever since its creation, the Yugoslav state was burdened with national and social contradictions. The Jewish community constituted about half percent of the population, and had a legally regulated status and favorable conditions for progress. The Jewish national movement, Zionism, was growing stronger. Jews played a prominent role in the scientific, economic and cultural life of the country. Manifestations of anti-Semitism were relatively rare, but became more pronounced as the country was getting closer to Nazi Germany, culminating in the adoption of two anti-Jewish laws, in 1940.



Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1939) an administrative map showing banates and the border of Banate of Croatia from 1939.

Since the proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, there existed deep national and social contradictions. The political crisis temporarily ended with the dictatorship of King Alexander Karadjordjević, in January 1929, which was an unsuccessful attempt of Yugoslav national integration.



The Kingdom of Yugoslavia 1939.



Jewish population – about 0,5%

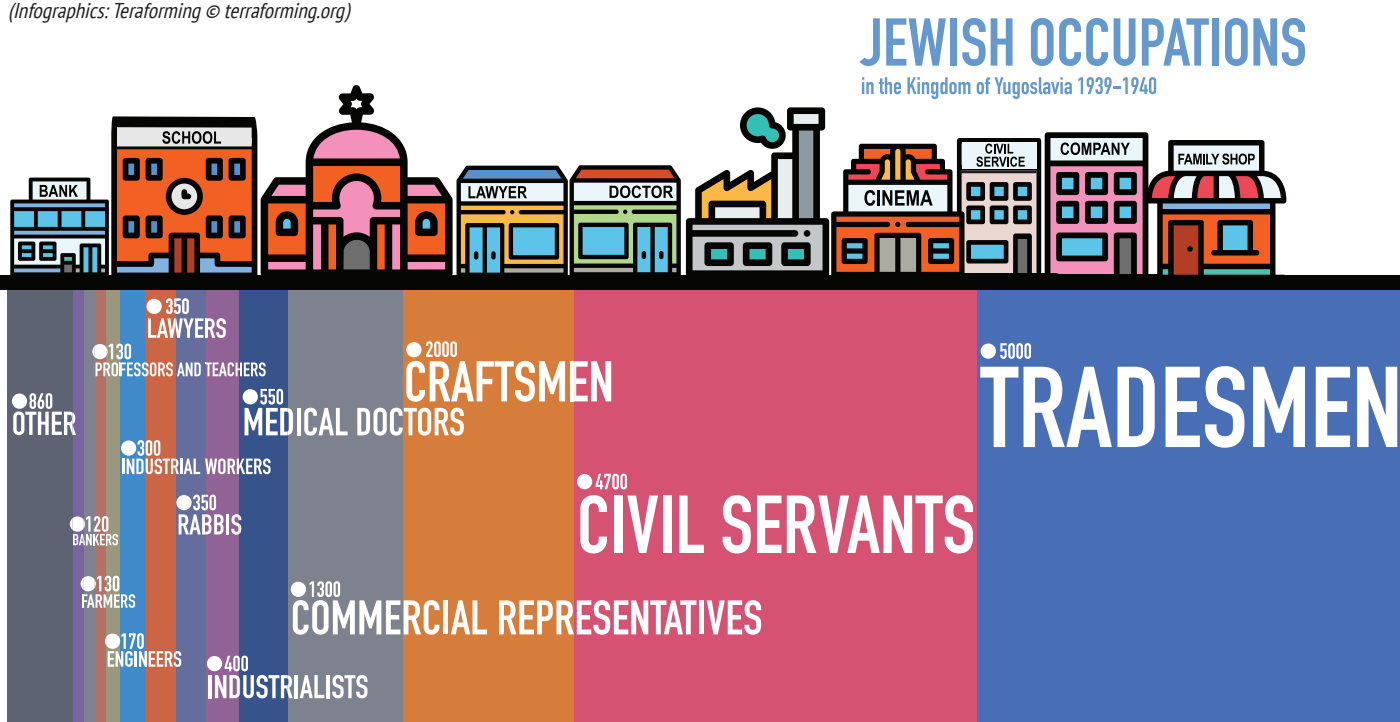
Separatist movements in Yugoslavia, the Ustaša and IMRO, organized the assassination of King Alexander, along with French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou, in Marseille in October 1934. Under the regent Prince Paul Karadjordjević and Prime Minister Milan Stojadinovic, Yugoslavia strengthened economic and political ties with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The attempt to resolve the crisis by granting broad autonomy to Croats, and creating Banate of Croatia, in August 1939, proved to be a failure, and the beginning of the World War II was increasingly threatening the survival of the country.

The Jews living in Yugoslavia had diverse national traditions and cultures. Due to the favorable conditions for life and business, they adapted relatively fast to the new circumstances and created a unified organization, the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities. The position of Jews was regulated by the Law on Jewish Religious Community in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, adopted in 1929, which ensured further prosperity and status determination for the Federation and the Jewish community in general.

The Jewish community was relatively small and represented about half the percentage of the nation's population. According to the data from 1939, in the whole of Yugoslavia, which at the time had about 15.596.000 inhabitants, there were 17.370 Jewish families with a total of 71.342 members (apart from the Jews who were Yugoslav citizens, 4000–5000 Jewish refugees came to Yugoslavia from Central Europe before the World War II, seeking salvation from the onslaught of Nazism). The Jews lived mostly in large city centers, primarily in Belgrade, Zagreb, Osijek, Sarajevo, Skopje, Bitola. Most of the Jews were engaged in trade, crafts, industry, and free professions, so there were many tradesmen, clerks and craftsmen, as well as doctors, lawyers, industrial workers, teachers, and clergymen among the Jewish population. Young Jews were mostly students of elementary schools, Gymnasiums, higher and vocational schools, as well as universities. While the majority of Jews had an average living standards, as did other citizens, there were those more affluent, as well as those impoverished, especially in Macedonian cities. The Jews created numerous social organizations, for youth, women, sports, etc. At the same time, they actively participated in the public, scientific and cultural life of the country.

The Zionist movement in Yugoslavia was well organized and comprised one tenth of community members. Of particular importance were the Jewish youth organizations, who provided training for those intending to settle in Palestine.

(Infographics: Teraforming © terraforming.org)



Jewish occupations in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, according to the data from 1939–1940

Anti-Semitism in Yugoslavia

The manifestations of anti-Semitism in the Yugoslav state were relatively rare. The notorious anti-Semitic text, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was first published in Yugoslavia in 1929. Since Hitler's rise to power, and especially since the World War II began in Europe, anti-Semitism was intensifying in Yugoslavia, culminating in the adoption of the two anti-Jewish laws, in October 1940. With these laws Yugoslav government imposed limitation on education for the Jews ("numerous clausus"), and banned them from wholesale trade in foodstuffs. Anti-Semitism was a part of the political program of a few fascist political organizations, Dimitrije Ljotić's Zbor and the Ustašas, and was felt in major religious communities as well. Numerous German national minority in Yugoslavia mostly followed the anti-Semitic ideology and politics of their motherland, the Nazi Germany.

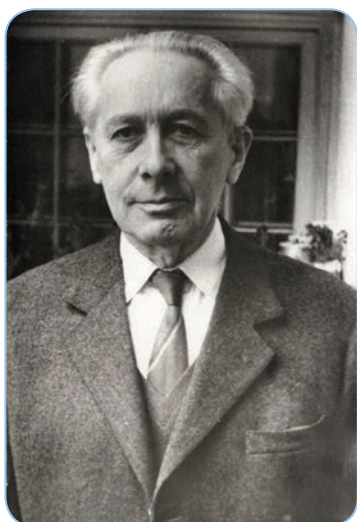
Jews in Yugoslavia before World War II



Family Baruh (Baruch) in Požarevac, 1925:
Bulina Baruh and the children Josip, Bora, Isidor, Rašela, Sonja and Bela.



Mostly the poor Jewish people lived
in Jewish Mahala in Dorčol, Belgrade



Hugo Klajn, a neuropsychiatrist, our
first psychoanalyst, a theater director
and professor of directing.



Celebration of Purim in the Jewish Community building in Belgrade,
in 71a Kralja Petra Street.

