

THE EXTERMINATION OF JEWISH POPULATION AND HERITAGE IN BAČKA REGION OF AP VOJVODINA (SERBIA)

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Abstract. Jews in Serbia always represented a micro-community. However, the interesting fact is that even in post-war period, the decline of Jewish population in Serbia continued. The Jewish communities mostly inhabited Belgrade and Vojvodina region (especially Bačka region). The study is based on statistical and historical data about the events concerning the extermination of the Jewish nation and heritage in Backa region of AP Vojvodina. The research included the analysis of available documents and publications, and gives a short historical outlook of events in Bačka region before, during and after World War II. It presents detailed demographic analysis of Jewish population and war casualties in Bačka region. The study also gives an insight into the destruction of Jewish heritage and other relevant data on Jewish communities in Bačka, Vojvodina and Serbia today.

Keywords: Jews, holocaust, heritage, Bačka region, Vojvodina, Serbia

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1. Introduction

The tragic history of Jews in Europe is well known. However, even 50 years after the Holocaust there is no exact evidence about these events. The lack of information, deliberate concealment of evidence or political reasons led to the fact that this important part of history remains incomplete. This is especially the case with the former Yugoslav countries, to be precise, Republic of Serbia and AP Vojvodina in particular. This study examines the history of Jewish people who inhabited the Bačka region, which had the largest Jewish community in Vojvodina.

The Jewish population inhabited the territory of today's Serbia a long time ago, but their number was significantly increased in the 16th century. When in Ottoman Empire (that included the Balkans) a significant number of Jews evicted from

Spain and Portugal (1492 and 1496), were inhabited. At the beginning of the 18th century the Habsburg court made a decision to populate the area of desolate and abandoned Bačka with new nations. Finding prospects in such an environment, for establishing family and survive, the Jews arrived individually. This was radically different from other ethnic groups who moved in groups. However, while other nations arriving in Bačka region had numerous benefits ensured, the Jews were discriminated and had different conditions and numerous impediments. Jewish people who inhabited Vojvodina during the 18th century originated from northern parts of Hungary, Moravia, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. Apart from other parts of Vojvodina, Jewish refugees from Belgrade, after the defeat in 1738, and the re-establishment of Turkish rule in Belgrade, did not reach Bačka region. This was the reason why the Jewish population in Bačka region was genuine Ashkenazim. The organization of Jewish communities developed slowly in Bačka region. The first community was established in Apatin, and then in Neoplanta (Novi Sad). The main function of those communities was mutual help and co-operation in solving the common issues vital to the life of the Jewish community of Bačka (gatherings, education, religious services, apprentices, etc.).

The main goal of the research is examination of the executions of Jewish residents of Bačka region of AP Vojvodina in 1941–1948. The aim is to show the extent of military and civil governmental actions during and after the war that lead to mass executions, forced labour in concentration camps, punishments, banishment, taking and destroying properties and lives of citizens who did not belong to any military formation. It is about innocent people who died and were penalized because of the ethnicity or membership of a political party, religion or culture. They were robbed of any property that could be of any use to the ruling powers of war or politics. After the war, in the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (Yugoslavia) the first census that was done showed no data on ethnicity, so it is impossible to say for certain how many Jews remained in Yugoslavia, Serbia or Vojvodina.

The destruction of Jewish heritage in World War II was a daily occurrence, but the destruction continued in the post-war period. On Vojvodina territory there were many synagogues, religious sites with religious schools (they were built rather modestly, with baroque and classicist elements) and the most representative ones were built in the 19th century in Novi Sad, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica, Zrenjanin, Pančevo, Ada, Senta, Bela Crkva and other towns. From the total of 76 synagogues and religious centres in Vojvodina in pre-war period, most were destroyed during and after the war. Only three synagogues in Vojvodina have survived (in Subotica, Novi Sad and Apatin). Today, the only evidence of Jewish presence in Vojvodina are abandoned and devastated Jewish cemeteries and a few synagogues, names carved in gravestones and the stories about their customs and holocaust tragedies.

The tragic destiny of Jews in Europe, Serbia and Vojvodina in particular, that occurred during World War II, wiped out all evidence of their existence on this territory. Even though Jews in Yugoslavia and Serbia always represented a micro-

community, this fact is especially obvious today. Before the holocaust the Jewish community consisted of around 0.45% of the population of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and after World War II they consisted of 0.06% of its population. Moreover the decline in their number continued, and after emigration to Israel in the 1950s, and the 1990s, they represented 0.02% of the Serbian population, in 2002 0.0145% and the last census in 2011 showed that the number of Jews in Serbia is still declining.

