# Brussels

Capital of Belgium. When the Germans invaded Belgium in May 1940, 33,000 Jews lived in Brussels, most of whom were recent immigrants from Eastern Europe. After the German invasion, many of Brussels' Jewish community leaders fled, disrupting community services.

Communal life was somewhat revitalized in the summer of 1940. However, by mid-1941, the German occupational authorities began issuing anti-Jewish legislation. Jewish children were kicked out of Belgian schools, and the Jews were forced to establish the Association of Jews in Belgium (AJB), a *Judenrat*-like organization. In 1942 the Germans began confiscating Jewish property, drafted Jews into forced labor units, and made them wear the Jewish badge (see also badge, Jewish). Many non-Jewish residents of Brussels wore badges in solidarity.

During the summer of 1942, the Jews were rounded up for deportation to the Mechelen camp. Many resisted the deportations. In September the Jewish Defense Committee was formed by Jewish Communists and Zionists; it helped hide Jews, provided assistance for them, and kept in contact with the Belgian resistance movement. Many Jews were also active in Belgian resistance organizations, and 12,000 Jews hid all over Brussels.

After the liberation, Brussels was a center for the reorganization and restoration of Belgium's Jews.