Purim is a holiday that commemorates the saving of Jewish people from the conspiracy of a royal vizier who planned to kill all the Jews in the ancient Persian Empire. Purim is one of the happiest Jewish holidays. On that occasion, a masquerade is often organized as a part of the celebration.



Daniel Ozmo was born in the poor Jewish family in Olovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and spent his childhood and youth in Sarajevo. He finished Art School in Belgrade. His artistic work was socially engaged, inspired by the lives of ordinary people, workers and the poor. Daniel Ozmo was a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Ustašas killed him in Jasenovac camp in 1942.

Jewish mahala in Bitola, by Daniel Ozmo

Jewish Women's Society



Members of the Jewish Women's Society



The building of the Jewish Women's Society, 2 Visokog Stevana Street

Jelena Demajo, nee Alkalai, was a teacher and a public worker. Due to her efforts, the Jewish Women's Society was established in Jewish Mahala in Dorćol, in 1874. She was the president of the Society for many years. During the Balkan Wars and the World War I, members of the Jewish Women's Society actively contributed to the Serbian war efforts, by assisting the Red Cross in preparing bandages and working as nurses in the field hospitals. Jewish Women's Society was dedicated to charitable, cultural and educational activities of women. It started by providing assistance to poor girls and widows with children, but over time offered significant contribution to the education and cultural development of the entire Jewish community. Society also cooperated with various non-Jewish institutions in Belgrade, providing regular and emergency assistance to the vulnerable families and individuals, through their programs and campaigns. In 1937-1938, a special building was constructed for the Jewish Women's Society, which had a kindergarten, a school for girls, and organized lectures for women. During 1941, it housed a Jewish hospital until March 1942, when the German police brutally killed all the patients and hospital staff, during the last phase of the elimination of Jews in the occupied Serbia. The building of the Jewish Women's Society still stands today in Dorćol in Visokog Stevana Street, and the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Belgrade is now housed there.



Julija Fišer (Yulia Fischer) was born Julija Sandel on 27 May 1915, in Slavonski Brod, to parents Ester, nee Tenenbaum, and Menahem. She lived in Belgrade where she worked as a teacher at the Medical School. Yulia was married to Erik Fišer (Erich Fischer), a doctor and a lieutenant of the Yugoslav Army. She was killed by the Germans on 3 February 1942. She was 27 years old.

Yulia and Erich Fischer in Belgrade before the war
(Yad Vashem Photo Archive, Jerusalem. 9162/2)



The Belgrade Fair was built in 1937. At that time it was a symbol of a new, bright future for Belgrade. The fair attracted investors and producers, thus opening up new perspectives for the development of the economy. In addition to the Yugoslav, there were international pavilions: Hungarian, Romanian, German, Italian, Czechoslovakian, Turkish... The citizens of Belgrade flocked in large numbers to see the exhibits displayed in a very modern and beautiful architectural environment, with the latest technological achievements of that time among them. The fairground was a very popular attraction where, apart from viewing the exhibited products from various parts of Europe, citizens could enjoy a rich offer of restaurants and sales stands. In this way, stepping for the first time across the river Sava, Belgrade became a proper European metropolis. But instead of a gateway leading towards a bright future, the Fair would become a place of horrible death and suffering, when in December 1941 the Nazi occupation forces first established Jewish concentration camp Zemun, or “Judenlager Semlin”, there. After the murder of the Jews at the end of May 1942, it became a reception camp, in which mainly the Serbs from the NDH territory were detained to be sent to labor and concentration camps.

GLOSSARY

Separatism – aspiration of nations or territories for the secession (separation) from the state union

Ustaša – Croatian fascist, clerical and terrorist organization, which sought to create an independent Croatian state.

IMRO – (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) revolutionary pro-Bulgarian organization with the goal to gain independence for Macedonia

Zbor – Yugoslav pro-fascist organization, based on the ideas of anti-communism and anti-Semitism

Volksdeutschers – (Ger. Volksdeutsche) the term used to refer to ethnic Germans living outside of Germany as national minorities, in various countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was in use until 1945

QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. Research and give the examples of Jewish community contributions to cultural and economic life in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia?
2. List organizations and movements in Yugoslavia with anti-Semitic political program?
3. When were the first anti-Jewish measures introduced by the Yugoslav government? What were those measures?
4. Research the life and destiny of the Baruh family.
5. Research what are the most important monuments of Jewish culture in your city, or in the vicinity.

2. Holocaust

The Holocaust is a genocide against the Jews, designed with an objective to exterminate all the Jews, systematically planned and executed by the German Nazis and their helpers and supporters throughout the occupied Europe, during the World War II. Six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

After the attack on Poland and the beginning of the World War II in 1939, the Nazis began implementing the plan for the pogrom of Jews across Europe. The racial laws, which were enforced in the Third Reich, were also applied in the occupied territories, while the countries in alliance with Germany developed their own anti-Semitic legislation.

Among the first measures that the Nazi authorities introduced was compelling the Jews to wear a yellow armband with a Star of David, in order to distinguish them in public. This was the first step in exclusion and dehumanization of Jews.

Soon, a decision was made to deprive the Jews of their freedom of movement, and they were ordered to live in certain parts of the city, or in a **ghetto**. A wall was built or a barbed wire was laid around each ghetto, and Jews were forbidden to leave without a special permit. The conditions of life in a ghetto were very difficult: a large number of people had to live in a confined space, without enough food and without adequate hygienic conditions. Soon, people began to die from hunger and diseases. The largest ghettos were located in Warsaw, Krakow and Lodz. Simultaneously, in the Southeastern part of occupied Poland, the so-called General Government (*Generalgouvernement*) was set up, originally intended as a location for deportation of all European Jewry, and their use as slave labor.

After the attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, a systematic killing of Jews began. Special SS units followed the German army on their march toward the East, with the task of “clearing” the territory from “undesirable” population, primarily from the Jews. It is estimated that in 1941, before the establishment of the notorious death camps, over million Jews were killed on the territory of the occupied Soviet Union, mostly executed by mass shooting. This mass crime is also known as “**Holocaust by bullets**”.

SS units are shooting the Jews at Ivangorod, on the territory of today's Ukraine.

The Warsaw Ghetto



Warsaw Ghetto after the uprising was crushed

The Warsaw Ghetto was the largest Jewish ghetto in the occupied Europe, during the World War II. Over 400,000 Jews have been detained there since 1940. In 1943, Jewish detainees raised an uprising that the Germans brutally crushed. The Ghetto was then totally destroyed. The largest number of Warsaw Ghetto detainees perished after they were deported to Treblinka concentration camp, as well as other camps in the area. A large number of them fell victim to starvation, diseases and exhaustion.



The Wannsee Conference represented the beginning of the final stage of annihilation of European Jews. In January 1942, Nazi leaders made a decision on the extermination of all Jews, and death camps were established for that purpose. During the conference in Wannsee, political, law enforcement and administrative officials agreed on the use of new methods, because shooting, gas vans and other methods of killings used until then were “not efficient enough.” At that moment the “death factories” were created as the most heinous form of Holocaust. **Death camps** were mostly built on the territory of the Third Reich and occupied Poland. Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor are just some of them. Special chambers for killing prisoners with gas were installed there, as well as crematoriums for the incineration of the bodies. Just in Auschwitz, more than a million Jews were killed in this manner.

Many Jews were killed through forced labor. There was a whole network of camps where inmates were used as slave laborers in mines and factories, where they worked in terrible conditions, often to their death.

As the Allied forces were liberating Europe, the retreating Nazis led the prisoners with them and transferred them to other camps, or killed them on the road during the infamous **death marches**.

The Holocaust mechanism

An important part of the ideology and politics of Nazi Germany and its plans for a new European order, was a displacement and murder of undesirable “races”, national and religious groups and ideological opponents. Before killing them, they should be fully exploited as slave labor. The Jewish people were completely dehumanized and stigmatized as the “absolute evil” and “mortal danger for mankind”, that must be destroyed. The Nazi ideology was translated into state policy of total annihilation of all Jews, by all means at disposal to the modern state, with the considerable help of collaborators and quisling regimes. The extermination of Jews took place in the circumstances of the World War II, which the Nazi propaganda blamed on the Jews themselves. The process of elimination of Jews took place according to the determined stages: definition, or separation and *identification*, followed by the seizure of property, *expropriation*, leading to the *concentration* of Jews in camps or ghettos, from where they were taken to systematic destruction or *extermination*.



