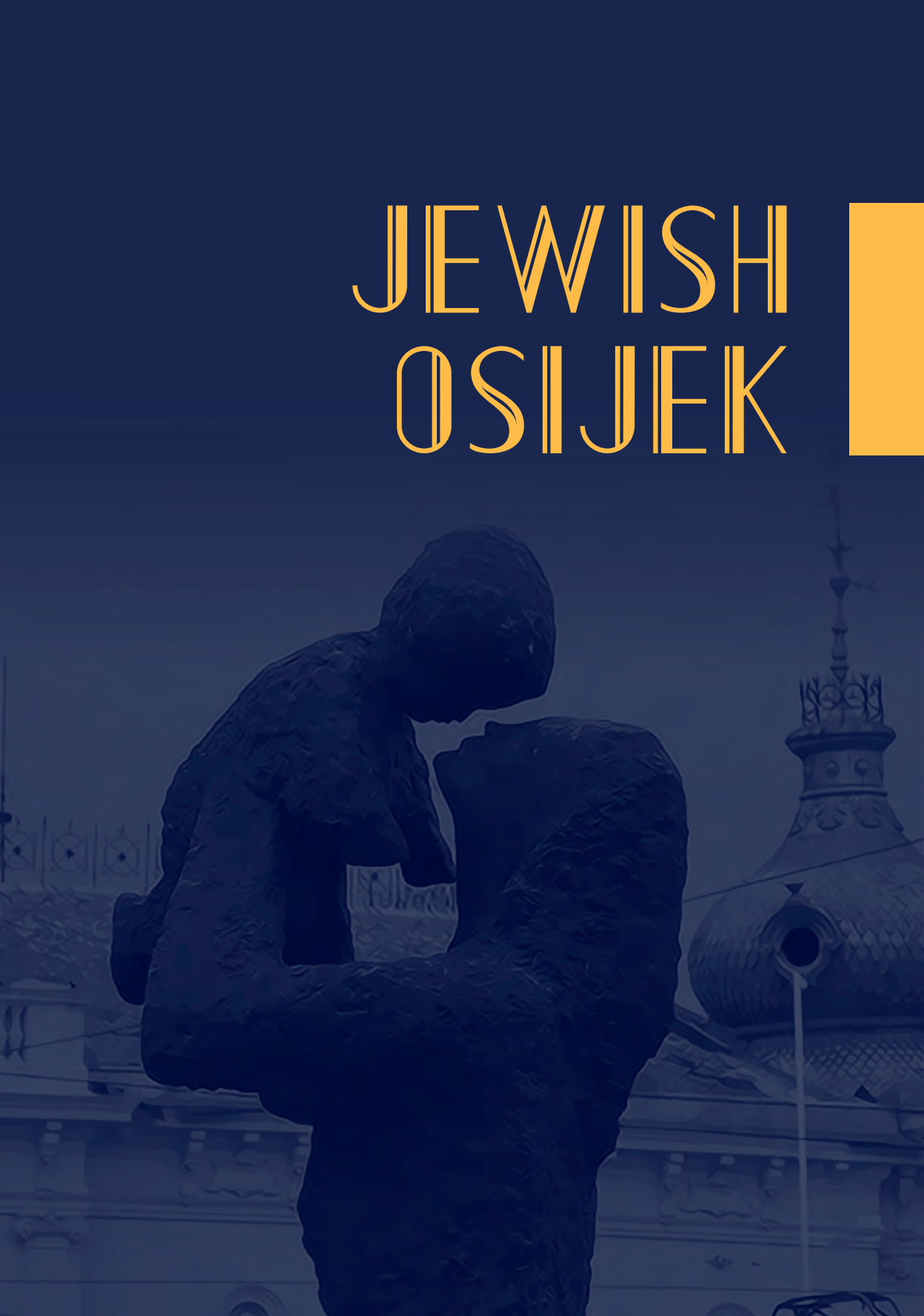
JEWISH OSIJEK





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REDISCOVER

Rediscover

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Contents:

Foreword 5

Pebble for Ms. L. 9

Jews in Osijek 15

Hermann Weissmann's Hidden Heritage - story of non-oblivion 31

Jewish Osijek Memorial Route 41



Foreword

It has long been woven into the historical understanding of the city of Osijek that Osijek is a meeting point of cultures, multiculturalism and multiethnicity, whose past and present are marked by invaluable tangible and intangible cultural heritage of nations and communities, among which there is a significant legacy of the Jewish community. Since the time of Mursa, the Jewish community has contributed and built the economic, cultural and social heritage of Osijek, whose totality we cannot understand today without knowing and understanding the history and present of Osijek Jews and their heritage.

The Jewish Osijek brochure is the result of a joint collaboration of three projects: Jewish Osijek implemented by the Nansen Dialogue Center Osijek, Rediscover, expose and exploit the concealed Jewish heritage of the Danube Region, whose lead partner is the City of Szeged (HU) and the City of Osijek a partner, and Loaf of Culture implemented by Fade In in partnership with the Nansen Dialogue Center from Osijek, Roma Resource Center from Darda, the City of Osijek and the Croatian Cultural Tourism Association from Osijek.

All three projects, which take place at the same time, are connected by their field of work and research, which is the Jewish cultural and traditional heritage in the city of Osijek and its surroundings. Thanks to the courage and willingness to cooperate and strive for interdisciplinarity and layering, we approached this topic through different prisms, visible in the brochure, which rely on each other and build on each other, providing readers with a multidimensional encounter with a topic often viewed from a single, primarily historical-factual angle, forgetting the importance of the personal, the intimate, the human.

Thus, the Jewish Osijek project, in an uninterrupted dialogue with the Jewish Community of Osijek, recognizes and discovers Osijek's Jewish heritage as an important educational resource for teaching about the Holocaust and dealing with the past, in conjunction with the present, which is also an innovative resource for developing critical thinking and

teaching history, as well as for the education of responsible young citizens who will make up the generation of those who will acquire the skills to question the 'default' implications, prejudice and stereotypes. The text Jewish Osijek, written by history professor Tomislav Vuković, is both the result of the project's research activities and a teaching model. The author of the text reveals to the reader, through a carefully designed Jewish Osijek Memorial Route, the legacy of Jewish families, which are in fact the streets, monuments and buildings of Osijek that form a part of the Jewish legacy. Vuković does not forget the personal stories of Jews woven into the urban vision, which locally and chronologically follow one another, creating an educational memorial route of Jewish Osijek, intended for teachers and their students, but also for every individual who seeks to experience and understand Osijek in its historical integrity.

In the Rediscover, expose and exploit the concealed Jewish heritage of the Danube Region (Rediscover) project the City of Osijek with partners and associates, including the Museum of Slavonia, embarks on its future-oriented research effort, which, by studying the hidden potential of Jewish heritage, seeks to create new values in social cohesion, tourism potential and cultural wealth. An important element of this new approach is the intangible heritage, that those who study it see as a challenge and potential for creating awareness and interest in Jewish heritage. In this approach, they also hope for indispensable personal stories as custodians of Jewish heritage and history. They also show their multidimensionality, which is revealed in the work of authors Andreja Šimičić, curator of the Museum of Slavonia, and museum librarian Marina Vinaj, who, in their scientific research, reveal the tragic story of the Weissmann family, but also their personal search and birth of the authors' contemporary story.

Davor Špišić's text entitled A Pebble for Ms. L. is a different example of a personal story that emerges through an actual encounter with a surviving Jewish woman, in which all the factual is lost and where the reader is left with the most elementary experience of the past and present, actually the encounters of a human with a human, of the personal with the personal. The reader experiences the horrors of the suffering of Osijek Jews during World War II at the most intimate level, and understands the consequences and burdens borne by modern man in every turning back to the past. This kind of personal story reveals itself as an important medium of transmitting empathy, respect for diversity and, hopefully, ultimate breaking of socially woven stereotypes towards minority communities and all oppressed and deprived members of society. This is one of the media thought about and developed through the Loaf of Culture project while creating a Museum of Personal Stories which presents, in a completely urban and modern way, devoid of pathos, personal stories of Osijek citizens, representatives of national minorities living in it, and of Jewish community as well. The Museum of Personal Stories will set interculturalism as the identity basis of Osijek and the region, with the desire to become a recognizable location on the urban, cultural and tourist map of the city of Osijek.

Finally, to every reader who wants a systematic and clear introduction and an initial encounter with the history of Osijek's Jewish legacy and heritage, we offer an introductory, very valuable text by the eminent scientist Ljiljana Dobrovšak. In it, the reader will be introduced to the historical cross-section and significance of the activities of the Jews in Osijek before World War II, during the war, as well as to the destructive mechanism of their suffering during the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) and the modern efforts of the remaining generation to preserve Jewish tradition and heritage and continue its activities and influence in the society in which it originated, in the society which will take the diversity and the wealth of its numerous multiethnic communities as a unity of the Osijek identity.

Senata Majić



Davor Špišić

A pebble for Ms. L.

At Christmas 2013 my wife and me happened to be in Jerusalem. We were stepping through the anxiety of Yad Vashem, and the misery walked with us. We held our hands tightly, shivering from misery, pain, sadness and shame because we belong to the human race that could (and can) give birth to such nonhumans. Demons capable, in the name of God, to crush all the divine in a person of another religion, nation, skin color, differently tuned soul… A horrible shame burns your skin when you spot the name of Jasenovac in the Hall of Remembrance, among those dark, basalt plaques with engraved names from 22 concentration camp death factories, next to Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau, Matthausen… Nothing can prepare you for the meeting with this Jerusalem place of Holocaust memorabilia. Nothing indeed shields you from the victims' sobs that never seem to go silent in the museum loudspeakers, nothing indeed shelters you from shock while looking at the huge photos of countless extras of the banal evil. By those indifferent citizens who delightedly greeted the executors in the streets of Europe. Because, that day they weren't coming for them. The criminals came rumbling for their neighbors who had been discredited as less valuable overnight. And when you enter the separate Yad Vashem premises dedicated to the children victims, all your senses sink into the ice then. In the utter darkness, black from the very beginning of the world, there burns a single candle. The walls are covered by mirrors, thus reflecting the misery of that memorial service into millions of lights. There comes the voice from the loudspeakers speaking out the names and ages of those tiny beings, murdered at the thresholds of their lives. My wife and me held our hands, cried and hoped that all those candles turned into stars, that the little ones ended up in some galaxies where evil will leave them alone forever.

That Christmas evening the life showed its often banal brutality of its own association game. Right under the sad vault of Yad Vashem, the display of my muted mobile phone blinked. I got a message from Osijek. They let me know that the eyes of my grandma Slava had shut forever, that she had gone to a more deserved, better world. Life is a miracle. It often fools around with us. For example, if it hadn't been for World War II, I wouldn't have been born at all. Or, at least not in this form. So, when Hitler's bombers were destroying Belgrade in April of 1941, my grandmother took her three-year-old daughter and came to Osijek. Right into the hands of newly formed Independent State of Croatia, established

under the patronage of German Nazi and Italian Fascist armies. My grandma and her daughter, later to become my mother, were soon deported to Stara Gradiška camp due to their Serbian origin. Short but tough, very agile, Slava managed to endure with stoicism and steel hope the nasty camping experience prepared for them by the Ustasha regime. She always avoided talking about those horrible camp temptations, or if she did talk about them, it was very short and in scarce words. 'It's over', she used to say, waving it all aside. She survived, managed to save her daughter, without any trace of hatred or bitterness in her heart. During the 1990s war in Croatia grandma stayed in her Osijek, despising the danger and not letting anything drive her out of the city she loved so much. She went down to the basement pro forma. „ Lightning never strikes twice in the same place", she used to say. Some neighbors, pressed against each other in the basement cells, used to comment on her origin in offensive manner. „It will pass, too.", she used to shrug her shoulders and smile, showing her so common, but actually 'heavenly' attitude. She lived for 95 years, with the mind clearer than ours, her grandchildren's.

