Andrej Pančur

HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN SLOVENIA

On 11 April 1945 the American Army liberated the German concentration camp of Buchenwald. The only fourteen-year-old Tamás Berthold Schwarz was among the surviving internees. Before he arrived to Buchenwald, in the end of January 1945 Tamás had barely survived the internees' "death march", whom the Nazi concentration camp guards had driven on as they retreated before the advancing Soviet Army. His father had been one of the unfortunate fatalities of this "death march". For months before that, Tamás and his fellow prisoners had suffered the impossible working conditions in the Jawischowits (Polish: Jawiszowice) coal mine, a branch of the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp. Tamás had arrived there from Prekmurje already on 21 May 1944, together with his mother, younger sister and other members of his family. On his arrival to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Tamás had lied about his age, claiming to be sixteen years old. Therefore the Nazi doctor Josef Mengele sent him to work, while his mother and little sister died in the gas chamber immediately as "unfit for work".[547]

547 Beata Lazar and Mirjana Gašpar: *Židje v Lendavi* [Jews in Lendava]. Lendava, 1997, pp. 88–91.

Mengele's decision was not intended to save Tamás's life, but only to exploit him as a labourer for the benefit of the German Reich. Had the Allied Coalition not ultimately defeated the Nazi Germany, Tamás would have sooner or later become a victim of the colossal Nazi destruction machine. All of this just because he was Jewish. During World War II the Nazi Germany, with eager assistance of its allies, managed to eradicate two thirds (between five and six million) of Jewish people from the occupied Nazi Europe. In comparison with the pre-war Jewish population, more than 70 % of Jews in Poland, the Baltic region, Czechoslovakia, Greece and the Netherlands died, and only slightly less in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In contrast, in France, Bulgaria, Luxembourg and Italy around 20 % of the pre-war Jewish population died, which means that despite the severe persecution the majority lived to see the end of the war.[548] The number of fatalities also differed considerably among Jews in Slovenia. While as much as 85 % of the pre-war Jewish population was killed in the Prekmurje region, in the other regions of Slovenia one fifth of Jews who had Yugoslav citizenship or had lived in this territory for a longer period (refugees excluded) were killed.[549]

Such a profound difference in the number of victims cannot be explained solely on the basis of the success or failure of individual Jews to escape the Nazi persecution. For example, the related Jewish families (of Catholic faith) Falter and Morderer managed to sell their assets and wood industry company in Jurklošter near Rimske toplice just in time to escape the German occupiers in 1941 and retreat to the neutral Spain (Madrid), where the former received a Canadian and the latter an Argentinian visa.[550] Were these families more far-sighted than the parents of Tamás Schwarz, who refused to sell their share in the family mill and brickworks and persisted in Lendava to the very moment when the Germans decided to kill off all Jews in Prekmurje? Of course not. As it happened, in the middle of 1941 nobody, not even in their worst nightmare, could imagine that the Nazi Germany would soon undertake a mass extermination of all Jews.

Hitler and other Nazi leaders did not have any predetermined plans to gradually murder all the European Jews. The Nazi delusions about a racially clean Reich, where only people of "Arian" descent could live, encouraged the

548 I. Koralnik: Untersuchungen über die Zahl der Juden in Europa Anfang 1931. *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* [Neue Folge], 1931, No. 3, p. 43. Martin Gilbert: *The Dent Atlas of the Holocaust*. London, 1993, p. 244.

549 Andrej Pančur: Holocaust in the Occupied Slovenian Territories. The Importance of Class, Gender and Geography. In: Nancy E. Rupprecht and Wendy Koenig (eds.), *The Holocaust and World War II*. Newcastle, 2012.

550 Karel Gržan: *Skrivosti starodavne kartuzije. Med zgodovinskimi pomniki v Jurkloštru* [Secrets of the Ancient Carthusian Monastery. Among the Historical Monuments in Jurklošter]. Ljubljana, Jurklošter, 2006, p. 99. Milan Ristović: *U potrazi za utočištem. Jugoslovenski Jevreji u bekstvu od holokausta 1941–1945*. Belgrade, 1998, pp. 352–353.