1.1. Research methodology

The study is methodologically based on data collected by the Inquiry Board of the Committee of Autonomous Pokrajina of Vojvodina entitled “The truth about events in Vojvodina in 1941–1948”. This collection registers by name the civil casualties according to gender, age and place of death. Demographic analysis is conducted on available data, and a historic overview regarding the Jewish history in Bačka region is given. The research includes an analysis of available documents and publications, a short historical overview of events in Bačka region before, during and after World War II. The research gives a demographic analysis of Jewish civil casualties as well as an overview of the destruction of Jewish heritage. The study focuses on the most recent statistical data on war casualties in Vojvodina, recorded by name. The study gives a demographic analysis on human victims by gender and age, the extent of executions given by year, as well as the places of death of the Jewish victims originating from Bačka region. Insight of some data on the great number of Jewish communities in Vojvodina and Serbia before and after World War II is given, with the goal of pointing out the extent that the war had on the diminishing number of Jews in this region.

2. Jews in Vojvodina and Bačka region before 1941

Although there seem to have been Jews in what became Serbian lands in Roman times, the most recognizable and self-defined Jewish community in Serbia was the Sephardi one that developed under Turkish rule. Before the Nazi invasion in 1941 there were some 78,000 Jews spread out through the south Slav lands. This was not a single community, and its 'ethnic' make-up was further variegated by an influx of Ashkenazi Jews from the Habsburg Empire. Significant immigration of Jews in Vojvodina, in fact, happened after the Turkish eviction from this area at the beginning of the 17th century. In Bačka region the first towns to accept the Jews were Novi Sad in 1693, Kula in 1709, Sombor in 1735, Bač in 1736, Bački Petrovac in 1737, Bezdán in 1740, Apatin in 1749, Nova Palanka 1771, Karavukovo 1776 and Senta in 1783 (Medić, 2006). Jews in Bačka region were genuine Ashkenazis who used Yiddish or German language, with some differences in religious customs from the other larger Jewish group of Sephardi genuine. Jewish communities represented political and administrative units, and the first of them was established in Novi Sad (1748), Zrenjanin (1760), Subotica (1775), and

then Bezdan, Ada, Senta, Vršac, Sombor and Sremska Mitrovica. As a result, 48 Jewish communities (in Bačka region 35, in Banat 8 and in Srem 5 Jewish communities) existed in Vojvodina before 1940. At the end of the 18th century in most villages of Bačka region in Vojvodina the presence of Jewish population was evident. However, the total number of families (mostly consisting of two or three members) in small towns in Vojvodina was less than a hundred; only Novi Sad, Subotica and Sombor had a relatively big Jewish community. The presence of Jewish people in dominantly Christian area was tolerated, and they were kept isolated, even though they had a dominant place in some fields – trade, medicine, pharmacy (Medić 2006). The position of Jewish people in Vojvodina within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was not easy. From 1784 Jews were forced to speak German while Hebrew was only allowed in the synagogues. From 1787 they were officially made to change their names into German names. Until 1846 there were even taxes for Jews. With an Austro-Hungarian law in 1867, Jews became equal to other nations, and in 1895 the Law of Reception declared the Jewish religion equal to all the other religions in Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, from 1918, the Jews gained their rights and became equal to other nations who lived in this state (Medić 2006).

According to some statistical data, approximately 15,507 Jews lived in Vojvodina in 1851, with a tendency of slow growth. The Jewish communities in 1919 established the Federation of Jewish religious communities of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. According to the official population census of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, in 1921, on the territory of today's Vojvodina, 19,286 persons declared to be of Israeli religion (13,898 Israelis lived in Bačka). In 1931, 19,296 Jews lived in Vojvodina. Their largest concentration was in towns such as Novi Sad, Subotica, Sombor and Senta. In Banat region a large number of Jews lived in Zrenjanin (Bjeljac, 2004).

