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ESCAPE FROM THE HOLOCAUST. YUGOSLAV JEWS IN SWITZERLAND (1941-1945)¹

Abstract: The destruction of the Yugoslav state in April 1941 implied it joining the ‘new European order’ under the domination of the National Socialist Germany in which the Jewish people were exposed to total annihilation. The greatest number of Yugoslav Jews saved their lives by escaping to the areas under the Italian rule. After Italy capitulated in September 1943, a larger number of refugees found refuge in neutral Switzerland. Jewish refugees, like other Yugoslav refugees, enjoyed the help of the Yugoslav government in exile through its diplomatic missions. The conflict of two resistance movements in the country caused a division among the Jewish refugees in Switzerland. Ideological, political and social differences among the refugees were also reflected in the issue of returning to the country after the war. The paper was written on the basis of archival research and relevant historiographical literature.

Keywords: Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the ‘new European order’, Jews, the Holocaust, refugees, Italy, Switzerland, resistance movements, repatriation.

After the aggression of Axis forces in April 1941 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was disintegrated as a state and some of its parts joined the “New Order” under the domination of the National Socialist Germany. The main ideological principle which this order was based on was racist and it was aligned with the German imperial plans and political practice in relation to other peoples and states. In that world, based on the biological superiority of the German ‘Aryan’ race, a nomenclature of nations and states with a different status in the emerging order² was established. Because Slavic nations were at the bottom of this nomenclature their statehood was abolished (with the exception of Bulgarians, Slovaks and Croats), their social elite was subjected to repression or it was physically destroyed, while the vast regions of the European East (Poland and the Soviet

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² Ristović 1991: 22-25, 47-58.

Union) with a decimated population were planned to be Germanized.³

In the National Socialist ideology the place of the greatest enemy of mankind, who threatened the survival of all other nations, was reserved for Jews. The Nazi ideology and demonology were soaked in anti-Semitism, which evolved into a politics of total destruction of the Jewish people. It was conducted until the last days of World War II, with all available means of one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world. The final outcome of this murderous enterprise without a precedent in history was the destruction of around 6 million people of all ages, i.e. two-thirds of the Jewish people in Europe.⁴ Because of the specificity of this historical phenomenon a special term was adopted for it: the Holocaust. Among the victims of the Holocaust were the majority of the Jews from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The Jewish community in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was one of the smallest religious and ethnic groups. It comprised about half a percent of the population with a tendency of slight decrease due to the faster rise in the number of the members of other groups.⁵ With some particularities in certain areas of the divided country – in the German, Bulgarian and Hungarian occupied territories and in the territory of the satellite Independent State of Croatia (original: NDH), during the four years of the war most of the Yugoslav Jewish community was destroyed. Out of the roughly 82,000 members of the community about 67,000 Yugoslav Jews, or about 81.7%, were killed in the Holocaust.⁶

The surviving Jews were able to save their lives in exile, by hiding and changing their identity because of the generous help of their friends or complete strangers, or by joining the resistance movement called the National Liberation Movement. Most of the approximately 15,000 (19.63%) Yugoslav Jews who survived saved their lives because they escaped to the areas annexed or occupied by Italy on the Adriatic coast. In this area, as well as in Italy itself, the Jews' lives were not threatened until the beginning of September 1943, when the Italian army capitulated and the German troops entered the country.⁷ Although a certain number of Yugoslav Jews had already found refuge in Switzerland during the autumn of 1943, several hundred of them sought and found refuge in Switzerland after fleeing from northern Italy. They were soon joined by many fugitives from prisoners of war camps, mainly from Italy.

According to various estimates, between 7,000 and 10,000 Jews found themselves in the zone of Italian occupation in Yugoslavia in 1941 and 1942. They mainly stayed in Split, on the near-by islands or were interned in a camp in Kraljevica (Porto Re), while about 2,000 Jews traveled or were deported to Italy. There they were interned in camps, the largest of which was Ferramonti di Tarsia in southern Italy. Part of the Jews was sent to smaller towns in the north of Italy, where they lived under a regime of free internment.⁸ Most of the

³ Archive of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, The State Commission Fund for Establishing the Crimes of Occupying Forces and Their Accomplices (fund label: 110), 30-43 to 44, *Basic Handbook for Germany*, part 3, 1944, *Umsiedelung* (AY).