Nazi elite to keep searching for new ways of removing Jews from the territories controlled by Germany. Since the Nazis rose to power in 1933 and until the breakout of World War II in 1939 the mass deportation of Jews from Germany was the only possibility for the "final solution of the Jewish question".[551] With the implementation of increasingly radical anti-Jewish measures, Jews were gradually pushed out of the German society and economy completely. Many of them were thus forced to leave Germany. The German authorities literally forced Jews to emigrate, while at the same time the vast majority of their assets were confiscated. After the German annexation of Austria on 13 March 1938, Germany immediately started persecuting the Austrian Jews as well. In just a few months the Austrian Jews experienced all of the forms of persecution that the German Jews had been gradually subjected to in the years leading up to that point.[552] Before that only around 270 Jews had lived in Carinthia, of these as many as 180 in Klagenfurt. The Nazi authorities exerted so much pressure against them that until the end of 1938 virtually all of them sold their property below cost and left Carinthia. Usually they were forced to leave for Vienna, where they waited for the opportunity to leave the German Reich. The majority of these people managed to leave in time, while the rest remained in the isolated houses, intended only for Jews, and awaited their destiny. At least 45 of them died in the Holocaust.[553]

After the German and Austrian Jews, the Czech Jews became the target of the persecution as well. When on 30 September 1938 Germany annexed the Czech Sudetenland as well and occupied the rest of the Czech territory on 15 March 1939 (the Czech-Moravian protectorate), the Czech Jews also became increasingly socially isolated and forced to emigrate.[554] Larger and larger masses of Jewish refugees strived to find refuge in the countries where they could feel safe from the German persecution.

A lot of them fled to Yugoslavia as well. Only a few stopped in the Slovenian territory for any length of time. According to the official information, only 16 Jewish refugees were in the Drava Banate in 1937.[555] However, in the following years the number of Jewish refugees in Yugoslavia increased quickly. Thus more than 55 000 arrived between 1933 and 1941. A very large number fled to Yugoslavia through Slovenia, where they mostly only stayed for a short time. Usually they headed on towards Zagreb immediately or in a day or two, and then towards other corners of Yugoslavia before finally retreating abroad. Many of these

551 Hans Mommsen: *Auschwitz, 17. Juli 1942. Der Weg zur europäischen "Endlösung der Judenfrage"*. Munich, 2002, pp. 177–178.

552 Cf. Saul Friedländer: *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939*. Munich, 2000.

553 August Walzl: *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*. Klagenfurt, 1987, pp. 138–246.

554 Livia Rothkirchen: *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. Facing the Holocaust*. Lincoln, Jerusalem 2005, pp. 98–159.

555 SI AS 68, box 13-13/1937, 1416, Številčno stanje inozemskih državljanov.

refugees were unable to keep travelling, though, and they got stuck in Yugoslavia for various lengths of time. With the aid of international Jewish organisations they were mostly taken care of by the Yugoslav Jewish religious congregations. Quite a few of these refugees were assigned to special shared accommodation. In 1940 the authorities in Leskovec pri Krškem organised shared accommodation for refugees, which were then taken care of by the Jewish religious congregation from Zagreb.[556]

As the number of Jewish refugees increased, more and more European as well as other countries closed their doors. The Jewish refugees had to overcome an increasing number of obstacles.[557] Yugoslavia was no exception.[558] Especially refugees without any property were unwelcome, and such was the majority of the Jewish refugees. Only a few of them managed to salvage a significant share of their former assets from the greed of the Nazi authorities and take their property with them abroad. However, soon even such Jewish refugees were no longer welcome. Thus the Czech Jew Jurij Polak and his family put up a true paper war with the state authorities between 1938 and 1941 in order to be allowed to stay in Maribor, although Polak worked there as an agent of one of the biggest textile factories in Maribor (Zelenka & Co.).[559] Naturally, in these circumstances the Austrian, Czech and German Jews, who had lived in the Yugoslav part of Slovenia for at least a decade, wanted to obtain Yugoslav citizenship. At first most of them succeeded. However, as the persecution of Jews in the Central Europe intensified, the responsible Yugoslav and Slovenian authorities started refusing their applications more and more frequently, because of a single reason: they were Jewish. Thus "the applicant is Jewish"[560] was the sole reason why even the application of the rich landowner and industrialist from Loka pri Žusmu, Karl König, was rejected.