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As a kid, I was extremely curious. There was no chance that the adults speak about a topic secretly, I always cocked my ears like the most successful radars. I think I was 8 or 9, when I vaguely started noticing that the word 'camp' doesn't always have the connotations of exciting stories about Indians and cowboys from Karl May's novels. When speaking about the camps, my granny Marija (my dad's mother) and her neighbor Ms. L. used to lower their voices significantly as if conspiring, looking cautiously in my direction. Ms. L. often spoke of hunger. I made out, from the sentence fragments I managed to catch, that she used to be hungry often and she remembered it even in her mature age, while her lips were fading rapidly. I loved going to Ms. L.'s over the garden fence. She always had some sweets for me and then she would take me among her books. The polished parquet floors creaked intimately, the scents of black leather armchairs mixed with the scents of vast books on lacquered shelves.

„Today I prepared Andersen for you! ", she would smile at me wisely and hand me the book wrapped in the blue packing paper, the color of workers' overalls.

I would take over the book, all shivering from the excitement, and take it across to my granny's, as a relic. Sad Andersen's fairytales, May's heroes Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, Kästner's Emil and the detectives, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, princes and beggars from Mark Twain's workshop…They all used to pop up from under the rough wrapper, and I used to devour their adventures as if in trance. Upon my returning the book, she would ask me what I had read. She was smiling mildly (with her face as if she were Ingrid Bergmann's

twin sister, which I only realized growing up, when I started to feed on movies) while the torrent of my impressions came erupting out of me. M.s L. was first to open the world of mythology for me. She gave her knowledge away unselfishly. Even to little bigmouths like me. She used to talk long and patiently about the heroes of the Antique and I would then answer unstoppably, like a real chatterbox, her questions about learned origins of our civilization. My each correct answer would produce the happiest suns in the universe in her eyes, and I remembered them forever. Ms L. was my private little Alexandria.

She was one of the mildest beings I have ever met in my entire life. You could never hear her raise the tone or speak harshly. Some pristine mildness radiated from every cell of her fragile being. A great actor Rade Šerbedžija told me once that only rare, chosen people manage to reach the sheer level of mildness, and that it takes enormous courage. Ms. L. definitely came from the wonderful minority line of the chosen ones. She was mild but brave and loving, an unbelievable combination in the world of harshness, cowardice and hatred. Anyway, she spiced the skin of her life with the horrible mantra of 'May God let you have a lot and then lose it'. And she felt on her widely open, good soul some of the weirdest tricks of that playful God. Born in Osijek in 1926, she belonged to one of the most influential Osijek Jewish families. As a little girl, she used to play in the Art Nouveau lounges of the elité Osijek hotel, which her father and uncles diligently built into a renowned institution.

When the second largest global massacre in history, in the spring of 1941, reached the Balkans, Ms. L.'s family met a horrible destiny. Overnight, they found themselves in Pavelić's demonic quisling Independent State of Croatia and became second-class citizens. Despised like dogs only because they were of other race and religion, different from the 'Aryan identity' proclaimed in theory and blood-stamped in the practice by the fascist scum. The Ustashas fanatically copy-pasted the racial laws and liquidation methods of the Hitler regime. Ms. L., like many other Jewish girls of the time, had to grow up brutally and abruptly, mastering the instinct of pure survival. At first, she and her mother managed to take refuge in Budapest. Although Horthy's puppet fascist regime had enacted anti-Jewish laws and measures since 1938, the outbreak of World War II for Hungarian Jews was taking place on the anxious verge of an abyss, between escalating and "easing" the terror. Horthy's pact with Hitler in the first years of the war did not include more zealous participation in a crazy Nazi project called "Endlösung der Judenfrage" - "the final solution to the Jewish question". L.'s father was supposed to join the two of them soon in Budapest, but failed. In Osijek, the executioners came to pick him and his brothers up, loaded them into death wagons and transported them to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where they were executed in 1942. In the winter of 1943, L.'s mother died. As L. found herself alone in Budapest, she went to her father's sister in Senta, in Bačka, then forcibly annexed to Hungary. When Germany occupied

Hungary in March 1944, both the homeland and the occupied Yugoslav regions with a Hungarian population, pogrom operations intensified drastically. In 1944 the Jewish population of Senta was deported in two directions, and one train went directly to the infamous Auschwitz. Fate, however, stingily took pity on her, so L., her cousin and aunt ended up in another transport, with a glimmer of hope that they would survive. They were deported to the Hungarian border towns of Baja and Szeged, and from there to a labor camp somewhere in Austria. At that time, in the paranoia of the Red Army, the German Empire was rapidly building the "Südostwall", a system of fortifications on the south-eastern borders of the Nazi empire. In the fall of 1944, labor camps, mostly filled with Jewish victims as slave forces, popped up along the Austrian-Slovak and Austrian-Hungarian borders. It was the Holocaust by other means. The unfortunate people were housed in ice-cold stables, barracks and abandoned schools, exposed to hunger and miserable hygienic conditions. Unlike the "systematic" liquidations in the concentration camps, here the massacres took place spontaneously, under the hysteria of the losses of the Nazi machinery in the battlefield. Even groups of Hitlerjugend members were sent to execution missions - crazed, hypnotized child-murderers. The detainees were exhausted by hard physical work (from my childhood eavesdropping, I remember Ms. L. telling my granny in a low voice that she was digging the ground with her bare hands ...), left to the brutal abuse of guards and harassment of the local civilian population. Ms. L. returned to Osijek in May 1945 after the Russians had liberated the camp.

Fortunately, she survived. From her spiritual elegance one would never guess what Calvary she went through in her youth. She had seen enough evil for a hundred lives. In spite of everything, she kept the beauty of the spirit in a disciplined and gentle way. Of her own and other people. Unfortunately, she only lived until the age of 55. At the end of September, 1980, I was due to go to Leskovac, southern Serbia, to serve the army and came to say goodbye to Ms. L. She was sitting on the balcony, wrapped in a blanket and encouraging me carefully. Even then, while her patrician face was distorted by the pain of an increasingly hungry cancer... even then you could only get immeasurable refined goodness from her. I remembered forever that 'graffiti' of her face. An imprint that overwhelmingly ran every track of her life's journey in which the evil boys tried to trample her. She died in early 1981. I received this sad news from home and got drunk as a coot in the barracks. I still believe she smiled as she was leaving. It can't be any other way.

Finally I hope that Ms. L., wherever she is in the Universe, rests in peace. And that she is not aware of the horrible pseudo-formula of today's world, immersed again into hatred and indifference. I learned from her that love is for the brave and hatred is for cowards. From that trip to Israel, which I'm writing about at the beginning of the text, I brought a limestone and placed it on the shelf of my home library. It kind of reminds me of Ms. L. because, she's one of the rocks of my life. The one I can always cling to.



Ljiljana Dobrovšak, PhD

Jews in Osijek

When we talk about the history of the Jewish community in Osijek, it is more or less identical with the history of the Jewish communities in Slavonia. Although the first archaeological traces of the Jewish community in Osijek stem from the time of ancient Mursa (3rd century AD), its continuous history cannot be traced, as there is no record of their presence during the Middle Ages and Ottoman rule. The first news about Jewish prisoners and merchants in Osijek appeared at the end of the 17th century, immediately after and during the liberation of Slavonia and Osijek from the Ottomans. Due to numerous Hungarian laws that forbade them to settle in the Kingdom of Hungary and its associated regions (and thus in Croatia), from the beginning of the 18th century until 1783, Jews in Osijek are mentioned only as "passing merchants" or as suppliers of ammunition and groceries for the needs of the Habsburg army. The permanent settlement of Jewish families in the civilian part of Slavonia has been monitored only since the adoption of the Tolerance Patent and the Systematica Gentis Judaicae Regulatio Patent of Joseph II (1780-1790), which allowed them to settle under the conditions of the Kingdom of Hungary and its associated parts. From 1783 to the 1830s very few Jewish families lived in the city of Osijek, one to two, while most of them lived in neighboring Hungarian Darda, where they had a community, a rabbi and accompanying institutions (mikvah, heder, ritual butcher…). Somewhat more significant immigration of Jews to Osijek was recorded in the 1830s (in 1831, eight families with 43 members were listed), and after 1840, strong immigration began, first from neighboring towns, and then from neighboring Croatian and Hungarian counties. According to the census conducted at the end of 1846 in the wider area of Osijek, there were 33 Jewish families with a total of 175 members, but there were probably more than 200. This was the time when the Jewish Community of Osijek was formed (1849) and began to rise. The funeral society of Chevra Kadisha was founded and the Jews of Upper Town (Gornji Grad) received land for the cemetery by the road towards Čepin (Čepinska cesta), at the place where it is still located today. The administration of the Jewish Community began to keep registers (1852), a confessional school was established (1852) and a magnificent synagogue (1869) was built in County (Županijska) Street, then the largest building in the Upper Town, according to the designs of architect Theodor Stern and builder Alois Flambach. In 1856, the first official

and educated rabbi Samuel Spitzer (Keszthely, Hungary, 1828 - Osijek, 1895) came to the municipality and led the municipality until his death. During his time, the synagogue was built and the construction of a new large building of the Jewish school began, in which today there is the seat of the Jewish Community of Osijek and the Faculty of Law. In 1862, due to the increase of the Jewish population in the city, but also the territorial distance of Upper from Lower Town (Donji Grad), Osijek Jewish Community was divided into Upper and Lower Tower Jewish Communities, and since then the two Communities had operated independently, each with its own administration, cemetery, while religious affairs were conducted by the Upper Town rabbi. As the number of Jews grew and the Jewish community strengthened financially, the construction of the Community building was completed in the Upper Town in 1900, and the synagogue for the Jews of the Lower Town was erected in 1902 in the Lower Town in Cvjetkova Street.

