

Autori / Authors

Anton HRUBOŇ

Alicja BARTNICKA

Tomáš LANG

Igor BAKA

Tamara JANECOVÁ

Jozef KLEMENT

Eduard NIŽŇANSKÝ

Romana ANTALOVÁ

Patrik MISKOVICS

Katarína BOHOVÁ

Nina ZBOROVANČÍKOVÁ

Eva BULLOVÁ

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Eduard Nižňanský

Výkonný redaktor/Executive editor

Katarína Ristveyová (katarina.ristveyova@muzeumsnp.sk)

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www.muzeumsnp.sk

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Anton HRUBOŇ

“Fascism has No Essence but Terrible Human Consequences”

An Interview with Professor Roger Griffin¹

His single-sentence definition of fascism has triggered a new wave in transdisciplinary research and aroused a significant shift in fascism’s scholarly reflection.² Thanks to a breakthrough contribution to science, Roger Griffin, a professor emeritus at the Oxford Brookes University, belongs to the classics of comparative fascist studies. Slowly but surely, Griffin’s conception of fascism has been gaining deserved recognition also in Central Europe where it influenced several “groundbreakers” or “icebreakers”, whose publications are now available. It brought an innovative paradigm into discussions about interwar fascism and the Axis by decentring the focus away from traditional Marxist and positivist historiographical approaches and towards a form intellectual history which embraces social theories from social psychology, cultural anthropology and millenarian studies.

During the covid pandemic in early 2021 it was a pleasure to host Roger Griffin as a guest lecturer within my compulsory online course at the Matej Bel University’s Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, his first ever performance on the grounds of Slovak university. Several months later, he virtually “returned” back to Banská Bystrica to deliver a keynote lecture at the “Fascism and Nazism from their beginnings to present days” conference organised by the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising (22 – 23 September 2021). The event provided a unique opportunity to dig deeper into Roger Griffin’s inspiring thoughts and opinions sketched in this interview given after the conference session.

1 This interview was supported by the KEGA project no. 003UMB-4/2022 awarded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

2 See: IORDACHI, Constantin – KALLIS, Aristotle. Introduction: Fascism at 100 (and a Bit). In IORDACHI, Constantin – KALLIS, Aristotle. (eds.). *Beyond the Fascist Century. Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 4-13.

A. H.: In October 2022, we will commemorate a centenary of the first major fascist triumph in Europe, the March on Rome. Your pioneering book *The Nature of Fascism* (1991) brought a new definition of fascism into the discourse of comparative fascist studies which has gradually come to be broadly accepted by scholars. Fascism is, however, a living, evolving phenomenon and did not die out together with the crushing defeat of the Axis powers in 1945. Following its evolution in recent decades, are there any parts of your definition which would deserve a reformulation, addition, or extension?

R. G.: Well, let us start by clearing up some possible misapprehensions. My definition was only new in the sense that I tidied up into a simplistic, one-sentence formula an approach that had already been applied in a less theoretically elaborated or rigorous spirit by a series of pioneers of modern comparative studies, notably Eugen Weber, Stanley Payne, Juan Linz, Zeev Sternhell, and especially George Mosse. In the last few years an increasing number of prolific and creative researchers have been developing my approach far beyond my tentative and partially flawed attempt to give the term "fascism" a heuristically useful definition (a "working definition") in 1991. There is thus no sense in which I am somehow the founder or leader of a school of fascist studies: it is an increasingly rich and fertile field of studies that has been given continuing relevance by the growth of right-wing populism and new forms of extreme right terrorism and hatred which conjure up the ghost of interwar fascism, and which thus fuel contemporary interest in fascism and lead to the term being used so frequently in the media and social media in a misleading, sloppy way. But if I broke new ground in 1991, the ever-larger field of studies that emerged is now being worked by many labourers and I am just digging the ground beside them in my little patch: I am far from being a sort of gang-master!

As for it being "broadly accepted", it may have become the dominant or widely accepted and cited definition but only outside the Marxist tradition, which is a rich and varied tradition in its own right that emerged shortly after the founding of Mussolini's first *Fascio* and can still offer some penetrating insights. The spread of partial consensus around the idea of "palingenetic ultranationalism" has contributed to the founding of a journal (*Fascism: Journal for the Comparative Study of Fascism*) and an international organisation (COMFAS), with which it is associated, which holds well-attended yearly conventions and has an increasingly international following. But there are still academics who radically disagree with "my" approach or ignore it altogether, notably some in the US who insist that Trump is a fascist, a position I deeply disagree with despite the confused fascistic position (rarely elaborated enough to be an "ideology") adopted by some of his more fanatical followers.

As for what I would change, I would not modify the notorious single sentence definition, but I would spend more time unpacking the sentence in the chapter that delivered it. I would devote more time to stressing the many ways the main parts of it can be interpreted by fascists and forms it can take, namely with

respect to mythic core, palingenetic, ultranationalism and populism, all of which have been misrepresented and misunderstood by critics and some “supporters”, an example of academic friendly fire. I would also spend a lot more time on post-1945 fascism now that “right-wing populism”, Islamism and illiberal democracy have come to play such a large part of the world and need to be differentiated carefully from fascism. But that would take too long to explain now.

A. H.: In academic as well as political discourse we have got used to a “neo-” prefix for denotation of fascism’s post-fascist era permutations. I am a little bit horrified by the static temporal implications of this term. I have a feeling that in the first decades after the war we committed to heuristic frameworks which defined neo-fascism as a single post-1945 phenomenon which we constantly compare to the “historic” pre-1945 fascism. Due to this, historiography and political science may be mixing up, for example, the fascisms of the 1950’s fascism with contemporary varieties of fascism – which might be thought of as neo-neo-fascisms – within one single taxonomical category. Can the disciplines reliably “capture” with a single concept the complex transitional process and evolution which fascism has undergone in post-war period?

R. G.: As I have just said, if I had my time again to rewrite the section of post-war fascism, I would be much more rigorous now about the use of the terms “neo-fascism” and “neo-Nazism”. I was really out of my depth when I wrote that chapter (7), because my doctorate and the research for it had been almost exclusively on interwar history. I am more comfortable now with period concepts such as interwar, post-war, post-1991, post-9/11 fascism, but would probably avoid “neo” and “proto”, though keep “parafascism” even though the concept never really took off for regimes that adopted the externals of fascism while suppressing its revolutionary, anti-establishment dynamic. As for the second part of your question, I certainly think political sciences working now carefully and modestly with historians on specialist, circumscribed topics in the period from 1945 till the recent past can “capture” (establish, define, and analyse) some of the key new permutations of extremist politics which have arisen since 1945. In particular, they can identify – though it is not always easy because of the disguises and euphemism so often adopted by fascists in the public sphere now that fascism is taboo – a recognizable core of revolutionary anti-liberal nationalism if it is present, if they are prepared to play academic detectives. To do this, they have to recognise the transformed socio-historical context in which fascism now has to operate compared with the interwar period, the drastic loss of political space for all revolutionary politics and the need for intelligent fascists (not a contradiction in terms) to disguise both the revolutionary and racial component of their thought if they want to participate in mainstream politics and culture. Not all academics are prepared to do this and thus write articles and books which fuel confusion rather than dissipate it, often for polemical or careerist motives.

A. H.: You have just delivered an opening lecture in Banská Bystrica – a centre of the Slovak National Uprising, the most extensive anti-fascist resistance military operation in the Nazi controlled Europe after the Warsaw Uprising. So, let's focus on Slovakia for a while.

In 2013, a far-right leader Marian Kotleba (for many surprisingly) won regional elections and became a head of the Banská Bystrica Region (*Banskobystrický kraj*). A politician who called the Slovak National Uprising a "Bolshevik coup", openly admired the wartime president Jozef Tiso and his regime, and proposed Slovakia's transformation into a corporative state. Political organisations under Kotleba's influence (Slovak Togetherness, People's Party Our Slovakia) were infamously notoriously known for their open or latent anti-Semitism. What does it say about the Slovak society? And do you think Kotleba has been a "product of local cuisine", or mirroring of *something* pan-European?

R. G.: Here I must apply one of the lessons I learnt from my misclassification of Ustasha in my *Nature of Fascism* along with some other aberrant judgements, and not try to offer analyses when I am so far out of my depth. I defer to you and Jakub Drábik to answer this question. I can read no Slav language and have far too superficial knowledge of Slovak interwar history and contemporary right-wing politics to answer your question. What I would like to say, though, is that since post-war conditions have shrunk the political space needed for a fully-fledged mass populist fascism party with a paramilitary wing, some fascists have resorted to using *non-revolutionary* forms of right-wing populism such as Trumpism, Orbanism, or the AfD³ as a chance to enter mainstream politics (a form of right-wing entryism). Elements of the Capitol mob and QAnon subculture, for example, try to use Republican Trumpism to gain momentum, and the neo-Nazi Hoecke Wing in Germany for a time successfully exploited the AfD's ambiguous relationship to historical Nazism to their advantage. In the UK, the post-Brexit Brexit party that replaced UKIP⁴ tried to elevate to a position of public importance Tommy Robinson who comes very sails to adopting a fascist critique of liberal democracy and advocating extreme racist policies, and so it goes on. To this extent, Kotleba must be seen as both unique to Slovakia and simultaneously part of a pan-European trend towards extremist racists and some genuine fascists operating on the fringes of populist (and illiberal) democratic movements, and disguising the radicalness and violence of their hidden agenda.

A. H.: Do you think the memory of World War II and anti-fascist culture, which has been preserved by post-war governments across Europe, is vanishing little by little?

R. G.: Inevitably, as one generation passes and a new era unfolds – the fascist era gave way to the post-fascist era of the Cold War, followed by the post-Cold

3 *Alternative für Deutschland* – Alternative for Germany, a right-wing populist party founded in 2013.

4 *UK Independence Party*, a Eurosceptic right-wing populist party founded in 1993.

War era of the 1990s with its own upsurge of ethnic hatreds, and then the 9/11 era of Islamism's war against the West – though how each “era” is perceived is inevitably modified in retrospect as new realities manifest themselves and new generations arise with their own experiences. Also, each country's experience of history is unique, and the fascist era is far from universal. To imagine it is, or that the whole world is experiencing a version of “your” era now or in the past, is deeply ethnocentric (Eurocentrism, US-centrism and Christianity-centrism have always been deeply distorting lenses through which to study or imagine history). Even the Holocaust cannot be treated as marking some ultimate yardstick or absolute episode of mass suffering since mass persecutions, engineered mass killings and genocides litter human history and the scale of inhumanity involved is incommensurable and not to be evaluated in terms of numbers of victims alone. Nor is there any definitive perspective on a brutal regime, war, or occupation since the way they are perceived is constantly evolving as history moves on and new long-term processes or aspects come into view. The same is true of all mass crimes against humanity, such as the history of Western Colonialism or the crimes or the regimes of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot.

Thus, it would be absurd for governments to try to freeze time and persist in commemorating just one extreme episode of suffering or violence in the nation's history. However, I do think it important that educational systems constantly revise their history syllabuses to provide citizens with a relatively unmythicized narrative of the nation's history and relationship to other histories, including the shameful episodes in which the nation has been involved, such as the slave trade and culture-cidal colonization in the case of the UK. This approach means that a particularly important role should be adopted by museums, libraries, archives, and history faculties in preserving the relatively accurate and uncensored memory of the past as time moves on. They should strive to lose their ethnocentric and nationalistic orientation and adopt a universal humanism rather than ethnocentrism as the core value-system. In that way the episode of suffering and inhumanity of which they are custodians is experienced both as unique but also as a “case study” in generic patterns of cruelty and inhumanity integral to the human species since time immemorial.

A. H.: One of the key problems I identify in historical narratives of contemporary Central European societies is a “*Sonderweg*” mind-set. A significant part of Slovak historiography and society are still dominated by traditionalist ethnocentric approaches which hesitate to taxonomically integrate the wartime Slovak State and its Hlinka's Slovak People's Party regime within the extended family of fascist movements who collaborated in the creation of Hitler's *Europäische Neuordnung*. Instead of seeking common features, they stubbornly concentrate on emphasizing the specifics, attempting to rip Slovakia out of this camp. What makes the Slovak story interesting or unique for you as a historian of fascism?

R. G.: Well, I feel unqualified to be definitive or dogmatic on this question, but what has always fascinated me since I started studying interwar European history is how many people who represented the church or thought of themselves as Christian could hate Communism or other races so much that they inwardly abandoned a sincere belief in Christ (if it ever was sincere) and embraced an extreme nationalism or fascism and colluded with all the inhumanity these led to while still claiming to be Christians. This collusion between institutionalized Christianity and systemic inhumanity happened in the interwar period in Spain, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, Romania, Hungary, Finland, South Africa, and of course to a much more systemized and horrendous extent in Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Ustasha Croatia.

I am convinced that most apparent "social" or "cultural" Christians were ultimately collaborationist pseudo-Christian conservatives/reactionaries who feared "decadence" and "chaos" – anarchy, materialism permissiveness, decadence, the breakdown of tradition, the emancipation of women, sexual liberation, Left and Communism – more than they feared ultranationalism and fascism. A small minority, among them major priests and theologians, were even able to carry out a peculiar and disgusting hybridization in the recesses of their mind between fascism and Christianity in which each reinforced the other, no matter how abhorrent this would have been to Jesus Christ.

The little I know about Slovakia between 1918 and 1945 suggests to me that mainstream Slovakian Christianity adopted an increasingly conciliatory approach to the rise of Fascism and Nazism, encouraged by the pervasion of the Church by nationalist, anti-modern, anti-socialist and anti-Semitic prejudices, as well as by the official position adopted and promoted by the Vatican itself, and especially the Concordats signed with Mussolini and Hitler. The Slovak State under pressure from the apparently inexorable rise of the Third Reich and the prospect of a Nazi Europe, thus became a deeply collaborationist regime without being technically fascist. However, many within the milieu of the Hlinka Guard seem to have abandoned even the pretence of being Christian and developed a uniquely Slovakian form of militaristic, pagan and racist fascism. But I may well be corrected by experts like yourself who know a lot more than me. In short, Slovakia is a rich case study in the relationship between Christianity, fascism, and collaborationism, which is itself part of a much larger story of the corruption of religion by state power and the failure of the clerical hierarchy of the religion – whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist etc. – to stand up for their core beliefs to stop society being taken over by the forces of "evil", however constructed.

A. H.: In your works you have been claiming that the long-term coalitional coexistence of clerical nationalists sympathetic to the authoritarian-styled government with revolutionary fascists is not sustainable. Sooner or later, the fascists would try to get rid of their "appendiceal" temporary allies. Do you think that finding some *modus vivendi* between these political elements is really out of question?

R. G.: Let us be clear: fascism, unlike the Christian extreme right in the US, ISIS, or the extreme wing of the BJP, is not a politicized form of religion. However, when it could become a mass movement or regime in the interwar period, fascism naturally adopted sacralised forms of secular politics and co-opted Christian forms of anticommunism and ultranationalism when it could, which complicates taxonomic distinctions. In the long term it is clear that Hitler and the leading Nazis (e.g., Himmler) intended to destroy and replace Christianity with a this-worldly pagan faith based on the primacy of the Aryan race with its own elaborate rituals of sacralised politics. Fascism in Italy was clearly a pagan creed theoretically incompatible with Catholicism, but the capacity for doublethink on questions of Catholicism demonstrated by millions of Italians between 1925 and 1943 was so enormous and widespread that some sort of collaboration might have gone on indefinitely for decades, just as perverted Catholicism, Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity (look at Putin's Russia now!) have formed alliances with a terrifying array of inhuman right-wing regimes and dictators throughout their history. As for the Ustasha State, there may well have been a large degree of hybridization in the "souls" (for want of a better word) in many Croats that might have postponed a showdown between a perverted Christianity and the racist state for generations. I would like to hear some expert opinions on your question both from devout (i.e., genuinely Christian) Christians and historical specialists.

A. H.: During your keynote lecture at the conference, you spoke about the mission of museums recording past atrocities, too. In this regard, you raised the idea of such museums as *humanisers* of society. What do you exactly mean by that? And how can this concept be applied in museums focusing on the history of antifascism like the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising does?

R. G.: Museums can serve the political agendas of any regime: look at the House of Terror in Orban's Hungary or the original Uffizi in Florence or The Hermitage in Moscow and it is clear that the link between humanism in the ethical, universalist rather than "classical" Graeco-Roman sense is weak. A museum can all too easily be a tool of propaganda and social engineering of any regime and value-system. However, there is a particularly idealistic type of museum that, thanks to the enlightened values of its direction and the government that oversees it, sees its role as bearing witness to past atrocities in the spirit not of dogmatic nationalism, religion, or party politics, but of universal, transcultural humanism. I am thinking about museums about the slave trade, of the many Holocausts and genocides, or the sufferings of the working classes or women. In my talk I was simply suggesting the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising was one of these: a repository not just of the memory of a particular episode in Slovak national experience and suffering, but of universal human violence and suffering preserved in a non-partisan anti-nationalist spirit. For example, the current war in Ukraine will obviously one day deserve a humanistically conceived museum as much as the Nakba

(Palestinian Catastrophe), the Armenian genocide or the Holodomor (the Great Ukrainian Famine) do, and the thousands of other episodes of mass suffering and conflict that should be a permanent and visible part of the record of the human presence on this fragile earth.

A. H.: Fascism and humanity clearly are in conflict with each other. However, a large number of people refuse to admit that the xenophobic parties they are currently supporting in the 2020s directly or covertly have a historical link with the movements from the 1930s and 1940s which are indisputably co-responsible for persecutions and genocides. But if these far-right supporters had a personal experience of life under pro-Axis regimes, many would surely be disappointed by the realities produced by populist illusions and maybe end up joining the resistance... Why do the masses today gravitate towards parties with such a clear anti-humanist agenda?

R. G.: T. S. Eliot, the Anglo-American poet, said in a poem that "*human beings cannot bear too much reality*". Each human being has a threshold of tolerance of complexity and few can actually come to grips psychologically with the intricacy, multifacetedness and ambivalence of historical and political "truth". To avoid the pain of cognitive dissonance, many choose subliminally to believe simplifications and lies, and enter a state of permanent denial where they cannot see the sort of connections and continuities you describe. Otherwise Trumpism and Putinism, Fascism and Nazism, Stalinism and the British slave trade or the conquest of North and South America by European "Christians" could never have happened. In short I would argue that people adopt simplistic populist and racist positions to *relieve* cognitive dissonance, to make the confusing and distressing realities of their lives and of contemporary history more tolerable, to anaesthetize the pain. That is why Nazism's big lie of the Jews being the root of all evil worked for so many millions who wanted an explanation for the collapse of society under Weimar...

A. H.: If you were to recommend a non-fiction book to a person outside academia who does not want to read scholarly literature but wants to understand the essence of fascism, which one would it be?

R. G.: Fascism has no essence but the socio-psychological dynamics and terrible human consequences of fascism's attempt to bring about the rebirth of a mythicized race or nation have been illuminated for me by several great products of the human imagination and capacity to testify to lived truths: a very short list: for the consequences of "rebirth" on those who do not fit the new nation *If This is a Man* (Primo Levi) and *The Pianist* (Polanski's film). For the dynamics of right-wing terrorism at a deeply psychological and individual level, *Fight Club* (the book and the film).