⁴ Fridlender 2013: 897.

⁵ Koljanin 2008: 48-56.

⁶ Sundhaussen 1991: 312, 330; Koljanin 2009: 58-59.

⁷ Ristović 1998: 177.

⁸ JHM, Belgrade k-21-2B-1/8, Dr J. Milhofer, to Dr Isak Alkalaj, the Supreme Raabi of Yugoslavia, Cairo, A

Jews who took refuge in the areas under the Italian control were originally from Sarajevo, Zagreb, Mostar and other towns of the Independent State of Croatia. It was a result of the geographic proximity as well as the fact that the fascist (Ustasha) state was at the forefront of anti-Jewish measures (mass internment and killing), even in comparison with the areas under direct German occupational administration (central Serbia and Banat). Later, the Croatian authorities and the German representatives in the Ustasha state repeatedly required the extradition of Jews who were kept safe on the Adriatic coast, but without success.

The Jewish refugees were given 8 lira a day by the Italian authorities, which was not nearly enough to meet their needs. The Jewish relief organization “Delasem” and the Yugoslav embassy at the Holy See and in Switzerland were also involved in aiding the refugees. The “Delasem” sent 30,000 lira per month to the Jewish refugees in the Italian territory in Yugoslavia. In a similar manner or through the Swiss embassy, the Yugoslav embassy in the Vatican sent 80,000 lira a month to the Jews in Italy. Help was also provided for individual Jews who addressed Yugoslav diplomatic representatives.⁹

In the face of the threat of extradition by Croatian or German authorities, the Jewish refugees were trying to reach Italy and from there to preferably go to an oversea country. Those with travel documents managed to leave Italy and most frequently went to Madrid or Lisbon to await the continuation of the journey. Italian authorities allowed the departure of those who obtained an entry visa from another country. Despite the intervention of the Yugoslav ambassador in Switzerland Momčilo Jurišić Šturm, until mid 1943 the Swiss authorities approved the visas and residence to Yugoslav citizens only in several cases. He was therefore under the impression that the Swiss did not accept Jews to their country.¹⁰ According to the testimony of Nada Najman (born Winterstein) from Belgrade, whose family managed to go to Milan via Split and Trieste, they requested a visa in the Swiss consulate several times, but were always rejected.¹¹

However, the largest part of the Jewish refugees in Italy did not have, not only travel documents, but any documents at all. Through an intermediary they addressed the Yugoslav ambassador in Bern asking for travel documents. He indeed issued passports to them if they could prove Yugoslav citizenship. However, in October 1942 the Yugoslav government decided that from then on the passports would be issued only with the permission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Despite that, the Embassy in the Vatican spoke in favor of issuing passports to Jewish refugees in Italy, “*for whom it was of crucial importance to have a passport to leave an enemy country.*”¹² In early June 1943 the Swiss authorities asked the

Transit Camp near Bari, 9 October 1943; JHM, The Royal Embassy of Yugoslavia in Switzerland, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Bern, 30 June 1943; AJ, 372-18, Royal Embassy at the Holy See, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Vatican, 10 August 1943.

⁹ AY, 103-9-77, General Consulate of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Geneva, 20 October 1942; AY, 103-9-77, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 15 December 1942; AY, 372-18, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, to the Royal Embassy, Vatican, London, 1 July 1943; AY, 372-18 Royal Embassy, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vatican, 10 August 1943.

¹⁰ AY, 103-10-83, Ambassador in Bern, 8 July 1943, secr. no. 1044; Ristović 1998: 173; Ivanković 1996: 56-57.

¹¹ Najman 2003: 237.

¹² AY, 103-9-77, Ambassador in Bern, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 October 1942; AY, 103-9-77, The President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, London, 20 October 1942; AY, 372-18,

Embassy in Bern to continue issuing and extending passports to the Yugoslav refugees in Italy which was carried out exclusively through the Swiss representative in that country.¹³

On several occasions the Yugoslav Government intervened through the Holy See to prevent the extradition of Jewish refugees to the German authorities and their deportation to Poland. The British ambassador to the Vatican joined these interventions.¹⁴ In August 1943 the Yugoslav government thanked the Holy See “*for a successful intervention, i.e. deportation of our Jews to Poland.*”¹⁵ The representatives of the Yugoslav Jews in Palestine and the United States invested huge efforts in rescuing the Jews from the Italian, and possibly Bulgarian, occupied areas, as well as from Italy. Through the Yugoslav government and its Consulate General in Jerusalem the British sought a way to enable the evacuation of the Jews from these areas, especially children, and their settlement in Palestine.¹⁶ The success of these efforts was minimal.