At the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, Osijek, as a significant river and road traffic center, provided numerous opportunities for the development of crafts and trade. Due to that, more immigrants moved to Osijek in this period, and relatively less emigrated, and among the immigrants, along with Germans, Hungarians and others, there was a larger number of Jews. In the period from 1880 till the end of the First World War, Osijek was also the city with the largest share of the Jewish population in the total population of the city, which amounted to more than 8.7% (in 1910, 2,340 inhabitants of the Jewish religion were registered in the city). Jewish families living in Osijek were mostly of Ashkenazi origin, and there were only a few Sephardic ones, with some more immigrating after the end of the First World War. After the schism within Hungarian Jewry in 1868/69, most Osijek Jewish families sided with the Neolog current and those who supported reforms within Judaism, while a minority who continued to maintain a traditional way of life and were known in the literature as Orthodox, mostly lived in the area of Lower Town. Jewish families who immigrated in the first half of the 19th century, in the second half took the leading role not only within the Jewish community, but also in the whole city as well. Most of the Osijek Jews until the 1880s were petty traders, craftsmen, owners of manufactures, inns, belonging to middle and lower class, and after 1880 even entrepreneurs, industrialists, bankers, doctors and lawyers began to appear. The share of Osijek Jews at the beginning of the 20th century was enormous in the development of shareholding and trade, factory industry, banks and savings banks and other economic institutions that were extremely important in the national economy, which influenced Osijek to become one of the largest and most economically developed cities in Croatia. Some Jews made a great contribution to this industrial development in Osijek. Thus, in the Lower Town, the first Osijek steam mill was opened in 1879 by Josip Kraus. In 1891, Lazarus Pfeiffer, Oskar Weiszmayer, Jakov Sorger, and others participated in the launch of the Union Steam Mill, and in 1911, Herman Mautner started a steam-powered mill that

employed 22 workers and six clerks. At the initiative of Herman Mautner, the Croatian-Slavonian Society for Sugar Production, LLC, was founded (1905), which led to the founding of the First Croatian-Slavonian Sugar Factory (1907) and later the First Osijek Kaiser & Stark Candy and Chocolate Factory. During this period, the company Berger & son operated, which in addition to the production of alcoholic beverages, took over the representation of utility machines from Budapest, and their company after the First World War was known as OLT Osijek, Osijek foundry and machine factory. In addition to the agri-food industry, Osijek Jews also participated in the development of other service activities, and made a significant contribution to construction (DW Klein, Ignat Nathaniel Schulhof, etc.), printing (Frank family, Julius Pfeiffer), trade, etc. As Osijek began to be significantly urbanized at the turn of the century, some of the most significant Art Nouveau buildings in the center of Osijek, in the then extended Kapucinska and Chavrakova streets (European Avenue today), were owned by Jewish families. The Kästenbaum-Korsky house and the Spitzer house stand out in particular, which are today located at 14 and 16 European Avenue, where the Ophthalmology Department of the Osijek Clinical Hospital is now located.



A group of Osijek Jews,©USHMM

The situation among the Jewish communities in Croatia changed with the outbreak of the First World War and the events that followed its end, because there were great changes in political, cultural, monetary and especially economic sense not only in Croatia and Slavonia but also in Osijek, whose economy was devastated and traditional ties between

Austro-Hungarian Jews were broken. Although the period till the end of the First World War was the age of the greatest prosperity of Osijek Jewish families, this prosperity among some families continued even in the interwar period. Jewish trade and craft shops that opened in the second half of the 19th century, continued to operate in the interwar period, with the only difference that they were now run by the sons or grandsons of the founders and Osijek Jewish families still traded in timber, manufactured, textile, haberdashery, food and overseas colonial goods. Because Jews often combined trade with catering, several hotels and inns were owned by them. Thus, the Grand Hotel in County (Županijska) Street was owned by the Görög brothers, as well as the Royal Hotel and Café in Kapucinska Street. Earlier entrepreneurs, who founded certain industrial plants before the First World War and earlier, started further development in the interwar period. The largest share of the capital of Osijek Jews was in the food industry, especially the mill industry. In the interwar period, there were three modern and two medium-sized steam mills in the city, in which the largest capital share was held by Oskar Weiszmayer, Julije Sorger, Josip Krauss and others. In the interwar period, Jews had a large ownership share in existing banks and savings banks, which mostly were joint stock companies. Some of the most important Osijek companies from this period were owned by Jews, or they were the shareholders.

The First Osijek Kaiser & Stark Candy and Chocolate Factory continued its work. In 1920 Gustav Krausz founded the Confectionery and Chocolate Factory and Adolf Krakauer founded the Cured Meat Factory, Mavro Adler and Marko Frankl produced liqueur and rum, and the distilleries were owned by I. Berger & son, Hermann & Weisz and Salamon Schwarz & son. In the Lower Town, Samuel Dirnbach opened the first Croatian paper and paper goods factory called Mursa Mill. Procurator Hugo Kolar (formerly Kohn) co-owned with Bela Springer the wholesale grocery store called J. Springer & Petru. After Springer's death, the company was taken over by H. Kolar, who ran it together with his brother Dragutin and son Pavle. When H. Kolar bought the building of the Yugoslav United Bank at 7 Kapucinska Street, he converted it into an industrial plant and opened Mara Socks and Knitwear Factory with about 70 employees. Building contractors continued their work. Ignat Nathan Schulhof's steam factory of brick, ice and limestone grew into a joint stock company, and the construction company D.W. Klein & son also continued its work. Some of Osijek's Jewish families continued to lead in occupations such as wholesalers, craftsmen, industrialists and bankers, but the majority were still petty craftsmen, lower-ranking officials, typography, textile and other workers. One third of the intellectuals - doctors, lawyers, professors, teachers, artists in the interwar period in Osijek were of Jewish origin. A large number of Jews engaged in music and among them were excellent pianists, violinists and singers. After the end of the First World War, there was no more immigration to Osijek, and according to the 1931 census, there were 2,455 Jews living

in the city with full citizenship and property. The religious and social life of Osijek Jews continued to take place within the Upper Town and Lower Town Jewish Communities, and, since belonging to the Community was mandatory, each Jew belonged to the community in the area where they lived, owned real estate or ran a business. The area of Upper Town (Gornji grad), the Fortress (Tvrđa), the municipalities of Tenje and Retfala belonged to the Upper Town Jewish Community, and the area of Lower Town (Donji grad) and New Town (Novi grad) belonged to the Lower Town Jewish Community. Each of these Communities had its own synagogue and cemetery. Each of these Communities was led by the president together with members of the Community representation, and they represented the Osijek Jewish Community before the state authorities and third parties. The leadership of the Community was elected every six years and the members of the Community Council and the president made decisions concerning the organization of Community and the religious life, convened sessions, elected rabbis, collected Community contributions, provided religious education and together with the membership organized various gatherings such as gatherings on the occasion of Jewish holidays and feasts. Communities were also social unions within which humanitarian fundraising actions were organized, various funds and endowments were established to take care of members, and aid was distributed especially to the most needy, the poor, widows, orphans, the sick, and refugees. Anniversaries of Community and individuals were celebrated within the Communities. Within the Communities numerous concerts, commemorations and ceremonies were organized to celebrate the day of the Unification of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes or the king's birthday.

Jewish children attended a Jewish confessional elementary school that continued to operate in the premises of the Upper Town Jewish Community at 13 Kolodvorska (now Radićeva) Street. For children attending non-Jewish schools, Jewish religious tuition was organized by rabbis or Hebrew teachers. The Community had a kindergarten (Gan Haieladim) and also a home for the elderly. As in the previous century and in the interwar period, Osijek Jews were strongly integrated into the urban environment and cooperated in various actions, ceremonies, celebrations with their fellow citizens regardless of their religious affiliation or nationality. They were active members of Osijek societies that operated in the interwar period, but also founded some new Jewish societies (Upper Town Reading Room, Lower Town Reading Room, Girls' Zionist Society, Jewish Youth Society Kavaret, Jewish National Society, Jewish Holiday Colony, WIZO Association of Zionist women, Jewish Ladies' Societies, Jewish Sports and Gymnastics Society Maccabi…). Jewish societies brought together Jewish members from all walks of life and generations, and lectures were organized for their members and non-members on various topics in Judaism and Judaism given by prominent Osijek Jewish intellectuals of the interwar period (Edmund Altmann, Geza Buchwald, Edmund Fischer, Ljudevit Freundlich, Hugo

Spitzer, Nikola Tolnauer, etc.). Within the Jewish Community and societies, events were organized on the occasion of the celebration of Jewish holidays and feasts (Shabbat, Pesach, Yom Kippur, Purim, Hanukkah, Rosh Hasana, etc.).

Until the beginning of the Second World War and the creation of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), most Osijek Jews retained their religious and ethnic identity, and respected their traditional Jewish laws and customs, but without strict religiosity, and at the same time were very successfully incorporated into Osijek's civic culture, accepting a great deal of the customs of the environment in which they lived. The memoirs Traces of the Past by Osijek resident Vilma Vukelić (Osijek, 1880 - Zagreb, 1956) witness this fact. Vilma (Wilma) was the daughter of the prominent Osijek Jewish merchant Julius Miskolczy, who wrote that "Croatia had always been her homeland, and Slavonia and Osijek her hometown". The German language was still present in some Jewish families, but over time it was replaced by the Croatian language, and members of Jewish families communicated in Croatian within their family homes.

The life of a prosperous Jewish community in Osijek was interrupted by the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) on April 10, 1941. Osijek Jews began to notice the first signs of anti-Semitism in the mid-1930s, when they received news of the fate of the Jews in the German Reich (Empire) as well as the arrival of Jewish refugees from the Reich to the territory of the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia almost on a daily basis. Some of these refugees also came to Osijek, and they were accepted by Osijek Jewish families, but despite all the black indications, the Jewish community believed that such drastic measures would not take place in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The first significant anti-Semitic outburst in Osijek occurred only in the autumn of 1940, when swastikas, signs of the local German cultural society (Kulturbund) and graffiti with the words ŽAP-Živio Ante Pavelić (Long live Ante Pavelić!, the head of the fascist Independent State of Croatia - NDH) appeared on the walls of houses in the center of Upper Town (Gornji grad). Along with these graffiti, slogans "go to your own" appeared, which encouraged the population not to buy in Jewish shops. The then Yugoslav Cvetković-Maček government began to give in under German pressure and consider introducing the first anti-Jewish laws, only to pass two decrees in September and October 1940 restricting the rights of Jews. One decree banned the operation of grocery wholesalers owned or co-owned by Jews, and another restricted the enrollment of Jewish students into schools and the University, the so-called numerus clasus. Despite this, at the beginning of 1941, life in the Osijek Jewish community continued in a daily routine and, as usual, Osijek Jews continued to gather within the Communities, worship was collected, various actions were organized, only work in Jewish cultural, Zionist and charitable societies decreased significantly. In the eve of World War II, there were about 2,600 Jews living in Osijek, members of two Jewish Communities and hundreds of refugees (according to the latest data from 1940, which

Jewish Communities sent to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia), the Upper Town Jewish Community had 2,400 members and the Lower 184). This does not include those individuals who were not registered as Jews, but still fell under the impact of racial laws that were passed soon after the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH).

The Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed on April 10, and German units entered Osijek on April 11, 1941, the day after this proclamation. After the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), the organization of government and the establishment of a new government began, and Osijek became the center of the Great Parish of Baranja. Very soon the new authorities began to adopt measures primarily directed against Jews, Serbs and Roma. Systematic anti-Semitic legislation was introduced on April 30, 1941, by the Legal Provision on Racial Affiliation, which determined the criteria, based on which people were considered Jews and Roma. On the same day, the Legal Provision on the Protection of Aryan Blood and Honor of the Croatian People and the Legal Provision on Citizenship were published. Having accepted a series of anti-Jewish laws and decrees, Jews in the NDH became second-class citizens. Various provisions stipulate that Jews must register with the authorities and report regularly. Then they had to wear special insignia - a yellow star, and lost their civil rights, their property was confiscated, the most prominent members of the community were arrested and forced to work or killed in the first purges. They were banned from practicing liberal professions, and government agencies took over Jewish companies and financial institutions, confiscated all their property in favor of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), and there was no compensation or reimbursement for the property. Jews were evicted from their homes and apartments and forced to live in special parts of the city. All anti-Semitic measures were accompanied by a cruel propaganda campaign of the press, which wanted to show that Jews are the enemies of the Croatian people, that they were communists and Freemasons.