A. H.: Thank you for your time!

R. G.: Sorry to have spent so long answering your questions: reality is complex. Kafka said something like: “we can only see reality through a little peephole in the door of the room where life has confined us, but at least we can keep the peephole clean!”



↑ Roger Griffin at the 2nd COMFAS Convention held at the Uppsala University, Sweden (Photo: FB/The Hugo Valentin Centre)

→ Griffin's books nowadays serve as a basic scholar literature for anyone studying shades of international fascism (Photo: Anton Hruboň)



↑ An online Zoom lecture at the Matej Bel University delivered the time of Covid lockdowns from his home office in Oxford. As Griffin said, ironically the pandemic had opened up an opportunity for him to teach in various countries across the globe in a single day. (Photo: Anton Hruboň)





Roger Griffin

Professor Emeritus at Oxford Brookes University, is best known for *The Nature of Fascism* (1991), *Modernism and Fascism* (2007); *Terrorist's Creed: Fanatical Violence and the Human Need for Meaning* (2012); *Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies* (2018), and for co-founding the journal *Fascism* and COMFAS, the International Association for the Comparative Fascist Studies. His main achievement is to have formulated a non-Marxist definition of fascism which is now widely used in academia all over the world. Despite retirement, he continues to pursue (but, as he

stresses, never quite catches up with) his research interests – among which are fascism, populism, terrorism, and more generally the way modern society generates a permanent crisis of identity for many, leading to a constant flow of minority movements of extremism and fanaticism. He is particularly interested in the socio-cultural and psychological drivers of “othering”, conspiracy theories against outgroups, and the formation of “Manichean” world-views that divide the world into “us” and “them”, “good” and “evil” and so license dehumanisation, persecution, and extermination.

(Photo: Roger Griffin's archive)

Alicja BARTNICKA

Butchers in Uniforms.

Crimes and Violence

*Against Jewish Forced Labourers
in the HASAG Munitions Factory
in Skarżysko-Kamienna
During World War II¹*

Rabbi Israel Fersztendig, a prisoner of *Werk C* in the Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna, who was a witness in Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem in 1961, wrote in a letter to court: *"The most horrific camps, such as Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka, were listed here.... But the one that was not, but should be called the most barbaric was Skarżysko-Kamienna, Werk C."*² Tamara Szapiro, a forced labourer, who was sent to Hasag factory in Skarżysko in the transport from Majdanek, fully agreed with his statement. In her account we read: *"Majdanek – a horror camp, Skarżysko – a camp of the most extreme human misery."*³ The Hasag munitions factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna, which produced weapons for German armaments industry during World War II, became a place of execution for thousands of Jews forced to work in inhumane conditions. High mortality rate was caused not only by arduous work with poisonous, deadly for a human body chemicals, emaciation or diseases, but in a large measure by crimes committed by the factory officials, from the directorate to the low rank supervisors and guards. This article aims to outline from the survivors' perspective criminal activities of those tormentors who, because of their sadism and bestiality, had haunted memories of Jews imprisoned in these labour camps.

1 This paper was written in conjunction with the "Jewish forced labourers in the HASAG ammunition factory in Skarżysko Kamienna during World War II" project. The project was funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, project registration No.: 2018/29/N/HS3/02261.

2 KARAY, Felicja. Działalność społeczna i kulturalna w obozie pracy przymusowej dla Żydów w Skarżysku-Kamiennej. In *Zeszyty Majdanka*, 1998, Vol. 19, p. 54.

3 Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (hereinafter AŻIH), No. 301/600/k. 5, Tamara Szapiro's account on the factory Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

State Munitions Factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna before WWII

Before the Skarżysko-Kamienna plant was taken over by German occupation authorities and became the place of exploitation of Jewish forced labourers, it was a state-owned munitions factory, which began its activity in 1924. In a short time, the factory developed enough to take a leading position in the metal industry in interwar Poland. The group was a modern manufacturer of strategic importance for the state.⁴ Initially, it produced only metal bottle tops and percussion caps, but after a year, developed production of artillery fuzes and rifle ammunition. In January 1926, a visit of General Władysław Sikorski⁵, then Minister of Military Affairs, had a huge impact on the scope of production. This modern factory made such a big impression on Sikorski that the state authorities decided to support the venture, both financially and politically.⁶ From that moment on elaboration of ammunition began – 75 mm calibre grenades with monthly output of about twenty thousand pieces; caps and caskets, also screws for warheads, RYG detonators, calibre 75 fired shells, or Mauser-type rifle ammunition.⁷ The introduction of new equipment from France improved the quality of production and further expanded its scope, this time with various types of ammunition – rifle and air ammunition, special purpose weapons, pistol, artillery and anti-tank ammunition, steel shells for grenades and many others, highly rated for the quality of materials and workmanship.⁸ The comparative analyses showed that the Skarżysko group, like no other in the world, produced ammunition from high-quality, expensive materials, thus translating into weapons quality.⁹ No wonder that in the 1930s the factory started selling its products abroad with a great success, producing orders for countries such as Mexico, Italy, Bulgaria, Peru, Germany, China, Estonia and Greece.¹⁰ The enterprise developed to such an extent that foreign industrialists boldly referred to it as “Polish economic miracle”.¹¹

4 WOJEWODA, Tadeus. Między polityką a samoorganizacją społeczności lokalnej. Organizacje społeczne w Skarżysku-Kamiennej w okresie międzywojennym. In *Znad Kamienna. Skarżysko-Kamienna. Materials and studies*, 2007, Vol. 1, p. 67.

5 Władysław Sikorski (1881 – 1943), Polish military and politician, Lieutenant General in the Polish army, a Prime Minister and Minister of Military Affairs of the Second Republic, the supreme commander of the Polish Armed Forces and the Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-Exile during WWII. Died in July 1943 in a plane crash in Gibraltar.

6 KOTARBA, Zbigniew Piotr. *1924 – 2004 Monografia Zakładów Metalowych MESKO S.A. Skarżysko-Kamienna*, 2004, p. 14.

7 Ibid., p. 14.

8 Ibid.

9 JUCHNIEWICZ, Bolesław. *Kronika Zakładów Metalowych „Predom-Mesko”, t. 1, Szkice o Państwowej Fabryce Amunicji w Skarżysku-Kamiennej w latach 1922 – 1939*. Skarżysko-Kamienna, 1974–1976, p. 56.

10 Ibid., p. 165.

11 Ibid.

Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft (Hasag) acquires the State Munitions Factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna

Around mid-August 1939, when the vision of war was imminent, the ammunition factory in Skarżysko appointed reservists, organised first aid, communications and observation units, and the factory hospital was converted into a sanitary facility. Employees were also given tampon gas masks, and factory staff began transforming the basement space into shelters in preparation for the upcoming danger.¹² On 8 September, troops of *Wehrmacht* 2nd Division entered Skarżysko; their main task was to secure premises of the State Munitions Factory,¹³ as arms industry of the Second Republic were to be transferred to a large German and Austrian corporation.¹⁴ Already in November 1939, following recommendation of the *Heereswaffenamt*, two companies – Roechling and Hasag were approached with a proposal to take on commissary management of Skarżysko plant.¹⁵ Although initially both companies expressed an interest, in June 1940 Roechling withdrew the offer, thus giving exclusivity to the Leipzig group,¹⁶ who officially took over Skarżysko factory on 1 September 1940.¹⁷ The next goal was to buy the factory out from the authorities of the General Government (GG).

Before monopolizing ammunition production in the GG in 1942, Hasag had already been the largest industrial plant in Saxony at the time, employing 10,523 people at the Leipzig factory and more than 27,000 people in ten other branches and factories in Saxony, Thuringia and Berlin.¹⁸ The Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft, which at the time was simply called Hasag, first started up in a small workshop in Leipzig producing various types of lamps.¹⁹ Since the workshop acquisition by Hugo Schneider in 1863, the site developed fast and transitioned into a major industrial enterprise.²⁰ Over the years, Hasag in

12 KOTARBA, 1924 – 2004 *Monografia Zakładów...*, p. 22.

13 PAJĄK, Henryk. *Skarżysko walczące*. Lublin, 1991, p. 38.

14 KACZANOWSKI, Longin. *Hitlerowskie fabryki śmierci na Kielecczyźnie*. Warszawa, 1984, p. 11.

15 KARAY, Felicja. *Death comes in yellow. Skarżysko-Kamienna Slave labor Camp*. Amsterdam, 1996, p. 14.

16 *Ibid.*

17 WIJACZKA, Jacek. Działalność koncernu HASAG w Skarżysku-Kamiennej w latach II wojny światowej. In *Znad Kamiennej. Skarżysko-Kamienna. Materiały i studia*, 2007, Vol. I, Skarżysko-Kamienna, p. 84.

18 WIJACZKA, Jacek – MIERNIK, Grzegorz. *Żydowscy robotnicy przymusowi w zakładach zbrojeniowych HASAG w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w czasie II wojny światowej*. In WIJACZKA, Jacek – MIERNIK, Grzegorz. (eds.). *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich. Polityka – gospodarka – kultura – społeczeństwo*. Kraków, 2005, p. 183.

19 Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (hereinafter StAL), sign. 20763 VEB Leipziger Werke, Leuchtenbau, 0306, the Hasag group Leipzig commercial offer containing catalogues with pictures of lamps.

20 GIBASZEWSKI, Krzysztof. *Hasag. Historia obozu pracy przymusowej w Skarżysku-Kamiennej*. Skarżysko-Kamienna, 2015, p. 11.

Leipzig employed more and more people²¹, and after the reunification of Germany in 1871 the company switched to manufacturing special industrial burners. The owners also established their own copper rolling mill near Leipzig-Schönefeld railway station, where the plant was eventually moved to. At the end of the 19th century, the Leipzig factory was considered one of the leaders in this branch of industry. In 1899, Hasag was made into a joint stock company.²²

Thanks to the proper governance and prudent financial management, Hasag made it through the turbulent times of the Weimar Republic and great economic crisis in the years 1929 to 1933. At that time, the company focused mainly on production of non-ferrous metal parts, which were then used in the automotive industry. The 1930s was the time of rapid development of Hasag, which also coincided with takeover of power by the national socialists in Germany. Undoubtedly, the industrial success of this factory was owed to Paul Budin, who was appointed general director at Hasag in 1932. *SS-Sturmbannführer* Budin was not only an influential SS officer but highly qualified in economic management and was able to adapt the company's economic policy to the change of regime. Under his leadership, Hasag switched partly to production of ammunition and military equipment. That, along with strong contacts in the Ground Forces Armaments Office, helped to maintain Hasag's independence in the face of forced industrial cartelisation.²³ In 1934, thanks to Budin's decisions, Leipzig company became one of the largest German armaments factories.²⁴ The subsequent remilitarisation of Germany and the war time circumstances further accelerated the development of Hasag, which in the late 1930s was completely transformed into arms production company, specialising in manufacturing various types of ammunition.²⁵

The outbreak of World War II further strengthened Hasag's position on German military market. Paul Budin fulfilled his plan to completely take over the factories from the GG area, which in the first years of war were under the commissary management of Hasag. Additionally, the Leipzig-based group also bought "Granat" ammunition factory in Kielce,²⁶ and "Pelcery" textiles factory in Częstochowa and the Raków steel works²⁷, which were all incorporated into

21 As reported by Wijaczka and Miernik, sixty workers were employed in Hasag, Leipzig in 1870, and in 1890 the number increased to 200; for more information see: WIJACZKA, MIERNIK, *Żydowski robotnicy...*, p. 182.

22 KARAY, Felicja. *Granaty i poematy. Obóz pracy Hasag-Leipzig*. Tel Aviv, 1999, p. 9.

23 KARAY, *Death comes ...*, p. 2.

24 HEß, Ulrich. *Sachsens Industrie in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Ausgangspunkte, struktureller Wandel, Bilanz*. In WERMER, Bramke - HEß, Ulrich. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in Sachsen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Leipzig, 1998, p. 83.

25 KARAY, *Death comes ...*, p. 2.

26 See: MEDUCKI, Stanisław. *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza w dystrykcie radomskim w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej*. Warszawa-Kraków, 1981, p. 73-77.

27 These Polish state-owned enterprises were bought out after long negotiations with the government of Hans Frank at a heavily discounted price; see: WIJACZKA, *Działalność koncernu HASAG...*, p. 83.

Hasag ammunition factories.²⁸ After acquiring of Polish factories producing ammunition on the territory of the GG in spring 1942, Hasag group employed a total of about 40,000 workers.²⁹ On 1 February 1942, 13,850 people worked at Hasag factories in the General Government, at the time most of them were Polish. As for the factory in Skarżysko, which was the largest of the acquired plants by the Leipzig group on GG territory, 6,846 Poles and Jews were employed there (as of 11 June 1941).³⁰ At that time, Hasag was the largest of sixty-four enterprises from the GG area producing for the German military.³¹

Jewish workers as forced labour

Alongside the acquisition of Skarżysko factory came the problem of staff shortages – an issue the company’s management had to continuously deal with throughout the War. The realities of working under occupation became apparent in the early days of the commissary management, when only 25 percent of staff formerly employed in the pre-war munitions factory entered the workforce. Although even threats were used to personally summon people to work there, Poles were reluctant to comply. Also, highly skilled workers and executives, often deliberately, were not revealing their professional skills and experience to make it more difficult for the German managerial board to organise work³². A special meeting with Egon Dalski (a new director of the factory on behalf of Hasag) was called to convince Polish specialists to work and co-operate. During the talks, he was very encouraging saying that “*it’s time to work to give employment to thousands of workers who are starving*”. Dalski also attempted to convince people that production was not meant to facilitate war-related activity (i.e. weapons), but was merely “a production for the purposes of consumer market”.³³ However, none of these attempts solved the problem as the Polish workers not only were reluctant to engage in working for the German occupier, but also took every opportunity to sabotage the production of Skarżysko factory or engaged in conspiracy activity, stealing and handing weapons on to Polish underground organisations.³⁴

28 In Częstochowa during World War II, Hasag Leipzig had five factories with adjoining labour camps for Jews: Hasag Raków (from June 1943 to 16 January 1945), HASAG Apparatebau and in ammunition factories: HASAG-Pelcery – in the suburban Stradom (from 22 September 1942 to 16 January 1945), HASAG-Warta (from summer 1943 to 16 January 1945) and HASAG-Częstochowianka (from late 1943 to 16 January 1945). Several thousand Jews worked in each of these places; see: MATUSIAK, Piotr. *Przemysł na ziemiach polskich w latach II wojny światowej. Tom II: Przemysł hutniczy, metalowy, maszynowy, lotniczy i stoczniowy*. Warszawa – Siedlce, 2012, p. 198-204.

29 HEß, Sachsens Industrie..., p. 83.

30 JUCHNIEWICZ, Bolesław. *Kronika Zakładów Metalowych „Predom-Mesko”, t. 2: 1939–1945. Wspomnienia pracowników, dokumenty, opracowania z dziejów Państwowej Fabryki Amunicji w Skarżysku-Kamiennej*. Skarżysko-Kamienna, 1982, p. 103.

31 KARAY, Felicja. Hasag. In *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Vol. 2, New York-London, 1990, p. 647.

32 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika Zakładów... t. 2...*, p. 104.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

34 Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), No. 0.33/1851, testimony of Ziuta Hartman, p. 2-3. More in: MATUSIAK, Piotr. *Ruch oporu w przemyśle wojennym okupanta*. Warszawa, 1983, p. 235-276.

In the war realities, when almost all males in Germany joined the army, the economy of the Third Reich could only function through exploitation of foreign workers, so all German-occupied countries were used as core providers of workforce. Shortage of workers pushed the occupiers to start employing Jews on a larger scale in industrial plants, organising special camps for them on premises.³⁵ In occupied Poland, forced labour for Jewish population was introduced immediately after the invasion of Poland. Since September 1939, *Wehrmacht* and its authorities have organised mass roundups of Jewish population, forcing them to carry out various jobs, such as removing rubble in nearby towns or filling in ditches.³⁶ These activities became more organised when the civil administration authorities were established, and using of Jewish population as a free labour was sanctioned by a Decree of Governor General, Hans Frank issued on 26 October 1939.³⁷ Another statement was issued on 11 December 1939 calling all Jews aged between 14 and 60 to forced labour for the occupier and to remain at the disposal of German police authorities.³⁸ A second document of such kind, issued by Krüger on 12 December 1939, ordered to detain a majority of Jewish population in labour camps where they were to remain for two or more years, depending on whether the camp work met the intended “educational purpose”.³⁹

German authorities became more and more interested in exploitation of Jewish labour since the mid-1940s when many Poles got exported to forced labour in Germany. Obviously, German occupation authorities realised that there were many professionals among the Jewish population whose skills could be put to good use and thus strengthen military potential of the Third Reich. The authorities, however, did not change the manner of treating Jews who were sent to industrial plants. They received no remuneration for their work and their treatment was no different from that of prisoners in concentration camps.⁴⁰

At the beginning of 1941, the management of the Leipzig group had increasing difficulties with filling in vacancies. That was a deciding factor to employ workers from the GG area in Leipzig, including those from the ammunition factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna. The first group of about 2,000 workers left for Germany as early as April 1941. In the Skarżysko factory, the decision was made

35 MASSALSKI, Adam – MEDUCKI, Stanisław. *Kielce w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej 1939 – 1945*. Wrocław, 2007, p. 71.

36 MARSHAL, J. *Labor camps in the General Government from 1939 to 1945*. Lublin, 1998, p. 12.

37 *Verordnung über die Einführung des Arbeitszwangs für die jüdische Bevölkerung des Generalgouvernements. Vom 26. Oktober 1939*, in: POSPIESZALSKI, Karol Marian. *Hitlerowskie „prawo” okupacyjne w Polsce. Część II: Generalna Gubernia. Wybór dokumentów i próba syntezy. „Documenta Occupationis” t. VI*. Poznań, 1958, p. 560-562.

38 *Erste Durchführungsvorschrift Zur Verordnung vom 26. Oktober 1939 über die Einführung des Arbeitszwangs für die jüdische Bevölkerung des Generalgouvernements. Vom 11 Dezember 1939*, in: *Ibid.*, p. 560-562.

39 *Zweite Durchführungsvorschrift Zur Verordnung vom 26. Oktober 1939 über die Einführung des Arbeitszwangs für die jüdische Bevölkerung des Generalgouvernements (Erfassungsvorschrift). Vom 12 Dezember 1939*, in: *Ibid.*, p. 562-564.