When Serbia was occupied in 1941, Vojvodina was annexed to the Greater Hungary. Hungarians joined in the attack on April 11, 1941. The official justification was that because of the declaration of independence of the Independent State of Croatia, Yugoslavia (with whom Hungary had signed a Contract on Eternal Friendship on December 12, 1940) ceased to exist and that it was necessary to protect the Hungarian population of the formerly Hungarian territories – i.e. Vojvodina (Janjetović 2012). The new law was forbidding the Jews to be educated and employed, and most of them were placed in concentration camps (Ceresnješ 1999). After the war, attempts were made to collect material about the Jewish people, but there were numerous problems. According to the first available data, 3,577 Jews lived in 1945 in Vojvodina, in 1946 around 3,729 Jews and in 1948 about 3,034 Jews. When the results of these censuses are compared, it is obvious that during the war and in post-war period, from 1941 until 1948 people were killed because of their ethnicity. In World War II, from Vojvodina region, officially 83,881 persons died, or unofficially even more people, around 106,000. From about 19,011 Jews living in Vojvodina region (evidence by name), 15,439

were killed and only 3,572 (18.7%) survived the war, of whom 2,482 Jews later emigrated to Israel (Živković 2008).

3. Jews in Vojvodina and Bačka region during World War II

The pre-war Jewish population of Vojvodina was around 19,290 people. The biggest Jewish population in Vojvodina before the war was concentrated in Bačka region (officially Bačka with Baranja region), about 14,800 Jews, and about 4,000 Jews lived in Banat region (Strosberger 1998).

The Bačka region of Vojvodina was under the Hungarian occupation, officially since Novi Sad was occupied on April 13 1941. The same happened later in Sombor, Kula, Temerin, etc. The Hungarian occupation authorities in Bačka began to arrest Jews in Novi Sad, Stari Bečej, Srbobran, and other towns. The Hungarian military destroyed Jewish heritage, monuments, synagogues and cemeteries, and all adult Jews, disregarding their age, were sent to forced labour in concentration camps. The occupants also demanded the so-called contributions to the Hungarian military from Jews. During 4 and 5 January 1942, an open conflict between Šajkaš partisans and the Hungarian army and police took place, with casualties on both sides, but the Hungarians defeated the rebels. Under the pretext of destroying the remains of the rebel units and their supporters, the Hungarian army, backed up by armed and unarmed Hungarian civilians began the Raid in the area of Šajkaš planned to last for ten days. They also sent to Budapest a series of false and over-exaggerated reports on the events in Bačka. In Budapest these events were discussed on 12 January 1942 at the meeting that gathered civilian and military leaders. The conclusion of the meeting was that the wanted goals were not reached, and that many 'suspects and culprits' escaped, mostly in Novi Sad, and the Raid was continued, reaching Gospođinci, Đurđevo, Žabalj, Čurug, Vilovo, Gardanovci, Lok, Mošorin, Titel, Šajkaš, and Temerin (Njegovan 2009). Most of the killings of Jewish people in Bačka region happened in Novi Sad, when in only three days, starting from 21 January 1942, about 870 Jews were killed regardless of their gender and age. Between 26 and 29 January, the Raid was continued in Bečej. On 30 January 1942, the chief of the Hungarian headquarters, General Ferenc Szombathelyi gave an order to terminate the Raid and withdraw the Hungarian army, as a sign of South Bačka peace treaty (Mészáros 1986, Kasaš 1996, Sajti 1987, Golubović 1992, 2004, Pal 2009).

3.1. Analysis of Jewish victims from Bačka region (Vojvodina) during World War II

Statistical data based on archive data on the war casualties originating from Vojvodina territory, to be exact from Srem, Banat, Bačka and Baranja region, counted 83,881 persons. Of the total number of war victims from Vojvodina, 15,419 were Jews (18.47%), with equal distribution by gender (7,737 male, 7,703 female, 55 unknown). According to the originating region of Jewish casualties

from Vojvodina, over 67.94% originated from Bačka region (10,527), 18.47% from Banat (2,904) and 13.32% from Srem (2,064).

Table 1. The distribution of Jewish victims from Vojvodina, based on the region of origin

	VOJVODINA	SREM	BANAT	BAČKA
Total	15,495	2,064	2,904	10,527
1941	2,274	223	1,827	214
1942	3,753	1,559	882	1,316
1943	816	83	20	713
1944	8,105	75	49	7,934
1945	245	29	4	223
1946	72	1	68	15
1947	15	0	14	11
Unknown	215	94	40	39

Source: Imenik stradalih stanovnika AP Vojvodine 1941–1948., Tom V – Jevreji, 2009.