Babi Yar

More than 33,000 Jewish men, women, and children, were executed by shooting by the Nazi and collaborationist units, in a place known as “Babi Yar”, near the city of Kiev, on 29 and 30 September 1941. More than 100,000 Jews, Roma, members of the Red Army and others, were killed in that place during the occupation.

Portrait of four-year-old Malvina Babat and three-year-old Polina Babat, who were killed at Babi Yar.

(Photo: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Babi Yar Society)

Auschwitz

Near the Polish town of Oświęcim (*German Auschwitz*) was the largest Nazi camp complex, known as the Auschwitz concentration camp, that became a symbol of Nazi evil. Auschwitz consisted of about 50 subcamps, including Birkenau death camp.

Today, Auschwitz is the central place of commemoration that is regularly held in memory of Holocaust victims, genocide against the Roma and other Nazi crimes.

After disembarking from the train, Hungarian Jews arrive to Auschwitz (May 1944)



Anne Frank

Ana Frank was a Jewish girl born in Frankfurt, Germany, on 12 June 1929. When the Nazis came to power and began to enforce anti-Jewish measures, the Frank family decided to emigrate from Germany. They found themselves in the Netherlands, Amsterdam, where Anne had a pleasant childhood for a time. But already in 1940, Germany occupied the Netherlands and introduced anti-Jewish measures. In order to escape the persecution and deportation to the camp, along with several other friends, the Frank family decided to hide in the secret hiding place they had prepared, at the back of the house where Anne's father Otto worked. Anne spent more than two years in that tiny space, together with others. She wrote in her diary all the time, describing her feelings and her thoughts. After someone gave them up to the police, on 4 August 1944, everyone was arrested and sent to the concentration camps. Anna died of disease and starvation at the concentration camp Bergen Belzen. After the war, Anne's father, Otto, the only survivor, published Anne's diary. To this day, Anne Frank's diary remains one of the most moving Holocaust testimonies, as well as one of the most famous symbols of resistance and dignity.



“Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness. People are just people, and all people have faults and shortcomings, but all of us are born with a basic goodness.”

Anne Frank

Nazis targeted others as well

Racism was at the core of Nazi ideology and politics, so it was not only the Jews who were exposed to total annihilation, but also certain Slavic peoples and Roma. Political opponents faced persecution too, above all communists, but also mentally ill, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others. Special racial laws were enforced against the Roma in the Third Reich, as well as in occupied countries under their control. Romani genocide is also known as **Porajmos** or **Samudaripen**.

The Roma imprisoned in Nazi camp Belzec, near Lubin, Poland
(Photo: Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej SR ID: II 6191)



More about the persecution of Roma in Part 3.



Liberation

On January 27, 1945, the Red Army liberated Auschwitz – the largest Nazi death camp. In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly 2005 proclaimed 27 January as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

A doctor from the Red Army's 322nd Rifle Division (in the middle) and a group of survivors leave through the main gate of the liberated Auschwitz camp, with the sign "Work sets you free" above it.

At a time when the Allies were liberating the territories under German control, most European Jews have already been killed. Allied soldiers who freed the camps were horrified by what they found. For Holocaust victims, liberation came too late.

Shmuel Krakowski:

"For us, the victory had come too late, much too late."

(After the Red Army liberated the camp Theresienstadt)

GLOSSARY

genocide – An international crime organized with the clear intent of complete or partial destruction of national, ethnic, racial or religious groups. It is among the most heinous crimes against humanity.

dehumanization – A representation of a certain group as if they are not human beings, by deliberately diminishing, concealing and distorting their human traits; spreading this perception about a group, most often through political propaganda and the media, is a prerequisite for deprivation of human rights, discrimination, hate, and even genocide.

quisling – A traitor and enemy collaborator who, through collaboration with the occupation forces, directly participates in causing harm and crimes against his own people. The term originates from the name of Norwegian politician Vidkun Quisling, who headed a domestic Nazi collaborationist regime during World War II.

QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. Explain the meaning of the term Holocaust and list all of its stages.
2. Holocaust victims have died in the world in which we can distinguish different roles: perpetrators, helpers, observers, rescuers (the Righteous Among the Nations). The people have made different choices, either to cooperate with the Nazis, or to help and rescue the victims, or to distance themselves from everything to save their own lives.
 - a) Give the reasons why some people would cooperate with the Nazis and help them kill the Jews.
 - b) Give the reasons why some people would help the Jews escape the persecution and in doing so risk their lives and the lives of their families.
 - c) Explain what it means to be an observer. Give some examples from everyday life.

3. Holocaust in Serbia

After the brief April war, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was destroyed and Serbia occupied and partitioned into several occupation zones. Most of Serbia fell under the German occupation, including Banat under administration of the Volksdeutsche. Other parts of Serbia were occupied by Hungary, Bulgaria, the Independent State of Croatia and Italy. Although extermination of the Jewish population unfolded differently in the areas under control of the various occupiers, the outcome was equally terrible: over 80% of Jews in Serbia and Yugoslavia perished in the Holocaust.

Prince Paul Karađorđević and the Yugoslav government, led by Dragiša Cvetković, made a decision on the accession of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact. The Protocol of Accession to the Tripartite Pact was signed on 25 March 1941, at the Belvedere Castle in Vienna. A group of officers, led by the Generals Dušan Simović and Borivoj Mirković, organized a military coup d'état, on the night between 26 and 27 March, and brought the young Peter II Karađorđević to power. Demonstrations against the accession of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact erupted in Belgrade on 27 March, as well as in other cities across the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Although the new Prime Minister Dušan Simović tried to convince Hitler that Yugoslavia would remain neutral, Germany attacked Yugoslavia without a declaration of war, on 6 April 1941. The Yugoslav Army was unable to offer any significant resistance to the German aggression. Yugoslavia capitulated on April 17, and the King, the government, and the highest-ranking military officers left the country. Yugoslavia was destroyed and divided between Germany and its allies.

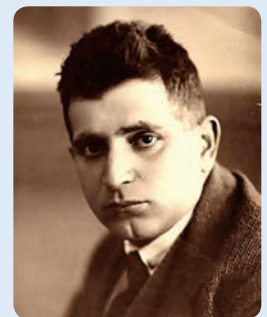


Demonstrations in Belgrade on 27 March 1941



Belgrade after the bombing on 6 April 1941

“In spite of our complete unpreparedness for modern warfare, and despite of our disorganization and disarray, enemy’s superiority, paralyzed or fifth columnist attitude of the high command – the news and realization of quick capitulation crushed every officer in our army. He did not want to, he could not believe it. We knew we had to yield. But how? But when? It never occurred to anyone it would happen so suddenly, and so shamefully.”



(Recollections of April War 1941, by the great author **Stanislav Vinaver**, in *The Years of Humiliation and Struggle. The Life in German “Oflag”*, Belgrade 1945, 3)

3.1 German occupation zone in Serbia

The German occupation zone covered the largest part of central Serbia, the North of Kosovo and Metohija, and Banat. Immediately after the German troops entered into Serbia, the Jews were registered, marked with a yellow armband and had a compulsory work service introduced. They were thrown out of public service, denied access to public health care, and the confiscation of their property started. These and other discriminatory measures affected Roma as well, and were carried out by the German police, with the support of the Serbian quisling administration of **Milan Aćimović**, and later General **Milan Nedić**. Since the middle of August 1941, the authorities of the German national minority in Banat expelled all the Jews to Belgrade.