In mid 1943, and particularly after the landing of Anglo-American troops in Sicily and southern Italy, it was certain that Germany would soon lose its main ally. The conquest of southern Italy and the advancement of the Yugoslav partisan forces on the Adriatic coast after Italy capitulated on September 8 1943 meant the salvation of Jewish refugees in those areas. Before the German troops came, the largest part of the Jews were evacuated to the territory liberated by partisans or were moved by the Allied ships to southern Italy. However, some Jews were arrested and killed in German or Croatian concentration camps.¹⁷ With the advancement of German troops, Jews in northern Italy were in very great danger because a puppet Italian state was established there. Among them were Yugoslav Jews in this region and the only country where they could seek refuge was Switzerland.

Affected by the news of the pending expulsion of foreigners from Italy, in mid June 1943 Yugoslav Jews from Palestine asked for the intervention by the Yugoslav Government via the Vatican in order to prevent the expulsion of Jewish refugees. In case of failure, they asked “*that the Swiss government is asked to receive as many refugees as possible for a temporary stay. Our Jews were informed that the permission can be obtained if our government would state that after the liberation our Jews would securely return to Yugoslavia. American Jewish organizations would take care of their livelihood.*” At the end of the same month the government reported on the intervention at the Holy See after the instructions of the Ambassador in Bern, as well as on the abolition of anti-Semitic orders

Advisor to the Embassy, to the Royal Embassy, Bern, Vatican, 5 February 1943; AY, 372-18, the Clerk of the Embassy, to the Royal Embassy, Bern, Vatican, 1 June 1943.

¹³ AY, 372-18, Legation Royale de Yougoslavie en Suisse, to the Royal Embassy, Vatican, Bern 11 July 1943.

¹⁴ AY, 372-18, Royal Embassy in Switzerland, to the Royal Embassy at the Holy See, Bern, 23 February 1943; AY, 372-18, 15 March 1943; AY, 103-10-83, Foreign Office, 24 March, 1943; AY, 372-18, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Presidential Office of the Ministry Council, London, 30 July 1943.

¹⁵ AY, 372-18, telegramme to the Embassy in Vatican, London, 12 August 1943.

¹⁶ AY, 103-10-83, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 26 March 1942; AY, 103-10-83, 17 February 1943; AY, 103-10-83, 4 June 1943; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Presidential Office of the Ministry Council, Cairo, 5 November 1943. From May to September 1943 in Istanbul the Delegate of the Main Board of the Yugoslav Jewish Community, dr Martin Weltmann, was active in this matter; see also AY, 103-10-83, The Jewish Agency for Palestine, H. E. The Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs, London, 19 August, 1943; Ristović 1998: 218-234.

¹⁷ Koljanin 1992: 365.

issued on the eve of the war in Yugoslavia. This confirmed that the Jews were provided a safe return to Yugoslavia after the war.¹⁸

Despite the fact that until then the Swiss authorities only exceptionally granted an entry visa Yugoslav citizens, in July 1943 the ambassador in Bern Jurišić Šturm took steps with the Swiss government to receive a larger number of Yugoslav Jewish refugees.¹⁹ These interventions contributed to the fact that during the autumn of 1943 several hundred Yugoslav Jews fleeing from northern Italy found refuge in Switzerland.

