

## Spain

Country in Western Europe. As a non-belligerent country during World War II, Spain became a possible refuge for Jews fleeing the Nazis. Indeed, within two years of Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, some 3,000 Jews had entered Spain in search of a safe haven. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, there were about 6,000 Jews residing in Spain. During the war, which lasted until April 1939, most of the Jews left Spain. After the Civil War ended with a victory for General Francisco Franco, all Jewish organizations in Spain were shut down.

Although Hitler's army had helped Franco's Fascist forces defeat the Republicans in the Civil War, and although Spain was a member of the Anti-Comintern Pact (along with Germany), other than a few members of the Spanish legion who joined the SS, Spain did not take part in the fighting during World War II.

After France surrendered to Germany in June 1940, tens of thousands of refugees flocked to the Spanish border, hoping to reach Spanish or Portuguese ports from which they would try to leave Europe by ship. In spite of strict rules about entry into Spain that were issued in 1940 and 1941, tens of thousands of refugees managed to cross the border---even if they did not possess a visa to a final destination. Refugees who missed their boats or had entered Spain without a visa were detained in the Miranda de Ebro concentration camp or transferred back to France. Jewish refugees from Germany continued to pass through Spain by train until the German authorities banned all emigration from the Reich in October 1941. During the first half of the war, some 20,000--30,000 Jews were given permission to pass through Spain.

During the summer of 1942 the Nazis began deporting Jews from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. At that point, many Jewish refugees crossed into Spain illegally. Those who were caught were arrested, and the Spanish government planned to return them to France, where they would face almost certain death. The Allies warned that the fate of these refugees would have a major impact on Allied policy on Spain. As a result of

that warning, Spain announced in April 1943 that it would admit refugees, as long as some other party would provide for their care and the refugees would leave the country as fast as they could. The refugees were mainly provided for by the Joint Distribution Committee in Spain. Between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1944, some 7,500 Jews fled to Spain and were given temporary refuge.

During the war, more than 4,000 Spanish Jews found themselves living in German-occupied territories; as Spanish nationals, these Jews were given protection by the Spanish government, which instructed its representatives abroad to report any situations in which Spanish citizens were mistreated, and to intervene on their behalf. However, as long as Spanish laws were not violated, the representatives were not supposed to insist that Spanish citizens be exempt from local laws. Thus, in many cases, Spanish Jews depended on the goodwill of the representatives of the Spanish government to deliver them from danger. In Hungary in 1944, Giorgio Perlasca, an Italian national, rescued Jews in the name of Spain.

In January 1943 the German embassy in Spain told the Spanish government that it had two months to remove all of its Jewish citizens from Western Europe. Spain now had an opportunity to save the lives of 4,000 Spanish Jews---but instead of rising to the task, the government severely regulated who was to be given entry visas. As a result of these restrictions, only 800 Spanish Jews were allowed to enter Spain. After the war the Spanish government claimed that it had protected all of its Jews, and the truth about its real actions was hidden from the Spanish public.