About the numbers of casualties of the Raid, different data can be found in historical sources and historiographical publications. According to A. Kasaš (1996) in Šajkaš there were 2,345 victims, in Novi Sad 1,253 victims, in Bečej 225 persons, counting a total of 3,823 victims (2,578 Serbs and 1,068 Jews). Golubović (1992) numbers 2,348 victims in Šajkaš Raid, in Novi Sad 1,246, in Bečej 215, with total 3,809 victims (2,578 Serbs, 1,068 Jews and 131 others). This study also gives the official data about the casualties, collected by the occupation forces: in Novi Sad 879 executed persons, in the area of Šajkaš 2,293, in Bečej 168, according to nationality: 2,549 Serbs, 744 Jews and 37 others. In his later studies (2004) Golubović gives other data: 2,425 victims from Šajkaš, 1,255 from Novi Sad, 248 from Bečej, with a total of 3,928 human casualties in the Raid (2,662 Serbs, 1,103 Jews and 163 others). Sajti Enike (1987) states that some unofficial sources give the number between 6,000 and 7,000 victims, while the official documents mention between 3,000 and 3,340 victims and missing persons (official data from the statistics of 5th Corps of Hungarian army, gathered in 1944). According to this data, among the casualties and missing persons were 2,550 Serbs, 743 Jews and 47 others. According to the age-gender structure, the victims included 2,102 males, 792 women, 299 elders and 147 children. Pal (2009) commented that according to the court data from the trial in 1943 in Budapest against the persons responsible for the Raid and the killings of the civilians, 3,309 people died, recorded by the place of death: in Žabalj 653, in Čurug 869, in Bečej 168, in Temerin 47, in Mošorin 195, in Vilovo 32, in Gardanovci 74 and in Novi Sad 879. Among the victims were 147 children and 299 elders. During the Raid of 1942 up to 3,928 civilians were killed, consisting of 2,662 Serbs and 1,103 Jews. After those events the executions became less frequent. In 1943 the government decided that the Jewish people had to wear a yellow star, all Jewish properties

were also seized and the remaining Jewish people were deported to camps (Golubović 1992). The mass killings were carried out in 1943 during the process of gathering of Jewish groups in order to send them to concentration camps. Killings were made because of the resistance or escape attempts, but mostly with the purpose of hiding the evidences of crimes and robbery undertaken by military. However, the biggest numbers of Jewish casualties originating from Bačka region of Serbia was registered in 1944, when 7,934 Jews died in different concentration camps mostly in Germany and Ukraine. In the first three years of the war, the predominance of adult male executions is evident, but after 1943, all Jews, regardless of their age and gender, were sent to concentration camps, tortured and eventually killed. Only few people managed to escape and a small number of Jews returned from concentration camps after the liberation.

Table 2. The gender structure of Jewish victims in Bačka region (Vojvodina, Serbia)

	Bačka region	Gender		
		Female	(%)	Male
Total	10,527	5,253	49.9	5,238
1941	214	48	22.4	172
1942	1,316	636	48.3	680
1943	713	13	1.8	700
1944	7,934	4,456	56.2	3,478
1945	223	71	31.8	152
1946	15	7	46.7	8
1947	11	5	45.5	6
Unknown	39	–		–

Source: Imenik stradalih stanovnika AP Vojvodine 1941–1948, VANU, Tom 1 – Bačka i Baranja, 2009.

Analysis of the database of the age structure of the war casualties from Bačka region who belonged to the Jewish nation shows that the brutality gradually increased. In the first three years mostly adults and seniors were the target of military actions and executions (around 90% of the killed Jewish people), and in 1944 the age structure is more even through the age groups. The most morbid fact of World War II is that so many families became extinct. Originating from Bačka region more than 1,462 Jewish children (under 16 years) were killed, and most of them died during the year 1944 (1,306 children), mostly in the Auschwitz concentration camp and in Novi Sad (in 1942 Raid, when about 138 children were killed). One of the explanations stated about the reasons for the killings of innocent children (even babies) was the fear of possible vengeance when they grew up.