Breaking through the mountain wastelands, overcoming many difficulties, in smaller or larger groups, Jews were transported across the Swiss border. Faced with the uncertainties of a difficult path, especially older and exhausted people, they still rather chose the uncertainty of hiding in northern Italy and danger than deportation to extermination camps.²⁰ Those who crossed the border were sent to one of the refugee camps (Flüchtlingslager, Camp Refugiés civils). There they had to make a statement about their profession, about which person in Switzerland they appealed to, and they had to stay in a quarantine for 21 days. Some of the camps were transient camps, while others were intended for longer stays. Few people could deposit a large sum of money or provide a guarantee from a Swiss citizen to be released from custody. Most of them remained in refugee camps and some were sent to labor camps (Arbeitslager). Part of the refugees were housed in refugee homes (Flüchtlingsheim). Those who were under the regime of free stay (Freiplatz) settled in small hotels and pensions.²¹

It is difficult to determine the exact number of Yugoslav Jews who found shelter in Switzerland during the war because the preserved records were apparently made only in 1944 and 1945. On the basis of other sources it can be concluded that until the autumn of 1943 a number of Jews from Yugoslavia stayed in Switzerland. Among them were many students and pupils whose education was interrupted by the war, then wealthy people who fled from the country on the eve of the war or immediately after April 1941, as well as a handful of those who stayed for a longer or shorter time in Switzerland because of work or other reasons. A few of them did great favors to other Jews, either in Switzerland or outside, helping them in different ways (with money, food parcels and clothing, through the mediation of Yugoslav diplomatic missions).

Mika Pinto, an industrialist who escaped from Šabac, urged the President of the Yugoslav government Slobodan Jovanović on 18 November 1942 to issue passports to all the Jews located in Italy. He did so “*in the name of his religious Serbs who are now in Switzerland*”, simultaneously accepting the moral and material responsibility for those who would be issued passports. He was told that he should address the Embassy in Bern concerning this because they were responsible for issuing passports to Yugoslav citizens

¹⁸ AY, 103-10-83, telegramme by the Royal General Consule, Jerusalem, 17 June 1943; AY, 103-10-83, Presidential Office of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 30 June 1943.

¹⁹ AY, 103-10-83, telegramme of the Ambassador in Bern, 8 July 1943; AY, 103-10-83, Presidential Office of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 14 July 1943.

²⁰ Picciotto Fargion 1991: 201-202.

²¹ JHM, k-23 A-1-1/1, Buki Konfino, to Chaim Baruch, Flüchtlingslager Ringlikon bei Zuirich, 2 October 1943; Ivanković 1996: 29-30.

confined in Italy.²² However, due to incomplete documentation there were serious problems with issuing passports to Jewish refugees in Italy. Chaim (Živko) Baruch, who lived in Zurich before the war, also intervened with the Embassy concerning this. He was also involved in sending letters and parcels to prisoners of war in Germany. Together with his wife Gina, he intervened with the authorities, sent packages, toured refugee camps and did various other services to people both known and unknown, which is evidenced in his voluminous preserved correspondence. He directed those who were looking for money to the Embassy in Bern, because “*all the other refugees who are located in Switzerland enjoy the financial support from London.*”²³

Through its diplomatic missions, the Embassy in Bern and consulates general in Zurich and Geneva, the Yugoslav government tried to help its citizens in Switzerland and Italy and among them there were Jews. At the request of the persons affected, the Embassy issued a one-time or occasional financial assistance, while some were given aid in the form of a loan which they were supposed to return with an interest rate immediately upon their return to the country.²⁴ As can be seen, Switzerland continued to maintain regular diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as well as with other countries which were the victims of aggression and whose governments had found themselves in exile. However, at the end of 1941, Switzerland signed a trade agreement with the fascist Independent State of Croatia, which opened its Consulate General in Zurich on 1 April of the following year.²⁵ This was de facto the establishment of diplomatic relations with the state that was founded after the aggression of the Axis powers, the state that was created on part of the territory of the country with which Switzerland had previously maintained regular diplomatic relations! This is a unique case in the international diplomatic practice. Through its representatives in Zagreb the Swiss government had to have known that in the Ustasha death camps there was mass destruction of Jews as well as of Serbs, Gypsies and Croatian anti-fascists. Such actions of the Swiss government were motivated by political and geostrategic, but surely economic interests as well.²⁶

For Jewish refugees the arrival to Switzerland meant salvation and the end of the uncertainty of tomorrow. Despite the constant worry and attempts to stay in touch with those who remained in Italy, the security, better living conditions and an increasingly more certain end of the war and the collapse of Nazism instilled hope and optimism. After crossing the border the majority of the refugees were sent out to camps or refugee homes in the following areas: Girenbad, Ringlikon, Adliswill, Gudo, Rovio, Gattikon, Felsberg, Bellinzona, Balerna, Bremgarten, Gutsch, Caux, Champéry, Plentenplotz, Tschierschen, Lugano (refugee homes “Flora”, “Bernhofer”, “Castaggela”, “De la Paix” and “Monte Bre”),

²² AY, 103-9-82, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 18 November 1942; AY, 103-9-82, Ministry of Internal Affairs, to the Presidential Office of the Ministry Council, London, 19 November 1943.