As it became increasingly harder to obtain even an ordinary visa for entry to Yugoslavia, more and more Jews crossed the Yugoslav border illegally. The northern border with the former Austria was the most crucial. Some of the illegal refugees that the Yugoslav authorities captured were sent back across the border. Only in a few cases did brave individuals prevent the extradition of captured Jewish refugees. For example, the commander of the Maribor border police Uroš Žun thus provided the necessary documents for sixteen captured girls from

556 Ristović, *U potrazi za utočištem*, pp. 23–82. Ivo Goldstein: *Židovi u Zagrebu 1918–1941*. Zagreb, 2004.
557 Wolfgang Benz: *Holokavst*. Ljubljana, 2000, pp. 35–37.
558 Milan Ristović: "Unsere" und "fremde" Juden. Zum Problem der jüdischen Flüchtlinge in Jugoslawien 1938–1941. In: Dittmar Dahlmann and Anke Hilbrenner (eds.), *Zwischen großen Erwartungen und bösem Erwachen*. Paderborn, 2007, pp. 191–211.
559 SI AS 68, box 13/13/1941, 5408.
560 SI AS 68, box 8–2/1940, 8784.

Berlin.[561] The more usual outcome was a fate like that of a group of Austrian Jews who crossed the Yugoslav border in Prekmurje illegally only a few weeks before the onset of World War II in Yugoslavia. The local driver then wanted to take them to the railway station in Radenci, but they were captured by the gendarmerie on a bridge across the river Mura and returned to the German Reich.[562]

The German authorities were by no means happy to receive any illegal Jewish refugees whom the Yugoslav authorities sent back across the border. As World War II began, the number of countries where Jews, unwanted in the German Reich, could seek refuge became increasingly slimmer. At the same time, with new victories of the German war machine, the number of Jews living in the territory of the expanded German Reich and in certain areas occupied by the Germans, especially in Poland, increased very rapidly as well. Even though the Nazi authorities continued to encourage the emigration of Jews from the German Reich until as late as 1941, such a "solution of the Jewish question" turned out to be increasingly unrealistic. The disenfranchised and destitute Jewish population gradually became concentrated and enclosed in ghettos. The plan was to deport and relocate them outside of the main territory of the German jurisdiction at the first suitable opportunity. However, every new plan with regard to the manner and location of their deportation (eastern Poland, Madagascar, polar regions of the Soviet Union) soon went up in smoke. In the circumstances of the ruthless German occupation policy, especially in Poland, the local Nazi rulers implemented progressively radical policies against Jews with the approval of their superiors. The lives of Jews became increasingly threatened, but their methodical extermination did not (yet) occur.[563]

However, the Nazi Germany was not the only state to deliberately exclude Jews from the society and economy at that time. Already before the war the German allies, one by one, swiftly adopted anti-Semitic legislation, drastically restricting the rights of the native Jews. Thus, after 1938, Italy and Hungary also restricted the Jewish citizens' rights and freedom of economic participation. Similarly as in Germany before, in Hungary and Italy the native Jews became more and more isolated.[564] The Yugoslav Jews were spared in this sense until as late as October 1940, when the Yugoslav government also adopted two anti-Semitic decrees. One of them restricted the enrolment of Jewish students in the universities, colleges,

561 Zdenko Kodrič: Iz takega testa so Žuni [Such is the Žun Family]. *7 D*, 13 January 1999.

562 SI AS 68, box 13–18/1941, No. 10861.

563 Christopher R. Browning: *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942*. Lincoln, Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 1–212.