Table 3. Age structure of Jewish victims in Vojvodina and Bačka region, 1941-1946

	Total	Average age	Age structure							
			Children (under 15)	%	Adults (16–59)	%	Elders (over 60)	(%)	Unknown	%
Vojvodina	15,495	41.7	1,897	12.2	9,372	60.5	4,226	27.3	–	–
Bačka	10,527	40.9	1,462	13.9	6,464	61.8	2,106	20.1	433	4.1
1941	220	38.5	11	5.0	165	75	18	8.2	26	11.8
1942	1,316	39.0	138	10.5	992	75.4	186	14.1	0	0
1943	713	38.4	3	0.4	708	99.3	2	0.3	0	0
1944	7,934	41.4	1,306	16.5	4,476	56.4	1,838	23.2	314	3.9
1945	223	44.3	9	4.0	164	73.5	44	19.7	6	2.7
1946	15	55.8	0	0	7	46.7	8	53.3	0	0
1947	11	63.2	0		6	54.6	5	45.4	0	0

Source: Imenik stradalih stanovnika AP Vojvodine 1941–1948, VANU, Tom 1 – Bačka i Baranja, 2009.

Analysing the distribution of casualties according to the place of death, most Jewish victims originating from Vojvodina, died in Germany (8,082), Central Serbia (3,046), Vojvodina (1,471), Soviet Union (764), Croatia (1,401), Hungary (231), Austria (178), Poland (7). The distribution of casualties by year of death of Jewish victims is unequal. The distribution of place of deaths is important geo-information that can be used for creating the image of war happenings from global to local points of view.

Data presented in Table 4 show the distribution of casualties of Jewish people originating from Bačka region of Vojvodina, according to the countries of death. The place where most Jews were executed and died is the Auschwitz concentration camp. Historians and analysts estimate the number of people murdered at Auschwitz somewhere between 2.1 million and 4 million, of whom the vast majority were Jews. The majority of prisoners held at Auschwitz were killed in various gas chambers although many died from starvation, forced labour, disease, firing squads, and terrible medical experiments (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org>). Jews originating from Vojvodina (Bačka region) shared the destiny with Jews from other countries, and most of them were killed in Auschwitz concentration camp (7,390 Jews, or 70.09% of total number of killed Jews from Bačka region).

From Bačka region about 36,919 people died during the war, from 1941 until 1948, 10,543 of whom were Jews (28.56%) (according to data collected by the Inquiry Board of the Committee of Autonomous Pokrajine of Vojvodina). After the war, only about 4,000 Jews returned to Vojvodina.

Table 4. Places of death of Jewish victims originating from Bačka region (Vojvodina, Serbia)

	Place of death									
	Serbia	Croatia	Hungary	Germany	Austria	Ukraine	Soviet Union	Poland	Other	Unknown
Total	1,412	82	218	7,709	173	597	167	11	145	151
1941	168	25	4	6	4	1	0	0	3	12
1942	1,065	29	31	19	114	31	25	0	5	12
1943	22	11	5	10	17	515	108	0	9	22
1944	98	21	140	7,464	29	50	17	7	80	32
1945	7	11	25	134	27	1	6	4	3	5
1946	7	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
1947	3	5	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0

Source: Imenik stradalih stanovnika AP Vojvodine 1941-1948, VANU, Tom 1 - Bačka i Baranja, 2009.

4. Jews in Bačka region, Vojvodina and Serbia after the war

The former Yugoslavia was liberated in 1944 and after the war the state was known as the Democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and through the entire region only 14,000 Jews returned, of whom about 4,000 Jews were from Vojvodina. The first post-war census conducted in 1948 showed data about 1,089 Jews (members of Judaism) in Serbia and the next census from 1953 gives data about only 740 Jews in Serbia. This was the consequence of a large-scale emigration to the newly established state of Israel. The Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia was established after World War II to coordinate the Jewish communities in post-war Federal State of Yugoslavia, and lobbied the right of Jews to emigrate to Israel in 1948 (about 8,000 Yugoslavian Jews moved to Israel in 1952). The Jewish population continued to decrease (Ivanković 2009). The Jewish communities in all republics of former Yugoslavia belonged to the Jewish Federation until the 1990s. When in 1991 Yugoslavia's republics began to break up, the entire region was negatively affected. This caused another structural change, as thousands of Yugoslav citizens, including the Jews, were forced to leave their homes. The disintegration of Yugoslavia led to an even larger emigration of Jews to Israel and the USA. The breakup of the former Yugoslavia also led to a breakup of the Yugoslav Jewish communities. The Jewish communities of Yugoslavia became completely autonomous after 1992, and are no longer connected to each other (ISJM Jewish Heritage Report, Vol. II, nos 3–4, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Yugoslavia2.html>). The civil wars in Yugoslavia destroyed many Jewish landmarks including famous synagogues and memorials to the Holocaust. Events in Kosovo region in the 1990s, leading to a bombing of Serbia by NATO forces in 1999, again led to emigration of many