40 WIJACZKA – MIERNIK, *Żydowscy robotnicy przymusowi...*, p. 184-185.

to compensate the lost workforce by bringing people from the local ghetto into Hasag. According to the plan, they were to be trained to operate machines under the supervision of Polish foremen. Initially, the majority of Jews volunteered for work as employment could protect them from being displaced, gave them a chance to leave the ghetto, and they could receive or buy food.⁴¹ In the spring of 1942, another large group of Polish workers were sent to Leipzig and the directorate became even more interested in Jewish workers who could fill the vacancies.⁴² It was then decided not to transport them from the ghetto every day, but to place them in the barracks adjacent to the factory.⁴³

The scale of exploitation of Jewish labour is reflected in statistics; according to those, at the end of 1942 the total of 185,776 Jews worked in the territory of Third Reich and in the annexed areas in the factories producing for German war industry. In June 1943, further 45,000 Jewish forced labourers were recorded in the area of GG.⁴⁴ The number of workforces in Hasag, including its factories in Skarżysko-Kamienna, Kielce and Częstochowa, placed Hasag at the lead position of all German armament companies running factory camps for the Jewish population. Statistics from the end of June 1943 show that Hasag employed about 17,000 Jewish workers at the time, which represented about 75 percent of total Jewish workforce in the whole Radom District⁴⁵. As of 30 June 1943, there were 6,408 Jews in the factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna alone⁴⁶. In time, not only the Jews selected during liquidation of ghettos in Radom District⁴⁷ came to Skarżysko factory but also Jewish prisoners from the concentration camp at Majdanek,⁴⁸ or Płaszów near Kraków.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, we do not have complete information on the total number of people who went through the camp in Skarżysko since it was first established and then evacuated in the summer of 1944. Available sources indicate to 38 transports with 17,200 Jewish forced labourers brought by Germans to Skarżysko-Kamienna, but these are certainly not complete numbers, and there is an ongoing investigation into this matter. According to historians, between 25,000 and 30,000 people have gone through the camp in Hasag in Skarżysko, and the number of forced labourers that were killed ranges from 18,000 to 23,000.⁵⁰

41 PIĄTKOVSKI, Sebastian. *Skarżysko-Kamienna. Losy miasta i jego mieszkańców w latach wojny i okupacji (1939 – 1945)*. Skarżysko-Kamienna, 2018, p. 54-55.

42 ZONIK, Zygmunt. *Gwałtem i przemocą. Z problematyki pracy w hitlerowskich obozach koncentracyjnych*. Warszawa, 1991, p. 99, p. 133.

43 PIĄTKOVSKI, *Skarżysko-Kamienna. Losy ...*, p. 55.

44 *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945. Informator encyklopedyczny*. Warszawa, 1979, p. 65.

45 KARAY, Hasag..., p. 647.

46 KARAY, Felicja. Spór między władzami niemieckimi o żydowskie obozy pracy w Generalnej Guberni. In *Zeszyty Majdanka*, 1997, Vol. 18, p. 38.

47 PIĄTKOVSKI, *Skarżysko-Kamienna. Losy...*, p. 56.

48 KARAY, Spór między..., p. 38.

49 PIĄTKOVSKI, *Skarżysko-Kamienna. Losy...*, p. 56.

50 *Ibid.*

Living and working conditions in Hasag Skarżysko

The primary causes of high mortality rate were horrific, unimaginable living and working conditions; only the most physically and mentally resilient individuals had a chance to survive. What determined life or death was assignment to a type of work that was less destructive than other. Hasag Skarżysko was divided into three sub-divisions, located at individual *Werks* – A, B and C, and the type of work and conditions at each *Werk* varied. The most terrifying place by far was *Werk C*, which was part of elaboration station (*Fullanstalt*), where Jewish labourers filled shells and mines with deadly chemicals – TNT and picric acid⁵¹. The allocation to work in *Werk C* equalled death sentence as people worked there without any protection, constantly inhaled poisonous fumes and dust that slowly destroyed their eyes and lungs.⁵² Hunger made their existence a sheer misery, as the basic food consisted of cereal drink, a “soup” which was usually a decoction made from rotten or frozen vegetables. Bread was baked with a little flour and added potato flakes. In *Werk C*, the workers received only 180g (about 6 ounces) of bread and one liter of soup in the morning, half a liter of soup at noon, and before the end of the shift – a ration of marmalade, which in no way could meet persons’ nutritional needs⁵³. General sanitary conditions were deplorable, with rampant headlice and infestation of rats and bedbugs in the barracks. The workers worked in their own clothes, which were very quickly destroyed⁵⁴ so they would often put on large paper bags with cut out holes for the head and hands⁵⁵. The situation was further exacerbated by lacking elementary hygiene, no sanitary facilities and insufficient water supply, resulting in epidemics of dysentery and typhus decimating people⁵⁶. There was a hospital in the camp, but in case of an illness, the staff simply left the patients there without any care⁵⁷. In these conditions, the prisoners died *en masse*, so, to maintain the continuity of production, Germans had to arrange for additional influx of labour and had more Jews transported to Skarżysko from the camps in Płaszów and Majdanek⁵⁸.

German invaders had the entire camp supervised by the head warden general for Hasag, Egon Dalski, who was replaced in 1943 by Paul Gedelmacher. All factory

51 AYV, No. 0.33/1826, testimony of Ester Handelsman, p. 3.

52 BAUMINGER, Róża. *Przy pikrynie i trotylu: (obóz pracy przymusowej w Skarżysku-Kamiennej)*. Kraków, 1946, p. 15.

53 AYV, No. 0.33/2533, testimony of Geulah Bienko, p. 3.

54 AYV, No. 0.33/1800, testimony of Eliezer Jurysta, p. 2.

55 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter AIPN), files of the investigation into Jerzy Adryanowicz, Ki 012/43/k. 144 t. 1, letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 August 1951.

56 AYV, No. 0.33/10083, memoirs of Frieda (Lipshitz) Weinstock.

57 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (hereinafter USHMMA), No. RG-50.462.0140, oral history interview with Lili Altschuler.

58 KARAY, *Death comes...*, p. 244; BRUSTIN-BERENSTEIN, Taniana. O podłożu gospodarczym sporów między władzami administracyjnymi a policyjnymi w Generalnej Guberni (1939 – 1944). In *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 1965, No. 53, p. 73.

guards (*Werkschutz*) – Germans⁵⁹, Ukrainians⁶⁰ or Poles reported to the head warden, and it was them who most often committed beastly acts of violence. Additionally, camps at each *Werk* had its own German *Lagerführer*. Members of the gendarmerie, Kripo, *Sonderkommando*, rail guards, *Schutzpolizei* or Polish Blue Police were responsible for overseeing the order in the factory.⁶¹ The workers were well aware that death in Hasag Skarżysko could come at any time, not only during worktime but also from the hands of their superiors; inmates could be shot at any time by *Werkschutz* or be punished by the commander, even if they carried out their duties properly⁶². Images of the perpetrators who most brutally abused Jewish prisoners in Hasag Skarżysko got preserved in memories of those who survived the war and occupation. Profiles of some of the abusers are presented below.

SS-Standartenführer Egon Dalski – a resourceful director

Standartenführer SS, Egon Dalski, appointed by the Leipzig headquarters as a director of the factory in Skarżysko, was widely regarded a firm supporter of the national socialism ideology.⁶³ Dalski was a trusted man of management at Hasag and he smoothly followed the company's policies.⁶⁴ The fact that he managed to significantly increase production was not only because of his own entrepreneurship or skilled professionals he had at his disposal, but it was in large measure down to the ruthless manners of his henchmen.⁶⁵ From the beginning of Dalski's time in Skarżysko, he supervised all forced labour, transferring Jews from the local ghetto to work in construction, logging of trees or unloading cattle cars.⁶⁶ Already then it was clear that Dalski was a staunch anti-Semite, which he ostentatiously manifested by issuing an order to ban all Jewish workers from moving without an escort of factory guards or civilian German workers. Dalski also officially appealed to local Germans and called for a strict regime while in direct contact with Jews, warning them against the possibility of contracting typhus from Jewish population.⁶⁷

Dalski's prejudice towards Jewish community was not limited to just humiliating accusations or restrictive regulations. The sources confirm many of his other crimes. Dalski often personally carried out selections of prisoners,

59 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 18, list of *Werkschutz* members – Germans.

60 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 16-17, list of *Werkschutz* members.

61 KARAY, *Death comes...*, p. 57.

62 AYV, No. 0.33/1646, testimony of Miriam Salsberg.

63 GIBASZEWSKI, *Hasag. Historia...*, p. 77.

64 KARAY, *Death comes...*, p. 239.

65 JUCHNIEWICZ, Boleslav. *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka Amunicji w Skarżysku-Kamiennej. Vol. I i II. Skarżysko-Kamienna*, 2014, p. 124.

66 BAUMINGER, *Przy pikrynie i trotylu...*, p. 13.

67 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 128.

sentencing the most vulnerable to death. In September 1942, together with the director of *Werk C* Artur Rost, he decided to kill 1,000 people. According to the account of one of the workers, Dalski used deception to select the physically weakest persons from the group: *“End of September 1942. Assembly in the camp. Director Dalski and Rost walk around the assembled. They ask: are you sick, are you healthy, do you want to go home? Great joy, everyone is signing up, wanting to get out of this hell. Rost put aside the healthy ones then he picked 500 people from Werk C. Then, using devious wiles, they brought in 1000 people (500 from both Werk A and B) and locked in Betriebe. The day after, a sudden order came, and windows got barbed wired in Betriebe. The next day people were put in batches of 100 then shot. The execution looked as follows: those sentenced to death dug themselves a grave, near the shooting range. They then laid face down to the ground. They [officers] shot them one by one, ordered to cover them with a thin layer of soil. Onto these corpses, a new batch went, got shot and covered with soil. This went on until the grave was full.”*⁶⁸

Dalski himself, like other Germans, also shot prisoners as part of his “shooting training”.⁶⁹ He must have passed on this degenerate and inhumane way of treating Jews to his son, who apparently observed Jewish women working in Dalski’s garden every day. As Franciszek Pańczyk recounted: *“Vegetables were growing in the garden. Dalski’s son, a little brat from the Hitler Jugend ‘had fun’ shooting from the short rifle [small-caliber sport shotgun] towards women who stopped working even for a moment”*.⁷⁰

Women in particular were victims of horrendous abuse, most often rape⁷¹. Witness accounts contain a description of the events of 23 January 1943, when a group of SS officers from Radom District arrived in Hasag Skarżysko: Herbert Boettcher – then head of the SS and police in Radom District, Paul Feucht – responsible for Jewish affairs, and Franz Schippers – head of Gestapo in Radom. According to Moshe Grinszpan’s account, Dalski together with Fritz Bartenschlager, selected three of the prettiest Jewish women who were raped and then shot by these three officers.⁷² Later findings revealed that the murdered women were Ruchame Eisenberg, Mania Silberman and beauty-famous 19-year-old Gucia Milchmann.⁷³ According to the minutes of interrogation of Chaim Milchman, Gucia’s brother, the rape of Jewish women by the officers of Hasag Skarżysko was always followed by murdering of sexually abused women: *“Bartenschlager often came to the camp, chose a few nice looking women, took them to the factory board building, where he raped them and then ordered to shoot them.”*⁷⁴ It is difficult to clearly determine how much Dalski was involved in all those crimes, but as the director of Hasag Skarżysko

68 AŻIH, ref. 301/1157/k. 2, account of [no first name] Zając on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

69 GIBASZEWSKI, *Hasag. Historia...*, p. 79.

70 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 139.

71 AYV, No. 0.33/1826, testimony of Ester Handelsman, p. 3.

72 AŻIH, 301/67/k. 2, report of Moishe Grinszpan on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

73 KARAY, *Death comes...*, 79.

74 AIPN, Ki 012/34/k. 137, t. 1, part 1, minutes of Chaim Milchman’s interrogation.

it is beyond any doubt that he must have known about the rapes and murders of Jewish women.⁷⁵

Egon Dalski, like many other national socialist dignitaries at the time, used his high rank to rob Jews of their belongings. Polish railway worker in Skarżysko, Stanisław Sadkowski who witnessed such events many times, reported in his memoirs: *“We often saw Dalski. I saw him few times on arrival of the transport of Jews from Płaszów camp; after he searched them, he collected two boxes of jewelry, dollars and money on the ramp. Then his watchmen would take these boxes to his office, and [Dalski] followed them to make sure they didn’t take anything. Another time I also saw him on the ramp when the workers were taken to Leipzig.”*⁷⁶

It is not entirely clear what happened to the requisitioned property – whether Dalski sent all of it back to the Reich to support the state, or whether he kept some of the looted property to line his own pockets. The situations described above, however, were clear expression of Dalski’s deep hatred towards Jewish population.

To further explain Dalski’s input and implementation of policies targeting Jews at Hasag, it is important to note that it was him indeed who conceived the idea of setting up labour camps and *Werks* for Jewish workers. During liquidation of ghetto in Skarżysko, Jews were placed in makeshift wooden barracks, located near *Werk A, B and C*.⁷⁷ Barracks were fenced with barbed wire, and Ukrainian factory guards (*Werkschutze*) kept watch on the camp⁷⁸. Such solution secured constant source of manpower for Dalski. Over time, these camps were further developed and expanded, thus increasing production efficiency.⁷⁹ By implementing Paul Budin’s directives the factory management in Skarżysko skillfully organised exploitation of Jewish labour force, at a very minimal own

75 Adam Kryształ recounted a slightly different version of the events of that night when Lola Milchmann and other Jewish women were raped. According to the report, one of the guards came to the camp at night and demanded seven women, allegedly for cleaning. The report reads: *“The most beautiful girls were chosen. Five of them were led into the room, where they were stripped naked, had to dance and sing. Then they raped them. Two women waited in the hallway for their turn. At this point, the factory manager ran in and, seeing what was going on, told the two to run away. They came terrified to lager and told us about everything. The next day we saw from the camp these 5 girls were being escorted: Lola Milchman from Suchedniowa (17 years old), Silberg, the wife of the pharmacist from Opatów (22 years old), Krnest Ewa with her sister who got resettled from Vienna, the names of the fifth victim I do not remember. Lola’s mother saw how her daughter being led to death. The mother begged to save the girl. The victims were led to a nearby forest and shot”* (See AŻIH, ref. 301/1955/k. 3, Adam Kryształ’s account on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna). It is difficult to determine whether the aforementioned “factory director” was Egon Dalski. It seems more likely that the author of the report may have got it wrong, and the intervention was made by someone else, e.g., one of the supervisors of another unit. As for the rape and murder of Lola Milchmann and the other women, it did happen for certain on 23 January 1943. This is confirmed by several other accounts.

76 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 123.

77 Ghetto in Skarżysko-Kamienna was liquidated by Germans in the first days of October 1942. It is believed that about 3,000 people lived there at the time. Only 500 of them were placed in a labour camp at the local Hasag. Some Jews were shot at the scene, while others were deported to Treblinka camp, where they were killed. See: PIĄTKOVSKI, *Skarżysko-Kamienna. Losy...*, p. 54.

78 AYV, No. 0.33/1828, testimony of Towa Kozak (Ogniewicz), p. 5.

79 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 130.

cost. Dalski's ruthless exploitation of workers and murderous working conditions at the camps led to numerous deaths by emaciation or shooting.

Fritz Bartenschlager – a relentless deputy

One of the guards, dreaded by all Jewish prisoners at Hasag Skarżysko camp was already mentioned here, it was Fritz Bartenschlager. Born in 1905, he was a deputy commander of *Werkschutz*.⁸⁰ As one of the Polish workers recalled years later, Bartenschlager *“often wore uniforms of different colours. He was around 40 years old at the time, short and stocky physique, round face, blond hair, wore glasses”*.⁸¹ Due to numerous crimes he committed in Hasag Skarżysko, Bartenschlager earned himself an infamous title of *“executioner and murderer of tens of thousands of people of different nationalities; the graves of those murdered on the factory premises speak volumes”*.⁸² *“Bartenschlager’s appearance in the camp always signified death”*, recalled Polish worker, Jerzy Kochan Piotrowski. In his account he recalls multiple murders committed by Bartenschlager: *“On his command, the sick were gunned down at the shooting range at Werk C. He himself or other Werkschutz on his command took women from the camp who were then raped or so the story was. These women were found dead the next day in the woods. On his [Bartenschlager’s] orders, Chajm Goldman, the mechanic and his wife were taken from the camp and did not return, and it was later known that they had been killed. Because of him, the conditions in the camp were below all standards in terms of provision and housing. Anyone who did not have help outside of the camp died after two months. In 1943, some Nowak from Skarżysko was hung on the factory premises in the presence of all the employees. The execution was led by Bartenschlager. As the posters displayed announced, Nowak was hung for helping Jews.”*⁸³

At this point it should be noted that the said Nowak, a Polish worker, was one of many who, on Bartenschlager's orders, were sentenced to death or deported to concentration camps for helping Jews.⁸⁴ He was an extremely ruthless officer, feared by both prisoners and Jewish policemen⁸⁵. Esther Gold recalled: *“Whenever Bartenschlager came in to us, there was deadly silence in the whole camp. Even the policemen were hiding in barracks, only the Ukrainians kept watch. Once he made his selection, there was no way out – he cleared out almost all the sick from the entire hospital, and from among those who were still able to work he picked the ones who looked sick or were poorly dressed.”*⁸⁶

80 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 10, the Ministry of Justice to the Civil Militia of Kielce region on the *Werkschutz* at Hasag, May 1965.

81 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 50, minutes of the hearing of Henryk Garacz, May 20, 1965.

82 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 6, letter from Marian Ciepelski from Skarżyska-Kamienna to the General Prosecutor's Office of the Polish People's Republic of Poland in Warsaw of 8 February 1965.

83 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 66, minutes of the hearing of Jerzy Kochan Piotrowski of 13 September 1947.

84 AIPN, Ki 53/3896/k. 1-5, note on aid given to Jews by Poles during the Nazi occupation of Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

85 AYV, No. 0.33/5710, testimony of Josef Reiner, p. 9.

86 AŽIH, 301/1067/k. 5, Esther Gold's account of the munition's factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

Such selection was carried out at least once a week. During one of those, Bartenschlager even shot a Jewish policeman, who apparently was not eager enough to beat up the inmates.⁸⁷ Many a time Bartenschlager personally executed selected victims who were first ordered to dig a grave for themselves.⁸⁸ Inmates who contracted typhus were sure to be shot too. Nine-year-old Henryk Schiller described the events surrounding his father's death in 1942 as follows: "In 1942, Daddy fell ill with typhus fever, and at that time sick people got shot down, they got gathered in a group, and Bartenschlager took [selected prisoners] to Werk C, to the shooting range, and shot them there. My brother and I were at work, when Daddy was taken. In the evening, we went to get Daddy's ration of bread, but in the commissary, we were told that Daddy was taking [bread] in his unit, we went to the hospital. Daddy wasn't there, we cried, but they told us that he was only taken to another hospital and that he would come back."⁸⁹

As it later turned out, young Schiller's father, who was ill with typhus, died along with other inmates. The boy, his mother and younger brother, were later sent to Buchenwald camp, where they survived until the end of the war.