Despite the grave circumstances, the Jews participated in the uprising and anti-fascist struggle since July 1941. The mass killings of Jews intensified, as well as the establishment of camps for the opponents of the occupation and the quisling regime, primarily the communists, followed by the Jews and Roma, and other patriots. The main camps were Banjica in Belgrade, the camp in Šabac and the Red Cross camp in Niš. Since the second half of August 1941, the Jewish men from Banat and Belgrade, and later Romani men from Belgrade, were detained at Topovske šupe camp, in Belgrade's Autokomanda. The German army was crushing the revolt by mass shootings of civilian population, and the camps became their main source of hostages to be shot. By the middle of November, practically all Jewish and, to a large extent, Romani men were killed, as well as all Jewish refugees from Central Europe. This was accompanied by intensive anti-Jewish propaganda that accused the Jews of organizing and leading the uprising

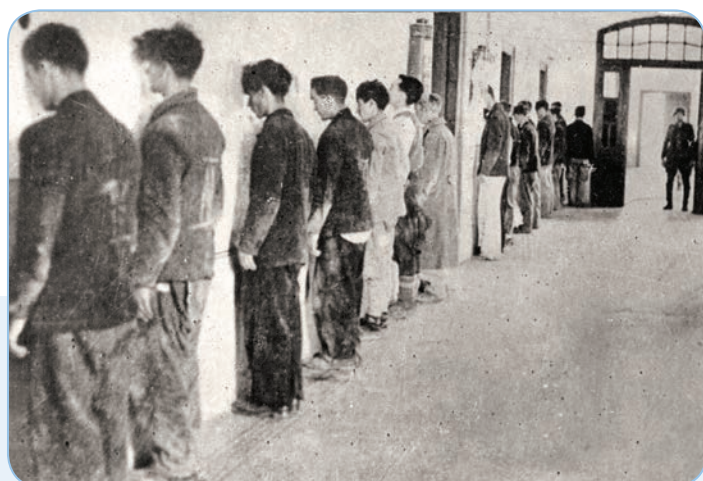
From 8 December 1941, all remaining Jews, as well as a number of Roma, women, children, and the elderly, were imprisoned in the Jewish camp Zemun (Judenlager Semlin) at the Belgrade Fair (Sajmište). In March 1942, Berlin decided that the Jews in Serbia were to be exterminated, and the gas van was sent to Belgrade. By 10 May, almost all Jews imprisoned at Sajmište were killed, and Nazi officers praised one another, saying that Serbia was "the only country in which the Jewish question and the Gypsy question have been solved".



Jews on forced labor in Belgrade, 1941



General Harald Turner,
Chief of the Military
Administration in Serbia



The prisoners of Banjica Camp, photo taken in 1942

Banjica Camp

The Banjica camp was originally established as a camp for political prisoners (communists) and the opponents of the occupation and quisling regime. From the very beginning, the Jews were interned there as well.



(Map: Terraforming © terraforming.org)

Антифашистички покрет

During the Serbian uprising in 1941, **Stjepan Stevo Filipović** led Kolubara Company of the Valjevo Partisan Detachment. This photo, taken immediately before his death by hanging in Valjevo, in 1942, became a symbol of the resistance to fascism.





Milan Nedić, Prime Minister of the quisling Government, 1941–1944, was the leader of the collaborationist regime, extremely loyal to the German occupation force, firmly convinced in the victory of the new European order led by Germany.

Masons or Freemasons are members of an organization that developed during the 18th century in England, and then in other countries. In the 19th century, especially in the conservative and right-wing political circles, as well as in parts of the Catholic Church, completely false claim that the Jews were behind the Freemasonry emerged throughout Europe, with the aim of spreading anti-Semitism, which was reiterated during times of Nazism.

The Grand Anti-Masonic Exhibition

The propaganda department of Milan Nedić's collaborationist regime organized an anti-Jewish exhibition entitled *The Grand Anti-Masonic Exhibition*, in Belgrade. The exhibition was officially launched on 22 October 1941, and was open to the public until 19 January 1942.



Poster from *the Anti-masonic exhibition*

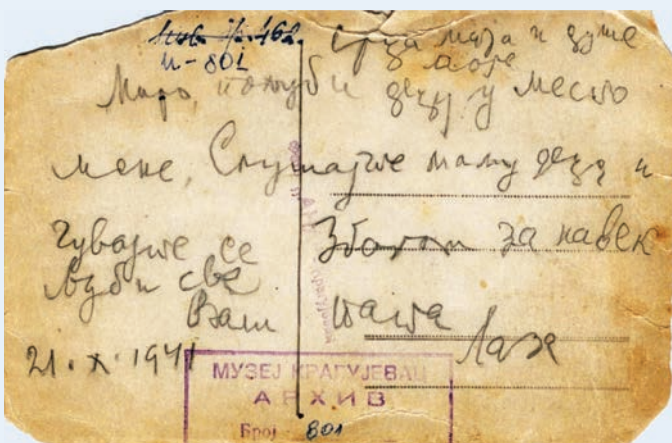
Mass shootings



German punitive expedition in Mačva, October 1941

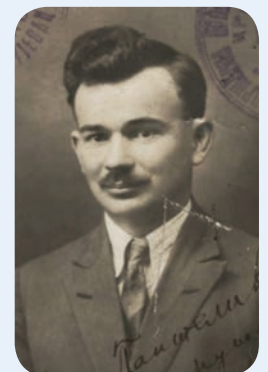


German soldiers are leading the citizens of Kragujevac to be executed, October 1941.



"My hearts and my souls. Mira, kiss the children for me. Listen to your mother children, and take care. Goodbye forever. I love you all. Your dad, Laza. 21 October 1941."

(The last message of **Lazar Pantelić**, the Principle of Kragujevac Gymnasium, before he was shot together with his students)



Lazar Pantelić (1893–1941)

Sajmište

From April to May 1942, the Jewish detainees at the Sajmište camp were systematically murdered in the “dušegupka” – a van reequipped as a mobile gas chamber. The Jews were boarded in this van under pretext of transporting them to another camp, and German officers drove them through Belgrade to Jajinci, where they unloaded by then lifeless bodies into the already dug up graves.



Marching the Jews to the Sajmište camp



“Not the hunger that makes you weep, not the cold that freezes the water in your glass and the blood in your veins... What do they intend to do with us? We are in a continual state of tension: are they going to shoot us, blow us up, transport us to Poland...? ... We just have to get through the present, which is not pleasant in the least – not in the least.”

(From the fourth letter of **Hilda Dajč**, the prisoner at Sajmište camp)

Hilda Dajč before the war

Volksdeutsche

Part of the members of the German national minority immediately entered into civilian and military service of the occupier, especially in Banat, which was under administration of the local Germans. In March 1942, in Bela Crkva, Volksdeutsche formed the notorious SS Volunteer Mountain Division “Prinz Eugen” that participated in war operations against the uprising in Yugoslavia and committed crimes against civilians.



The Hitler Youth (Hitler-Jugend) rally in Zrenjanin, 1941

3.2 Bačka under Hungarian occupation

In April 1941, Hungary occupied Bačka, committing terrible war atrocities. Immediately the Hungarian anti-Jewish laws were introduced, and in January 1942, the Hungarian Army and the Gendarmerie carried out a terrible massacre of the Serbs and Jews in Southern Bačka and Novi Sad, known as the “The Raid”, when about 4,000 civilians, including women and children, were killed. Jewish men were drafted into labor units in the war against the Soviet Union, where most of them perished. Upon request of the Germans, part of them was assigned to forced labor to the mine in Bor. A part of the Jewish youth joined the anti-fascist movement, but the majority were arrested, executed or imprisoned. After the German troops entered Hungary on 19 March 1944, harsh anti-Jewish measures were introduced in Bačka. Jews were registered, marked with a yellow armband, their property was confiscated, and from the end of April, all of them were interned to the camps in Bačka Topola, Subotica, Segedin and Bačajmaš, as well as in the ghettos in Subotica and Baja. Except for a group of about 700 “work-able” Jews who were transferred to labor camps near Vienna, all the others were deported to the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau on 25 May 1944, where almost all were killed.



Jews from Senta on forced labor



Hungarian army and the police during “The Raid” in Novi Sad.



Hungarian gendarmerie escorting the Jews of Bezdán to the ghetto, 1944

“This notebook contains the lyrics of the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti. Please send it to Hungary to the address of Dr. Gyula Ortutay, University Lecturer, Budapest, VII, Horánszki utca 1.1.”