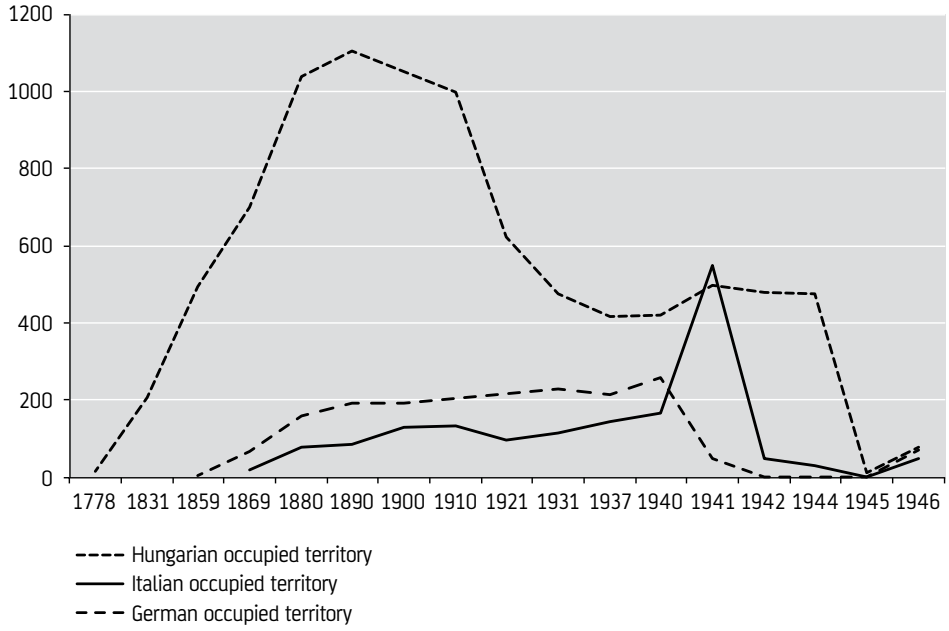
564 Thomas Schlemmer and Hans Woller: Der italienische Faschismus und die Juden 1922 bis 1945. *Vierteljahrschrift für Zeitgeschichte*, 2005, No. 2, pp. 165–201. Rolf Fischer: *Entwicklungsstufen des Antisemitismus in Ungarn 1867–1939. Die Zerstörung der magyarisch-jüdischen Symbiose*. Munich, 1988, pp. 127–189.

high schools, secondary schools, teachers' training colleges and other vocational schools. The number of Jewish pupils at these schools was supposed to be in line with the number of the Jewish population in the areas where these schools were located. The other decree prohibited Jews from establishing wholesale food dealerships, while the Jewish owners of the existing dealerships could be prohibited from further activities or forced to accept business management commissioners.[565] Especially the latter decree affected quite a few Jewish merchants.[566] On the other hand, the introduction of "numerus clausus" for Jewish pupils and students was not in force long enough to demonstrate its true power in practice, which would have occurred in the environments with larger concentrations of the Jewish population. Thus, for example, quite a few Jewish pupils had to leave the general upper secondary school in Murska Sobota.[567]

On 6 April 1941, with the attack of the Axis Powers against Yugoslavia, the full-blown Nazi persecution was also applied to Jews from the Yugoslav Slovenia. After the defeat of the Yugoslav Army the German occupiers took over the regions of Upper Carniola, Carinthia, Styria and the northern part of Lower Carniola. These territories were then de facto (but not also de iure) annexed by the German Reich. The other two occupiers annexed their parts of the Slovenian territory also formally. The Italian occupiers took over most of Lower Carniola, Inner Carniola and Ljubljana, where they established the provincial administrative unit called the Ljubljana Province. The Hungarian occupiers took over the majority of the Prekmurje region. The Hungarian legal order (and thus the applicable anti-Jewish legislation) was soon implemented in Prekmurje, while the German and Italian occupiers only gradually implemented their legal orders in the occupied territories of Slovenia.[568]

565 *Službeni list kraljevske banske uprave Dravske banovine*, 16 October 1940, pp. 862–863.
566 Vlado Valenčič: *Židje v preteklosti Ljubljane* [Jews in Ljubljana's Past]. Ljubljana, 1992, p. 72.
567 Borut Brumen: *Na robu zgodovine in spomina. Urbana kultura Murske Sobote med letoma 1919 in 1941* [At the Edge of History and Memory. Urban Culture in Murska Sobota between 1919 and 1941]. Murska Sobota, 1995, p. 54.
568 Tone Ferenc: *Okupacijski sistemi med drugo svetovno vojno: 1, Razkosanje in aneksionizem* [Occupation Systems during World War II: 1, Division and Annexation]. Ljubljana, 2006.