Rapes and murders committed by Fritz Bartenschlager on Jewish women are a separate category of crimes he indulged in.⁹⁰ We read in the account of Gotlieb Szulem: "*He particularly abused girls. Every now and then he would choose the most beautiful ones, rape them, kill them himself, and then order to bury them in the forest. After bathing, women were rounded up in the square in front of the bathhouse. Naked, they had to parade up and down in front of Bartenschlager as he sicked a dog on them. When the dog grabbed one by the leg, she went down to the fence, [Bartenschlager] fired the gun himself. Although women were bearing up better than men, they were still subject to selection. Women in fear of dying from the hands of Nazi persecutors took their own lives.*"⁹¹

According to Esther Gold, Jewish women feared any visits to a doctor, so that Bartenschlager would not put them on a patients' list, which normally amounted to certain death. In her account, there is a mention of a girl who, after having broken her leg, was most likely considered to be less productive at work, and thus was murdered. Gold recounted: "*We walked in clogs, snow stuck to the soles and bulked up. We kept falling on the road. Thus, one girl broke her leg. The leg healed a little and she walked on crutches to her work, and hard work it was. On one occasion, Bartenschlager came to the factory; he knew exactly all inmates and*

87 KARAY, *Death comes ...*, p. 99.

88 AŻIH, 301/1346/k. 1, Gotlieb Szulem's account on *Werk A* in Hasag Skarżysko-Kamienna.

89 AŻIH, ref. 301/1075/k. 2, Henry Schiller's account of the ammunition factory labour camp Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

90 USHMMA, No. RG-50.232.0093, oral history interview with Aaron Salzburg. See: SINNREICH, Helene J. *The Rape of Jewish Women during the Holocaust*. In HEDGEPEETH, Sonja M. – SAIDEL, Rochelle G. (eds.). *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*. London, 2010, p. 115.

91 AŻIH, 301/1346/k. 1, Gotlieb Szulem about *Werk A* in Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna. Esther Gold and Aszer Grynberg described exactly the same manner Bartenschlager raped women. See also: AŻIH, 301/1067/k. 5-6, Esther Gold's account on the munition's factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna; AŻIH, No. 301/2914, account of Asher Grynberg on Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

called the lame girl. He sweetly asked her if she wanted to go work in the warehouse, because this [her existing job] was too hard for her. The girl was happy about it, but on the next day a Jew policeman came for her, took her to the forest and she went to 'Himmelkommando'."⁹²

Prisoners who had enough courage to attempt escape from the camp were sure to meet their death from the hands of Bartenschlager's.⁹³ What is important, in such situations, the rule of collective responsibility was applied, and other innocent workers were also murdered, thus warning the others of possible consequences: *"A fairly large group managed to escape, but a few were captured. Bartenschlager called a gathering and spoke to us, calmly convincing us how the escape was in vain, and we no longer had a house or family, our home was the camp. Before our eyes 'the guilty ones' were shot, and on top of that, for each escaped ten innocent ones went down.*"⁹⁴

Fritz Bartenschlager's criminal activity in Hasag Skarżysko ended at the time of camp liquidation. However, at the end of October 1944, himself together with the transport of Jewish prisoners from Skarżysko, arrived at another Hasag forced labour camp in Częstochowa, which signified imminent changes for the place⁹⁵. Before his arrival, the living conditions in the Hasag-Pelcery camp in Częstochowa were much better than in Skarżysko. Prisoners received bigger food rations, were not punished without a reason, nor were they forced to work beyond the required time. After reviewing the situation, Bartenschlager announced, *"We need to tighten up discipline in here, bring about a new order."*⁹⁶ One of the witnesses described his activities in Hasag Częstochowa as follows: *"At the end of 1944 I was sent to Częstochowa [...] here again I encountered more crimes and more murders by Bartenschlager. In Częstochowa, he used food to torment people; he had scales with him and weighed bread every day, and if he saw that someone had more than 1 kg, he took everything from him and did not give him any food. Later, in the next few days, Jews from Dęblin came along with their families and children. Bartenschlager decided to take around 17 children away from their parents and he killed them all. Also, he used to secretly plant ammunition so that he had more reasons to murder while doing the search."*⁹⁷

Bartenschlager's degenerate acts and brutality towards inmates caused outrage of the director of Hasag Częstochowa. Thanks to his contacts at the Leipzig headquarters, all the officers including Bartenschlager, were transferred from Skarżysko to the Hasag-Warta plant.⁹⁸

92 AŻIH, ref. 301/1067/k. 7, Esther Gold's account of the ammunition factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna. "Himmelkommando" was a place where people were exterminated, hence the certainty that the girl described by Esther Gold was killed.

93 AŻIH, No. 301/2914, report of Asher Grynberg on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

94 AŻIH, 301/1067/k. 7-8, Esther Gold's account of Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

95 USHMM, No. RG-50.002.0033, oral history interview with Max Findling.

96 EINHORN, Jerzy. *Wybrany, aby żyć. Wspomnienia*. Gdansk, 2002, p. 157.

97 AIPN, ref. Ki 128/227/k. 83, minutes of Abram Wolfowicz's interrogation, 13 September 1947.

98 EINHORN, *Wybrany, aby żyć...*, p. 158.

The scope of atrocities committed by Bartenschlager during his time in Hasag Skarżysko, and later in Częstochowa, included multiple shootings of Polish and Jewish citizens, population selections with a purpose to kill, numerous rapes and murders of female workers, and orders to shoot all children after the evacuation of the Jewish camp from Dęblin to Częstochowa. Also, between July 1944 and January 1945, Bartenschlager was involved in lootings of property of Jewish and Polish prisoners.⁹⁹ From the witnesses' many accounts emerges an image of ruthless executioner and tormentor condemning people to death under any pretext¹⁰⁰. Bartenschlager, as one ex-worker stated, was *"the worst scumbag in the whole camp in Skarżysko; he distinguished himself by murdering and beating up innocent victims"*.¹⁰¹ Another worker added: *"Bartenschlager was a terror at the plant, everyone was petrified of him [...], he hit Jews on the spot, did not regard them at all, randomly shot and beat them"*.¹⁰² In his file of wanted war criminals there is an information that Bartenschlager *"a) between 1942 and 1944 as Werkschutzleiter in the camp Skarżysko-Kamienna and Częstochowa shot about 1000 Jews, and b) at said period of time and place as Betriebsleiter shot even more"*.¹⁰³ Although the number of murders committed by this German criminal appears to be very high, there is no doubt that the extent of his atrocities is greater than the estimations presented here.

Paul Kühnemann – a sadistic Lagerführer of Werk A

In the accounts of prisoners describing crimes committed in Hasag, the name of Paul Kühnemann, *Lagerführer* at *Werk A* very often appears in the context of brutal murders and abuse.¹⁰⁴ He was easily recognised by the workers because *"he was slouchy, hunched and was clearly overweight"*.¹⁰⁵ Unlike other commanders in the forced labour camp for Jews, Kühnemann often appeared in person, and had no problems to personally persecute workers¹⁰⁶. One of the reports reads: *"Kühnemann was appointed a Lagerführer of Werk A, and the prisoners called him 'Garbus' [Hunchback]. He tormented prisoners and would never part with his*

99 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 34, letter from the Ministry of Justice to the District Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes, 30 August 1965.

100 USHMMA, No. RG-50.030.0034, oral history interview with Regina Hamburger Bomba.

101 AIPN, Ki 128/227/ k. 70, minutes of the hearing of Arnold Rotbard, 13 September 1947.

102 AIPN, Ki 012/34/ k. 146, Vol. 3, minutes of the hearing of Zbigniew Suligowski, 30 August 1965.

103 AIPN, Ki 128/227/k. 12, memo on the review of materials in the archives of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland regarding former factory "Hasag" in Skarżysko-Kamienna, 1 June 1965.

104 In the source material, especially in witnesses' accounts, the surname Kühnemann appears in the wrong spelling, e.g., as "Kineman" or "Kinerman"; clearly this was a result of recording this surname by ear. However, we can be sure that the correct spelling is "Kühnemann", as shown in the official list of *Werkschutz* from Hasag, Skarżysko-Kamienna (see AIPN, No. Ki 128/227, list of members *Werkschutz – Germans*, box 18). In the source material cited in this article, where the record was incorrect, I use the last name – Kühnemann to avoid implying that two different officers might be investigated here.

105 AIPN, Ki 128/235/k. 204, minutes of the hearing of Debora Bugajska, 18 November 1956.

106 KARAY, *Death comes ...*, p. 121.

baton. He would give a whip to every inmate entering the camp – ‘to start off the day nicely’ – as he would say himself. I know of one incident where Kühnemann shot one female inmate in the unit. One day he came to the barracks and saw this sick woman. She asked Kühnemann to finish her off. He left the barracks and stopped two passing prisoners and ordered them to bring the sick woman and throw her into this big wooden box where the corpses were kept. When she was already in the box, Kühnemann shot her.”¹⁰⁷

This method of killing sick inmates was typical for Kühnemann, and everyone in the camp was well aware of it: *“He took the sick out of the hospital, threw them into that wooden box where the corpses were laid, and shot them there. Once a week, the bodies were cleared out from the box like trash.”¹⁰⁸*

Paul Kühnemann was hardly a staunch national socialist. His violence against Jewish forced labourers simply gave him pleasure and was used to intimidate inmates at their daily duties¹⁰⁹. One of the accounts reads: *“Infling’s deputy was Werkschutz Kühnemann, the hunchback. Although he cared very much about cleanliness in the camp, he also mistreated the inmates. He always walked through the camp with his dog and sicked it on people. He always used to say to the dog ‘Mensch nimm den Hund’.¹¹⁰ It was supposed to be a joke that he regarded a dog a person, and a prisoner a dog. When the dog hurt someone badly, Kühnemann threw some clothes [a lot of them arrived from Majdanek] as a comfort for the injured.”¹¹¹*

Another form of humiliating prisoners was organising races in front of the clothes depository – the prize for a winner was a set of clothes.¹¹² Proper clothing was crucial in the camp as this could determine one’s life or death: *“On Werk A, Kühnemann would sic dogs on prisoners waiting in line to the warehouse. The ‘prominantes’ received better clothes, and the wretched ones got rags and it decided their fate, because during the selection all poorly dressed went to death. With horror we recognized shot through and bloody clothes belonging to the Jews. In some shoes there was money sewn in. The ‘picryner girls’ were happy to finally rid of rotting papers and put on some dresses. The dresses were ragged and patched up with different colored fabric scraps, and they often looked like a checkerboard.”¹¹³*

The prisoners had to go along with Kühnemann’s conditions and comply with any form of vile entertainment and games he invented, because only that could give them a chance of surviving¹¹⁴. Kühnemann’s degenerate sadism was reflected in other, even more humiliating actions: *“Kühnemann also used to bully inmates whenever he found someone with a woman. Once he saw a boy talking to a girl in one of the barracks. He forced them both to undress and*

107 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 133.

108 AŻIH, 301/67/k. 2, Moishe Grinszpan’s account on Hasag In Skarżysku-Kamienna.

109 AYV, No. 0.33/5876, testimony of Chana Anna (Bloomenfeld) Rosenkranz, p. 5.

110 Translated from German *“Man, take this dog!”*

111 AŻIH, 301/2618/k. 4, Lejwa Fuchs’ account on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

112 AŻIH, 301/1156/k. 4, NN factory report Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

113 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 137.

114 AYV, No. 0.33/1826, testimony of Ester Handelsman, p. 11.

have an intercourse in front of him and eight other Germans officers, whom he invited to this show.”¹¹⁵

Kühnemann was also known for being one of those officers who, at all costs, wanted to line his own pockets with Jewish property: “People talked that Kühnemann had his informers amongst inmates, from whom he learned about who had money or expensive stones, which he then took away. The story had it that he liked money.”¹¹⁶ Kühnemann’s greed translated into the manner he treated the workers; he called any theft in the camp to be punished by shooting down¹¹⁷.

In the summer of 1944, during the camp evacuation, it was Kühnemann’s responsibility to select prisoners. The sadism and bestiality he demonstrated once again caused death of even those young and healthy: “*All older ones, poorly or ill looking were put aside, under the protection of the gendarmerie department. Then the hospital went. Almost all the sick and convalescing who did not leave the hospital in time were put to death. All groups returning from work have been selected. Many young workers fell victim of Kühnemann’s whim. They were just too short, unshaved, or just dirty after day’s work. That day about 200 people were killed on Werk A alone.*”¹¹⁸

It is difficult to find any logic in Kühnemann’s behaviour during this last selection. His decisions were undoubtedly an expression of inexplicable ruthlessness and cruelty.

Amongst Kühnemann’s criminal activity in the Skarżysko factory, there was something astonishing indeed in the nature of his relationship with Rabbi Yitzhak Finkler from Radoszyce, who arrived in Hasag in March 1943.¹¹⁹ Rabbi Finkler enjoyed great respect of the Jewish workers who would come to him, hoping for support after a loss of loved ones, and or even asking for advice on possibilities of escaping from the camp.¹²⁰ According to witnesses, Kühnemann’s attitude towards the rabbi was that of respect, something that other Jewish residents of the camp could not count on. The prisoners mentioned that when the rabbi refused to eat a non-kosher *kaszanka*,¹²¹ Kühnemann did not force him to, neither did he stop the rabbi from carrying out his religious duties. What seems even more shocking, when he once found Jews sleeping in barracks on Yom Kippur day, he was angry at them for skipping prayers.¹²² It is difficult to explain and understand what underpinned this uniquely positive attitude

115 AŻIH, 301/2618/k. 4, Lejwa Fuchs’ account on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

116 AIPN, Ki 128/235/k. 204, minutes from the hearing of Debora Bugajska, 18 November 1956.

117 AŻIH, 301/2618/k. 4, Lejwa Fuchs’ account on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

118 AŻIH, 301/787/k. 1, Maksimilijan Holländer’s account on Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

119 More on Rabbi Yitzhak Finkler in: GRANATSTEIN, Yechiel. *One Jew’s Power One Jew’s Glory: The Life of Rav Yitzchak Shmuel Eliyahu Finkler, the Rebbe from Radoschitz in the Ghetto and Concentration Camps*. New Jerusalem – New York, 1991.

120 KARAY, *Death comes ...*, p. 135.

121 Type of blood sausage or black pudding.

122 KARAY, *Death comes ...*, p. 136.

towards Rabbi Finkler, but nevertheless this does little to change the fact that Kühnemann was one of the most despicable tormentors in Hasag, Skarżysko.

SS-Scharführer Kurt Schumann – a spiteful murderer of Jews

Karl Schumann, who took up a position in March 1943, was a rank-and-file factory guard in Skarżysko labour camp. Then he became one of Kurt Krause's subordinates and led the local *Werkschutz* unit. Initially, Schumann was most likely assigned to *Werk C*, but was soon transferred to *Werk B*, where he served as an NCO (*Oberwachtmeister*) until the end of his time in Skarżysko Kamienna.¹²³ Like in the case of the aforementioned officers, we learn about the nature of his conduct thanks to the survivors' testimonies and accounts: *"As Wachführer [Schumann] often selected from among those Jews at Werk B, who, for any reason seemed to him as unfit for work. He listed their names and then at intervals of several days they were shot by the members of Werkschutz. That took place about 200-300 meters away in the forest. Whether he himself was shooting I cannot testify because I did not see it. But I've seen him go out with people into the woods and then I heard gunshots."*¹²⁴

In the same account we read that Schumann would beat prisoners so badly that because of injuries they were considered unfit for work: *"I often saw with my own eyes how Schumann beat Jews senseless with a rubber baton or a whip. As a result of this mistreatment, they became incapacitated or less able to work, and soon they were selected to be shot."*¹²⁵

Schumann was particularly furious during search, when he found Jewish prisoners who had some food or other products that may have come from Poles. Such situations suggested that food was somehow handed over under the watchful eye of officers on guard. A big case in the camp was the beating of a Jew named Luksemburg, who was most likely murdered on *Werk C*. One witness recalled: *"In the summer of 1943, the head of a Jewish group named Luksemburg, leading Jews after work to back to the camp, carried few eggs with him. This was spotted by Schumann, who beat Luksemburg. Moreover, the next day Luksemburg was brought to Werk C, where, according to his brother (his name I do not know), he was thrown into the furnace."*¹²⁶

Schumann also committed numerous crimes against Jews, including shooting a Jewish policeman, certain Chęciński and his wife in the summer of 1943, the

123 PIĄTKOVSKI, Sebastian. Zbrodnie funkcjonariuszy straży fabrycznej zakładów HASAG w Skarżysku-Kamiennej w świetle akt procesowych SS-Scharführera Kurta Schumanna. In *Z Dziejów Regionu i Miasta: rocznik Oddziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego w Skarżysku-Kamiennej*, 2014, No. 5, p. 70-71.

124 AIPN, ref. 012/34/k. 352, Vol. 3, minutes from the hearing of Lejbus Czaryski, 9 December 1947.

125 Ibid.

126 AIPN, 012/34/k. 356-358, Vol. 3, part 2, minutes from the hearing of Josek Schaiman, 12 April 1946.

shooting of two Jewish females – a mother and daughter, after the girl begged for mercy for her mother, or the shooting a Jew named Frydman for having few eggs on him¹²⁷. Kurt Schumann, during his post-war trial, pleaded not guilty to the charges, nor did he show any sign of remorse.¹²⁸

Jerzy Adryanowicz – brutal officer of Werkschutz

A rather enigmatic figure, but specifically remembered by the prisoners, was one of the Ukrainian Werkschutz: *“The villain in a green uniform received a kind of distinction. Only the worst thugs were given nicknames. This one was called ‘Zielonka’. All the prisoners in the camp got to know ‘Zielonka’ after he shot a worker by the name of Czapnik, and then declared: ‘This will happen to everyone who tries to escape’. He stood proudly erect over the corpse of this poor wretched man and smiled, pleased with himself. He smiled as he, together with Kraus, Bartenschlager and Kühnemann selected prisoners, smiled as he beat the workers with his truncheon, and smiled when he whipped one inmate for giving a piece of bread to his brother when they met in passing.”*¹²⁹

“Zielonka” was born in 1907 as Jerzy Adryanowicz (a.k.a. Georg Adrianovitch)¹³⁰, who served as the watchman of the Factory Hasag Werk C. Although he was Ukrainian, he spoke excellent German, and used it not only when talking to other officers, but also when dealing with Jews. Reports about him are filled with descriptions of numerous brutal murders: *“‘Zielonka’ was a terror for all inmates. He abused workers, beating them for no reason whatsoever. I was often an eyewitness to how, during 1942, ‘Zielonka’ beat the workers with a plank, a stick, anything until they died. In this way, I personally saw how he killed several workers of Jewish nationality. Of those killed I remember the following names: Nudelman, Kożuch, Krips... [...] often were beaten with a stick, then Zielonka finished them off with a gun.”*¹³¹

Adryanowicz had inclination to extremely sadistic treatment of prisoners, which he apparently enjoyed. It seemed that he would hit without the slightest inhibitions, and even if the abused men managed to survive the attack itself, they often died soon after from the injuries suffered.¹³² Moshe Gotlib, who was one of the victims of Adryanowicz’s attack, recounted one particular situation: *“This criminal Adryanowicz, called by the inmates ‘Zielonka’ got well stuck in my memory. In the winter of 1943, a group of prisoners from Werk C were brought to Werk A to take a bath in the bathhouse. Here, I’d like to clarify that there was only one bathhouse on Werk A, where prisoners from all units took baths from time*

127 AIPN, O12/34/k. 356-358, Vol. 3, part 2, indictment against Kurt Schumann of 28 April 1946.

128 AIPN, O12/34/k. 360, Vol. 3, part 2, extract from the minutes of the main hearing held on 28 July 1948.

129 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 139.