Jews to Budapest and later to Israel and the USA. In the next years several censuses were conducted, but there is no data on the Jewish community in Serbia. It should be mentioned that the declaration on nationality and religion in Serbia was not obligatory. Jewish people and some other ethnic groups, especially those who were victims of the Holocaust (for example Gypsies) hesitated to register, as similar lists were used during the war to track them down and kill them.

Currently only about 5,500 Jews live in former Yugoslavia (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia). Nobody really knows for certain how many Jews live in Serbia today. Data from the 2002 census show that according to nationality 1,158 people declared to be Jews. However, the same census shows that only 785 people declared to be members of the Judaist religious community, and the rest of them were secular. According to this data 329 Jews live in Vojvodina, of whom 245 Jews live in Bačka region, in Banat there are 90 Jews and in Srem only 4 Jews. In some towns of Vojvodina Jewish communities still exist in Novi Sad (129 people), Subotica (89), Pančevo (42), Zrenjanin (15), Sombor (17), Senta (6) and Kikinda (7), but their number is very small. About 456 Jews live in Central Serbia of whom 415 Jews live in Belgrade (mostly Zemun) (Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2003). The latest census conducted in 2011 shows that in Serbia only 578 persons declared to be members of the Judaist religious community, living mostly in Belgrade region (296) and Vojvodina (286 people in total, of which 185 in Bačka, 65 in Banat and 4 in Srem). However, according to some unofficial estimation, around 3,000 Jews live in Serbia (data on members of Jewish community in Serbia).

Most of Serbian citizens had never had direct contacts with Jews who constituted around 0.45 % of the total Serbian population before World War II, and after the war only 0.03%. The Nazi genocide and the emigration of at least half of the Serbian Jewish survivors put an end to most of the 'non-symbolic' problems of Serbian Philo-Semitism (and anti-Semitism too). From 1945 onward, Jews were (and are) such a small presence in Serbian life that hardly any attention would be paid to them had not the phenomenon of anti-Semitism and Philo-Semitism retained an 'explanatory power' in defining Serbia's relation to itself and the outside world. This is not surprising since the social-political question of how the Jews were to be treated became less relevant than the historical-philosophical question of how the Jews were to be remembered and recognized as part of the Serbian society (Pickus 2008).

5. The destruction of Jewish heritage in Bačka region, AP Vojvodina (Serbia)

The religious domes were the places of religious gatherings of Jews in Bačka, and they existed in Ada, Bačka Palanka, Bezdán, Petrovac, Kanjiža, Idoš, Senta, Bač, Vrbas, and other towns in the 18th century. Synagogues were built later. At the same time the Jewish cemeteries were formed in every town and village where Jews lived (Šosberger 1998). Before World War II a great number of synagogues

and Jewish cemeteries in about 80 locations existed in Vojvodina. Bačka region had a number of Jewish cemeteries: in Ada (1800), Bajmok (1830), Bačko Petrovo Selo (1800), Bačka Topola (1835), Bački Petrovac (1875), Kula (1840), Mol (1840), Novi Sad (three cemeteries, of which two, dating from 1717 and 1748 were totally destroyed and the one still standing is from 1800), Novi Vrbas (1901), Senta (1852), Stara Kanjiža (1800), Bečej (1848), Sombor (1805), Subotica (1795), Temerin (1800). Many of these cemeteries are today in rather poor state and endangered (Medić 2006).

The destruction of Jewish heritage was an everyday occurrence during World War II. The violent takeover of all movable and immovable properties of Jews was something seen as a normal consequence of the war events. First all the properties of rich Jewish families were expropriated, families killed or sent to concentration camps and their houses demolished in an attempt to hide the evidence. Most of the movable values and assets gathered during the war years were taken and sent to Germany, and some of these possessions were hidden by generals and soldiers. Several synagogues and Jewish schools were demolished during the war. However, immovable Jewish heritage was mostly destroyed or changed their purpose in years after the war, done by the communist forces.