(The text found on the notebook with the poems of **Miklós Radnóti**, who was killed in the forced march during retreat of the Jewish prisoners from forced labor in Bor mines, October 1944; Miklós Radnóti, *The Bor Notebook*, Bor, National Library Bor, 1979, 17)

3.3 Srem under Independent State of Croatia

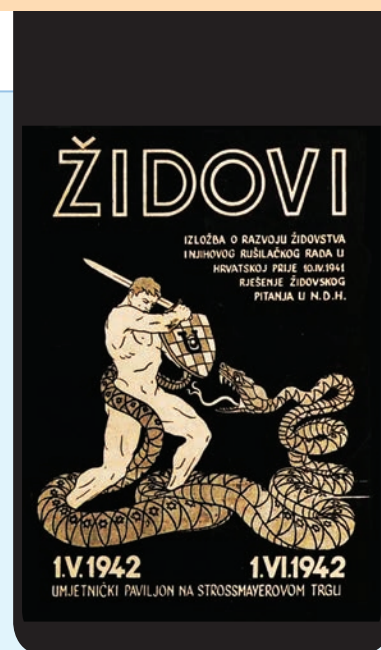
After the collapse of Yugoslavia, Germany and Italy endorsed the creation of the Independent State of Croatia which, in addition to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, encompassed Srem (Syrmia) and extended all the way to Zemun and the banks of Sava, to the borders of Belgrade city territory. The political order of Ustaša NDH was similar to Nazi regime, and the persecution of Jews begun immediately, simultaneously with the persecution of the Serbs, followed by the Roma. Jews were registered, labeled, and exposed to blackmail, violence, robbery, with an increasing number of them detained in camps, and all of it was accompanied with an intensive anti-Semitic campaign. The numerous German national minority also participated in it. By the late July 1942, Ustaša authorities ordered the immediate arrest of all Jews in Srem, and their deportation to the death camps. The majority of the Jews were detained at the football stadium in Vinkovci, under the open skies. After a month, a part of them were deported to Jasenovac, and the other to Auschwitz, where most were killed upon arrival.



Ante Pavelić, leader of the clero-fascist Ustaša movement and the leader of the puppet state of NDH.

Anti-Semitic exhibition “The Jews”

After being displayed in Zagreb in May 1942, anti-Semitic exhibition produced by the Ustaša authorities entitled “*The Jews – Exhibition on the Development of Judaism and its Destructive Work in Croatia until 10 April 1941. The Solution to the Jewish Question in NDH*”, opened in Zemun, on 19 August.



In addition to the anti-Semitic accusations borrowed from the Nazi racist narrative, Ustaša propaganda was both anti-Yugoslav and anti-Serb, and among other charges, the Jews were accused of creating a “monster state of Yugoslavia”.

Since the end of April 1941, the Ustaša authorities organized a system of camps in which the death camps Gospić-Jadovno were considered most important, until that position was taken over by Jasenovac, from August 1941 to the end of April 1945. Genocide against Serbs, Jews and Roma was carried out in these camps, including mass murder of the members of the partisan movement and other patriots. These were the only death camps in Europe beyond the control of Nazi Germany.



The children marked with a Jewish star with a letter Ž (for Židovi, a Croatian word for Jews), which was the way of identifying Jews in NDH



Ustaša plundering the personal property and valuables of the prisoners, who had just arrived to the Jasenovac camp.

Escape from Jasenovac camp

“What helped me most is the fact that I did not lose my spirit. I was always thinking about escaping and coming up with new plans. In September 1942, seven of us young men, managed to jump over the wire fence and run away, thanks to courage and sheer luck. After the escape, the Serb population helped us, and we all joined the partisans. We turned from slaves into human beings. After the war I returned to Belgrade and found my mother and two sisters. Fortunately, they managed to survive the war, unlike so many of our relatives and friends, on whose doors I went knocking, but there was no one there to answer.”

(**Cadik Danon**, *A Tree of the Danon's Cut Down: Memories of Jasenovac*, Belgrade, 2000).

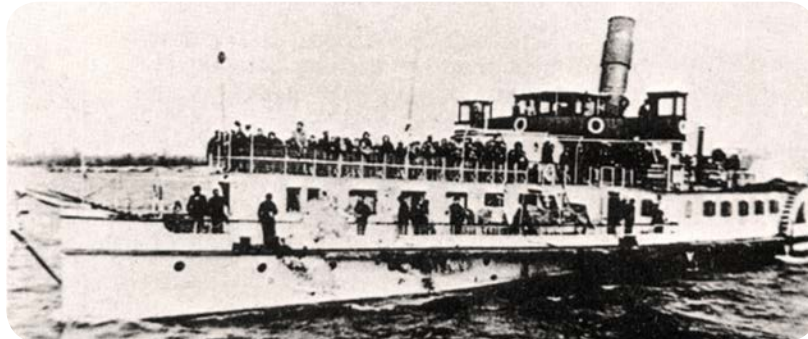


Cadik Braco Danon managed to escape from the Jasenovac camp and join the partisans.



3.4 Southeastern Serbia under Bulgarian occupation

In addition to the major part of Macedonia, the Bulgarian occupation zone in Yugoslavia extended to Southeastern Serbia with Pirot, where a smaller Jewish community lived. According to the Bulgarian anti-Semitic legislation, Jews were registered, marked, and exposed to robbery and various indignities. From 11 March 1943, all Jews from the Bulgarian occupation zones in Yugoslavia and Greece, including the Jews from Pirot, were deported to the Treblinka death camp, from where no one ever returned.



The Jews from Pirot were deported to the Treblinka camp from the Bulgarian port of Lom, in March 1943.



Rudi Abravanel (born 1920) and Rejna (born 1918) with their father Jakov in Pirot in the 1920's.

Family Abravanel from Pirot

In 1943, Rudi's father Jakov, mother Sofia and then 23-year-old Rudi, were deported by train to Lom by Bulgarian occupation forces, along with other Pirot Jewry including Rudi's grandparents and three uncles with their families, to be taken by boat to Treblinka death camp. During the transport, Rudi managed to squeeze through the narrow window of a cattle wagon and jump off the train. Escaping across Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania, Rudi succeeded in reaching the south of Italy, which was already liberated by the Allied forces. From there he went to Israel, where he lived with his wife and two children until his death in 2008. All the other members of Rudi's family were killed in the Treblinka camp. Rudy's sister Rejna joined the national liberation forces before the deportation, but was captured and executed as a partisan.

3.5 Kosovo and Metohija as part of Greater Albania

The Northern Kosovo was under German occupation, and the Southern part of Kosovo and Metohija was encompassed in the Greater Albania, under Italian protectorate. The conditions of life were tolerable, but a part of the Jewish population was interned in Albania. A number of Jews joined the anti-fascist movement or supported them. After the capitulation of Italy, the Jews returned from Albania, but in mid-May 1944, were arrested by Albanians and Germans. They were deported to Sajmište camp in Belgrade, and soon from there to Bergen Belsen, where majority of them died of starvation or disease.

Raul Tajtelbaum (Taitelbaum) was born on 13 December 1931 in Prizren, to Yosef and Paula, née Weisselberger. Raul and his parents survived the horrors of the Bergen Belsen camp, but his father, Yosef, died of exhaustion just days after they were liberated by the Red Army. After returning to Yugoslavia, Raul continued his education in Prizren, and in 1949, he left for Israel with his mother, where he still lives today, in his old age. He worked as a journalist and publicist, and was a longtime Israeli correspondent for “NIN”, “Borba” and “Politika” dailies.



Raul and Dr Yosef Taitelbaum

“It was the last Jewish transport from the territory of Yugoslavia. We were there among them – my father, my mother and me. I “celebrated” my thirteenth birthday, bar mitzvah, in this camp. Together with us, the “Albanians”, there were many Dutch Jews, Anne Frank among them, and a few dozen prominent Jews from Greece. Later, others arrived. The women who had survived the camps at Auschwitz. And even a few hundred Jews from Libya ...”