Although the Osijek Jewish community, after the arrival of the Germans and the Ustasha government, briefly ceased to function, it resumed work in mid-May, but now in completely new circumstances and with the aim of survival. By mid-May, several Osijek Jews had been arrested on charges of being communists, and since mid-May the situation has deteriorated since the arrival of Branimir Altgayer from Berlin, who was the pre-war leader of the Osijek German Cultural and Charitable Association and president of the Kulturbund in Osijek, and then the leader of Ethnic German National Group in the NDH. Persecutions and arrests of Osijek Jews became more frequent. From the spring of 1941, mass deportations and liquidations began in Osijek. First only men were arrested and taken away, and then Jewish women, children and the elderly. At the beginning of August 1941, about 500 young Jews from Osijek were arrested and taken to camps where

most of them died. They were taken from Osijek in the direction of Zagreb, all the way to Gospić, and some of them died in the Ustasha camps in Jadovno and Pag, and from September 1941 in the Jasenovac camp system. Croatian and German newspapers in Osijek published anti-Semitic texts daily, advocating a "solution to the Jewish question" and calling on citizens to openly persecute Jews out of the city, and lectures were organized to speak out against the harmful influence of Jews. In the very center of the Upper Town on August 1 and 16, 1941, large demonstrations were organized against Jews, communists and Freemasons. Osijek Germans joined various German organizations and alliances and, together with the Ustasha authorities, actively participated in anti-Jewish demonstrations, as well as in arrests, harassment and robberies of Osijek Jews.



Shop window from the period of World War II.

Osijek Jews were subjected to all the abuses as elsewhere in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), they were openly discriminated against, forced into humiliating work and various forms of abuse and harassment. There were frequent desecrations of graves in the Upper Town Jewish cemetery, destruction of Jewish shops, looting and other anti-Jewish manifestations. As early as April 1941, a contribution or confiscation of Jewish movable property was introduced for the release of prominent and wealthy Osijek Jews (gold, gold coins, diamonds and diamond jewelry, shares, securities and cash were collected). In the summer of 1941 (probably in July), the large synagogue in County (Županijska) Street was set on fire, and the ruins of the burned synagogue could be seen until the beginning of 1953, when a three-storey residential and commercial building was built on the site of the synagogue.

In the late summer of 1941, a fire was started in the Lower Town synagogue, which was devastated, but survived the Second World War. Because the Community administration did not have the money to renovate after World War II, in 1978 the building was sold to Christ's Pentecostal church community which renovated the building and today the building is owned by the Evangelical Good News Church. Jews who were still in the

city were evicted from their homes, looted, sent to forced labor, disabled in economic activities, and required to wear the Jewish badge. In May 1941, Jews and Serbs were ordered to move out of «elite parts of the city,» and among the first to be evicted was the chief rabbi, Dr. Simon Ungar and his family from an apartment in the center of the Upper Town to a nursery home for the elderly in the Lower Town. Together with his wife and other Osijek Jews, he was arrested in the summer of 1942 and taken to a transit camp in Tenja. He died in a cattle wagon in transport to the Jasenovac camp.



Burned synagogue from the upper town in Osijek

DBy the summer of 1941, most of Osijek Jews had moved out of their villas, apartments, houses and moved into apartments on side streets or on the outskirts of the Upper and Lower Towns, and high-ranking Ustasha and German officials had moved into their properties. A curfew was also introduced for Jews, and they were forbidden to visit theaters, cinemas, restaurants and cafes. Jewish workers were soon dismissed from the civil service, Osijek factories, shops, health care and other institutions. They were expelled from all professional associations. Simultaneously with the mentioned relocation of Osijek Jews from their apartments, deportations began, so some apartments and houses remained empty, and Ustasha police officers or other political or police officials who took away movables arrived and moved in. Before they were sent to concentration camps, all

movable and immovable property was looted from Osijek Jews. Realizing the situation, a small number of Osijek Jews left Osijek, trying to save their own lives and the lives of their families and moved to neighboring Hungary, the Croatian Primorje (northern coastal) region and Dalmatia, using real or counterfeit passes, some joined the partisans, while most Osijek Jews remained in the city obeying all the newly enacted provisions and orders because they had neither the money, the connections, nor the relatives they could rely on. From the end of the summer of 1941 to the beginning of the summer of 1942, the arrests and abductions of Osijek Jews began to abate. During this period, since the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), Jewish Community of Osijek continued to operate, although their premises were occupied and sealed. Their accounts were blocked, and all cash deposited in money was confiscated from the cash boxes of Jewish communities and societies, their movable and immovable property, as well as archives, were confiscated. Despite this, the municipality tried hard to continue its work and developed a significant activities to provide aid to all the Jews in the camps: Jasenovac, Đakovo and Lobor-grad. Food, clothes, medicine and money were collected, and all of them were, either legally or through bribe, delivered to the camps, first to the deported Jews from Osijek, but also to others. The work of the Community was led by President Lazar Marguiles, and was assisted by council members: Bela Fridmann, Miroslav Feldmann, Andrija Bandi Ripp, Slavko Klein, Sandor Aufferber, Vilim Sternberg, Julio Sternberg, Adolf Hecht, Žiga Mautner, Viktor Beck and others. The Community operated in its own confined premises at Radićeva Street 13. The Jewish Community of Osijek Lower Town (Donji grad) ceased to function and the Community of Osijek Upper Town of (Gornji grad) took over its obligations. As the Osijek command was not satisfied with the above measures against the Jews, and considered that too few Osijek Jews had been arrested, they decided to completely remove (isolate) them from the Osijek environment, separating them into a separate Jewish settlement. Based on a signed protocol with local Ustasha authorities and representatives of the Kulturbund, which guarantees the lives of Osijek Jews and that they will not be deported to concentration camps, the Osijek Jewish Community organized the construction of barracks for a Jewish settlement in the nearby settlement of Tenja. The settlement was built from April to July 1942. The first Jewish families were brought to the unfinished settlement at the end of June 1942 from neighboring towns (Donji Miholjac, Našice, Podravska Slatina, Valpovo, Vukovar), and after them Osijek Jewish families began to arrive. But the Jewish settlement was turned into a concentration camp. By August 1942, a total of 2,500 Osijek Jews and about 500 Jews from the surrounding area had been relocated (ghettoized) in the Jewish settlement of Tenja. The few Osijek Jews who were spared being taken to the Tenja camp, such as Jewish community councilors and members of their families, individuals from mixed marriages and those retained for their expertise (327 of them), were housed by the city authorities in special Lower Town gathering places - the Jewish nursing home for the elderly and the

former Mursa Mill envelope factory, relatively close to the Tenja camp and close enough to the industrial track connected to the railway network. As the situation in the Tenja camp became impossible due to the mass deportations and the large number of detainees, with the unsatisfactory hygienic conditions, the question arose as to where to place the new detainees and how to feed them. Authorities in Zagreb decided to close the camp and transfer the detainees to "forced labor in Germany," as the official authorities told them at the time. In August (on 15 and 22) of 1942, according to a preconceived plan, the Jews of Osijek, housed in the Tenje camp, were divided into three transports and taken to the camps. One transport organized by the SS with about 1,000 people, in which there were the most children (600-700), was transported on August 15 to Auschwitz and it was never established with certainty where they were executed. On August 18, another transport under Ustasha guard took between 100-300 people to the Jasenovac concentration camp. The last and largest transport train with about 900 remaining detainees of the Tenja camp and 300 people gathered in the Lower Town gathering place and about 600 Jews brought the day before from Bjelovar, Koprivnica and Virovitica set off in the afternoon of August 22, 1942, to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Before the border, a smaller group of 120 people was separated from this transport, who were liquidated in Croatia. At that time, 90% of the members of the Jewish Communities of Osijek disappeared. Only a small number, a few of all deported Jews from the Tenja camp, survived. After August 1942, about 300 Jews remained in Osijek, only the recently baptized ones, i.e. married to people of "Aryan blood", but their daily lives were extremely difficult, and they were still exposed to harassment. By the spring of 1945, only a small number of Jews in Osijek remained and survived. Along with them, those Jews from Osijek who joined the partisan movement or took refuge in the areas under Italian occupation or in other areas were also saved. A total of about 360 pre-war Jews from Osijek and about 300 from places near Osijek survived the war.

After the end of the war, about 200 survivors returned to Osijek, and about 140 to places around Osijek. Most of the Jews of Osijek were impoverished, without movable and immovable property and without any means. The work of the Osijek Jewish Community was soon restored, which in the first days after the liberation mainly took care of the feeding the poorest Jews in Osijek and organized a soup kitchen for them. The first post-war Community Council was elected, headed by Dr. Lazar Margulies. In the first years of the postwar period, the Community also had to take care of children who were left without parents and find their surviving relatives, if possible. Most of the survivors could not return to their apartments, so they had to be taken care of. The newly created Democratic Federative Yugoslavia (DFJ) state, although it conducted investigations against war criminals and tried to convict them, at the same time decided to put all legal companies and real estate under state administration. The property of war criminals

and collaborators of the enemy and members of the German nationality was gradually nationalized and confiscated, and among them were Jews from Osijek with German surnames. Dissatisfied with the government's attitude toward Jews, the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities of the DFJ issued a recommendation in August 1948 for Jews to move to the newly created state of Israel. Some of the surviving Jews of Osijek decided to go to Israel. In the period from 1948 to 1951, about 280 Jews from Osijek emigrated to Israel. The number of members of the Jewish Community of Osijek has been reduced to about a hundred members. In the first post-war years, the work of the Jewish Community of Osijek was mostly focused on social work, the care of returnee Jews, and the determination and verification of the financial situation of individual members of the Community. The Community sought to take care of the religious needs of its members, maintained and arranged Jewish cemeteries, and nurtured Jewish tradition, Jewish cultural and educational work, culture, and the arts. It organized religious education classes and, as far as possible, provided social care for the elderly and the infirm, especially for the victims of fascism and for the children of the fallen fighters of the National Liberation War. From 1961 to 1965, the municipality participated in the preparations for the erection of a monument to the victims of fascism, i.e. anti-fascists and Jews killed in the Holocaust, which was to be erected in front of the Jewish Community building on Gaj Square. The Mother and Child monument, by the world-famous sculptor Oscar Nemon, a native of Osijek, who lived and worked in London, was ceremoniously erected on November 28, 1965. Oskar Nemon Youth Club was founded, which was most active from 1970 to 1974. A new period in the activities of the Jewish Community of Osijek began in the 1990s with the creation of the sovereign Republic of Croatia. The period from 1990 to 2005 was full of many positive and negative events. The Jewish Community building was partially destroyed during the Homeland War when hit by the grenades, but its community activities did not die down due to the war. Due to the war destruction and uncertainty, there was a new emigration of Osijek Jews, some emigrated to Israel, and some to European and overseas countries. After the war activities had settled down, the citizens who fled during the war began to return to Osijek, including the Jews of Osijek, and the life of the Jewish Community of Osijek entered a more peaceful period. The Community continues to take care of its members, organizes celebrations of religious Jewish holidays and feasts, arranges cemeteries, organizes concerts, exhibitions of Jewish authors (Ivan Rein, Elza Rechnitz, etc.), book promotions by Osijek Jewish authors (Vilma Vukelić, Zora Dirnbach, Eva Grlić et al.), public lectures on Jewish topics and the history of Osijek Jews and participates in commemorations of Holocaust victims that are regularly held in Osijek and its surroundings. It cooperates with Jewish communities in Croatia, but also with neighboring communities in Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Subotica and Sombor). There is practically no religious life, however, when necessary, part of the religious obligations are performed by the Chief Rabbi of Croatia Lucijano Moše Prelević from Zagreb or the

