

Jewish Center, Slovakia

(*Ustredna Zidov*), Jewish institution established by the Slovak government in 1940 to run Jewish affairs.

When Slovakia was given autonomy in 1938, its Jews obtained permission to set up an umbrella Jewish organization, which they named the Central Jewish Office for Slovakia. This office, which excluded Orthodox Jews, ran social, cultural, economic, and religious activities. In mid-1940 Germany increased its pressure on Slovakia. This convinced the Jews that the entire Jewish community needed to unite, so a new organization was established that included Orthodox Jews. This organization functioned until late September 1940, when the government dissolved all Jewish agencies. At that point, the authorities set up another institution to administer Jewish affairs, which they called the Jewish Center.

The Jewish Center was headed by a *starosta*, or elder, who was assisted by a council, but actually held most of the organization's power in his own hands. In addition, many of the center's employees collaborated with the Nazis. Some of those working at the center opposed the way the organization was run; together with Jewish leaders not associated with the center, they set up their own semi-underground agency, the working group, which led the effort to rescue the remaining elements of the Slovak Jewish community.