130 AIPN, 128/230/k. 11, memo from the review of Jerzy Adryanowicz’s personal file.

131 AIPN, Ki 128/230/k. 254-255, minutes of Moshe Gotlib’s hearing, 7 January 1966.

132 AIPN, Ki O12/34/k. 241-242., t. 4, evidence in the investigation against Jerzy Adryanowicz.

*totime, because there were no bathhouses at other Werks. Adryanowicz came with this group of prisoners. Among the inmates was my cousin David Rozenbaum and Pawel Fajngol. Rozenbaum was my first cousin and Fajngol was my brother-in-law. Both were shot on Werk C. Because I knew they were hungry, and I had a piece of bread and a few cigarettes, I tried to give that to them. Adryanowicz spotted that. He grabbed me by the collar and beat me with a lead-tipped cane to the point that I had open wounds on my body. Then he told me to undress, he put me in the shower and directed a hose with icy water all over me. The pressure of this water was so strong that I could not stand on my feet, and Adryanowicz specifically directed water onto my genitals, which was horribly painful. Then he threw bread and cigarettes on the ground and trampled them into the ground.*¹³³

Zielonka was also one of the main sexual abusers of Jewish women in Hasag Skarżysko.¹³⁴ There is an information in one of witness' statements that he regularly raped a Jewish inmate named Adela, whom he shot in 1943 when she fell pregnant with him.¹³⁵ Adryanowicz was also famous for his love for gold and jewelry, and at every opportunity he robbed prisoners, often killing them when they did not agree to give up their possessions.¹³⁶ Zielonka even traded with some workers, promising them additional food for the donated valuables¹³⁷. When they held him up to his promise, Adryanowicz had no qualms to kill. We read in one of the accounts: *"He also shot a worker named Mącznik, with whom he was trading goods. Mącznik delivered some jewelry and asked Zielonka for a payment in the form of bread.*"¹³⁸

The investigation into the case of Jerzy Adryanowicz detailed the extent of crimes he committed in Hasag Skarżysko – from abuse of workers, selections of prisoners, rapes, thefts, to brutal murders.¹³⁹ Although in the accounts of inmates concerning Ukrainians, it is Zielonka who appears most often as a direct perpetrator, one should note that these recollections also draw a collective image of Ukrainian *Werkschutz* as a group of officers frequently abusing power¹⁴⁰. The source material reads: *"I was arrested during work by the Ukrainian Werkschutz. I knew that arrest equalled death. Rarely was one of the arrested sent back to the camp; we deluded ourselves that there is one in a thousand chance of survival. Most often, after a few days of keeping prisoners in a bunker and torturing them, Werkschutz brought them to the unit and killed them"*.¹⁴¹

133 AIPN, Ki 012/3/k. 237-238, t. 4, minutes of Benjamin Hersh Rozenbaum hearing, 21 June 1966.

134 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 139.

135 AIPN, Ki 012/34/k. 243, t. 4, evidence in the investigation against Jerzy Adryanowicz; JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 139.

136 AIPN, Ki 012/34/k. 241, t. 4, evidence in the investigation into Jerzy Adryanowicz.

137 AYV, No. 0.62/223, testimony of Celina Bajrach, p. 2.

138 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka ...*, p. 139.

139 AIPN, 012/34/k. 200-209., t. 14, part 2, a plan of witness' interviews the case against Jerzy Adryanowicz.

140 AYV, No. 0.33/1984, memoir of Aron Szwarcbard (1939 – 1945), p. 28.

141 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 138.

It is worth noting here that a special group, the so-called “*Stosstruppen*”¹⁴², consisting of Ukrainian and German *Werkschutz* was specifically set up to deal with executions of Jews and Poles.¹⁴³ Teodor Sawczuk, one of the Ukrainian *Werkschutz*, testified during the post-war investigation: “*When I started working as a Werkschutz in Hasag in Werk C, I got to know a separate area designated for a ‘shooting range’ for Werkschutz [...] Every week, it was customary to do selections of Jews. It was each foreman’s duty to provide a list of Jews unfit for work to be eliminated. Based on these lists collected from foremen, mainly Germans, the selected Jews were gathered on Sundays and shot at the shooting range.*”¹⁴⁴

Sawczuk’s statement, however truthful, omitted some important information, for example the fact that Ukrainians often did not need a reason to shoot Jewish workers. Sawczuk anyway shot the Jews not only in the factory, and not just during selections. In the account of one of the witnesses we read about murder he committed: “*... some 11-year-old boy came up to the guard [Sawczuk] at the gate and said that there was a Jew standing in the field. Sawczuk took this boy on a bike and his machine gun and went off. When he came back, I asked him how the hunting went. He replied that he had shot that Jew.*” The author of the account also stated that other officers also deliberately hunted for Jews on the premises and had “*no qualms to treat them like animals, as if they weren’t humans*”.¹⁴⁵ Rose Bauminger recalled some Ukrainian guards shooting Jews “for fun” when describing the conditions in the barracks: “*Because of vermin, sleepless nights were a nightmare. It was a torture, not a rest. The filth and stench were beyond words. Physiological needs were taken care of in the barracks because the Ukrainians shot at everyone who tried to go out at night to the toilet.*”¹⁴⁶ It seems there was no place in the Skarżysko factory and camp where the Jews could feel safe even for a second¹⁴⁷.

Ukrainian guards also posed a threat to residents of Skarżysko town. One evening Roman Hławacz, Roman Holdarz and a third officer, whose name was not given in the source material, got drunk with vodka, and intoxicated they went downtown, armed with guns. There, they arranged a bloody evening in Skarżysko, and shot at anyone who crossed their path. During this night’s escapade, they shot three men and seriously wounded a fourth one.¹⁴⁸ It is difficult to say how often such events had occurred, but the situations described above clearly show that the *Werkschutz* crew of Hasag in Skarżysko was unpredictable in their behaviour and posed a real threat to inmates.

142 *Stosstruppen* were German operational groups during World War II carrying out specific military actions, such as breaking enemy lines. In Hasag Skarżysko, this special group was called *Stosstruppen*, although it met completely different objectives. Witness accounts confirm that their main task on the factory premises was to exterminate Jews and Poles.

143 AIPN, Ki 128/228/k. 79, letter from the KWMO Investigation Department in Kielce, 13 December 1965.

144 AIPN, Ki 128/228/k. 89-90, minutes of the hearing of Teodor Sawczuk, 8 June 1965.

145 AIPN, Ki 128/232/k. 54-55., minutes of Edward Kluszczyński’s interrogation, 30 March 1966.

146 BAUMINGER, *Przy pikrynie i trotylu...*, p. 14-15.

147 AYV, No. 0.33/1841, testimony of Giza Szmulewicz, p. 3.

148 AIPN, Ki 012/34/ k. 327, t. 3, minutes of Lucjan’s Niklewski interrogation, 30 February 1966.

As Jewish workers in Hasag were entitled to much smaller food rations than Polish labourers, so, Poles sometimes shared food with them or sold bread (at inflated prices). If noticed, any such incident could have serious consequences for both sides: *“If a Werkschutz saw that someone gave a Jewish worker anything to eat, both would immediately be detained, and after torturing killed. Still, one helped whenever one could. The person could also be put in the bunker if a German foreman saw us working too slowly, or if we made mistakes at work, or were talking. Then he would say it to a Werkschutz and the worker would be immediately taken away from the work station. They arrested men at his own discretion... for the way you looked. If he didn't like something about an inmate he would lock the person up, no questions asked. It was only during the beating that they asked, ‘Admit it, are you helping Jews? Do you know any forest bandits [AK – Home Army]?’”*¹⁴⁹

As the author of this report points out, Ukrainian *Werkschutz*e repeatedly made death threats to workers, and said they had been spared for the time being only because of the war conditions and the need for cheap labour: *“They often said they would kill us all, if it weren't for the war and that someone had to work, because all Germans and others were in the army.”*

The crimes of Ukrainian *Werkschutz*e committed on women working in Hasag Skarżysko call for a separate reconstruction. Both German and Ukrainian guards could expect to be heavily punished (death penalty included) for engaging in any relationship with Jewish women. Violence, rape and murder, however, were a commonplace for which perpetrators were not held accountable in any way. The brutality of the Ukrainian tormentors is confirmed by a particularly dramatic description of collective rape and murder of Jewish female workers, which was recalled by Eugeniusz Ostrowski: *“On New Year's Eve 1943, the Ukrainians ‘Werkschutz*e’ chose in the camp several dozens of the prettiest women. They brought them under escort to their barracks, which were opposite the Metal Plants, in the building after the former mechanical gymnasium. There the women were told to undress. Before entering the hall ‘Werkschutze’ forced them to drink vodka. They were raped by Ukrainian fascists who were celebrating [the New Year]. Then the women were brought out naked near the forest, where now is a health centre at Ekonomii Street. There, they were murdered with axes. One of those women fled and ended up in the village, where she told all about it. What happened to her, I don't know. A few days later, dogs brought in several human remains to the workers' colony. There were hands and arms and fragmented legs.”¹⁵⁰

Many years later, during excavations in the place described by the author of this account, human bones were found, most likely the remains of women murdered on that tragic night. This rape was one of the many committed by the Ukrainian guards in Hasag¹⁵¹.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid., p. 137.

151 AYV, No. 0.33/1826, testimony of Ester Handelsman, p. 3.

Treatment of Jewish workers by the staff of the Hasag Skarżysko – an attempt to recap

The situation of Jewish forced labourers at the Hasag munitions factory in Skarżysko was in many respects tragic. As a labour force, the Jews were exploited to the last, working over the limit without any kind of protective clothing or equipment. As a result of murderous and hazardous conditions, after about two months in Hasag, most individuals were considered too weak or too sick to work and were sentenced to death by shooting. Years after, Adam Wasserstein who was a doctor at the camp hospital, described how difficult existence of Jews was, often exacerbated by ill manner in which the camp supervisors treated them: *“I granted sick leaves, but the commander did not always respect my orders. This one was about two patients [...] The commander made concession to the first one, the second one went to work, and shortly was brought back dead. Every day, several Jews who never made it to their workstations were brought back on stretchers. Then the sun began to warm up, and when the prisoners shed their yellowed rags and paper covers they used as clothing, they revealed bodies all black and blue with an uncountable number of ulcers ... they [factory management] got people out from the barracks after night shift, and the sick from the hospital. To lure them in, they said that all the weak individuals would get double soup, the trick worked, the inmates all lined up and then they started to load them into the truck. The sick behaved desperately, were jumping out, and those who put up a fight were shot on the spot. This carnage lasted until four o'clock in the afternoon, and only in the evening the cause of this purge was explained – a new transport from Płaszów arrived and therefore the weaker ones were removed to make space for the new victims.”*¹⁵²

Given such brutal, downright bestial treatment of Jewish prisoners at Hasag by the factory supervising staff, starting with commanding officers to regular guards, the question arises as to whether we can also speak of any positive attitudes towards Jewish labourers in this place of constant violence and abuse. The available accounts indeed point to only a few individual situations in which some staff members took pity on Jewish workers. Adolf Lewin, who was an electrical engineer at Hasag, mentioned that his supervisor “Fraülerin Arnold” secretly gave up her breakfast for him, or would give him extra rations of bread and marmalade. *“I wasn't hungry anymore, I could even exchange bread for other items,”* he said¹⁵³. Simon Wulwik also reported years later that the German foreman named Keller had helped him escape from the camp, which saved his life¹⁵⁴. The most interesting case, however, seems to be the one described by Esther Gold, concerning a German officer unknown to us by name, referred to

152 AŻIH, 301/1043/k. 2-4, Adam Wasserstein's account on the labour camp in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

153 AŻIH, 301/1236/k. 3, report of Adolf Levin on Hasag, Skarżysko-Kamienna.

154 Esther Gold thus describes this German officer in the report: *“... it was a third camp boss since our arrival [underscoring A.B.]. Much more decent than the other ones. He took foreman Fritsche down a notch, and he put our Vorarbeiters in their places.”*

as “the third one”, who apparently hid Jewish children¹⁵⁵: “The displaced brought children in backpacks instead of luggage. Those children were hidden in lagers, they did not see daylight. Teppermann and Krzepicki gave up poorer children and pregnant women who couldn’t buy themselves out. The third one, when the selection committee was due to arrive, hid all the children at home. He gave them candy, doubled their rations as they were starved and poorly looking. On his own accord he reduced the contingent selected for extermination and risked his own head because he reported to Oberszef Bartenschlager, an exceptional thug.”¹⁵⁶

It is not clear which of the officers Esther Gold referred to as “the third one”. Such relationship between an officer and inmates, although unique, is something otherwise unheard of at Hasag Skarżysko. The camp staff in no way regarded the lives of workers. There may be a single mention – as in the case of Friedrich Schulze, *Lageführer* at *Werk C*, a former *Wehrmacht* officer – of someone talking about his reluctance to kill the workers, or about him seeking to improve conditions in the camp (for example, by sharing food and clothes fairly), but this had never been out of concern for Jewish prisoners, but about the efficiency of production¹⁵⁷. Other than that, the same Schulze at some other time had no qualms to make selections and send Jews to death “on a whim”.¹⁵⁸

Post-war accountability and responsibility for crimes

The manner of treating Jewish workers by camp guards in Hasag, Skarżysko was not unusual comparing to other places of similar character. Exploiting the Jewish workforce to benefit of economy of the Third Reich with a purpose to annihilate the Jewish population were two crucial elements in German racial policies.¹⁵⁹ Hans Frank, acting governor-general, described the paradox of this situation saying: “You should not kill a cow that you want to milk. But the Reich wants to milk and kill the cow.”¹⁶⁰ The rationale behind unscrupulous crimes was constantly sustained by the argument of Jew’s racial inferiority. More importantly, the propagandists kept convincing the public that all activities against the Jewish population were in fact counteractions in defence of the country.¹⁶¹

It is difficult to say explicitly whether the supervisors and camp guards in Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna were criminals who had already been showing violent tendencies, or people who until that time would have considered it impossible to kill so readily.¹⁶² However, Harald Welzer rightly wrote that in

155 AŻIH, 301/2220/k. 6, Simon Wulwik’s account on Hasag Skarżysko-Kamienna.

156 AŻIH, 301/1067/k. 5, Esther Gold’s account on the factory Hasag, Skarżysko-Kamienna.

157 KARAY, *Death comes...*, p. 212-213.

158 AŻIH, 301/1043/k. 5-6., Adam Wasserstein’s account on labour camp in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

159 MADAJCZYK, Czesław. *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, Vol. 1. Warszawa, 1970, p. 652.

160 Quoted from: EISENBACH, Artur. *Hitler’s policy of extermination of Jews*. Warszawa, 1961, p. 444.

161 HILBERG, Raul. *Zagłada Żydów Europejskich. Volume III*. Warszawa, 2014, p. 1265.

162 WELZER, Harald. *Sprawcy. Dlaczego zwykli ludzie dokonują masowych mordów*. Warszawa, 2010, p. 80.

the times of National Socialism, humiliating and persecuting people was not a reprehensible act for the Germans but a required one, and in the last years of the Third Reich's killing was even considered necessary and morally good.¹⁶³ The described examples of criminals operating in Hasag, Skarżysko seem to confirm this conclusion. The accounts of Jewish survivors not only point to the unimaginable brutality of the camp guards but also indicate that for the staff inflicting pain, humiliating or murdering was the source of entertainment and satisfaction that is beyond our comprehension.

Studies of individual perpetrators operating in the Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna and the scope of their crimes seem to point to three elements that we can consider characteristic both to the abusers as a group, and to the factory as a place where Jews were used as forced labour. The first is permanent brutality of the camp guards to the extent that even the directives of central authorities seemed to be ineffective in curbing beastly behaviour of the staff and improving the way the Jews were treated. In the memoirs of Hasag in Skarżysko survivors, one frequently comes across the accounts saying that it was not the work itself that was horrific but the discipline in the camp¹⁶⁴. One could get punished for the smallest "misconduct": "[...] *if someone sings or marches badly, gets whipped. [...] after 13 hours on your feet you're not allowed to sit down for a minute, and those who do, get terribly beaten*".¹⁶⁵ The camp guards did not spare the prisoners even when the efficiency of production largely depended on their health condition. When the situation on the Eastern Front began to rapidly deteriorate and German industry was affected by an increasing shortage of labour, the central authorities focused even more on extensive use of Jewish workforce.¹⁶⁶ However, the accounts of the prisoners from that period clearly show that this did not improve the way the camp supervisors dealt with Jews. Although some accounts from in 1944 in Hasag, Skarżysko point to supposed improvement in food situation or setting up an infirmary¹⁶⁷ which directly benefited prisoners and general living conditions,¹⁶⁸ the guards' approach to the prisoners did not change whatsoever; the vast majority of archival sources from that period contain descriptions of unjustified shootings¹⁶⁹ and bestial crimes committed on exhausted Jews¹⁷⁰. Similarly, the time of camp liquidation which began in March 1944 saw mass murders of workers, including those relatively healthy and able to work.¹⁷¹

The second characteristic to Hasag emerging from this analysis concerns the situation of Jewish female workers as objects of constant acts of sexual violence

163 Ibid., p. 73.

164 AYV, No. 0.33/636, memoirs of Edyta Zierer.

165 RUBINOWICZ, Dawid. *Pamiętnik*, Warszawa, 1960, p. 107.

166 EISENBACH, *Hitler's policy...*, p. 554-555.

167 URBAŃSKI, Krzysztof. *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*. Kraków, 2004, p. 198.

168 KARAY, *Spór między władzami...*, p. 42.

169 AŻIH, No. 301/7007, Mieczysław Ruzga's report on Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna, box 5-6.

170 AŻIH, No. 301/48, Erita Troppe's report on Hasag factory in Skarżysko Kamienna, box 1-2.

171 AŻIH, No. 301/502, Hanka Kornfeld's account on Hasag factory in Skarżysko Kamienna, box 5.

committed by German and Ukrainian guards. Although aggressive behaviour of staff in forced labour camps was commonplace, rapes on Jewish women in Hasag, Skarżysko had different and broader dimension that does not seem to fit into the pattern of research results on sexual violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust. The American historian Elizabeth Heineman noted that Germans very rarely raped Jewish women, and she listed several arguments to support this: racial doctrine, dehumanisation (Jews considered “sub-humans” and inferior thus disregarded by Germans as sexual partners and therefore, target of rape), or the poorly appearance of the Jewish women in ghettos or camps. Heineman’s analysis led to the conclusion that German officials accepted the National Socialist propaganda prohibiting physical contacts with Jewish women, and they did observe the racial policies.¹⁷² However, in the accounts of survivors of Skarżysko camp, we find numerous descriptions of sexual abuse and brutal rapes of Jewish women who were most often murdered shortly afterwards¹⁷³. Therefore, the case of Hasag camp varies from the previous research findings on sexual violence against Jewish women during the war.

It is also worth looking at the results of the analysis carried out by Zoë Waxman, who studied the stories of women during the Holocaust. She wrote that the Holocaust was a series of various events, differently experienced by women, and makes it unique in its monstrosity, but valid example of how gender hierarchy worked.¹⁷⁴ Studying the testimonies of survivors of extermination, concentration, or work camps, makes it clear that even in the process of extermination, gender remained a factor determining fate of men, women and children.¹⁷⁵ The situation of Jewish female workers in Hasag in Skarżysko was often far more difficult than that of men, because of their gender. In the memoirs of the Jewish survivors, *Werk C* appeared as sheer hell, and the personnel deliberately assigned the most attractive women to work there. The accounts explicitly point to a pattern of sorts: “*The youngest and most beautiful girls were chosen to work with picric acid, and after two weeks they were completely changed.*”¹⁷⁶ Another one reads: “*In the corner I noticed an older, decrepit looking woman working with TNT. I was surprised where old women like her came from in Skarżysko; they were normally finished off in labour camps. She turned out to be an 18-year-old girl, with skinny legs that couldn’t support the weight of her body, she was hunched over like an old woman, she looked at least fifty years old.*”¹⁷⁷

Additionally, the issue of sexual crimes committed by camp supervisors and guards shows that women in the Skarżysko factory were targeted not only

172 HEINEMAN, Elizabeth D. Sexuality and Nazism: The Doubly Unspeakable? In *Journal of the History of Sexuality, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism (Jan. – Apr. 2002)*, Vol. 11, No. 1/2, p. 62-63.