Chart: Jewish population since its settlement until the Holocaust in view of the individual occupied territories of Slovenia during World War II[569]



Only a few Jews lived in the territory of the today's Slovenia before World War II. The chart above demonstrates the growing and diminishing number of the Jewish population in the Slovenian territory, occupied during World War II by the German, Italian and Hungarian occupiers. The largest number of Jews lived in Prekmurje, where they had begun to settle already in the 18th century. Until the end of the 19th century their number had already increased to 1000, but had diminished swiftly afterwards, especially due to their migration to larger city centres outside of the economically poorly-developed Prekmurje region. According to the last official population census in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, only 476 Jews were left in Prekmurje in 1931. The majority of them had been firmly rooted in this territory for several generations, and therefore almost all of them had Yugoslav citizenship. The Jewish community in the other parts

569 The statistical data about the number of Jews until 1937, inclusive, was assumed from the work: Andrej Pančur: Judovsko prebivalstvo v Sloveniji do druge svetovne vojne [Jewish Population in Slovenia until World War II]. In: Žarko Lazarević and Aleksander Lorenčič (eds.), *Podobe modernizacije. Poglavja iz gospodarske in socialne modernizacije Slovenije v 19. in 20. stoletju* [Images of Modernisation. Chapters from the Economic and Social Modernisation in Slovenia in the 19th and 20th Century]. Ljubljana, 2009, pp. 255, 271–275. The data for the time of World War II is much less reliable and based on the on the information contained in a variety of expert literature (quoted in this article), but especially on my own database about the Jewish population.

of the Slovenian territory was completely different. As it happened, after the expulsion of Jews from Styria and Carinthia in 1497 and from Carniola in 1515 they were prohibited from permanently settling in this territory until as late as their emancipation in 1867. However, even afterwards Jews only rarely settled in these areas. Those who did were exceedingly urban, and the majority of them only settled there recently. In 1937 almost half of Jews were foreign citizens (from Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Germany and Romania). If they were Yugoslav citizens, almost half of them had only recently arrived from territories outside Slovenia as well, primarily from the neighbouring Croatia. Before World War II most Jews lived in the larger cities, especially Ljubljana, Maribor, Ptuj and Celje. Although they were, on average, significantly wealthier as the rest of the population and certain quite rich individuals were among them, the majority nevertheless belonged to the bourgeois middle class. It was also characteristic for these Jews that they were exceedingly mobile. During the 1931 census the interviewers only registered 344 Jews, but until the World War II their number gradually increased because of the refugees. Thus, together with Christianised Jews, approximately one thousand Jews lived in the territory of the Yugoslav Slovenia.[570]

Already at the first glance it is immediately obvious from the chart above that the dynamics of the persecution of Jews in different occupation zones varied greatly. The "solution of the Jewish question" was first carried out in the German occupation zone, then Italian, and finally Hungarian.

Already shortly after the German arrival, most Jews from the German occupation zone retreated from the persecution. The Carniolan Jewish industrialist Artur Heller and his family simply took a train to Ljubljana, located in the Italian occupation zone, on 27 April 1941.[571] Thus he managed to barely avoid the mass arrests of all those individuals whom the occupiers saw as unfit to become full citizens of the German Reich. As it was, Lower Styria and Upper Carniola were among those occupied territories (like the western Poland, Alsace and Lorraine) that the Nazi elites wanted to Germanise as soon as possible. On their quest for the "racially clean" German Reich, the Germans wanted to drive out all of the "racially inferior" groups of the population and all those individuals they saw as obstacles to Germanisation due to national and political reasons. Not only did the Germans intend to banish the "racially inferior" Jews and Romani, but rather, primarily, the part of the non-German population that they did not intend to Germanise. The ambitiously outlined relocation plans always turned

570 Pančur, *Judovsko prebivalstvo v Sloveniji*, pp. 249–296.

571 Jože Žontar: *Kaznovana podjetnost. Kranjski trgovec in industrialec Franjo Sirc* [Punished for Entrepreneurship. Merchant and Industrialist Franjo Sirc from Kranj]. Ljubljana, 2005, p. 114.

out as unrealistic.[572] Thus the Germans managed to deport approximately 17 500 unwanted people from the Slovenian territory to Serbia and Croatia during the summer of 1941. Most of these deportees were Slovenians, but this included practically all Jews (as well as the Sinti) who had not managed to escape before.[573]

These expelled Jews ended up in places where their lives were increasingly threatened with each passing month. The Ustashe regime in Croatia started persecuting Jews resolutely immediately after their rise to power, and in a few months the mass killings began there as well. The Jews deported to Croatia thus sooner or later became victims of the merciless Ustashe destruction machine.[574] The whole family of Ignac Sonnenschein, a Jew from Ptuj, died in the largest concentration camp Jasenovac in 1942. On the other hand, his brother Hinko and his family managed to hide their identity for a while and pretend to be Slovenian. Finally they acquired the relevant documents at the Swiss embassy in Zagreb and retreated to the neutral Switzerland in 1942.[575]