The religiosity of Serbian Jews diminished upon their return from concentration camps, and there were no religious services after the Holocaust. After 1968 the community had no rabbi. Instead of traditional services and holidays the Jews took to commemorate special days in honour of their family members who died in the Holocaust. While many Jews have left the area of the former Yugoslavia, their monuments and synagogues remain. The Jewish community that remained in Serbia was especially concerned with Jewish heritage, cemeteries and memorial buildings to commemorate the war victims. Most Jewish heritage sites in Serbia were located in Vojvodina region that was a former part of Hungary and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The data shows that even though Jewish heritage was endangered during the war period, the main destruction of the Jewish heritage actually happened after the war. According to the data in Table 5 most of Jewish synagogues as the most representative buildings and heritage assets were demolished between 1948 and 1962. After the war there were thus only abandoned, ruined or neglected Jewish sites in many towns and villages of Vojvodina (shown on Map 1). The former synagogues were gradually either demolished or put to new uses. Many cemeteries were abandoned; some were pillaged and their gravestones used for construction; others became overgrown and almost forgotten until researchers began to identify them in the 1990s (ISJM Jewish Heritage Report, Vol. 2, pp. 3–4; www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Yugoslavia2.html). Today only few typical Jewish heritage monuments remain in Serbia, three synagogues, several cemeteries and Holocaust memorials (Gruber 2003).

Table 5. Jewish heritage in Bačka region of Vojvodina (before and after 1941), Republic of Serbia

Place	Demolished heritage	Remaining heritage	Built	Demolished
Apatin		synagogue (used as Baptist church since 1950), Rabbi's house and Jewish cemetery (1780)	1885	–
Bač	synagogue		1750	1980
Bačka Palanka	synagogue		1806	1956
Bački Brestovac	synagogue		1880	1948
Bačka Topola	synagogue	Jewish cemetery Holocaust memorial	1863	1950
Bačko Gradište	synagogue, school, Jewish cemetery	Holocaust memorial	1890	1955
Bački Monoštor		Jewish cemetery – abandoned		
Bački Petrovac	synagogue		1905	1962
Bačko Petrovo Selo	synagogue	Holocaust memorial, Jewish cemetery	1854	1950
Bajmok	synagogue		1896	1948
Banatsko Arandelovo	synagogue		1880	1948
Bezdan	synagogue	abandoned Jewish cemetery	1807	1948
Čonoplja	synagogue	abandoned Jewish cemetery	1763	1948
Crvenka	synagogue		unknown	1948
Čelarevo		Jewish necropolis (Hazar's tombs)	8 th century	
Čurug	synagogue		1880	1950
Đurđevo	synagogue		1900	1948
Feketić	synagogue		1900	1948
Gospođinci	synagogue		1900	1948
Kula	synagogue		1861	1948
Novi Sad		synagogue, Jewish cemetery (1717), Ceremonial hall (1905) and Memorial, Holocaust memorial on the Danube riverbank	1906–1909	Synagogue renovated
Pačir	synagogue		1850	1948
Pivnice	synagogue		1900	1944
Prigrevica	synagogue, cemetery		1880	1948
Ratkovo (Parabuć)	synagogue		1870	1948

Place	Demolished heritage	Remaining heritage	Built	Demolished
Ridica	synagogue	abandoned Jewish cemetery	1900	1948
Silbaš	synagogue		1900	1948
Sivac	synagogue		1878	1948
Srbobran	synagogue		1900	1956
Subotica		synagogue and Jewish complex, Holocaust memorial and Jewish cemetery (1780)	1902	Synagogue renovated
Sombor		synagogue (used as an administrative building of "Gradsko Zelenilo"), Jewish cemetery (1800) – vandalized	1860	
Sonta	synagogue		1900	1948
Stanišić	synagogue	Jewish cemetery (60-70 tombs)	1870	1950
Bečej	synagogue	Jewish cemetery (about 200 monuments) vandalized	1883	1962
Temerin	synagogue	Jewish cemetery (about 80 tombstones)	1878	1947
Titel	synagogue		1900	1950
Tovariševo	synagogue		1900	1948
Vrbas	synagogue		1914	1948
Žabalj	synagogue		1904	1950
In total	33 demolished synagogues			

Source: Jewish Heritage in Europe, <<http://www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/>>