173 PACHTER, Mietek. *Umierać też trzeba umieć...* Warszawa, 2015, p. 544-545.

174 WAXMAN, Zoe. *Kobiety Holocaustu*. Poznań, 2019, p. 17-18.

175 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

176 AŻIH, 301/1743, report by Frýda Immerglück, box 2.

177 AŻIH, No. 301/502, testimony by Hanka Kornfeld, 4; see also: AŻIH, 301/828, report by Felicja Bannet, box 5-6.

to work the hardest, in harmful conditions, but were also victims of sexual violence. Jewish women tried to survive in Hasag at all costs, but their gender made the chances of survival much slimer, comparing to men.

Finally, there is the third important element in the stories of the perpetrators and the history of Hasag factory in Skarżysko: post-war accountability for crimes and only selective punishment for some criminals. After the war, some of the abusers appeared in court. The most important trial, held in 1948 in Leipzig was called the “Kamienna Trial”. Twenty-one defendants were tried for crimes committed on the premises of the Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna.¹⁷⁸ Arthur Rost (director of *Werk C*), Willi Seidel (head of operation on *Werk A*), Alfred Wagner (foreman) and the guard commander Reinhard Neumerkel were sentenced to death. Felix Kerbs, the head of the grenade department on *Werk B* and foreman Marianne Tietge (known for her particularly brutal treatment of prisoners, including trampling on people’s heads and genitals) were sentenced to life imprisonment. The other defendants received prison sentence (one to fifteen years)¹⁷⁹. In another trial held in Poland, Kurt Schumann (already mentioned in this paper) was sentenced to death in August 1948.¹⁸⁰ Two months later in Radom, Poland another member of the *Werkschutz* staff, Michał Czepil was sentenced to ten years in prison.¹⁸¹ It was not until 1953 that the Provincial Court in Kielce, Poland sentenced a Ukrainian, Teodor Sawczuk to death penalty, which was later changed to life imprisonment.¹⁸²

In the years 1966 – 1973 there were also extensive criminal proceedings against Jerzy Adryanowicz and other persons “suspected of involvement in the killings of Polish citizens carried out between 1940 and 1945 on the premises of the Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna”, but despite extensive evidence and implicating guilty individuals, the verdict in this lawsuit was challenged.¹⁸³ The director of the Leipzig factory, Paul Budin was never held responsible and he, together with his wife, most likely committed suicide in 1945, just before the liberation of Hasag in Leipzig by American troops.¹⁸⁴ As for Egon Dalski, the manager of the plant in Skarżysko-Kamienna, he most probably managed to escape and remained in hiding as he was never caught.¹⁸⁵ The case of Fritz Bartenschlager and many other torturers looks similar; they all seemed to

178 StAL sign. 21698 SED Sammlung Gerichtsunterlagen, No. 04, indictment in trial Kamienna-Częstochowa (Anklageschrift Them Proseß Kamienna-Tschenstochau).

179 Available online: <<http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/czestochowa%20trials.html>>. (cit. 28 March 2021).

180 PIATKOWSKI, *Zbrodnie funkcjonariuszy straży...*, p. 79.

181 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 143.

182 Ibid.

183 AIPN, 012/34/k. 346-356, t. 14, Rewizja Prokuratury Wojewódzkiej w Kielcach od wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego, 11 April 1973.

184 ITS Bad Arolsen, sign. 1.1.5.0/0005/0016, 82065940#1, report on takeover of the Leipzig camp by American troops on 21 April 1945.

185 STRIGLER, Mordechai. *In den Fabriken des Todes: Verloschene Lichter II. Ein früherer Zeitzeugenbericht vom Arbeitslager Skarżysko-Kamienna*. Springe, 2017, p. 7.

have disappeared without a trace just after the end of the war.¹⁸⁶ Post-war accountability for the crimes is therefore disappointing as many of the murderers were never even summoned to court. What is also significant is that while public prosecutors spoke about the responsibility and atrocities committed by the SS and the *Werkschutze*, none of the German engineers and economists responsible for the organisation, technologies and maintenance of the Hasag concern were never indicted. And most certainly, the people who made decisions to abuse Jewish workforce in Hasag should be answerable for this calculated exploitation.¹⁸⁷

Memory and oblivion

Facing the threat of the Soviet offensive in July 1944 Hasag management decided to demolish the factory in Skarżysko. Since the families of German workers fled, Polish and Jewish workers, under the watchful eye of Ukrainian *Werkschutze* and their German superiors, were made responsible for dismantling of machinery and loading it onto carriages¹⁸⁸. Groups of Jewish workers were specifically assigned to obliterate the traces of crimes. Mass graves with people murdered in the years 1940 – 1944 were dug up, uncovered bodies were taken to field crematoria where they were covered with picric acid and then incinerated. Ashes and bone remains were scattered throughout the forest. At leaving the factory, Polish workers were encouraged by the factory management to leave and find work in other branches of the Hasag concern – in Częstochowa, Leipzig or Altenburg, while the Jewish workers were selected down to only those men and women able for work¹⁸⁹. The majority of Jews who remained in the camp were murdered and their bodies were incinerated in the field crematorium¹⁹⁰. And just as most perpetrators were never held responsible for the crimes committed in Hasag, Skarżysko, thus the memory of Jewish victims was erased too for many years after the war. In 1965, on the former factory grounds a modest tombstone was erected with a metal plaque and an inscription: “*In memory of 35,000 murdered in the Nazi slave labour camp Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna in the years 1940 – 1944 – members of the resistance movement, town residents and prisoners of war who gave their lives so that others could live*”, but clearly not a word to recognize the Jewish nationality of workers who constituted a vast majority of Hasag labour force.¹⁹¹ Only in 2015 a memorial acknowledging Jews who died there was put up. The inscription reads: “*In memory of thousands of Jews and Poles tortured*

186 Ibid., p. 21.

187 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 143.

188 AYV, No. 0.3/3561038, testimony of Izhak Dobia Frank.

189 AYV, No. 0.33/5687, testimony of Lucy Gershwin, p. 3; USHMM, No. RG-50.029.0023, oral history interview with Estelle Laughlin.

190 AYV, No. 0.33/1759, testimony of Felicja Karay, p. 17.

191 JUCHNIEWICZ, *Kronika. Państwowa Fabryka...*, p. 142-143.

and murdered during World War II in the German forced labour camp Hasag. The community of Skarżysko-Kamienna”.¹⁹²

In the memoirs of Mojsze Grinszpan (the Jewish prisoner in Hasag, already quoted in this paper), there is a description of the process of liquidation of Hasag factory just days away from the Soviet offensive in July 1944.¹⁹³ The author quotes the words of one of the German managers, who said to the group of Jews before making the selection: “To us you are not Jews, you’re just robots to operate machines”¹⁹⁴. Another Hasag survivor, Erita Troppe recalled years later that the camp crew referred to the Jews no longer able to work as *szmelc* [scrap] and killed the weakest ones.¹⁹⁵ The dehumanisation and cruelty of the oppressors towards the slave labourers in Hasag often took away the identity of people who died there. The cases of perpetrators described in this paper show that detailed research on functionaries of German repressive apparatus, from those of higher ranks to regular *Werkschutze*, fully shows not only the scope of crimes they committed, but also allows to bring back identities to the victims. And the abusers, who often avoided responsibility for their actions and to this day hide their identities under the terms “Germans” or “Nazis”, no longer remain anonymous.¹⁹⁶

192 Available online at: <<https://echodnia.eu/swietokrzyskie/ten-pomnik-w-skarzysku-nie-ma-szczescia-tablice-z-napisem-zmieniano-juz-kilka-razy-zdjecia/ar/c1-14745934>>. (cited on 01 Oct. 2021).

193 More on the liquidation of Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna in: WIJACZKA – MIERNIK, *Żydowscy robotnicy przymusowi...*, p. 200-201.

194 AŻIH, No. 301/67, Moishe Grinshpan’s account on Hasag factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna, box 4.

195 AŻIH, No. 301/48, report Erita Troppe’s report about the factory Hasag in Skarżysko Kamienna, box 1.

196 PIATKOWSKI, *Zbrodnie funkcjonariuszy straży ...*, p. 80.

Tomáš LANG

Crime and Guilt. Tyranny of the Arrow Cross Party in Southern Slovakia 1944 – 1945

From an attempt to call a truce to a fascist coup

In July 1944, Regent Horthy decided to prevent deportations of the rest of Hungarian Jews from Budapest, and also to remove Sztójay from office on 25 August – two days after Romania, fighting along Nazi Germany, declared its withdrawal from the war. Horthy's decision was a clear proof for the Reich that Hungary is planning to rebel against forging another alliance with Axis powers.

Therefore, they immediately took measures to protect their interests. They seemed to tolerate the newly-formed Geza Lakatos' military government on the outside, but at the same time they started behind-the-scenes negotiations with representatives of the Arrow Cross Party – extreme right-wing national-socialists – over the possible founding of a new political party, devoted to the Reich, under the leadership of Ferenc Szálasi.

Horthy, who was aware of the political views and ambitions of the Arrow Cross Party-Hungarist Movement¹, ordered an immediate arrest of its prominent

1 The Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement (*Nyilaskeresztes Párt – Hungarista Mozgalom*), the emblem of the party corresponded to its name: a cross with an arrow attached on each side) was formed in 1938 – 1939, and it soon became the second largest political party in the country. On 21 February 1938, Minister of Interior dissolved the Hungarian National Socialist Party (*Magyar Nemzetiszocialista Párt*), under the leadership of Ferenc Szálasi. He and other seventy-two members of the party were put under close police supervision by the VIII District's police captain. In April 1938, Szálasi restored the activity of the party under the name of National Socialist Hungarian Party (*Nemzetiszocialista Magyar Párt*). The government used carrot and stick policies against this party during the following two years. Carrot and stick policy manifested itself when the party dissolved and then, few days later, resumed its activity again – this happened several times. The National Socialist Hungarian Party – Hungarist Movement was dissolved on 23 February 1939. It appeared on the political scene again on 15 March 1939 under the name of the Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement (*Nyilaskeresztes Párt – Hungarista Mozgalom*) and took part in the elections. At the beginning of 1938, about 10,000 members were recorded in the party. In the summer of 1939, the number of its members reached 500,000. Sharp increase in numbers of the membership base can be partially explained by growing social tension in the country. Their political program from 1939 preached the importance of corporate identity within society and promised employment for everyone. It called for arms industry and energy industry to be put under state control, land reform, freedom and protection of craftsmen and trade, and removal of *freeloaders*. The removal of *freeloaders* has a direct connection with its demand to establish *Hungary free of Jews*. It preached a racist ideology of Hungarism and blind devotion to Nazism and Nazi Germany to the last breath. Members of the party were often colloquially called “*Nyilas*” – i.e., arrow bearer. We are referring to them as “*Nyilas*” or “*Nyilas authorities*” throughout the text. For further information, see the main body of the text.

members on 16 September. His order was not carried out though – all prominent *Nyilas* members had already been under the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) protection. Once under the protection, they were single-mindedly preparing for the takeover of the government. Their pompous and bizarre ideas about changing the course of the war naturally included the necessary steps to finally resolve the “*Jewish question*” once and for all. According to them, all the Jews who were at this point located only in Budapest and within the forced labour units and who were defined according to strict racial rules, would form forced public labour units. After the war, they would be relocated from the country to the not yet specified place – it was going to be decided upon according to international agreements. Party leader Ferenc Szálasi² summed up his ideas on “*the solution of the Jewish question*” as follows: “*Jews must be deployed in labour units to work for the nation, inside the country; the way we’ll treat them will depend on the way they’ll behave; their legal status will be defined by the law. There are no exceptions, period. After the war, all the Jews must be removed from Hungary. The specific location will be established according to the international agreement. Jews are never to be permitted again to set foot on Hungarian soil. Mixed marriages are to be nullified. Everybody has the right to exercise this regulation. Whoever fails to take advantage of this law*

2 Ferenc Szálasi (born 6 January 1897 in Košice – died 12 March 1946 in Budapest) was born into the officer’s family, to father Ferenc Szálasi Senior and mother Erzsébet Szakmári. He was an army officer and Commanding Officer of the general staff. After completing his military service in Kőszeg in western Hungary, he studied at K.K. (*kaiserlich-königlich* or Imperial-Royal, t/n) Military Academy in Vienna. He graduated as a lieutenant in 1915. He was serving thirty-six months at the front since 1915 and received the Order of the Iron Crown – Grand Cross. He moved from Košice to Budapest in 1919, where he served in Ministry of Defence’s messenger service. After the fall of Hungarian Republic of Councils, he joined Miklos Horthy’s units. In 1923 – 1925 he studied at military academy, in 1926 – 1929 he served in the General Staff’s Military Personnel and Training Department, where he met several right-wing-minded commanding officers and generals. In 1930 he joined the secret racist *Alliance of Hungarian Life*, founded by Arpád Taby, major of the bodyguard unit. He attained a rank of a Major of the General Staff in 1933 and published the *Plan for the Building of the Hungarian State*. Because of this pamphlet, Szálasi was sentenced to twenty days in prison and expelled from the General Staff. In order to pursue his political ambitions, he retired in October 1934. He founded his first political party, Nation’s Will Party (*Nemzet Akaratának Pártja*) on 4 March 1935. By 1937, he managed to unite various extreme right-wing clubs and small parties and reshape them into a mass movement. He was brought to justice several times for his political activities. On 19 May 1937 and 26 January 1938, he was sentenced to three months and additional one month in prison for stirring up racial hatred with his pamphlets. On 1 August 1937, he signed an agreement with László Endre and Count Lajos Széchenyi, and together they founded the Hungarian National Socialist Party. He was under the police supervision until the end of May 1938. Towards the end of June, he was brought to justice again and, on 6 July 1938, regional court changed its ten-month sentence verdict, reached in Autumn of 1937, and found him guilty of high treason against the state and social establishment. This court sentenced him to three years in prison and ordered an immediate arrest. He served his sentence in Szeged until 17 September 1940. As early as 1939, his political party had 500,000 members. In 1939, this party – by that time known as the Arrow Cross Party – received 1,000,000 votes in the elections and entered the parliament with twenty-six MPs. He became the party leader immediately after he got out of prison in autumn of 1940. On 15 and 16 October 1944, he seized the power with the help of the Nazis after Regent Horthy’s failed attempt to withdraw Hungary from the war and rebel against further alliance with the Axis powers. On 2 November 1944, he seized both the authority of a prime minister as well as the authority of a president and declared himself the leader of the nation. On 5 March 1945, he fled to Austria. On 5 May 1945, he was taken hostage by Americans and, on 3 October 1945, the Americans transferred him back to Hungary and transported him to Budapest. People’s Court delivered a death sentence and on 12 March 1946, he was hanged.

will fall into the same group as Jews; in such case, their children will be automatically considered Jewish as well."³

Horthy was aware of possible strategic-geopolitical consequences of allies' decision in Yalta for his country. According to this decision, Hungary was to be liberated by the Red Army. Therefore, he tried to avoid direct negotiations with Moscow and on 28 August, through Swiss emissary, he asked the western allies to hold peace talks. He received the answer the very next day: "*peace negotiations only with western allies are out of the question. Any attempts to exclude Russians [from peace talks] would result in an immediate termination of such negotiations*".⁴

There were no more options left other than sending a delegation through the Slovak insurgent territory to Moscow to negotiate peace. The head of the delegation was General of Gendarmerie, Gábor Faragho. The only reason for him to be recommended for this mission was the fact that he served as a military *attaché* at the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow in 1940 – 1941. Negotiations were lengthy, the delegation did not have enough authority, and Hungarians hesitated to accept the Allied powers' adamant request to immediately turn all military forces against Nazi Germany and its allies.

The intention to negotiate peace with the Allied powers, Gábor Faragho's peace talks in Moscow, as well as the intention to carry out these negotiations in secret, were foolish and sloppy. Not only did Nazis find out about everything just in time, but they also managed to prepare their thorough countermeasures. On 16 September, Hitler himself authorized Otto Skorzeny, who was a commander of a rescue mission that freed Mussolini, to prevent Hungary to withdraw from the war and to end alliance with the Axis powers. *Obergruppenführer* Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski arrived in Budapest from Warsaw as well. He took over the command of all SS and SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, Security Service) units. Towards the end of September, Veessenmayer signed an agreement with Szálasi on creating a new government, led by Veessenmayer, and its first actions. On 1 October, 138 MPs led by Ferenc Rajniss⁵ created the so-called National Council of Legislators.

3 LÉVAI, Jenő. (ed.). *Eichmann in Hungary. Documents*. Budapest: Pannónia, 1961, 146. p.; BRAHAM, Randolph L. *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary. Vol. II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, p. 902 et seq.

4 Telegram from the military *attaché* in Bern, László Rakonczai, to the Budapest government, see: FÖLDI, Pál. *A magyar királyi honvédség a második világháborúban. Vol. II*. Budapest: Anno Kiadó, 2002, p. 111.

5 Ferenc Rajniss (1893, Bardejov – 1946, Budapest) arrived in Budapest in 1921, along with the last transport of war prisoners from the Soviet Russia. He reacted to the initial speech by the Prime Minister Károly Huszár by acting on behalf of "Hungarian honour and humanity" and he denounced persecution of Jews and the white terror. He seemed a true liberal in many areas in comparison with the *zeitgeist* of the period. As a politician with social values, he criticised Horthy's regime. After Hitler seized power, he saw "dark times ahead" and he wrote about "barbarism and corruption of the soul". He wrote in Vienna about how the Austrian government waged war against swastika, fighting to the last breath. In the second half of 1930s, his ambitiousness tipped the scales of his sense of justice. He came around and joined the fascist ranks. As an educated intellectual, he had little respect for Szálasi. Instead, he was tempted to join the aristocratic party of extreme right-wing members led by Béla Imrédy and Andor Jaross. This, however, did not bother him when he joined Szálasi's "leader-of-the-nation" government and took up the office as the Minister of Culture. He kept his position until 7 March 1945. People's Court sentenced him to death. On 12 March 1946, he was hanged together with Ferenc Szálasi and other members of the Arrow Cross Party – namely Dr József Gero and the Minister of Transport, General Col. Károly Beregffy.

The aim of this council was to make the government takeover seem legal and to ensure further collaboration with Nazi Germany⁶.

On 27 September, Horthy appointed General Szilárd Bakay a Chief of Defence of Budapest. However, Bakay was kidnapped on 8 October by RSHA (Reich Main Security Office, or Gestapo) and they got their hands on all the documents concerning the secret defence plan of Budapest.