prelate from Subotica. The Community has a Women's Section (since 2007), the dance group Ha Chaverim Shel Israel - Friends of Israel, founded in 1998, and since 2005 a Sunday School, run by Nives Beissmann, has been organized within which children and youth of Jewish origin are taught Judaism. The Community actively participates in all events in Osijek and its surroundings and cooperates with Osijek schools in teaching about the Holocaust. According to the 2011 census, 31 Jews were registered in Osijek, but the Community has some more members - about 150. Throughout history, the Jewish Community of Osijek has produced a relatively large number of influential individuals in the fields of art, culture, economy, law and medicine (filmmaker Branko Lustig, sculptor Oscar Nemon, journalist and writer Zora Dirnbach, doctor Klara Fisher, doctor Lavoslav Kraus, musician Lav Mirski, lawyer Vilim Herman and Ljudevit Rosenberg, pharmacist Oskar Heršković and many others.) A new generation of members is born within the Community which, although not exclusively committed to Judaism, conveys through its activities the knowledge that a powerful Jewish community lived in Osijek until 1941, which has continued to exist in spite of the terrible suffering in the Holocaust.

Find out more about the work of the Jewish Community of Osijek on their website:
https://www.zo-osijek.hr/



Andreja Šimičić, senior curator,
Head of the Artisan Crafts Department

Marina Vinaj, PhD, library advisor,
Head of the Library Department,
Museum of Slavonia

Hermann Weissmann's Hidden Heritage – Story of Non-Oblivion

Often, when visiting museum exhibition spaces, we stop and look at an object, interesting, different, special… we ask ourselves then, for sure, to whom it belonged, where its owner lived, using it or, carefully preserving it for generations to come. Did he live a happy life, was he peaceful at deathbed…?

And, unaware, every visitor makes up a possible story, it sometimes even touches reality in their imagination.

There are countless recorded and unrecorded museum stories that the guardians of the past discover and record in their work, thus preserving them from oblivion.

This is one of many to be told….

Museum of Slavonia

Heritage institutions keep in their funds the valuable material of former societies, institutions, as well as parts of family collections. The high value of these treasuries lies not only in the rarity of an individual sample of display materials, but also in the value of knowledge about the past and the people of a particular area, their habits and everyday life.

Therefore, the Museum of Slavonia should certainly be highlighted as the oldest cultural institution in Osijek.

On January 17, 1877, Osijek merchant Franjo Sedlaković donated his numismatic collection, his collection of old weapons and professional numismatic literature to the City, on condition that a museum be established. Receiving these collections as a donation, at the session held on February 17, 1877, the then City Council determined that they were to be considered the foundation of the city museum[1], which was named the Museum of the Free and Royal City of Osijek.

The first museum collections were created, the first exhibitions were opened due to the diligence and efforts of the curator-guardian in times mostly difficult for museum activities. The systematic management of museum documentation through inventory books, catalogues and notes began at that time as well. The unavoidable name of the Osijek museum - Vjekoslav Celestin - keeps museum documentation, especially archeological and numismatic materials, but also expands the activities of the Museum by cooperating with numerous European museums. He especially addresses the citizens, inviting them to donate items to the Museum.

During the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Red Cross was seated in the Museum, and the collections were relocated. The war was followed by a period of frequent relocation of museum collections, and curator Celestin often spoke and wrote with indignation about the difficult condition of the Osijek museum.

In addition to the material from the archeological excavations, exactly the gifts and purchases of the material remained the basis for completing the museum collections.

During WWII Josip Bösendorfer, PhD, a retired principal of the Gymnasium (lyceum), a well-known and recognized historian, became the director of the Museum. While managing the Museum in difficult times, he tried to get into the Museum and protect the abandoned and confiscated material from Serbian and Jewish families. He succeeded in the effort to transfer the City Museum to state ownership, thus protecting the material from the German fascists who tried to declare it a German city museum, and at the same time, under the competence of the Ministry, it was treated as a scientific institution. In February 1942, the name of the museum was changed to the Croatian State Museum in Osijek.

Since 1947, the Museum has borne its current name - the Museum of Slavonia. Due to its valuable archeological, numismatic, historical, artistic, ethnographic, library, natural and technical material, in 1994 it was declared a cultural institution of national importance, although its activities remained focused on local and regional, i.e. on hometown of Osijek and its surroundings.

Collection of Hermann Weissmann in the heritage institutions of Osijek

During World War II, Dr. Hermann Weissmann, a lawyer and collector from Osijek, partially donated to the Museum of Slavonia, and partially stored in the museum his family library, numismatic collection and a collection of paintings and graphics. The library and numismatic collection have been preserved as a whole, but the collection of paintings

and graphics is divided between Osijek›s heritage institutions - the Museum of Fine Arts, the State Archives and the Museum of Slavonia. U očuvanju zbirke dr. Hermanna Weissmana iznimnu ulogu imao je tadašnji ravnatelj dr. Bösendorfer. Nastojao je zaštititi Weissmana, ali i njegovu imovinu sačuvavši je u okrilju tada jedine baštinske ustanove u Osijeku.



› *Herman Weissmann, PhD., Photography of the Museum of Slavonia, Osijek*

PThe then director, Dr. Bösendorfer, played an exceptional role in preserving Dr. Hermann Weissman's collection. He tried to protect Weissman, but also his property, preserving it under the auspices of the then only heritage institution in Osijek.

According to the list of movables of Dr. Weissmann compiled in November 1946 - the objects are listed according to three locations: in the State Museum in Osijek, where there are paintings, graphics, photographs, cabinets and showcases for books; then in the Landbank for Croatia there were money and gold items and in the apartment of Dr. Karl Weissmann at 9 Radićeva Street, where Dr. Hermann's office used to be, furniture and carpets were located.

In 1947, Dr. Weissmann's heirs, brothers Karlo and Srećko, and nephews Edita and Franjo Fuks, came to the Museum for inherited property, and a final list of items from

Dr. Hermann Weissmann's legacy was drawn up, which due to their cultural and historic value were extracted from the entire estate and officially listed as a legacy.

Today, the cultural and historical objects of the lawyer Hermann Weissman are part of the rich heritage collections of cultural institutions of the city of Osijek and of the invaluable heritage treasury of Osijek, Slavonia and Croatia. It was the proclamation of the Osijek Museum as a state museum that contributed to the preserving this valuable library, numismatic and paintings collection in Osijek.

Who was Hermann Weissmann?

He was born in Virovitica in 1884 into a Jewish trading family. Father Jakob traded in agricultural products and provided the children with a good education: brother Srećko ran a trading company in Virovitica, and Karlo graduated in medicine in Vienna and in 1921 completed a specialization at Charité - Universitätsmedizin in Berlin. In 1928, he and his partner, Dr. Julio Bathory, opened a sanatorium in Osijek in the villa of the Union Steam Mill's manager in today's Radićeva Street.

The eldest son, Hermann, studied law in Vienna, received his doctor's degree from the Zagreb Faculty of Law in 1910, and became a lawyer in 1914. He opened a law practice and began a family life in Osijek in the early 1920s. In 1921 he married Ivana Tereza, b. Stein and in 1922 their daughter Zdenka was born.

Dr. Weissmann was a prominent public and cultural worker of the city of Osijek, a member of the board of the Jewish religious community of Upper Town (Gornji grad), between 1913 and 1922 a member of the Osijek Free Masons Lodge Vigilance (Budnost) and a member of the Archaeological Club, i.e. Mursa Society of Friends of Antiquities. As a bibliophile, he collected significant contemporary and rare book editions, and in addition he created a numismatic and fine art collection at two locations - in his office at 9 Radićeva Street and at his home at 4 Gaj Square.

With the beginning of World War II, as a prominent Jew, Dr. Weissmann disappeared from public life. Although friends and acquaintances tried to save him from the inevitable tragic fate for some time, he and his closest family, wife Tessa and daughter Zdenka, were deported in 1942 to the Tenja camp near Osijek, from where Osijek Jews were sent by train to the Auschwitz concentration camp. The literature states that he died in the camp in August 1942, when he was deported, but the possibility arose that in 1943 Dr. Weissmann was still alive. Namely, his name appears on the list of persons who were in the sanatorium of Dr. Đuro Vranešić in Zagreb. After the end of World War II, he did not

return to Osijek, nor was anything known about him and his family. The 1947 issue of the Palestine Gazette reported that Dr. Karl Weissmann, the brother of the late Hermann Weissmann of Osijek, was initiating probate proceedings - a small note from the Haifa Provincial Court was left behind his unknown fate, one of the countless in postwar years. And only the legacy of the Weissmann collection preserved in heritage institutions is a testimony and example of the tragic fate of an erudite and intellectual, pars pro toto.

Reconstructing the pre-war and first war years, we follow the life of Dr. Weissmann as an example of the tragedy of Jews active in public life, from an appreciated and publicly respected person to the total disappearance from public life.

Rediscovering the hidden heritage of Dr. Hermann Weissmann

The City of Osijek, in cooperation with a number of European cities and cultural institutions, has joined the project called Rediscover, expose and exploit the concealed Jewish heritage of the Danube Region with the aim of discovering the hidden potentials in Jewish cultural wealth, its traditional heritage, everyday life, the legacy of famous and recognized individuals…

The Museum of Slavonia recognized the possibility of presenting the valuable legacy of Dr. Hermann Weissmann and proposed an exhibition and publishing project that would present a valuable cultural and historical collection of this famous Osijek citizen, but also tell an interesting family story. The Ministry of Culture, along with the City of Osijek, also supported the museum initiative.

To unite the legacy of Dr. Hermann Weissmann, stored in different museum departents: the History, the Arts and Crafts, the Numismatic and the Library Department, as well as in the Museum of Fine Arts, means to talk about 70 works, mostly by contemporary authors and Osijek and Slavonian painters. The opus of Osijek painter and drawing teacher at the famous Osijek City Drawing School, Hugo Conrad von Hötzendorf, stands out among all of these works. Apart from Hötzendorf, we also find works by Vladimir Filakovac and Josip Zorman. The cycle of 12 copper engravings of old Osijek is also important, which confirms the interest of collectors in graphic art. The family library of more than four thousand bibliographic items, reveals the broad interests of its owners, from professional legal literature, valuable art monographs, a rich opus of domestic and foreign fiction, a large number of periodicals, luxurious editions and rare bibliophilic editions. Each book bears the ex libris of Hermann or his daughter Zdenka, the dedications for anniversaries, birthdays, the notes in the margins, forgotten letters and devotions. In addition to his

professional interest in legal sciences, he was also interested in ancient and medieval numismatics. During the war, in 1943, he donated to the Museum a family numismatic collection with more than 600 items, stored in a wooden cabinet, and singled out on cardboard boards with trays lined with yellow decorative paper.