Cultural processes and cultural changes are closely linked with the memory of individual and collective agents as active factors. Marked with the help of signs and symbols, meaningful experience possesses both a subjective and an objective dimension (Halas 2010). Collective as well as individual memories become legitimate first and foremost when they are approved by the current power-holders and the authorities within public opinion (Aarelaid-Tart 2010). The memory of the Holocaust is thus also fragmented according to the national context. In the history of humanity, the Holocaust is an unprecedented massive event. This larger understanding, however, gets lost in societies where no historical research has been undertaken since World War II. Sometimes governments or local authorities mark Jewish places. They frequently do so because they want to catch the attention of the Western world and show that the Jews are part of their history. Often, though, they nurture the memory of the murdered Jews and the communities that disappeared without elaborating on how and why this happened (Cerenješ 1999). After the war in Serbia, in 1945, significant changes were made in the way that the



Map 1. Jewish heritage in Vojvodina, Serbia.

war was commemorated. The presentation of the war as a tragedy and madness, marked with millions of civil deaths, genocide and concentration camps, and not the heroic fight and triumphant armies, showed the symbolic meaning of the new ideology of United Europe. Heterogeneous cultural heritage and numerous historically opposite traditions were rationally suppressed by economic principles in need for creating unique market empowered with promotion of the idea of free man and open society. After the war, two discourses were obvious in the former Yugoslavia – the glorifying of military casualties and commemorating the civil casualties, that created some kind of gap in the ideology of national community. The creation of the new ideology was simultaneously followed by the destruction of symbols from the past. Even though many historic and cultural monuments were destroyed during the war, numerous valuable historical monuments (especially religious monuments and buildings) disappeared at the time of affirmation of brotherhood and unity of peoples of socialist communities. This trend resulted in total destruction of heritage from other epochs and historic events that the newly created community tried to forget or re-contextualize. Instead of

diverse heritage, the promotion was directed into the idea of autoimmunity of Yugoslav cultural tradition by creation of a series of memorial parks that in the 1960s and 1970s were established as places of commemoration of the sufferings of the civilians in World War II (Manojlović-Pintar, 2011).

About 20 synagogues and many other Jewish sites in Serbia survived in one form or another, but only three synagogues kept their original function (Belgrade, Novi Sad and Subotica). Today, most synagogue buildings that remained, such as the grand structures in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Subotica are protected as cultural monuments. Many are being (slowly) restored or adapted to new uses, and nowadays this is usually done in ways that incorporate visible reminders of their Jewish origins. Dozens of Jewish cemeteries still exist in Serbia, but most are in poor condition (Šosberger 1998). Even today, there are often attacks on Jewish heritage sites in Serbia, reflected in vandalism and open anti-Semitism by some extreme groups such as neo-Nazism and anti-Zionist organizations (for example Skinheads, Obraz, Dveri) that propagate open hatred against Jews. The government and the Serbian Orthodox church in general have the judgemental stand and verbally react about individual incidents such as the destruction of gravestones, graffiti drawings and verbal attacks (as the physical attracts were not recorded so far) (Lebl 2012).

6. Conclusion

The study shows that the quite large Jewish community that existed in Vojvodina, most numerous in Bačka region, counting over 19,300 people before World War II, was reduced to about 4,000 people after the war. After that the numbers continued to decrease until they reached the number of only 329 Jews in Vojvodina (245 Jews in Bačka region). The outcome of World War II in this region was highly expressive in the data, showing the evidence of 10,465 Jewish victims from Bačka region of AP Vojvodina. The biggest numbers of executions took place in 1942 during the Great Raid (Novi Sad) and later, in 1944, when the executions were made in concentration camps abroad (Germany, Hungary, Ukraine, Soviet Union). The study also gives some assessment of today's number of Jewish community members in Serbia that can be called a micro-community. The study also examined the problem of Jewish heritage and its protection. The rather modest remains of Jewish heritage in Bačka region, Vojvodina and Serbia in general should gain more public respect. The government should foster the restorations and protection of the remaining Jewish heritage of Serbia, as well as all the other heritage of Serbia in general, disregarding the historical period, ethnic or religious origin. The Jewish heritage in Serbia could also become a tourist attraction in the future, especially in the newly created form – the so-called genealogy tourism. The descendants of Serbian Jews or other members of the Jewish community in general could become interested in visiting the place of their ancestors and Jewish heritage in Serbia.

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