Preparation of the withdrawal from Nazi Germany reached its climax in the first half of October 1944. The initial plans were worked out by Horthy himself, along with his son Miklós Junior and several closest family members and senior military officers of the castle. Plans were implemented on 15 October as a separate endeavour of the castle and this attempt had its few tragicomic moments. One of the major causes of its failure was the sudden implementation of measures, which were supposed to start on 18 October – three days later. The reason for an early start was the fear of a *Nyilas*' coup. They had the full support of *Wehrmacht*, Gestapo, SS, and SD units. Horthy was relying on the element of surprise. He summoned the Crown Council on 15 October at 10 a.m.⁷ At midday, he summoned Veessenmayer so as to inform him about the decision to make peace and to turn against Nazi Germany. Element of surprise, however, was used against him. During early morning hours, Gestapo kidnapped his son who was wrapped in a carpet. They transported him out of Budapest and eventually deported him to Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp.

Horthy's proclamation was broadcasted at 1 p.m. He admitted that the Axis powers had lost the war and that the Reich was facing an inevitable defeat. He accused the Reich of dragging Hungary into the war and he announced Hungary's withdrawal from war on the side of the Nazis. Then he read an official order from the Commander in Chief. In his order, he made an appeal for all military forces to remember their oath of loyalty and to carry out his orders immediately – "*nation's survival depends on these orders*".

Orders for commanders of the First and Second Army to stop fighting against the Red Army and to turn against the Reich were supposed to be given by the Chief of the General Staff, General János Vörös. He, however, gave a different order – he told the commanders that the regent's broadcast proclamation did not apply to the army and that the fight must carry on.

The vast majority of the army, gendarmerie, and the police listened to those who wanted to fight alongside the Nazis. Suddenly, Jews realised that this was not a liberation – persecutions were not going to stop. This was an exact opposite – they had reached their country's darkest hour. This was the beginning of the most terrible period of the war. Horthy and his few followers woke up to the fact that they had lost control of the situation. Szálasi's crew, under the protection of SS, was waiting to seize power – preferably with Horthy's blessing. And the very next day, they did so.

6 Andor Jaross was also a member of the party. He was a minister in the previous government which carried out deportations of Jews.

7 Crown Council (*Koronatanács*) – regent's supreme advisory forum.

The extreme right wing seized power after *Nyilas'* coup and with the help from the Nazis. Several factors played an important role in their success – betrayal of a few high-ranking officers, the incompetence of the previous political leadership, and the careless preparation of peace talks as well the measures taken to keep them a secret. Veessenmayer's and Rahn's shifty diplomacy, Skorzeny's and Bach-Zelewsky's confidence, obedience of SS units, and presence of several dozen army tanks in Budapest prevented Hungary from following the successful example of Romania from 23 August 1944.

Regent Horthy was forced to sign two documents on 16 October – in the first document, he took back his proclamation from the other day and confirmed the order, given by the Chief of the General Staff, to continue the fight alongside the Nazis. In the second document, he authorized Ferenc Szálasi to form the *Government of National Unity* and he abdicated in favour of Szálasi. The following day, Skorzeny “escorted” Horthy and his closest family members into the Reich, where he was accommodated in Hirschberg, Bavaria. Despite the promise, his son was not reunited with the family. Instead, he was transported from Mauthausen to Dachau concentration camp where he was liberated by the Americans. Two days later, Eichmann returned to Budapest with his deadly SS commando of approximately 150 “advisors”.

Unconditional devotion to German interests spread across the whole country like a wildfire. Numerous anti-Jewish actions took place – persecutions, death marches, slaughtering. The time of national-socialist extreme rightists' regime of terror had begun. This hellish dream became reality to the last days of the war.

Tyranny of thugs

The consequences of the takeover of the government by *Nyilas* in the capital city were the same for every single level of administration in the country.

The aim of this text is to try – within the context of the topic – to reconstruct anti-Jewish atrocities committed by local, either insignificant or more important, “big shots” and those who carried out their orders in Nové Zámky and its immediate surroundings.

Szálasi's Government Regulation⁸ reviewed and, usually immediately, revoked any exemptions, including those issued by government concerning approx. 8,000 people. Szálasi confirmed exemptions only for seventy people and Gábor Vajna, who held office as the Minister of Interior, issued exemptions for 501 people. As a result, the number of people with exemptions granting them protection dropped to 571⁹ in the whole country.

The Arrow Cross Party, similarly to pretty much every single totalitarian party throughout history, had its own armed forces. In this case, they were the so-called Hungarist Legion (*Hungarista Légió*) and armed party squads

8 Government Regulation No. 3780/1944 M.E. of 15 November 1944 with an immediate effect.

9 SÁGVÁRI, Ágnes. *A budapesti zsidóság holocaustja*. Budapest: The Jewish Agency for Israel, 1994, p. 4.

(*pártszolgálat*). Membership in this *legion* or *squad* provided protection from the draft into the fighting army. Therefore, in many cases, these groups symbolized a refuge for those who wanted to avoid taking part in significantly more dangerous service in the army. Lower working classes were usually entering the Arrow Cross Party and its armed forces. Apart from them, many lowlives found a perfect environment to vent their most primitive aggressive drives here.

Ferenc Szálasi became the leading figure within the party, which was introduced in its final form in 1939, immediately after he got out of prison. His right-hand was Count Lajos Széchenyi. Although the then parliamentary almanac (*Országgyűlési almanach*)¹⁰ seldom mentions the count, he invested huge parts of his income into the party-political goals and he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of national-socialistic movement.¹¹ The social base of the party consisted of lower-middle classes, simpletons, craftsmen, small businessmen, junior officials, miners, impoverished villagers, and people representing the *lumpenproletariat* (lowlives, t/n).¹²

They devoted themselves to their superiors. They showed total obedience and faith in the dominance of Hungarist ideology and race. A prominent philosopher and writer, György Konrád who was monitoring their behaviour when Budapest was under siege wrote about them the following: “...the scum of the earth, kicked out of every school. The only thing they are good at is teasing cats...”¹³ High-level party members were people with higher education, often with academic titles. Their leadership and orders were accepted and carried out with absolute obedience and devotion.

It is important to mention the fact that members of the party were not only Hungarians, but also Slovaks, especially in the surrounding small towns and villages with Slovak or mixed population. After the war, their excuse for taking part in the Arrow Cross Party or other right-wing Hungarian parties was that they merely protected themselves from being persecuted by Hungarian nobility.

Nyilas gunmen turned the spotlight on hunting down Jews, wherever they were located, on shooting deserters and, last but not least, on assembling young people, the so-called *Leventists*¹⁴, and their transportation to military

10 This is the name of the then parliamentary journal.

11 *Országgyűlési almanach 1939 – 44*, p. 319. Available at: <http://www.ogyk.hu/e-konyv/mpgy/alm/al1939_44/319.htm>. (cited on 20 Sept. 2022).; also see CSAJÁNYI, Melinda. *Arisztokrácia a két világháború közötti magyar törvényhozásban. Doctoral Thesis*. Budapest: FF ELTE, 2015, p.117.

12 Ibid.

13 GYÖRGY, Konrád. The High Priest of Frivolity. In *The New Yorker*, 9 March 1992, p. 32; EBY, Cecil B. *Civilek és katonák a második világháborúban*. Budapest: MUNDUS Press, 2003, p. 233.

14 Countrywide Hungarian organisation *Levente* was in charge of military youth education. They brought together youth between twelve to twenty-one years of age. Military youth education consisted of physical education, military training including shooting practice, ideological education in the spirit of Hungarist Movement, revisionism and devotion to the regime and its army, as well as making use of the spare time to practice anti-aircraft defence drills and to spy on the enemies of the regime. *Levente* clubs were focusing primarily on the village youth. *Levente* usually got out of hand and changed into a brutal military drill, since non-commissioned officers, reservists, were responsible for training and education. Jews were excluded from the organisation and they could not participate in any way. See: VIETOR, Martin. *Dejiny okupácie južného Slovenska*. Bratislava: SAV, 1968, p. 175.

training camps or, under the pretext of “manual labour”, to Germany. If Jews or deserted soldiers ran into *Nyilas* gunmen, their fate was sealed. First, they tried to make them confess under brutal torture and to reveal the names of those who helped them to either escape or to hide them. Then they simply shot them dead, because they represented “enemies of Hungarist ideology and traitors”.

The orthodox part of the Jewish cemetery in Nové Zámky contains two graves where the remains of victims, murdered by *Nyilas* gunmen, are buried. According to the information available, the first grave should contain remains of seventeen victims who were shot dead right at the inner wall of this cemetery. Second burial place contains five victims whose bodies were exhumed in the woods near the Bajč-Pribeta road immediately after the war.

Alexander Stern's case against Tibor Járík and accomplices

One of the first hearings, scheduled by District People's Court in Nové Zámky dealt with charges against¹⁵ a group of *Nyilas* officials. This group worked together to deliberately torture to death a twenty-year-old chemist, Alexander Stern from Nové Zámky.

Alexander Stern joined the labour force unit which was deployed in Nové Zámky on October 1944 to remove debris after air strikes from 14 October 1944¹⁶. *Nyilas* Imrich Procháska detained Alexander Stern and brought him to the *Nyilas* headquarters. Once they were inside, *Nyilas* officers beat him up and then tortured him mercilessly – they poured brine solution into his mouth and pricked his feet and other parts of his body with a red-hot needle. Tortured Alexander Stern lost his consciousness several times and eventually died. *Nyilas* officers got the body into a sidecar and drove towards the Nitra River at the end of a Nesvadská Street where they dumped the body into the water.

The prosecution brought charges against Tibor Járík, born in 1924 in Nové Zámky, confectioner apprentice Imrich Procháska, born in 1925 in Gbelce, locksmith Tibor Szőke, born in 1923 in Nové Zámky, and soda maker and glazier Jozef Bartoš, born in 1915 also in Nové Zámky. Other accomplices to

15 Štátny archív Bratislava (abbreviated to ŠA BA), f. Okresný ľudový súd (abbreviated to OLS) Nové Zámky, file No. 1/45.

16 The city of Nové Zámky was bombed three times: on 7 October 1944, eighty-two USAF aircrafts B-24 dropped 180,4 tons of explosives, on 14 October 1944, twenty-four planes dropped 52,8 tons and on 14 March 1944, 115 heavy bombers dropped 253,0 tons of fragmentation bombs. See: PATAKY, Iván – ROZSOS, László – SÁRHIDAI, Gyula. *Légiháború Magyarország felett*. Budapest: Zrínyi Kaidó, 1988, ISBN 963 327 1963, p. 301-307. This source also mentions one individual air raid and the bombardment of the city carried out by a single B-24 heavy bomber on 13 October 1944. Other sources do not mention this event. To learn more about air raids in Nové Zámky, see: ZUPKO, Štefan. *Bombardovanie Nových Zámkov 7. a 14. októbra 1944 a 14. marca 1945*. In *Vojenská história*, 2007, No. 4 Bratislava: VHÚ, p. 182-198. See also: DANIEL, František. *Neuskutočnené bombardovanie Nových Zámkov 8.marca 1944*. Nové Zámky: OZ „Za tromi mostami“, 2013.

murder are Dezider Slamenka from Nové Zámky and Constable Ilonka¹⁷. These names are appearing with countless other names of accomplices, when it comes to similar crimes throughout the Arrow Cross Party's reign of terror.

The main culprit was Tibor Jarík. Let us, however, give chance to perpetrators of this hideous crime to explain themselves. Twenty-years-old Tibor Jarík testified: *"... In 1944, I re-joined Nyilas party and I had been a member until the Russian army arrived. After that... my duty was to catch, detain and transport young boys – Leventists – to Germany. I was always in charge of the whole transport... I was usually... on the watch, I carried out house raids, I was bringing in deserted soldiers, politically unreliable citizens and non-Hungarians."*

After this guilt-ridden profile, let us read further to find out how these "patriots" treated Alexander Stern: *"In December 1944 – I don't recall the exact date – during the evening hours I entered the Nyilas office.... Jew had already been sitting on a chair, his hands and legs tied up. Everyone was standing around him, punching him. I joined them and beat him up.... Karol Pálffy poured salt water into his mouth and pricked him with a sharp needle. Constable Ilonka tied him up. Jew... died during the beating and torturing.... Karol Pálffy ordered me... to take the body to the Nitra River... there we handed the body over to German soldiers who dumped it into the water.... They robbed the dead Jew of his watch, wallet containing an unknown amount of money, and his documents. They stole his sweater, shoes, handkerchief and other small items. Ilonka gave me 40 P[engő] (Hungarian currency at the time, t/n) for my troubles. He kept everything else.¹⁸... Jew seemed to be emotionless – not a sound came out of him.... and they punched him until he died."¹⁹*

Tibor Szőke joined the party as early as 19 April 1939. In December 1944, 190 boys around seventeen/eighteen years of age were assigned to him. They were supposed to receive a military training as soon as possible and then be transported to Budapest in order to defend the city as volunteers. He had been appointed commander of this group by Albín Šupala. Under Szőke's eager leadership, they had been transported to Germany instead of Budapest. Szőke was promoted to First Lieutenant for his eagerness, although he served merely as a private.

Jozef Bartoš testified in connection with Alexander Stern's case the following: *"... I sometimes helped... party's authorities when they needed to beat someone up... Very often... they would bring in Jews, deserters and civilians into the office. They were interrogated, beaten and tortured.... As far as I remember, nineteen Jews were shot dead at Nové Zámky cemetery sometime in the middle of January 1945... about a week later, three soldiers were executed in the old barracks by Hungarian gendarme special unit."²⁰*

District People's Court's hearing scheduled for 20 August 1945, pronounced its verdicts:

17 Police Constable Sándor Ilonka, who was supposed to be transferred from Debrecen to Nové Zámky, was probably one of the accomplices to the murder. According to some sources, he was tried in his absence after 1945 in Cluj, Romania. Further research is required to shed some light on this case.

18 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 1/45/1, p. 5, 6.

19 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 1/45/1, p. 12, from file No. 21/45/1.

20 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 1/45/1, p. 18.

Tibor Járík received the consecutive sentence of thirty years in prison.

Tibor Szőke received the consecutive sentence of twenty-eight years in prison. Both of them were sentenced to six years in prison and the rest in a special labour unit.

Imrich Procháska was sentenced to five years in prison and twenty years in a labour camp.

Jozef Bartoš received the sentence of four years in prison and sixteen years in a special labour camp unit.

Convicts did not serve their sentence in compliance with the court's verdict. Some of them were immediately moved to labour camps instead of prison. That is why on 20 October 1946, *Imrich Procháska* escaped from labour camp in Svätý Jur.

Tibor Szőke managed to run away from the very same camp on 7 June 1947. An official report on this matter refers to their escape as a "deliberate departure" and the head of the camp added the following: "*Nobody is responsible for Szőke's escape, because he left behind his group after the shift was over and he went home.*" After eleven days, *Tibor Szőke* returned from his little vacation of his own accord – *Imrich Procháska* did not. He was then sent to a labour camp in Ústí nad Oravou and from there he was sent to prison in Leopoldov in January 1949. In July 1951, he was transported from Leopoldov to Ostrov near Karlovy Vary.

Tibor Járík asked to be pardoned in February 1954. Further details about the fate of these convicts are missing.

Ladislav Járík

An investigating officer from National Security (*Národná bezpečnosť*, NB) Headquarters in Nové Zámky brought charges against another accomplice *Ladislav Járík*²¹, born in 1925 in Nové Zámky. Although the investigator accused *Ladislav Járík* of murders committed at the Jewish cemetery, the prosecution lacked any specific details and simply stated that *Járík* "... as a member of fascist organisation..., he fought against the Czechoslovak Republic and against its interests. He escaped to Germany right before the Red Army marched in. He gladly persecuted people with anti-fascist and democratic principles and values, he supported Hungarian occupation and its endeavour to restore the Greater Hungary as well as to annex additional territories in the Czechoslovak Republic. In other words, he assisted and collaborated with fascists..."²²

District People's Court, under the chairmanship of Dr Pavol Guričan and his colleagues *Jozef Kádek*, *František Marečka*, *Ján Grúnský*, and *Ján Hralo*, sentenced *Ladislav Járík* to public reprimand on 17 December 1946, without any witness hearings – only the *ex officio* member *Ľudovít Frank* was present.²³

The verdict claims that: "... pressed charges against *Ladislav Járík* of participation in the execution of Jews at the cemetery in Nové Zámky are insufficient. NB did not

21 In the court record No. 154/46 referred to as *Járík*, in the following file No. 54/47 as *Járík*.

22 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 154/46/2.

23 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 154/46/11, document 13.

provide any source of this evidence and therefore, this evidence will not suffice as incriminating evidence. As a result, the District People's Court was forced to free the defendant."

District People's Court files do not contain any documents regarding this case, nor did we find any previous endeavour to find out the role of Ladislav Jarík within the murders at the cemetery. The fact that only five days before this case²⁴ – on 12 and 13 December 1946 – a murder case involving eleven killed Jews had been taken to the court and that the court delivered sentences of five to fifteen years in prison, makes this verdict even more astonishing and unbelievable.

Slaughter at the Orthodox Jewish Cemetery

In order to reconstruct these events, using available sources, let us begin from the start - from the initial execution order. This order came from the District Governor Dr Pavol Farkas who was appointed by the *Nyilas* government. An extreme right-wing weekly newspaper *Érsekújvár és Magyar Vidék* informed about his nomination to the Office of District Governor on 28 October 1944 – two days after the fascist coup. It stated the following: *"According to an official announcement, Dr Pavol Farkas was nominated as a District Governor for Nitra-Požoň District.... The district finally gets a national-socialist governor who is going to prove – not with empty phrases, but with action – that the Hungarist progressive country is built on determination, hard work and quick decisions."*²⁵

The new governor did not disappoint his superiors.²⁶ Štefan Brenka, who worked as a telephone operator until 14 March 1945²⁷, testified on 10 August 1945.²⁸ First, he talked about himself, then he was questioned about events surrounding the shooting at the cemetery: *"Towards the end of January 1945, around 2 p.m., Július Sovány called. He introduced himself as a head of the party²⁹ and said that he has an order from Governor Dr Pavol Farkas. He said that I need to immediately fetch six men with tools and send them to the Jewish cemetery. They need to be there by 3 p.m. and dig a hole – 2 x 4 meters wide.... Then he said that if I don't want to end up like those Jews, I should carry out this order as fast as possible... After this call, I told the road sweepers Jozef Procházka, Jozef Švec and*

24 On 12 December 1946, according to the case file No. 163/46, the District People's Court sentenced Július Sovány to five years in prison. On 13 December 1946, the senate – consisting of the very same people from 17 December 1946 case file No. 154/46, who freed Ladislav Jarík – sentenced Ladislav Csányi (case file No. 166/45) to fifteen years in prison; case file No. 166/45 contained testimonies of witnesses describing Ladislav Jarík's crimes against Jews at the cemetery, as well as crimes committed near Hron River.

25 *Érsekújvár és Magyar Vidék*, 28 October 1944, Vol. (V.) XIII, No. 44, p. 1.

26 According to the court hearing No. 98/45, the District People's Court in Nové Zámky sentenced Dr Pavol Farkas to ten years in prison and ten years in forced labour units. In addition, his property was confiscated.

27 Largest damage was caused by an air strike on this day. The town hall was destroyed as well.

28 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 166/45/12, document 4.