Every item hides a story, every collection deserves the truth…

What really is the story of Dr. Hermann Weissmann? Only when we scratch beneath the surface of often repeated and accepted data, we discover…the truth, or at least a part of the truth.

Wanting to explore the family story, the team of museologists: Branislav Miličić, Grgur Marko Ivanković, Andreja Šimičić, Marina Vinaj, Ivan Roth, Martina Gavran Španiček set out to un- / dis-cover the fate of Dr. Hermann Weissmann.

Did the Weissmann family really die tragically in Auschwitz? In contact with the documentarist (archivist) of the Auschwitz Memorial Center, we learned that they do not have information about the Weissmann family, and he kindly directed us to seek the information in the Military Archives in Belgrade, which, unfortunately, remains inaccessible to us.

Were Dr. Hermann Weissmann and his family forced to board the train to Auschwitz from the Tenja transit camp on August 22, 1942? Dr. Weissmann was already rather old at that time, ill… was their trace lost somewhere along the way… Is his name on the list of Dr. Đuro Vranešić's sanatorium in Zagreb a mistake…?

Reality is sometimes more impressive, more bizarre than the story….

Cooperation with the Jewish Community of Osijek, with Mr. Željko Beissmann and Mr. Dragutin Kohn, listing of old documentation, contacts…

This was followed by a trip to the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb, collection of documents, registry books, funds in which we could find information about the Tenja camp, about Đuro Vranešić, Ponova documentation … with the selfless help of the archivist, led by colleague Ana Štimac. Meeting with Ljiljana Dobrovšak, PhD, at the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, an excellent scientist, a connoisseur of Croatia's Jewish past, contact with Mr. Darko Fischer and his memories…

Dr. Hermann Weissmann's brother, Karlo, survives the war and returns to Osijek. We find him on the list of survivors in 1946, together with his then seventeen-year-old daughter Ruth and wife Luna at Pejačevićeva 37. Mr. Fischer remembers the rich library of Dr. Karl Weissmann and his daughter, a medical student, stored in the Jewish community in Osijek. He also remembers a respected woman from Osijek who kept part of the documentation, furniture, but also some paintings in her apartment in Radićeva Street, which used to be Dr. Karl Weissmann's apartment… Unfortunately, Dr. Karl Weissmann's wife and daughter were killed in a car accident in Berlin in the 1960s… it was a long time ago.

A handful of information that slowly but surely fills in the gaps in the search for family members of Dr. Karl Weissmann. These information discover a possible portrait donor at the Museum of Fine Arts, listed in the Inventory Book as Dr. Weissmann's wife. It was, for sure, the wife of Dr. Karl Weissmann and the portrait of Zdenka Weissmann, which she donated to the museum in the late fifties, after her husband's death. We contacted the current owners of the apartment, we arranged a meeting… A part of the family documentation was taken over by one of the sons of Srećko Weissmann, the only one of the three sons whose descendants we could find, whose story we must find out …

We returned to the Jewish community of Osijek, opened the cupboards full of some old books and got astonished ... Along with the valuable library of Dr. Herman Weissmann, the library of his brother Karl has also been preserved. Hundreds of covers of professional literature signed by Karl Weissmann, but also by his daughter Ruth, but the covers reveal various publications with ex libris of many Osijek Jews. We stop here - Dr. Karlo Weissmann certainly collected the remains of the former Osijek Jewish family libraries Kohn, Fischer, Ungar, Singer, Adler after the war, carefully collecting traces of missing and extinct friends, relatives…

Therefore, this library, this valuable collection, once professionally processed and published becomes available to users, will become a permanent treasure of memories, and behind each title the reader will be greeted by the story of its owner.

Just like she welcomed us…

But our research journey is still ongoing, the pieces of the mosaic have yet to be put together, slowly.

The story has been waiting for us for decades, let's tell it properly, because those, who are no longer here with us, really deserve it.



Tomislav Vuković

Jewish Osijek Memorial Route

The Jewish Osijek Memorial Route includes sites significant for the history of the Jewish community, and most of them are located in the city center. At each of the sites, visitors will be informed about Jewish heritage, but also about specific destinies related to the Holocaust. The goal is to raise awareness that the Holocaust did not only happen in Germany or in Auschwitz, but also on the streets of our city, in the places we pass by every day. The emphasis is therefore less on architecture and more on human stories.



If you follow this memorial route, you will find out, among other things, why Osijek Jews mostly have surnames that sound German, what is the importance of Jews in the economic development of Osijek and who were prominent Jews such as Lav Mirski, Julius Miskolczy or Slavko Hirsch.

The first ten localities form a separate unit that can be easily visited on foot. This part of the route is designed according to the geographical principle, so that no place has to be passed twice. Freedom Square was chosen for the introductory part, and the Mother and Child monument for the end, which represents a kind of message of hope. Places can, of course, be visited in a different order. The remaining sites are located outside the city center, so it should be noted that access to some of them is not suitable for larger groups.

1. INTRODUCTION (FREEDOM SQUARE)

The first two Jewish families, with the Hirschl surname, were recorded in Osijek in the middle of the 18th century, during the Habsburg Monarchy. After long periods of discrimination and persecution, their position had slowly begun to improve since the time of Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790). He softened his attitude toward the Jews by passing the Edict of Tolerance. However, the Edict banned documents written in Hebrew and Yiddish at the same time. Therefore, since then Jews had to write all the documents in Latin, German, or Hungarian. Likewise, Jews then had to take new surnames instead of being named after their father or place of birth. Some simply translated earlier surnames, some described their external features, but the result is that Jewish surnames in Croatia since then usually sound like German.

In the middle of the 19th century, after the Hungarian Parliament allowed the Jews to establish factories, crafts and shops, and to buy real estate in free and royal cities, they started to immigrate much more to Osijek. Jews also inhabited the surrounding villages, and their numbers grew steadily until World War II. Almost exclusively Ashkenazi Jews immigrated to Slavonia from different areas of the Habsburg Monarchy.



Osijek, a postcard from the beginning of the 20th century

Most of the Jews of Osijek were engaged in trade and crafts, and from 1880 they became lawyers, doctors, bankers, professors, teachers and industrialists. The influence of the Jews of Osijek was also significant for the launch of some factories, out of which even presently well-known brands on the Croatian market developed. However, contrary to the prejudices that say that all the Jews were rich, the largest number of Jews belonged to the middle class, and also to lower class of clerks, textile and other workers.

In the middle of the 19th century, the Jews founded the first religious school, built a synagogue and received land for a cemetery. The time after the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867 was extremely fruitful for the development of the whole city. The railway, the horse-drawn tram were introduced in Osijek at that time, social life developed and members of different nations: Germans, Croats, Hungarians, Serbs and Jews lived peacefully together. It was only when they started school, actually in religious education classes, that the children, who had previously been playing together on the street, began to notice that they were not all of the same faith.

Only a small part of Jewish families in Osijek were Orthodox, but they were aware of their origins and celebrated their holidays. It was the time when the most common language in Osijek was German. The Jews of Osijek also spoke mostly German until the collapse of Austria-Hungary. Later, more and more of them stated Croatian as their mother tongue.

2. LAV MIRSKI SQUARE

Although located in the very center of the city, people rarely stop in this square because its main purpose is parking. Many do not even know after whom the square is named.

Lav Mirski (1893-1968) was a famous Croatian conductor and cellist of Jewish origin. He was also the first director of the Osijek Music School, and before the Second World War he held the position of conductor and director of the opera of the National Theater. After the proclamation of the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH), due to racial laws, all Jews were prohibited from membership in cultural institutions and organizations. Mirski was



Lav Mirski

then fired from his job at the theater, and had to return his old name, Leo Fritz, to be recognized as a Jew. Lav Mirski wrote about his case to the great prefect, emphasizing his many years of work and contribution to Croatia, but his request was not granted. In October 1941, he visited the Roman Catholic priest Josip Šokičić, chaplain in the church of Saints Peter and Paul, with a request to baptize him and his wife into the Catholic faith, but Šokičić refused. One of the reasons was a law which stipulated a six-month prison sentence and loss of citizenship due to the unauthorized baptism of Jews.

Mirski then managed to escape to Dalmatia in 1942, but was arrested there and deported to Italy. He was liberated from the Italian camp only by the Allies in 1944. After that he spent some time in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but in 1947 he returned to Osijek and became the director of the opera again.

3. COUNTY (ŽUPANIJSKA) STREET, LOCATION OF THE FORMER SYNAGOGUE

A memorial plaque in the shape of the Star of David is the only thing reminding of the former synagogue in County (Županijska) Street. The Upper Town Synagogue was built in 1869, approximately thirty years before the present-day Concathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. Before the Second World War, most of the Jews of Osijek lived in the Upper Town, but it is interesting that there was another Jewish Community in the Lower Town. Thus, Osijek was one of the few cities with two synagogues. There were also several Jewish associations in the city, which often attracted non-Jewish audiences by organizing music and other events.



Postcard of the Synagogue, County (Županijska) street, 1915 © Trgovina Kolekcionar

The Upper Town Synagogue was burnt down in 1941. In the same year, absurd regulations were imposed on the Jews of Osijek, the most famous of which was probably the obligatory wearing of a yellow badge on a ribbon with the black Star of David and the inscription saying Jude. Significantly, the authorities did not charge these badges equally, but wealthier citizens had to pay more for them. Likewise, the inscription saying *Jewish Company* had to be placed in the windows of shops owned by Jews.



Memorial plaque at the place of the former synagogue

Although fear prevailed among the Jews of Osijek to the greatest extent, the policy of public humiliation did not pass without resistance. An interesting case is that of the eminent Osijek lawyer Marko Leitner, who, in addition to the Jewish symbols, decided to show the medals he had previously received as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army. Significantly, as a lawyer he figured out how to show resistance without violating the absurd provision of wearing the yellow ribbon. Although he did not violate any law by displaying military medals, he was taken to a camp and then killed in 1943.

4. COUNTY (ŽUPANIJSKA) STREET, MISKOLCZY HOUSE

Miskolczy House is located opposite the Concathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. The owner of this house was Julius Miskolczy, known as a merchant and entrepreneur, but also a pioneer of Osijek industry. He was educated in Vienna where he worked in a large bank. After his father became disabled, he returned to Osijek to take over the family's textile shop. Julius also played an important role in founding the Union steam mill. However, he is perhaps best known for encouraging the construction of the Osijek horse tram in the 19th century. Paradoxically, less than sixty years later (May 15, 1941), a regulation was brought that Jews were allowed to ride only in the rear wagon of the Osijek tram, and if there was no rear wagon, then in the driver's compartment.

Shortly thereafter, state regulations focused on the confiscation of Jewish houses and apartments. The Ustasha administration and military-police services could evict anyone from the apartment and the house, anytime and anywhere, and everything was according to the law. From June 12 to 21, 1941, Jews had to move out of the center of Osijek, all the way to the area of today's Mažuranić Quarter. Ustasha wardens, politicians and policemen then broke into their apartments and took out everything that was valuable - art, carpets, curtains, dishes, cutlery, clothes and shoes. Eventually, the state passed a decree allowing intrusion into a Jewish house only with a written order, but this did not reduce the extent of the looting of Jewish property.