²³ JHM, κ-23 A-1-1/1-36, Chaim Baruch, to Miško Begović, Zurich, 25 November 1943.

²⁴ AY, 103-9-82, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 3 July 1942; AY, 103-9-81, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 14 December 1942.

²⁵ AY, 103-63-284 and 103-59-277, reports of the Consul General to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from Zurich; Ivanković 1996: 40-44, 47-50.

²⁶ Sundhaussen 1983: 170-175; Živković 1994: 46-48.

Finhaut, Oberhelfenschwil and some others. Yugoslav Jewish refugees were sent to the following labor camps: Mezzovico-Vira, Egetswil, Bestetten, Eggiwil-siehe, Montana, Hedingen, Moehlin, Arisdorf, Sierre and Laufen. Some of the children were taken in by Swiss families, others were sent to the appropriate sanitariums and clinics (Alpines Juvinglingssanatorium and Alpines Kinderklinik in Davos).²⁷

The living conditions in these camps and homes were very different. According to the letter of Solomon Mošić to Chaim Baruch on 23 November 1943, in Girenbad the food was extremely bad and because of poor housing conditions almost all children became ill. However, the following month Aaron Levi wrote to Baruch that housing conditions and nutrition in Girenbad were much better than in Ringlikon. And in refugee camps and homes there was a work obligation for which refugees received a little compensation. Leaving the camp was possible only under escort in case of emergency, for example to go for a medical examination or treatment.²⁸

After the capitulation of Italy a number of Yugoslav refugees in Switzerland suddenly increased. The most numerous were the soldiers and officers from Italian prison camps, so the number of Yugoslav military refugees in late 1944 was about 2,300, including 300 active officers of the Yugoslav army. They were interned in camps for military refugees, where the regime was more severe than for civilian refugees. The Yugoslav government also decided to provide them with regular monthly wages.²⁹ Due to the large influx of refugees into Switzerland, at the request of M. Jurišić Šturm, the ambassador from Bern, the Yugoslav government offered greater financial aid on several occasions to meet the needs of these people. In late October 1943, the ambassador was urgently given “*additional 300,000 Swiss francs for the needs of the growing number of refugees in Switzerland.*”³⁰

Unlike the Yugoslav war refugees, the civilian refugees who had just arrived from Italy during the autumn of 1943 were exclusively Jewish. Among all the refugees from Yugoslavia who came to Switzerland to civilian internee camps 70% were Jewish.³¹ Soon after their arrival came the help from the Yugoslav embassy. Solomon Mošić joyfully wrote to Chaim Baruch from the refugee camp Oberhelfenschwil: “*We have received that aid of 50 fr. from the embassy so everyone feels revitalized. However, there are still camps that have not received such assistance although it was promised.*”³² Due to the large influx of refugees, Jewish aid societies (Verband Schweizerischer Jüdischer Hilfsvereine) exhausted their reserve so some Yugoslav Jews turned to them for help in vain. In early February 1944 all the refugees in the camps received packages with food from Egypt, which was organized

²⁷ JHM, k-22-8-2/6-I, “Switzerland”; *ibid.*, k-22-8-2/6-II, “The refugees will be located in Switzerland”; JHM, 23 A-1-1/1, correspondence of Chaim Baruch.

²⁸ JHM, 23 A-1-1/1-94 and 1/1-133.

²⁹ AY, 103-10-83, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Military, Navy and Airforce, Cairo, 17 November 1943. The officers received 40, noncommissioned officers and cadets received 25 and soldiers received 15 francs a month.

³⁰ AY, 103-10-83, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Military, Navy and Airforce, Cairo, 28 October 1943.