Quite a few Jewish deportees in Serbia probably also survived only because they successfully concealed their true identity. The circumstances were such that when the first of them arrived to Serbia, the local Jewish population had already been subjected to all forms of discrimination and persecution. Ultimately, in the autumn of 1941 the German Army started to implement the Holocaust against the Jews so successfully that Serbia was declared as "Jew-free" already in May 1942.[576] Among other people, in February or March 1942 the members of the Carniolan Jewish family Singer died in the German concentration camp Sajmište.

In the second half of 1941 a dramatic turning point in the Nazi anti-Jewish policy took place. With the German attack against the Soviet Union a total war began against the "Jewish Bolshevik" enemy. As the use of even the most extreme measures was not only allowed but even recommended in the fight against this enemy, the selective executions of Jewish men soon turned into unselective extermination of the whole Jewish population. With mass shootings of large groups of Jews the Germans and their collaborators managed to kill more than a

572 Isabel Heinemann: "*Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut*". *Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*. Göttingen, 2003, pp. 187–356. Isabel Heinemann: Die Rassenexperten der SS und die bevölkerungspolitische Neuordnung Südosteuropas. In: Mathias Beer and Gerhard Seewann (eds.), *Südostforschung im Schatten des Dritten Reiches*. Munich, 2004, pp. 135–157.

573 Andrej Pančur: Judje s Spodnje Štajerske in Gorenjske kot žrtve holokavsta v Evropi [Jews from Lower Styria and Upper Carniola as Victims of the Holocaust in Europe]. In: Nevenka Troha, Mojca Šorn and Bojan Balkovec (eds.), *Evropski vplivi na slovensko družbo* [European Influences on the Slovenian Society]. Ljubljana, 2008, pp. 373–380.

574 Ivo Goldstein: *Holokaust u Zagrebu*. Zagreb, 2001.

575 Marija Bagarić: Obitelj Kapetanović. *Pravednici među narodima [online]*. Available at: http://www.geoskola.hr/hr/projekti/pravednici/kapetanovici.htm.

576 Walter Manoschek: *"Serbien ist Judenfrei". Militärische Besatzungspolitik und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941–42*. Munich, 1993.

million Jews. Those who were not killed immediately were imprisoned in crowded ghettos, where they awaited their destiny. Finally, by the beginning of 1942, the Nazi "solution of the Jewish question" developed into a systematic industry of murder, killing millions of European Jews in the extermination camps.[577]

In light of these circumstances, in 1941 the Jewish refugees from the Slovenian territory occupied by Germans managed to retreat to safety temporarily. Most of them initially fled to Ljubljana, where they joined large numbers of other Jewish refugees. In the end of August 1941 over 400 Jewish refugees from the Slovenian Styria and Upper Carniola, Germany, Austria, and more and more often from Croatia were located in Ljubljana. Usually they did not intend to stay in Ljubljana for long, but rather headed onwards to Italy. Despite the strict Italian anti-Jewish legislation Italy was an attractive destination for the refugees fleeing from the Nazi persecution. Until 1943 the level of the Italian anti-Jewish violence was extremely benign in comparison with the Nazi Germany. Jewish refugees and other Jews with foreign citizenship, also those in the Ljubljana Province, were soon subject to internment in Italy in accordance with the Italian racial legislation.[578] Only after a while certain Slovenian Jews, who had lived in Ljubljana for a long time, were interned as well. When Italy capitulated in September 1943, only a small number of foreign Jews and those with the former Yugoslav citizenship, among them many Christianised Jews or those living in mixed marriages, remained in Ljubljana.