(Raul Tajtelbaum, “Prizren Elegy”, *We Survived ...* 2. The Jews about the Holocaust, Belgrade, Jewish Historical Museum, 2003, 174)

QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. What were the causes of war on the territory of Yugoslavia?
2. Take a careful look at the map of the occupation zones on the territory of Yugoslavia (on page 17). Explain how is the territory of Serbia divided.
3. How do you explain the statement made by Nazi officials that the occupied Serbia was “the only country in which the Jewish question and the Gypsy question have been solved”?
4. Do the research using literature and the Internet and find out who was Hilda Dajč. Describe her life and her motives to go to the Sajmište camp.
5. Do the research using literature and the Internet and find out who was Miklós Radnóti and why is he considered one of the greatest poets of the Holocaust period.
6. Research the persecution of Roma during the World War II, in your local community. Visit a local museum, archive or a library and, with the help of your teachers, collect information about the persecution of Roma. Write a brief essay about it.
7. What was the fate of the Serbs, Jews and Roma on the territory of Srem under the NDH administration?
8. Where were the majority of Jews from the Bulgarian occupation zone deported to? Where were they deported from the Albanian occupation zone?

4. Survival

The largest number of Jews who survived the Holocaust managed to escape certain deaths by hiding or joining the resistance movement. After the April war, the Jews who were soldiers of the Yugoslav Army were taken to labor camps as prisoners of war, where they had more chances of survival. Jews from the territory of the German occupation zone in Serbia, who managed to get out of the cities, were mainly hiding in the Serbian villages, often with the identity of Serbian refugees from NDH. This entailed an active assistance of others who were hiding or aiding Jews to assume the false identities. Others tried to reach the territories under Italian or Hungarian occupation, where they were safe at first.

Jews in the resistance movement

In spite of the mass persecutions they were exposed to immediately after the occupation of Yugoslavia, a significant number of Jews joined the anti-fascist movement, either as fighters in the partisan units, members of the underground resistance, or as doctors. Some were among the organizers of the armed groups in the uprising, and holding prominent positions in the partisan movement. In proportion to their number, the participation of Yugoslav Jews in anti-fascist struggle was one of the highest in Europe. Participation of Jewish women in the partisans was also considerable, including Dr. Roza Papo, the first woman to rise to the rank of General in the Yugoslav Army Medical Service. In the Yugoslav Army, the rank of General was awarded to 14 Jews, and 10 received the highest state decoration, the Order of the People's Hero.

"4 March 1944 in Krčevo. Attack on the Sunja-Kostajnica railway line. In Hrastov, partisan units from Banija killed 1 colonel, 3 officers. Captured 1 major, 14 members of Ustaša home guards and militia. The entire archive of the hunting association was seized."

Journal of **Lea Abinun Salcberger**, July 1944 – July 1945, Danilo Šarenac, Ivana Pantelić, *Two Halves of Memories. Partisan Diaries as a Historical Source for the World War II History*, Belgrade, Institute for Contemporary History, 2012, 99.

Dr. Roza Papo
with the partisans
in Niš, 1944

Dr. Roza Papo was a physician who participated in the People's Liberation War. She was in charge of partisan hospitals and medical services, one of only two women who were awarded the rank of General in the Yugoslav People's Army.



Vojo Todorović-Lerer
(on the right),
Commander of the
First Krajina Brigade,
1943

Vojo Todorović-Lerer participated in the People's Liberation War, held the rank of General-Colonel of the Yugoslav People's Army and was decorated with the Order of the People's Hero.



Jews in the territories under Italian occupation

After the introduction of anti-Jewish measures, and especially after the start of retaliatory mass shootings, many Jews tried to save themselves fleeing abroad. Around 5000 Jews from Serbia and the NDH found refuge in territories under Italian occupation, Kosovo, Montenegro, Dalmatia and Slovenia. Italian authorities refused to return them to the Germans or Ustaša. As a result, most of them were saved, and after the capitulation of Italy, 8 September 1943, they either joined the partisans or evacuated to the liberated territory.



Jewish refugees in the Italian camp in Kraljevica

Observers and witnesses

Residents of Belgrade and other cities have witnessed the humiliation and abuse of their fellow citizens, the Jews. Some were trying to help or express their compassion, others turned their heads away, even from the people who were until recently their neighbors or friends. Public announcements about the shootings of “the Jews and communists” were designed to forestall any idea of resistance to the occupier.



Marching the Jews to the Sajmište camp

“9 December 1941, Belgrade – There’s bread, but no meat. [...] Since yesterday, the Jewish women, together with the children, are sent to Sajmište to the camp. Men have been taken away earlier. In a few days, no Jew will be left in Belgrade. It’s very lively in front of the Botanical gardens. The Jewish women are sent to the camp from there. It looks like the whole world is on the move.

(Excerpt from the journal of **Dragutin J. Rankovic**; Nataša Milićević, Dušan Nikodijević, *Everyday Life under Occupation, 1941–1944. The Experiences of a Belgrader*, Belgrade, Institute for Contemporary History of Serbia, 2011, 89–90.)

“The first victims of Sajmište were the Jews. Judging by the full pavilions of clothing, shoes, various children’s toys, piles of human hair and other things we found coming to this camp, thousands of Jews have been killed at Sajmište before the spring 1942.”

(Testimony of the captured partisan **Milan Spasojević**, who was taken to the camp in Sajmište with a group of comrades from Kragujevac, on 2 March 1942; Milan Spasojević, “The House of Death at the Fair”, *The City of Struggle and Freedom, Belgrade 1941–1944*, Radovan Blagojević (ed.), Belgrade, Kultura, 1964, 205)

Rescuers

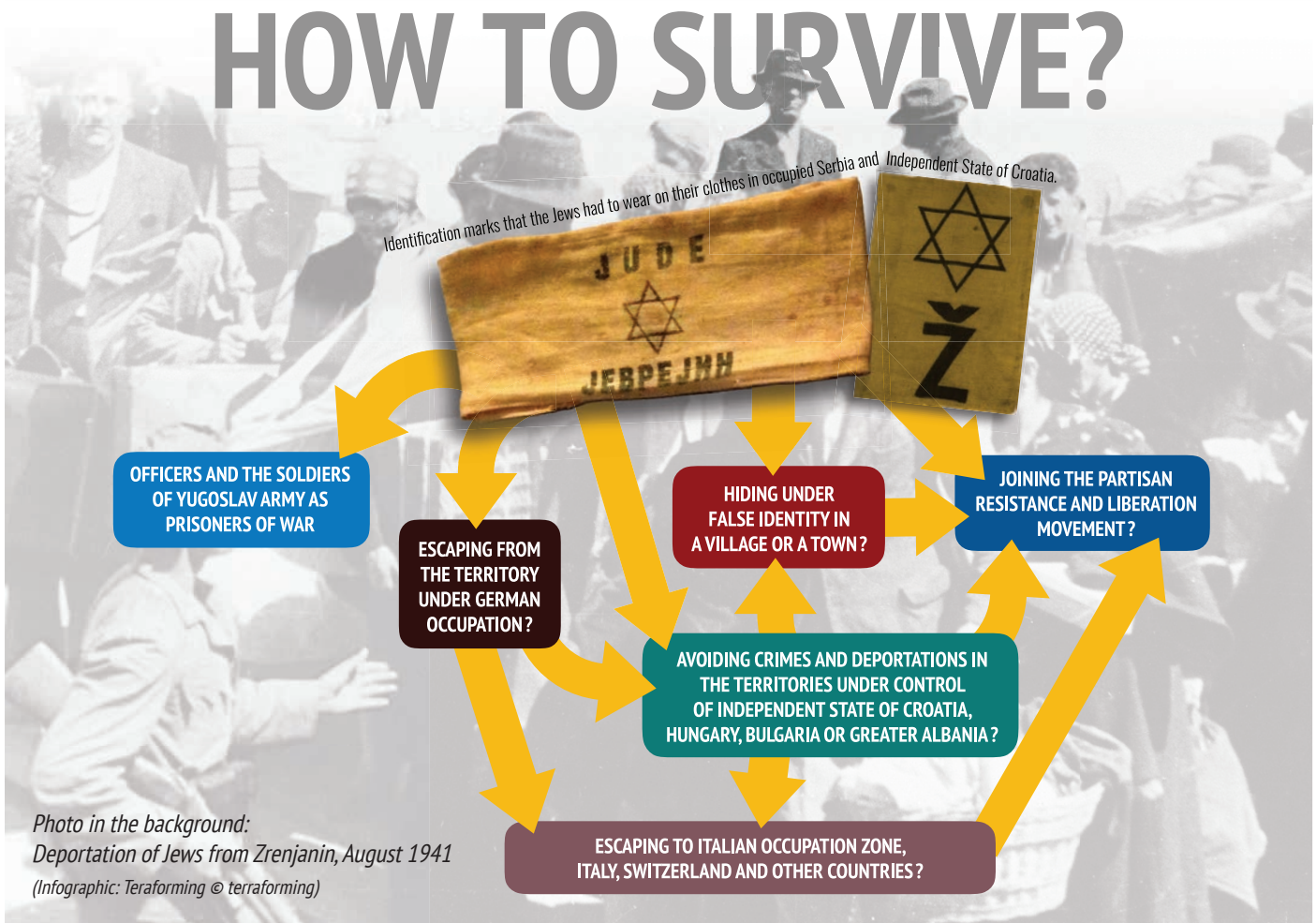
The speed at which the Jews have been registered and put under strict control, left few opportunities for escape and rescue. The Jews who have succeeded in doing so were assisted by people who, despite the threat of death to all who conceal the Jews, provided help as a gesture of humanity and resistance to the occupier. The help was offered to friends and acquaintances, but also often to complete strangers, and the safest haven was usually found in the Serbian villages. Assuming a fake non-Jewish identity was made easier by the fact that Serbia was overwhelmed by the Serbian refugees, displaced from other parts of Yugoslavia, especially from the NDH..