³¹ Report of the Committee of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia Abroad, 6 June 1944, in: Ivanković 1996: 171, Appendix no. 5.

³² JHM, k-23 A-1-1/1-94.

by the Yugoslav government. However, at the time aid in cash did not arrive.³³

The Yugoslav Jewish Representative Committee in New York thanked the Yugoslav government in a telegram dated 13 November 1943 for their care for the refugees in Switzerland and southern Italy. At the same time the Committee requested from them to inform American help organizations about the amounts of money paid to Jewish refugees in Switzerland in order to secure further contributions. This was certainly connected with the obligation of subsisting the refugees in Switzerland assumed by the American Jewish organization, which had already been mentioned. The Jewish Agency for Palestine also thanked the Yugoslav government for the moral and material support for Yugoslav Jewish refugees in Switzerland, thereby offering their cooperation and assistance.³⁴

In determining the total number and structure (gender, age, professional profile, location in refugee camps and homes) of Yugoslav Jewish refugees in Switzerland, the main source are the three lists that are kept in the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade. On the basis of these, an almost complete list of refugees and their gender and age structure can be determined, as well as their location in refugee camps and homes and partly their professional profile and place of birth.³⁵

Out of the approximately 700 Jewish refugees from Yugoslavia, about 3/5 were women. Out of 289 persons for whom the professional structure could be determined, 93 were housewives, 41 were pupils, 40 were students, 24 were clerks, 23 were directors of large companies, industrialists, stockholders or hoteliers; there were 18 traders and exporters, 22 people were professors, lawyers or teachers, there were 7 engineers and technicians, 5 doctors and pharmacists, and 16 craftsmen.³⁶

The split and conflict between the two resistance movements in the country, the legitimizing one embodied in the movement of Dragoljub Draža Mihailović and the revolutionary People's Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia, was soon reflected on Yugoslav citizens who had fled the country. No exception were the refugees on the territory of Switzerland, among them Jews. The main protagonists of the conflict were the Yugoslav embassy and the Committee of National Liberation of Yugoslavia Abroad (CNLYA), which was formed in July 1943 by the supporters of the National Liberation Movement. The committee relatively quickly spread its influence among Yugoslav refugees, primarily through its committees and commissioners in military and civilian camps. One of the three leaders of the Committee was Zdenko Rajh and the Jews were at the forefront of several committees, primarily the youth. In left-wing student associations at the universities of Lausanne, Geneva and Zurich which were established 1944 Jewish students were the most

³³ JHM, k-23 A-1-1/1-276, Chaim Baruch to Buki Konfino, Zurich, 11 February 1944; JHM, 23 A-1-1/1-42, Pavle Winterstein, to Chaim Baruch, Geneva, 14 October 1944.

³⁴ AY, 103-10-83; AY, 103-4, President of the Ministry Council, to the Ministry of Social Politics and National Health, Cairo, 12 November 1943. In connection with the intervention of the political secretary of the World Jewish Congress, A. L. Easterman from London concernign the help to Yugoslav Jews, see: AY, 103-4, Ministry of Social Politics and National Health, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, 8 November 1943; AY, 103-4, Acting Head of the Prime Minister's Office, A. L. Easterman, Cairo, 11 November, 1943.

³⁵ JHM, k-22-8-1/13, "List no. 1"; k-22-8-2/6-I, "Switzerland"; k-22-8-2/6-II, "The refugees will be located in Switzerland".

³⁶ *Ibid.*

numerous. The largest number of members and some of the leaders of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Switzerland were also from the ranks of Jewish refugees.³⁷

Besides those who chose to support the National Liberation Movement or were neutral, there were also Jewish refugees who helped the rival movement and were supported by the embassy. Among those who were declared enemies and traitors by their opponents were the “famous Našica A. D., Dr. Sohr, [and] Dr. Engel, a lawyer from Zagreb, who has large sums transferred from Italy and who is the soul of the Chetnik propaganda”.³⁸

The differences among Jewish refugees in Switzerland, primarily ideological and political, but also social ones, were also reflected in the attitude towards returning to the country. As the ending of the war approached and after the war ended, this became a first-rate existential question and the answer for many was surprising. Only one-fifth (140) of the Jewish refugees from Yugoslavia pleaded for repatriation, while the majority decided to go to the United States or to Palestine. The decision to continue living outside of the homeland was certainly influenced by the fact that in the Holocaust these people had lost many members of their families and their property, and that the situation in the war-torn country was certainly not very good. Since among the many refugees there were members of the Zionist movement, it is understandable that many of them decided to find a new home in Palestine where a Jewish state was being built.