Since the Osijek Concathedral is located opposite the Miskolczy house, it is worth remembering the role of the Catholic Church in Croatia during the Holocaust. Unlike many priests, mostly senior in the hierarchy, who publicly supported the Ustasha regime, some Catholic priests openly protested against the liquidation policy and helped Jews despite the fact that the punishment for helping was six months in prison. Amadeja Pavlović (1895-1971), the nun of the Holy Cross in Đakovo, is definitely worth mentioning. She was awarded the title of the Righteous Among the Nations for hiding and rescuing a ten-year-old Jewish girl from Osijek. This title is awarded by the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem - Yad Vashem, and 120 people from Croatia have been awarded this title so far. Remembering their courage is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the famous saying from the Talmud, the fundamental book of the Jewish religion - "*He who saves one life has saved the whole world.*"

5. ANTE STARČEVIĆ SQUARE

Just like in Nazi Germany, during the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH) books by Jewish and other undesirable authors were publicly set on fire on Osijek's main square. The square was then called Ante Pavelić Square. At the same time, anti-Jewish speeches

and songs echoed through the city. At the protests, it was not unusual to see a banner reading "Jews, Communists and Freemasons on the gallows."

In May 1941, Jews and Serbs were ordered to move out of the elite parts of the city, and soon high-ranking officials of politics, government and the army moved into their houses and apartments. The next step was the dismissal of Jews from all important institutions. The hospital was no exception. After the NDH authorities fired the Jewish doctors, there was a general shortage of doctors as early as 1942, so they had to seek help from the Italian military authorities. Jews were also excluded from high schools, and in elementary schools they had to sit at separate desks and wear a ribbon with a yellow badge or the Ž symbol (Jew = Židov in Croatian).

Anti-Jewish regulations became increasingly bizarre over time. Soon Jews were forbidden to enter restaurants, cafes, theaters, or cinemas; they were allowed to go to the market, for example, only after 10 am, and to barbershops and hairdressers between 10.30 am and noon. Gradually, they were even banned from passing through the city center, first from 6 pm, and then completely. Similarly, no more than two Jews were allowed to walk the street at the same time, and it was forbidden to meet in private apartments. The following year (1942) an order was issued obliging the Jews to hand over all woolen sweaters, gloves, socks and warm underwear to the Ustashas and Croatian Home Guard army members who were fighting in Bosnia.

German military crews hunted down Jewish girls around the city, then took them to wash the floors in their offices, and at the same time the Ustasha authorities organized public works with the aim of humiliating fellow Jews. So, for example, the eminent doctor Lazar Margulies had to clean the shoes of German soldiers, and the dentist Lavoslav Kraus had to sweep the streets. Other forced labor involved road construction and garbage collection, and regime journalists played an important role in promoting such ideas. Part of the fellow citizens used forced labor to throw mocking comments at the Jews in passing, but there were also those who secretly brought them food and water while the guards were not watching.

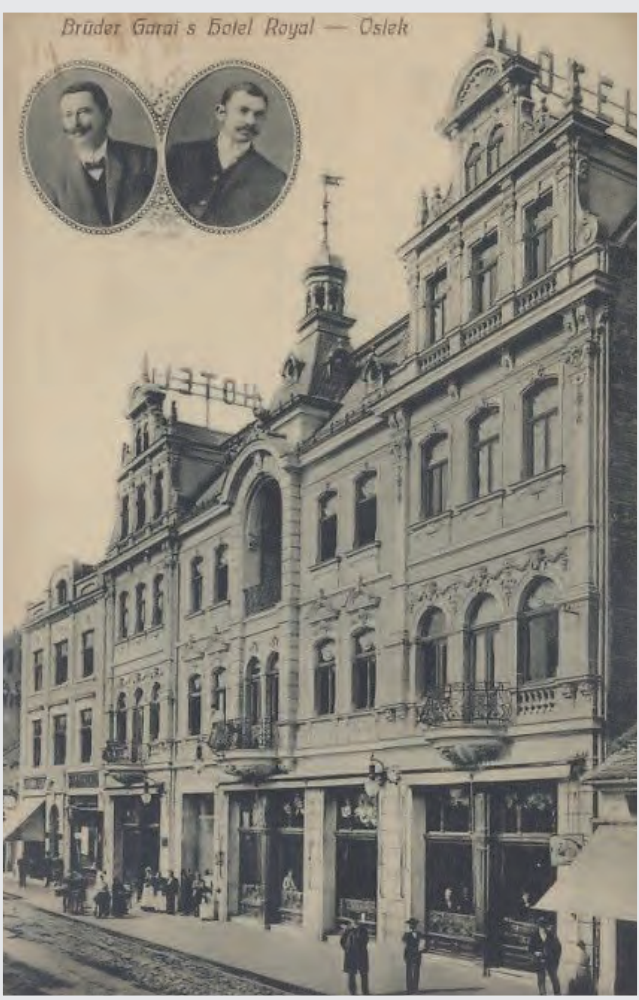
Initially, several Osijek lawyers advocated for the salvation of certain Jewish families, but soon the state threatened all lawyers who would advocate for the rights of Jews, after which this attempt of resistance was stopped.

6. KAPUCINSKA STREET 34, ROYAL HOTEL

UIn October 1941, a law was passed that made all Jewish property state property. Jewish companies were left to trustees, most often unprofessional ones. As they did not understood economy and production, the companies quickly collapsed so no one

benefited from them anymore. The new owners, Germans and Croats, would, as a rule, only sell off large stocks of goods and raw materials, thus providing only short-term profits.

One of the most obvious examples of the destruction of a once respectable company is the Royal Hotel. From its founding until World War II, it had been known for its elegant atmosphere and high level of service. At the time of the outbreak of World War II, the owners of the Royal were two Jews from Osijek, the Görög brothers - Viktor and Julije. The Ustasha authorities confiscated their hotel and changed its name to Velebit, and Commissioner Budimir Boras from Senj promised he would "remove the Jewish spirit and influence" from the company.



Postcard of Royal Hotel, from the beginning of the 20th ct.
© Trgovina Kolekcionar

After the end of the war, the hotel was briefly returned to its surviving owner, Julije (Julius) Görög, but was soon confiscated by the communist authorities, following the accusation that the occupiers (Nazis and Ustashas) were accommodated in it during the war. The paradox could hardly have been greater. In any case, the communists confiscated his hotel, and Görög sought his fortune in Zagreb, working as the reastaurant manager of the Palace and Esplanade hotels, and then at the Kvarner Hotel in Opatija.

The Royal Hotel in Osijek never reached its old glory again. Over time, its quality deteriorated more and more, and the end of privatization in the modern Croatian state resulted in its complete closure.

7. CORNER OF KAPUCINSKA AND RADIĆEVA STREETS, PFEIFFER HOUSE

This representative, but today somewhat ruinous building, is located on the corner of Kapucinska and Radićeva streets. It was built at the end of the 19th century, when its owner was a Jew from Osijek, Julius Pfeiffer. He hired prominent architects from the then Austro-Hungarian Empire to build the house, with the aim of beautifying the city center with it. Pfeiffer was the well-known owner of the printing house and *Die Drau* newspaper between 1876 and 1918. As a part of a newspaper published in German, then the dominant language in Osijek, an annex was printed on Sundays in the Croatian language called *Osijek Paper: the people's instrument for national economic policy, education and entertainment / Osječki list: pučki organ za narodno-gospodarstvenu politiku, pouku i zabavu*.

Kuća Pfeiffer



8. EUROPEAN AVENUE Nr. 14/16, KÄSTENBAUM AND SPITZER HOUSES

Although the Osijek Art Nouveau sequence in European Avenue is well known to everyone, few will know that the two houses in this sequence belonged to prominent Osijek Jews. The house at number 14 was owned by a prominent Osijek lawyer and city representative, Dr. Hugo Spitzer. It was built in 1905 and housed the owner's family. On the ground floor there was his representatively equipped law office. Hugo was also the president of the Osijek Bar Association.



Marko and Ilonka Spitzer with their daughter Miriam, © USHMM

The house at number 16 belonged to the lawyer Dr. Alfred Kästenbaum and it is the only example of a civic house built in the style of the Hungarian Art Nouveau in Osijek. The designer of the house was the owner's cousin, Budapest architect Ferenc Fischer.

Thirty years after the houses were built, the descendants of their owners were deported or forced to escape. The attempt to escape was extremely complicated and dangerous, so only a small number of Osijek Jews managed to save their lives in that way. Namely, during the NDH, Jews were forbidden access to the railway station building as well.

During 1941, however, individuals managed to escape to the Italian occupation zone, such as Crikvenica and Novi Vinodolski. In order for them to succeed, they needed forged documents, but also a reliable person to take them out of town, usually at night. After the deportations began in the Italian zone of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), the only thing left for many was a night escape across the Drava to the Hungarian territory. Unfortunately, the main reason why few people escaped on time is the fact that Jews before the war were fully integrated into society and simply could not believe the scale of the evil that was being prepared for them.

It should be noted that some of the Germans from Osijek did not agree with Hitler's policy, but there was a special database for them and if it turned out that they did not support the Nazis, they were sent to Germany for forced labor. Croats who would oppose the regime would experience a similar destiny.

9. KING TOMISLAV PARK, MONUMENT TO THE VICTIMS OF FASCISM

The first thirty Jews from Osijek were arrested between April 13 and 15, 1941, just a few days after the establishment of the new state. The building on the edge of the park, today at 2 European Avenue, and then at 2 Ante Starčević Street, served at that time as the Ustasha police station. All Jews between the ages of 16 and 60 had to come to this address to be registered, which was ordered in the radio proclamation on May 10, 1941.

All decrees sentencing Croatian Jews to death, deportation or confiscation of property ended with the infamous Ustasha greeting *Ready for Home(land)*. With the same greeting, many Osijek Jews, Serbs and anti-fascists were sent to be shot in King Tomislav Park. At the site of the former ossuary, where 74 victims were shot and buried, today stands only a rather neglected memorial plaque. Until 1992, a monument stood next to the memorial plaque, the work of sculptor Nikola Kečanin, born in Čepin, with engraved verses of the Bosnian and Serbian poet Aleksa Šantić *"And when you take our male lives / Our graves will fight with you"*.

According to the data presented in the book called *Demolition of Anti-Fascist Monuments in Croatia 1990-2000*, during the socialism period, 437 memorials to the People's Liberation War were erected in the Osijek-Baranja County. Between 1990 and 2000, almost half, 201 of them, were devastated. In the city itself, the removal of the memorials was carried out systematically, according to a 1992 decision by municipal authorities.

10. OSCAR NEMON PARK

Jewish Community Building

The building was built in 1900, and the land for its construction was donated to the Jewish Community by the City itself, provided it serves religious, administrative and educational purposes. The building served as a Jewish school until 1941 and was reputed to be one of the better ones in the city. By the way, the First Jewish School in Osijek was founded in 1852.



› *Jewish Community Building*



› *Jewish school, Purim celebration, 1936, © USHMM*

In 1975, the building was annexed and converted into the Faculty of Law. Today, the Jewish community of Osijek uses only a few rooms in the building, and they include a small synagogue. It is useful to point out that the Jewish community is not only a religious but also a social community that takes care of its members by helping the poor, orphans and the sick.