After the Italian capitulation the Germans occupied the northern and central parts of Italy quickly. With the eager assistance of the marionette fascist republic, the German occupiers started deporting the captured Jews to the concentration camps. Some of the Italian Jewish communities were virtually decimated. The situation was the worst for those who ended up under direct German authority in the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral. At least 764 members of the Jewish community in Trieste, which had amounted to more than 3500 people in 1942, died during the Holocaust. Of more than one hundred Jews from Gorizia, 45 died in the concentration camps.[579] As late as in September 1944 the last remaining Jews in the Ljubljana Province, which had a limited provincial autonomy, were arrested as well. Only at this point did the lives of the majority of the remaining Jews take a fatal turn. In the context of extensive anti-communist arrests 32 remaining Jews and their non-Jewish relatives were arrested in Ljubljana and taken to the concentration camps.[580]

577 Saul Friedländer: *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Vernichtung 1939–1945*. Munich, 2006, pp. 225-693.

578 Klaus Voigt: *Zuflucht auf Widerruf. Exil in Italien 1933–1945*. Stuttgart, 1993, p. 211. Liliana Picciotto: The Shoah in Italy. In: Joshua D. Zimmerman (ed.), *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922–1945*. Cambridge, 2005, pp. 209–223.

579 Michael Wedekind: *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945. Die Operationszonen "Alpenvorland" und "Adriatisches Küstenland"*. Munich, 2003, p. 361.

580 Andrej Pančur: *Judje v Ljubljanski pokrajini* [Jews in the Ljubljana Province], unpublished conference contribution. Maribor, 2010.

At this time the Holocaust also engulfed the Hungarian Jews and thus the Jews in Prekmurje. Hungarians implemented a strict anti-Jewish policy in the Prekmurje region, similarly as elsewhere in Hungary, but they did not carry out the Holocaust until as late as 1944. This dramatic turn of events in Prekmurje as well as elsewhere in Hungary took place only after the deployment of the German troops on 19 March 1944 and the establishment of a pro-German government there. This was followed by systematic arrests, concentration of Jews in ghettos and their subsequent transportation to the concentration camps by the Germans. The Prekmurje Jews were among the first victims. In April 1944 the Hungarian authorities arrested 387 Jews, transported them through Čakovec to the temporary Jewish ghetto in Nagykanizsa, and from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau. On 20 October 1944 the few remaining Jews, who had been spared before, were arrested together with a large group of Slovenians.[581]

More than 400 Jews from Prekmurje were killed during World War II. Thus only 63 members of the once largest Slovenian pre-war Jewish community survived the Holocaust. Quite the opposite, the majority of Jews arrested in Ljubljana in 1944 returned from the concentration camps. Similarly, most of the Jewish refugees who had fled to Italy managed to survive as well. These surviving Jewish refugees, who were mostly without a Yugoslav citizenship, rarely returned to Slovenia after the war. The few of them who returned home after the war usually soon left Yugoslavia, mostly for Israel.

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Such radical differences in the number of Jewish casualties in Slovenia mostly resulted from the completely different dynamics that the Nazi Germany and its allies applied with regard to the persecution of the Jewish population in different periods. However, the severity of the persecution, which finally led to the genocide of the Jewish population, was more or less the same as in the case of all other European Jews:

Initially Jews were gradually *excluded* from the social and economic life on the basis of the various anti-Jewish laws. This process started in Germany already in 1933; in Austria, Italy and Hungary in 1938; and in Yugoslavia in 1940.

In order to get rid of them, the authorities initially encouraged the unwanted Jews to *emigrate* abroad. Those who retreated from the persecution thus sought refuge elsewhere, also in Slovenia. However, with the occupation of Slovenia in April 1941 they started running towards Italy in increasingly large numbers.

581 Darja Keréc: Judje v Murski Soboti v letih 1938–1954 [Jews in Murska Sobota 1938–1954]. *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje*, 2000, No. 4, pp. 600–609. Franc Kuzmič: Podjetnost prekmurskih Židov [Entrepreneurship of the Prekmurje Jews]. *Znamenje,* 1989, No. 2, p. 177. Godina, *Prekmurje 1941–1945*, p. 118.

When this forced emigration came to an almost complete stop, the Jews from the Central and soon also Western Europe were gradually *banished* towards the east. Thus the Jews from Slovenia were exiled towards Serbia and Croatia.

Until the beginning of 1942 the sporadic killing of Jews (also in Serbia) had escalated into systematic *mass killing* of the whole Jewish population. Thus the transportation of Jews from Italy to the concentration camps began after 1943, and those from Hungary in 1944. Had the Allies not ensured their victory against the Nazi Germany, all European Jews would have been killed in the concentration camps.