The state of Israel established the honorary title **“Righteous Among the Nations”** awarded to those who risked their lives saving Jews from the Holocaust. So far, 135 people from Serbia have been given this honor..

Sonja Lunginović and **Marija Andeselić** in Belgrade in 1944. With her daughters Vera and Natalija, Marija saved Sonja from death in the Holocaust. For their selfless assistance, despite risking their own lives, Israel awarded Marija, Vera and Natalija with the honorary title Righteous Among the Nations.



HOW TO SURVIVE?



QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. A large number of Jews participated in the People’s Liberation War. Do the research, using books and the Internet, of a biography of a prominent fighter of Jewish origin, and write a brief essay about it.
2. Explain what is Righteous Among the Nations honorific.
3. Where did Jewish refugees seek shelter and salvation from the Holocaust?

5. After the Holocaust

The World War II ended in 1945, taking about 55 million human lives. Many have lost their lives during military operations, or due to violence, hunger, or disease. During the war, the Nazis, their helpers and collaborators committed terrible atrocities, including genocide against Roma, genocide against Serbs in NDH, mass crimes against the mentally ill and disabled persons, homosexuals, Red Army prisoners of war, political opponents, and many others. But in terms of its objective and the manner in which it was prepared and executed, as well as its magnitude, the Holocaust is an unparalleled and unique crime.

The new post-war Yugoslav society

The State Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes of the Occupiers and their Collaborators was founded in 1943, and its work lasted until 1948. The task of the Commission was to document and establish the crimes committed in Yugoslavia during the World War II on the grounds of testimonies, and in particular to identify the perpetrators and their helpers, who participated, ordered or organized the commission of the crimes. In documenting crimes committed against the civilians, the Commission specifically labeled the crimes against the Jews.

The Nazis tried to destroy the evidence of their crimes

In the fall 1943, in order to erase all traces of their crimes, the Nazi police formed a special unit ("Sonderkommando 1005") that, up until 1944, conducted exhumations and destruction of the bodies of the murdered victims, thus removing the material evidence of crimes in some of the largest massacre sites in Serbia, such as Jajinci, Jabuka, Niš, Bagljaš near Zrenjanin, and others.



Jajinci after the Germans burned the remains of the victims of massacres



Reconstruction of the country

After the end of the war in Yugoslavia, the rebuilding and reconstruction of the war-torn country began. Demolished bridges, roads and railway tracks were reconstructed... The youth work brigades built the Brčko-Banovići railway line, 92 kilometers long, in 1946.

The trials of war criminals

The greatest international court proceeding against the Nazis was organized immediately after the war, in the German town of Nuremberg. In the Nuremberg trials (1945–1946), 24 high-ranking officers and officials of the Third Reich were indicted. It was the first international tribunal. After the post-war trials, the idea was born to establish an international tribunal for genocide and crimes against humanity.

Nuremberg trials



Defendants at the Nuremberg trials:

1. (in the front row, from left to right): Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Wilhelm Keitel
2. (in the second row, from left to right): Karl Dönitz, Erich Raeder, Baldur von Schirach, Fritz Sauckel

Trials in Belgrade



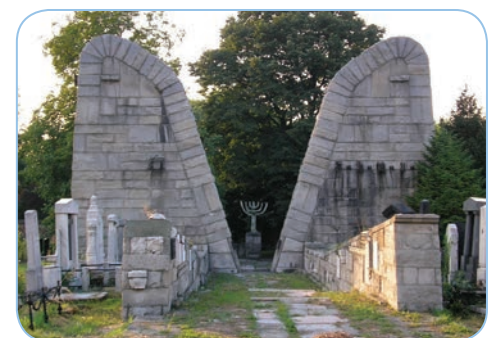
Trial of German war criminals was held before the Military Court in Belgrade in 1947

Former Commander-in-chief in Southeastern Europe, Alexander Löhr and Harald Turner, former Chief of the Military Administration in Serbia, were, among others, both sentenced to death as war criminals.

Remembrance and commemorations

In the first decades after the World War II, the culture of remembrance in Europe focused on the fighters who have lost their lives in the struggle against the Nazis, while all civilian victims fell under the general definition of the “victim of fascist terror”. In the 1960’s, the Holocaust began to be perceived as a unique historical event among the World War II atrocities.

There was no separate narrative about the Holocaust in socialist Yugoslavia either, but there was awareness of the persecution of Jews in Yugoslavia. The focus of memories and commemorations was primarily on the combatants who fell in the People’s Liberation War, and all civilian victims were referred to in general terms, as victims of fascism.



Memorial to the Jewish victims of fascism, the work of Bogdan Bogdanovic, 1952, Jewish Cemetery in Belgrade

“During the occupation, a heinous German camp stood on this spot, where several thousand of citizens of Podrinje and other places of our homeland were imprisoned. From it, over a thousand Jews and several hundred of our citizens were taken to be shot (...)

23 October 1954. Citizens of Šabac”

Memorial plaque on Šabac fortress was unveiled on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the liberation of Šabac.



Monument “The Three Fists”, the work of Ivan Sabolić, 1963, is a part of the memorial park Bubanj, near Niš. The memorial park Bubanj is a memorial complex built to commemorate the shooting of citizens of Niš and Southern Serbia (Serbs, Jews and Roma) in the World War II. Each of the three fists is of different sizes, symbolizing a male, female, and child’s hands that defy the enemy, since entire families were executed there.

Return to life

Returning to life after the war was particularly hard for Jews who survived the Holocaust. Many found out upon return that, not only have all the members of their immediate and extended families been killed, but that the entire communities have perished. Despite the enormous suffering and destruction of the major part of the Jewish population in Yugoslavia, the surviving Jews returned from the partisans, shelters in the villages and towns where they were hiding during the occupation, or from captivity in prison and concentration camps, and managed to renew the work of the Jewish Community. At the same time, they were selflessly committed to the reconstruction of the devastated land. With the creation of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, many Jews were faced with a dilemma: whether to go to a newly established State of Israel, or to remain and continue life in Yugoslavia.

SFR Yugoslavia was among the first states to recognize Israel and establish diplomatic relations in 1948. By 1952, around 7500 Jews, representing about 60% of Jews who survived the Holocaust in Yugoslavia, emigrated to Israel.

Dina and Jovan Rajs, 5 February 2015, in Stockholm, before the performance of “Have you met Hitler?” based on the autobiographical book of the same name by Jovan Rajs, about how he survived the Holocaust as a boy. *(Photo Frankie Fouganthin)*

Jova Rajs from Zrenjanin and **Dina Vajs** from Ruma, managed to survive the Holocaust as children. They met after the war, got married and lived in Belgrade. Jova liked Serbia, but as he himself said, it was very difficult for him to pass every day by the place where a Jewish camp Sajmište used to stand, where his entire family was slain. For years he was incessantly haunted by the image of the gas van “Dušegupka” passing through Belgrade and killing his loved ones. Because of this, in the 1960’s Jovan and Dina moved to Stockholm, Sweden, where they still live. Jovan and Dina are active today in schools across Sweden, where they talk to the young people about their Holocaust experiences.



QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. What was the greatest international Nazi war crimes trial, after the World War II?
2. Were the Jews in socialist Yugoslavia recognized as victims of fascism? Explain by example.
3. To what extent was it possible to re-establish the life of the Jewish community in the territory of Yugoslavia, after the horrors of the World War II?

6. State of Israel

Many Jews have long hoped for a country of their own, that would protect them from the centuries-long anti-Semitism. By the end of the 19th century, an increasing number of Jews moved to the area of today's Israel, where their ancestors have lived for centuries, and even more have left Europe before the start of the World War II. After the war, out of the few who survived the Holocaust; a certain number emigrated to Israel. The State of Israel was declared in 1948.

Millenium-long aspirations for a country of their own

Zionism is a movement for creation of a Jewish state on Israel's soil (*more on this topic in the Part I*). When the first Zionists settled in the Middle Eastern territory known as **Palestine**, at the beginning of the last century, it was a British protectorate. Initially, the Jews lived in peace with their Arab and other neighbors. One of the important motives for Jewish emigration from Europe to Palestine in the 19th century was the growing anti-Semitism. Purchasing land from Arab landowners extended the already existing Jewish communities in Palestine. The British have given false hope to both Jews and the Arabs from Palestine, that they will get the support for establishing their own state. The desire of both groups to found their own countries in the same area is the cause of territorial conflict that continues to this day. In 1947, Britain announced a withdrawal from this territory and in November the United Nations adopted a resolution on the partition of the former British colony and the establishment of two states, the Arab and the Jewish. A large part of Arab countries objected to the United Nations resolution. Nevertheless, on the basis of that decision, the Jews established their own state by declaring the Republic of Israel on 14 May 1948. David Ben-Gurion was appointed as the first Prime Minister of the new state. The neighboring countries Egypt, Jordan and Syria, as well as a part of Iraqi forces, immediately attacked Israel. This was the First Arab-Israeli war, won by Israelis. In 1967, a new war broke out and, ever since then, the tensions in this territory never ceased. The wars and conflicts led to many casualties.

The unresolved political issue in the Middle East is often a source of contemporary anti-Semitism. It is necessary to distinguish potential criticism of the Israeli policies in the context of a democratic dialogue, from denying the right of the Jewish people to their own country, which represents a blatant expression of anti-Semitism.

The ships for Israel

Immediately after the war, groups of camp survivors who had nowhere to return to, left for Palestine, which was at that time governed by the British. The British usually arrested and deported the postwar newcomers, as the measures that limited the rights of Jewish refugees to settle in Palestine were still in force.



The ship full of Buchenwald concentration camp survivors arrives to Haifa harbour, 1945

Young Jews in today's Serbia and Israel

"I have a relationship with both Israel and Serbia. Actually, I like to appreciate my every step - both Jewish and Serbian. I'm certainly more attached to Serbia. I love Serbia, and I love being here, and I love that I was born in Serbia. I am a Serb, and Israel is, as they say, the Jewish homeland, and I believe in that. I like to go to Israel, it is a beautiful country, and I have friends and relatives there. I've been to other countries that are beautiful too, but I feel a special connection to Israel."

Marina Drašković, age 17, Jewish Community of Novi Sad's Teenage Club

QUESTIONS/ASSIGNMENTS for students

1. How and when was the State of Israel created?
2. Why is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict considered to be one of the greatest contemporary conflicts?

Reflections of the young people after meeting Jewish survivors of the Holocaust:

"I knew about these topics more than my peers even before, but now I have learnt a lot more. When I see the kind of disinformation that exists in society, I simply feel the need to tell someone the real truth and about the experiences of the concentration camp survivors and their descendants, who have been exposed to persecution. I will attempt to talk as much as I can about what I learnt here, and use my abilities and talents to make people aware of the truth."

Ilija Đorđević Arsić, age 16, Niš

"Sometimes they ask me things like whether I'm going to "a Jewish church," and then I explain to them that it's called a synagogue. It would be very nice and much easier, if everyone could learn a bit more about our culture and customs. Likewise, I think it would be very good to organize meetings with the old people who survived the Holocaust. One such encounter left a great impression on me. These old people have wonderful stories and know what life was like before."

Hana Fa, age 17, Novi Sad, Jewish Community of Novi Sad's Teenage Club

"I try to imagine myself in the shoes of my peer, a Jew, who lived through all these hardships. I think I would feel awful that my neighborhood suddenly rejected me overnight, and that they used falsehoods to create an artificial difference between me, my people and others. And all because someone objected to the Jewish lifestyle and their status in the society. I imagine myself as someone who dies in that Holocaust just because someone implied that I'm different, and actually we are all the same - because there is no significant difference between people."

Vladimir Simić, age 16, Šid

"Sometimes I encounter nasty jokes about the Jews and the Holocaust. This has taken root. It all sounds very stupid to me. It makes me feel bitter and I just pretend to laugh."

Mihajlo Miletić, age 16, Novi Sad, Jewish Community of Novi Sad's Teenage Club



(Photos: Terraforming © terraforming.org)

The Holocaust is a genocide against the Jews, planned and executed by the German Nazis and their collaborators, throughout the occupied Europe, during the World War II.

There were other terrible atrocities during the World War II including, among others, genocide against the Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia, genocide against Roma, mass murder of people with mental or physical disabilities in Germany, as well as mass crimes against the Soviet and Polish civilian population, and others. All victims have to be remembered with respect and piety, just like all crimes must be investigated objectively and scientifically, precisely in order to understand their specificity, socio-historical processes that led to them, who were the perpetrators and who were the victims, or other protagonists of those crimes, as well as what was the extent of their consequences, that often stretch to this day.

As for the persecution of the Serbs, Jews and Roma during the World War II in Yugoslavia, especially in Serbia and the NDH, all three peoples were targeted by the occupiers and their helpers, as were the members of the resistance movement and other anti-fascists, regardless of their nationality or religion. In many massacre sites the Serbs, Jews and Roma were killed together, and many have fought side by side against the occupier. All three peoples share a common anti-fascist tradition, which should be fostered with pride.

Some of materials for learning about the Holocaust

1. The project “The Portraits and the Memories of the Jewish Community of Serbia before the Holocaust” is an initiative of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia for preservation of memories and promotion of education on Holocaust.

Website: www.jevrejipamte.org contact: www.haver.si



2. The exhibition and a graphic novel “The Letters of Hilda Dajč”, is a work of the cartoonist Aleksandar Zograf.



3. “Ester” is a teaching material, whose most important part is a series of dramatized stories in the form of graphic novels, about the lives and suffering of our fellow citizens, killed in the Jewish camp at Sajmište, in Belgrade.

Website: www.ester.rs



4. Exhibitions “Shoa – How was it humanly possible?” about the Holocaust in Europe (Yad Vashem), and “Some Words about the Holocaust in Serbia” about persecution of Jews in the occupied Serbia (Terraforming), are part of an innovative “ready2print” concept, which makes exhibition of a museum quality available for downloading, printing and displaying in an adequate public space, such as schools, libraries, museums, community centers, etc.

Website: www.terraforming.org



Authors: Dr. Milan Koljanin, Dr. Milovan Pisarri, Miško Stanišić, Aleksandar Todosijević • **Anne Frank House expert team:** Nevena Bajalica, Dr. Evelien Gans, Jaap Tanja, Dr. Dienne Hondius • **Collaborators:** Aron Albahari, Dr. Sanja Petrović-Todosijević, Branko Đurić • **Consulting editors:** Ivana Janković, Nataša Kostić, Dr. Marko Šuica • **Proof-reading and correction:** Milena Macura • **Design:** Mario Lampić • **Print:** Printing press xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx • **Publishers:** OSCE Mission to Serbia and Anne Frank House, Amsterdam

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Publication “Teaching materials to combat anti-Semitism” is composed of three parts: Part 1: The Jewish people and anti-Semitism, Part 2: Holocaust, and Part 3: Never again, with the aim to enable the students to recognize anti-Semitism, as well as other forms of intolerance and discrimination, and learn how to confront them.

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