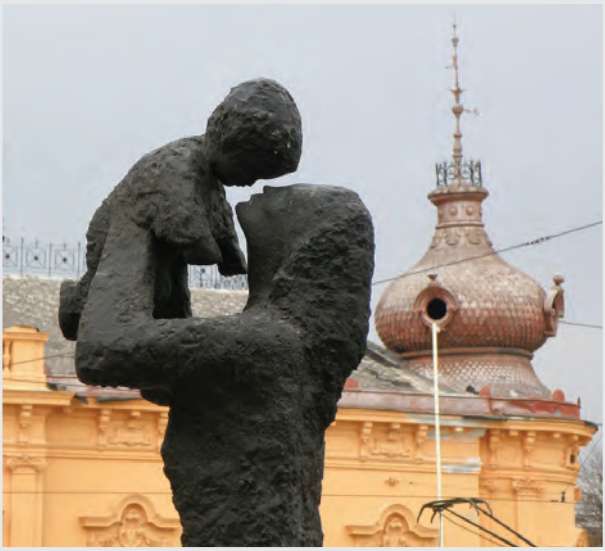
Communist Yugoslavia - an additional stamp on the great tragedy

TAbout three hundred Osijek Jews managed to survive the Holocaust and see the liberation. These were mostly the converts, the ones married to people of so-called of 'Aryan blood' and a few saved by escape. The surviving Jews were considered Yugoslav citizens, so some returned to Osijek, but no longer had anything to live on. Their pre-war apartments and houses were looted and thoroughly emptied so that only a small number of Jews could return to their former addresses. The final blow was dealt to them by the communist authorities by nationalizing their former property without any compensation, leaving the Jews without their pre-war factories, workshops and shops. Therefore, it is not surprising that about 280 remaining Jews emigrated from Osijek to Israel in 1948 as soon as the Association of Jewish Communities offered them this opportunity.

Formally, the former property of the Jews was returned to their descendants only by the Republic of Croatia. However, this fact found survivors living in distant lands such as Israel and the United States, and in many cases there were no living descendants. As the descendants of Osijek Jews, especially children, are no longer committed only to Judaism, it can be said that Judaism is only a fragment of their ancestral heritage. Nevertheless, the Jewish Community of Osijek still operates today. It has about sixty members, many of whom has only one Jewish grandparent. Significantly, in the entire Osijek-Baranja County in the 2011 census, only 26 people declared themselves as Jews.

Mother and Child Monument

Mother and Child is a monument to the victims of fascism, erected in 1965, and its original name is *Humanity*. The monument is the work of sculptor Oscar Nemon, a Jew born in Osijek who emigrated to England in the eve of World War II. The message of a mother who raises her child high represents man's eternal hope for a bright future. The author used the monument to make people think about their actions, pointing out that "anyone who can throw a stone at a mother with a child in her arms is either crazy or a criminal." According to the original project, the monument was supposed to be 10 meters high, but a reduced version was later agreed. In 2009, the City of Osijek paid tribute to this sculptor by naming the park around the monument Oscar Nemon Park. Flower wreaths for Osijek victims of the Holocaust are still laid in front of the monument.



Mother and Child Monument (Humanity)

11. RADIĆEVA STREET 23, UNION / BATORY VILLA

Union Villa (also known as Batory Villa) is an Art Nouveau building from 1906. It originally served as the home of the Union steam mill manager. The Union steam mill was located behind the villa (only one part is preserved today), and it was one of the largest companies in Slavonia at that time, which supplied Vienna and most of the Czech Republic with flour. After the First World War, the villa changed owners and became the famous Bathory-Weissmann sanatorium. Karlo Weissmann was a prominent Osijek doctor of Jewish origin, the founder of the First Osijek Antituberculosis Dispensary.



Union / Batory Villa

12. CVJETKOVA STREET 32, LOWER TOWN SYNAGOGUE

The Lower Town Synagogue was built in 1903, so Osijek became a city with two synagogues and two Jewish communities. Similar to the synagogue in the Upper Town (Gornji grad), the Lower Town Synagogue did not escape devastation during the NDH. After the war, it was completely unusable. Jewish Community of Osijek did not have the funds to rebuild it, so the Yugoslav Union of Jewish Communities decided to sell it. Since its sale and renovation in 1976, the former synagogue has served as the evangelical church of the Good News. The original exterior and interior appearance have not changed much, and the details on the facade and interior of the church still testify to the original purpose of this place of worship. During the renovation of the Law School and Jewish Community building after the 1998 fire, the Evangelical Church allowed the celebration of the Passover feast in this church.

13. JEWISH CEMETERY, ST. LEOPOLD BOGDAN MANDIĆ STREET

The Jewish cemetery in the Upper Town has existed since 1850, and a smaller Jewish cemetery also exists in the Lower Town. The tombstones contain inscriptions in Hebrew, German and Croatian.



Details from the Jewish cemetery in Upper Town

14. EPIDEMIOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF OSIJEK HOSPITAL

After Osijek's Jewish doctors were fired in 1941, their surgeries were taken over by doctors close to the regime, appropriating instrument cabinets, desks, dental appliances, microscopes and other devices. Ironically, there was a general shortage of doctors in the NDH in 1942, so the authorities had to turn to the Italian military authorities for help.

Some Osijek doctors of Jewish origin were killed in the Holocaust. Among them was Slavko Hirsch, a prominent physician credited with building the infectious diseases ward of the Osijek hospital in 1938. With a microbiological and chemical laboratory, this department was then considered one of the most modernly equipped. Unfortunately, the only "reward" Slavko Hirsch received for improving health care in Osijek was being sent to Jasenovac, where he was killed with his entire family. The infectious disease epidemiology department still serves the city today.

15. MEMORIAL AT THE SITE OF THE TENJA TRANSIT CAMP

When the deportations of Osijek Jews began, the official explanation of the Ustasha authorities was that they wanted to prevent Jewish propaganda through deportations. After the construction of a camp near Tenja was announced, some citizens hoped that it would calm the suffering a little. Paradoxically, the Jews had to build the camp themselves. They used to start the walk to the construction site from the building of today's library on the corner of Divaltova and Josipa Reihl-Kira Streets, and as they walked towards Tenja and the construction site, the inhabitants of the then New Town, mostly Germans, used to beat them, threaten them and made abusive comments in passing.

The Tenja concentration camp opened in late June 1942 and in reality functioned as a ghetto. It was surrounded by barbed wire, and about 2,500 Osijek residents and about 500 Jews from other places were detained there. Due to the insufficient number of barracks, many prisoners slept under the open sky. Upon arrival at the camp, Jews were first deprived of money, watches, wedding rings, jewelry, and other valuables. The camp was in operation until August 1942, when most of the prisoners were sent to Auschwitz, while between 100 and 300 people arrived in Jasenovac.

In August 1942, the former Jewish nursing home for elderly on Vukovarska cesta in the Lower Town was emptied. While the Jews of Osijek were escorted on foot towards the station, some Osijek residents shouted insulting words at them, while others cried when they saw their former neighbors and acquaintances. Arriving at the station, the Jews were crammed into cattle wagons and transported to Auschwitz. There, children and the sick were immediately taken to gas chambers. Only ten Osijek Jews managed to survive deportation to the camps.

Ahead of his time

When anti-Semitism began to grow in the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the leading Croatian politician was Vladko Maček, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS). With regard to the Jews, in 1936 he made a significant statement that could be considered far advanced for its time: "*The HSS is a movement that judges people not by religion or origin, but by honesty and humanity. Therefore we measure both Christians and Jews by the same measure*." It is important to point out that Maček did not change his attitude significantly in the following years, so during 1941 and 1942 he spent several months in the Jasenovac camp where the NDH authorities detained him in order to prevent him from political activity.

Census statistics

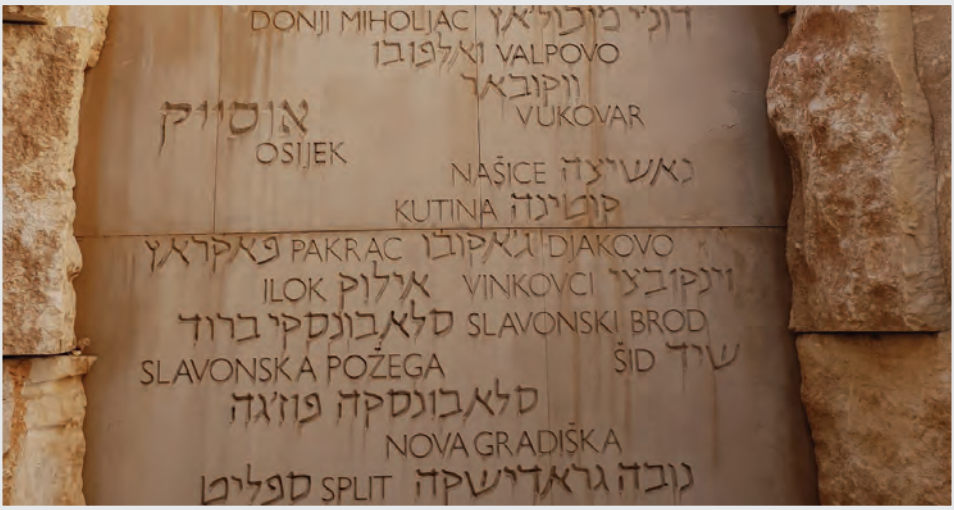
In 1831 eight Jewish families with a total of 43 members lived in Osijek.

In 1846 33 families with 175 members were recorded.

In 1857 the Jewish Community has the total of 578 members.

In the 1931 census, 2,445 people declared themselves as Jews by religion. The data from the Jewish Community from 1930, however, record a slightly higher number of Jews - 3,020, including members of the Community and their families. In some places, the sources also state that more than 4,000 Jews live in Osijek, which is more than 10% of the population of Osijek. When calculating statistics, it is important to understand that before the Second World War, the inhabitants did not declare themselves by ethnicity and nationality, but only by their mother tongue and religion. This leaves room for different interpretations of who can be counted among the Jews. Is Judaism solely a matter of birth and faith or a matter of personal identity? Most of the Jews of Osijek used Croatian as their mother tongue, some of the children were born in mixed marriages, and there were people who changed their religion during their lives and converted to Christianity. All this may leave doubts about the calculation of statistics, but it does not diminish the importance of the Osijek Jewish community for the development of the city before the Second World War.

In 2011, only 26 people declared themselves Jews in Osijek-Baranja County. The Jewish community of Osijek has about sixty members, but many of them have only one ancestor of Jewish origin.



Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, a memorial to the Jewish communities in Slavonia and Srijem

Menorah in a Franciscan monastery

In 2007, a symbolic Holocaust monument, one meter and a half high, in the shape of a stylized menorah, was erected in the courtyard of the Franciscan monastery in Tvrđa (Fortress). The menorah is a symbol of Judaism, signifying a lamp or candlestick, and is especially important during the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. By erecting a monument to the Holocaust as part of a Catholic building, a symbolic step forward was made in promoting ecumenism, because there are few cases in the world where a symbol of another religious community is placed in a building of one religion.

For teachers, students and those interested in teaching the topics of Jewish heritage, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, additional educational materials and online brochure are available on the Jewish Osijek project web page: https://www.ndcosijek.hr/zidovski-osijek/

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