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³⁷ Ivanković 1996: 66, 156-158.

³⁸ Report of the Committee of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia Abroad, 6 June 1944, in: Ivanković 1996: 173, Appendix no. 5.

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**БЕКСТВО ОД ХОЛОКАУСТА.
ЈУГОСЛОВЕНСКИ ЈЕВРЕЈИ У ШВАЈЦАРСКОЈ
1941-1945. ГОДИНЕ**

Резиме

После априлског рата 1941. Краљевина Југославија је уништена као држава, а њени делови су укључени у 'нови европски поредак' под доминацијом националсоцијалистичке Немачке. у којем је јеврејски народ био изложен потпуном уништењу. У Холокаусту је страдао највећи део јеврејске заједнице Југославије, која је сачињавала пола процента становништва земље. Од око 82.000 Јевреје из Југославије преживело је око 15.000 (18,3%). Највећи број југословенских Јевреја спасио се бекством на подручја анектирана или окупирана од Италије или у самој Италији. Швајцарска политика примања избеглица је била веома рестриктивна, али се донекле ублажила нарочито од 1944. године. После капитулације Италије 8. септембра 1943. и уласка немачких трупа на север ове земље, велики број југословенских Јевреја је из северне Италије, под тешким условима, пребегаво у Швајцарску. Ту су се придружили мањем броју јеврејских избеглица који су ту боравили од раније. Међу њима је било студената, ђака, пословних људи и других. Укупно је у Швајцарској нашло спас око 700 јеврејских избеглица из Југославије. У њој је спас нашло и око 2.300 југословенских ратних заробљеника, углавном из италијанских логора. Избеглице су биле смештене у логорима за цивилне интернирце, у радним логорима или у избегличким домовима, док је део избеглица лечен у здравственим установама. Југословенске избеглице уживале су различите облике помоћи Југословенске владе у избеглиштву, углавном преко посланства у Берну уз велико заузимање посланика Момчила Јуришића Штурма и осталих службеника посланства и конзулата. Сукоб два покрета отпора у земљи изазвао је поделе међу избеглицама у Швајцарској, међу њима и јеврејским.

Главни протагонисти сукоба били су југословенско посланство у Берну и Комитет народног ослобођења Југославије у иностранству (КНОЈИ), који су јула 1943. формирале присталице Народноослободилачког покрета. Комитет је релативно брзо проширио утицај међу југословенским избеглицима пре свега преко својих одбора и повереника у војним и цивилним логорима. У комитету и његовим органицима, као и међу другим левичарским удружењима у Швајцарској биле су бројне јеврејске избеглице, нарочито омладина и студенти. Највећи део чланства и део руководства Комунистичке партије Југославије за Швајцарску били су такође из редова јеврејских избеглица. Осим оних који су се определили за подршку Народноослободилачком покрету или су били неутрални, међу јеврејским избеглицима је било и оних који су помагали супарнички легитимистички покрет у чему су имали подршку посланства. Разлике међу јеврејским избеглицима у Швајцарској, пре свега идеолошке и политичке, али и социјалне, испољиле су се и у ставу према питању повратка у земљу. Само једна петина (око 140) јеврејских избеглица из Југославије се изјаснила за репатријацију, док се већина одлучила за одлазак у Сједињене Америчке Државе или у Палестину. На одлуку да се живот настави ван домовине сигурно је утицало то што су они у Холокаусту изгубили бројне чланове својих породица, да су остали без имовине и да ситуација у земљи разореној ратом свакако није била најповољнија. Како су међу избеглицима бројни били припадници ционистичког покрета, разумљиво је да су се многи одлучили да потраже нови дом у Палестини у којој се изграђивала јеврејска држава.

Кључне речи: Краљевина Југославија, 'нови европски поредак', Јевреји, Холокауст, избеглице, Италија, Швајцарска, покрети отпора, репатријација.