29 The Arrow Cross Party – *Nyilas*.

gamekeepers Ondrej Solčan, Štefan Dudáš, Štefan Karas, and František Surányi to take their tools and go to the Jewish cemetery... At about 6:30 p.m., Jozef Procházka came to me and said that they dug up a hole, they buried eleven dead bodies, and that they thoroughly covered up the grave... apart from this, he told me the whole story of how they killed them.”

Cemetery grounds keeper Ján Ölvecký witnessed these workers and the purpose of their digging. He gave testimony on 10 August³⁰: “It happened towards the end of January 1945, at about 2 p.m. A road sweeper approached me... he wanted me to show him the place in the cemetery where the hole is supposed to be dug up... When I entered the cemetery, I noticed six more workers, waiting for me... at 1 p.m., a truck parked next to the entrance and two Hungarian gendarmes got out, along with soldiers and civilians. Then I heard shooting, coming from the cemetery. It lasted for about ten minutes... I also noticed that there were shoes and civilian coats piled up in the morgue. They had probably belonged to Jews before they were shot.”

The identities of those prominent party authorities – who carried out these murders at the cemetery – were revealed by the driver of that ominous-looking truck, Ľudovít Katona from Dolné Saliby, Galanta District: “Leading Nyilas party members in Nové Zámky were Ján Jambor, Dezider Slamenka, Pavol Kamenický, Július Vadász, Štefan Marušinec, [Dr] Pavol Farkas, Sergeant Major Kováč and Constable Ilonka. Their vanity knew no boundaries. They got very rich, they walked around in expensive clothes and spent large sums of money – they were ‘partying’. I left Nyilas party on 14 March 1945 when I was suffering from a hearing loss after an air raid. I had nothing to do with this group ever since.”³¹

He was a member of an armed unit of the party, along with about twelve soldiers – the rest were the so called *Leventists*. There were around fifty people all together. Suddenly, he started to talk: “Five of us were selected as an execution squad from this unit: Vojtech Haimaši from Baja³² was the commander of this squad...” As an active participant of the killing at the Jewish cemetery in Nové Zámky, he described the whole event as follows: “... we drove in a truck, along with Jews, to the Jewish cemetery where one big hole was dug up. Gendarmes ordered us to step out of the truck and Jews were gathered in the morgue. They were told to take off their shoes and coats. Five of them were carried outside, but before that they were officially sentenced to death. Jews were ordered to get on their knees, with their backs facing the morgue wall. Then the five of us lined up before them, so that there was at least five-foot distance between us... and the gendarme ordered us to shoot. Each one of us fired one round and we shot them in the head, so that they were all immediately dead.

After they were shot... the remaining six Jews were brought outside... they had to stand in front of the dead and get on their knees. They were shivering, because it was

30 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 166/45/1, document 4.

31 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 166/45/1, document 3.

32 The town of Baja, to the south of Hungary – in an immediate proximity of the town of Mohács, where Ladislav Csányi was from. It is quite possible that they went back two times long before the military service.

bald outside and they had no shoes on... Gendarme gave us an order to shoot, we shot each one of them in the head but, because we were only five, there was still one Jew left. Gendarme, probably Ilonka, said that this one was his. He went to him, pressed a gun against his head and pulled the trigger... Shoes and coats were taken by these prominent Nyilas members and they were stored in the party headquarters.”³³

Slaughtering at the orthodox Jewish cemetery in Nové Zámky wasn't by far the last tragic event. The very same truck was used during the slaughtering near Hron River. Apart from several unfortunate souls, certain five members of an execution squad were driving in the same vehicle. A special car with *Nyilas* party leaders joined them to supervise the mission.

Escaping Justice

Ladislav Csányi

Ladislav Csányi was born in the town of Mohács in southern Hungary on 5 June 1923. He was twenty-one-years-old in 1944. He actively participated in three operations and an investigator described him and his accomplices as a group of “*bandits and each one of them – especially prominent Nyilas members – were strictly against anything anti-Nazi and anything which stood in a way of the Hungarist ideology.*” Ladislav Csányi was detained on 12 March 1945 and taken into custody in Nové Zámky. Charges were pressed against him on 10 October 1945.

Ladislav Csányi, along with Štefan Gerzon and Dr Pavol Farkas, escaped³⁴ on 7 December 1945 at around 7 p.m. Dr Oskar Matulay, chairman of the District People's Court reported this on the next day at around 11 a.m. The search for escapees was unsuccessful. Border guard received a telephone call about the fugitives only in the neighbouring Komárno District. They could not alert other border districts, because “*... there was no telephone connection since it was a national holiday and the next day was Sunday.*”³⁵

After a year of hopeless searching for fugitives, on 13 December 1946, the Chairman of the District People's Court Dr Pavel Guričan scheduled a court hearing for 10 January 1947 for the defendant Ladislav Csányi. Senate, consisting of four members, was present under his chairmanship. The hearing was held in the absence of the defendant, whose defence was an *ex officio* solicitor. Since the grave near Hron River was never found, the court was forced to dismiss the case because of the lack of evidence.

District People's Court sentenced Ladislav Csányi – during a court hearing held at an unknown place – to five years in prison and ten years in work camp for participation in the shooting of eleven labour unit deserters out of which he shot two of them. Ladislav Csányi never served his sentence.

33 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 166/45/1, document 8,9.

34 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 166/45/4.

35 Ibid.

Július Sovány

Július Sovány played a significant role in the cases mentioned above. He was the one who carried out an order from Dr Pavol Farkas and sent local workers to the cemetery to dig up a grave in advance. He also took in captured victims before they were loaded into the truck and assisted in the shooting³⁶ along with another district authority, Csaba Hanyi. In the case of shooting near Hron River, Július Sovány – along with Dezider Slamenka – was driving the car, escorting the truck with the victims and the execution squad on board. Then he ordered the chairman of the *Nyilas* party to bury the victims and get rid of any evidence.

At the time of the crime, he was the head of the armed forces of *Nyilas* party. In January 1945, right before the Red Army marched in, he fled with the retreating German and Hungarian troops to Germany³⁷. First charges were pressed against him before Local People's Court on 14 August 1946, during a No. 201/46 hearing. The court stated that it had no jurisdiction over the crimes committed and therefore, the plaintiff appealed to the District People's Court.

District People's Court in Nové Zámky tried Július Sovány in his absence on 12 December 1946 during a 163/46 hearing. He was found guilty of the membership in the *Nyilas* party and collaboration. He also faced charges of manslaughter, however, these charges were dismissed because of lack of evidence. The senate, under the chairmanship of Dr Pavol Guričan (other members: Ján Grúnsky, Jozef Kádek, Filip Šimunek and František Mareček), found him guilty of collaboration³⁸ and, in his absence, he was sentenced to five years in prison and lost his civil rights for ten years. The court took into its consideration Sovány's [moral?] reputation and the innocence of his family when it was delivering its verdict.

The plaintiff appealed this verdict and the National Court in Bratislava scheduled a rehearing. They claimed that there had been new developments and evidence which might influence the court and its former – unbelievably lenient – sentence.

The incompetence of the court is astounding when it comes to the letter it received, containing the information on the whereabouts of the *Nyilas* fugitives – *Združenie fašistickým režimom rasovo prenasledovaných SRP* (Union of the Persecuted by the Fascist Regime SRP), which united survivors from concentration camps, sent a letter on 6 February 1947 stating the following: “We would like to kindly inform you that the leading *Nyilas* party members, Pálffy, Szlamenka, Hanyi Csaba, and Sovány are located in Wells, Austria, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) department. We would like to ask you to allow us to extradite these war criminals. Best regards, A. Spevák, Chairman, illegible signature, secretary.”³⁹

36 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 163/46/14, 15.

37 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 163/46/1.

38 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 163/46/10.

39 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 57/47, document No. 30/47, 1339/1947.

During the preliminary proceedings on 2 April 1947, there was a mix-up of defendants with various hearings. Only a week after, on 10 April 1947, the court issued a warrant for Július Sovány's arrest. There is no suggestion at all that the court's arrest warrant was based on SRP's letter and that it ordered to search for defendants in Austria. *Ex officio* Dr Aladár Mikloška was a defence lawyer during the main proceedings of the reopened case No. 57/47 on 18 April.

The court accepted only the fact that Július Sovány became the district head of the *Nyilas* party in Nové Zámky after Szálasi's coup and that he wore a *Nyilas* uniform and carried a loaded gun. Július Sovány had already been sentenced for these activities – the Local People's Court in Nové Zámky found him guilty on 12 December 1964. The court dismissed the charges pressed against him for murdering Jews in January 1945 because of the lack of evidence. Thus, he never served his former sentence of five years in prison and ten years of the loss of civil rights. He was finally brought to justice thirty years later.

Ján Jambor

Ján Jambor was another prominent representative of *Nyilas* party in Nové Zámky. He owned a hat shop on Štefánikova Street – former Széchényiho Street. His name appeared for the very first time in local newspapers in connection with the *Nyilas* party. He was referred to as the “chief of the city”⁴⁰ which can be translated as the head of the city units⁴¹. His name popped up in connection with the murder of the chemist Alexander Stern and also in connection with the mass murder at the Jewish cemetery. He fled the city, along with retreating *Wehrmacht* units in 1945. Local People's Court hearing, held in his absence, was scheduled for 29 November 1946. After two-hours-long proceedings, Ján Jambor was given a consecutive sentence of five years in prison – two years in prison and three years of hard labour. In addition, he lost his civil rights for ten years and his property was confiscated.⁴²

We were unable to find any further information on Ján Jambor, because he had fled the city in fear of being captured and punished.

Dezider Slamenka

Dezider Slamenka was born in 1907 in Nové Zámky. He was a carpenter. His role within the *Nyilas* party was that of a “head of the working unit, organiser”.⁴³ His name appeared in connection with the murder of the chemist Alexander Stern and mass murder near Hron River where he was escorting the truck, loaded with victims and the execution squad. He also took care of covering up the evidence.

40 In Hungarian: *városvezető*.

41 *Érsekújvár és Magyar Vidék*, 2 November 1944, Vol. (V.) XIII, No. 48, p. 2.

42 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 155/46/6.

43 In Hungarian: *munkásságvezető, üzemi szervező*. In *Érsekújvár és Magyar Vidék*, 2 November 1944, Vol. (V.) XIII, No. 48, p. 2.

The Local People's Court hearing⁴⁴ was scheduled for 11 December 1946 and the senate sentenced him, in his absence, to five years in prison – three years in prison and two years in a forced labour camp. In addition, he lost his civil rights for ten years. He was sent to prison for collaboration and *Nyilas* party membership. According to the prosecution, there were no witnesses and no sufficient evidence to prove his participation in murders. Therefore, the court took this into consideration. After the National Court in Bratislava allowed the plaintiff's appeal, there was a rehearing scheduled for 18 April 1947.⁴⁵ However, this hearing did not bring any changes to the verdict.

After thirty years of escaping justice

Ladislav Csányi and some of his accomplices were captured 30 years later in Hungary at the request of the Czechoslovak Committee for Nazi War Criminals Prosecution. Ladislav Csányi had been enjoying his life for thirty years in his home town of Mohács. His accomplices – head of the execution squad Vojtech Hajmáši, now under his real name Béla Hajmási, Gyula Sovány aka Július Sovány, and Sergeant Major Kováč who was in charge of the entire execution squad – were living happily in Budapest.

According to the verdict of the City Court in Budapest from 16 August 1976 No. 6.TB.9618/1976/15 – which came into force by Order of the Supreme Court MĽR on 8 December 1976 No. Tbf.11/1976/1 – they were found guilty of war crimes and sentenced as follows:

László Csányi sentenced to two years and eight months in prison and prohibition to hold public position for a period of three years,

Béla Hajmási sentenced to three years in prison and prohibition to hold public position for a period of three years,

Gyula Sovány sentenced to four years and six months in prison, fined 5,000 forints and prohibited to hold public position for a period of four years,

Menyhért Kovács sentenced to three years and four months in prison, fined 5,000 forints and prohibited to hold public position for a period of four years.

The Supreme Court of Hungarian Republic dismissed the appeal of the defendants and confirmed the verdict. Legal files of this case, which are kept in the Budapest City Archives, do not contain any information on whether the culprits served their rather symbolic sentences.

Brothers Jozef and Sándor Vigh

During the tyranny of the Arrow Cross Party, there was one rule: these sorts of crimes were not committed at one's residential town or city⁴⁶, but rather in an environment where one was not identified by the locals. In a certain way,

44 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 161/46.

45 ŠA BA, f. OĽS Nové Zámky, file No. 56/47.

46 They transported several dozens of youngsters to Hamburg to be trained.

they copied the practices of gendarmes. The main rule for gendarmes was that a gendarme could not operate at his place of residence or its immediate surroundings. Instead, they were positioned in an environment where the chances of establishing closer relationship with local folks were small. This rule was established so that their judgement would not be clouded by emotions or feelings towards the locals – ruthless behaviour was guaranteed.

Brothers Jozef and Sándor Vigh⁴⁷ were arrested in Karlove Vary on 3 June 1949. In order to paint a grim picture of prominent authorities' and the so-called small *Nyilas*' operations, it is necessary to read through their testimonies. Some information on crime scenes, numbers of people involved and names of a few accomplices are well worth noticing. *"I was called up for military service in Nové Zámky, but I was not drafted because my brother István, who was a member of Nyilas party in Budapest, along with my second brother Sándor, wanted me to join them in Budapest, Zugló⁴⁸ District... I went there because I wanted to – if there was an opportunity – to get my hands on some fine furniture and clothing. I have seen it before in Nové Zámky.... My first job as a driver was to... gather any movable Jewish property and store it in the party headquarters. Back then I wasn't allowed to enter the basement. But later, they used to let me in... Soon after this, Szelepcsényi summoned Komlószy in the evening hours and ordered him to gather men because we had to transport fifteen people towards Danube River and execute them there. Together with my two brothers and fifteen other men, we loaded these people into a panel truck. At the end of Pozsonyi Street – as far as I remember – there was a clear area and a sand pit. The truck had stopped. We ordered people to get off the vehicle, rounded them up and sent them towards the Danube. As soon as they reached the water, we shot them dead. People were rounded up in the backyard of the party headquarters more than once. Sometimes, there were around 150-200 people. Once they were gathered, we took their valuables. We received an order sometime around the beginning of December: we had to go to Mexická Street⁴⁹, to the institution for disabled children because there was some kind of trouble.... When we arrived, we picked out twelve people and brought them to the party headquarters... then we took them into the basement, beat them up and executed them. We threw the bodies into the river on the very same night. In my opinion, Nyilas members in Zugló murdered around 600 people. To the best of my knowledge, I was involved in six cases. In my defence, I would like to state that I wasn't a member of the Nyilas party. I just wanted to escape the draft and get myself some nice furniture..."* The testimony of the other Vigh is longer and it checks out with the testimony cited above.

The People's Court in Budapest scheduled a hearing for 15 August 1949. József Vigh and Sándor Vigh were tried for war crimes. After the trial, the court found them guilty of manslaughter of at least eighty people. They were both sentenced

47 Already mentioned above, born in Nové Zámky.

48 Urban area of Budapest, District XIV.

49 *Mexikói út* (Mexican Rd.) in District XIV in Budapest.

to death. The senate dismissed their appeal and confirmed the verdict. The sentence was executed on 4 October 1949.

The ruling of the Supreme Court against eighteen armed *Nyilas* party members marks the end of one of the most horrible cases of deliberate genocide. Legal files are more than 10,000 pages long. They provide a testimony of a period of inhumanity, injustice and racial intolerance.

This case was not the last one. In 1976, the Supreme Court of Hungarian Republic closed another case, involving *Nyilas* gunmen who in January 1945 slaughtered Jews at the orthodox cemetery in Nové Zámky and several others in the area.

Author's note: other *Nyilas* criminals are the following people:

Case No. 20/45 – Ambrus Buday sentenced to twenty years in prison and ten years of forced labour

Case No. 222/45 – Dr Otto Dütsch sentenced to notary reprimand in absence

Case No. 98/45 – Dr Pavol Farkas, district governor, sentenced to ten years in prison, ten years of forced labour, confiscated property

Case No. 27/47 – Ede Schneider, editor, sentenced to ten years in prison, five years of forced labour in absence

Case No. 134/45 – Ján Sovány's hearing took place in Local People's Court

Case No. 155/45 – Karol Sovány's hearing took place in Local People's Court

Case No. 154/45 – Július Slamenka's hearing took place in Local People's Court

Albín Šupala lived in Australia until 1972

Case No. 162/46 – František Šupala was reprimanded in absence

Case No. 6/45 Case – Štefan Gerzon received a sentence of thirty years in prison reduced to twenty-five and lost his civil rights for fifteen years, he served 19 years, he was released in 1964 and died on 22 October 1966 in Nové Zámky; after he was released, he pressed charges against the Czechoslovak Republic because his health had gotten worse over the time spent in prison.

Igor BAKA

Documents About the Slovak Army and the Beginnings of Genocide Committed Against the Jewish Population on the Eastern Front

The study dealt with the fact that Slovak soldiers deployed on the Eastern Front were confronted with genocide and persecution of Jewish people in the occupied territories. It describes the position of Slovak army within the occupation structure apparatus. It also shows how individual levels of command reflected the anti-Jewish decrees. The author presents 21 documents, which are either excerpts from military diaries, witness testimonies, or speech given by Minister of Defence. However, they also include reports, orders and anonymous letter to Slovak president. The author wrote about the attitude Ukrainians had towards Slovak soldier, and vice versa. He also showed how instructions that applied to Ortskommandanturs affected Slovak soldiers.

Keywords: *Slovak army, anti-Jewish regulations, Ukrainians, Security Division*

Since the war started, Slovak soldiers deployed in the summer of 1941 on the Eastern Front were also confronted with the persecution and subsequent genocide of Jewish population, which took place in the occupied area. In relation to the subject of this study, it is therefore important to pay attention to the position that the Slovak Army had within the occupation apparatus, and how its individual levels of command reflected the anti-Jewish regulations, or to what extent they took part in the crimes committed against the Jewish people.

From the beginning, Slovak soldiers faced an enormous propaganda. Their conviction about the “Judeo-Bolshevist” enemy was becoming deeper and deeper due to discoveries of large massacres that took place before the evacuation. These murders were committed by NKVD. Initially, the Nazis also used the anger of the population, especially in the area that was subjected to Soviet occupation after 1939. They directed this anger at Jews. Although the pogroms that happened there were referred to as spontaneous retaliation actions, for the Nazis they

constituted a part of the extermination war strategy. Hitler had already agreed in March to deploy *Einsatzgruppen*, which started to eliminate the “Judeo-Bolshevist base” of the Soviet regime. This was the reason why *Wehrmacht* was instructed to cooperate and its passivity, sometimes even active participation on pogroms, are significant. Pogroms were witnessed by Slovak soldiers as well. They were told that these terrifying things are an elemental and just retributive act.¹ Minister of Defence I. class General Ferdinand Čatloš told the soldiers not to participate in the massacres, his remarks “*about settling the score with Jews*” (document/doc./4) led many of them to believe that it is right to punish this ethnic group (docs. 7 and 10). This is evidenced by the fact that some individuals took part in anti-Jewish reprisals, which occurred on 5 July in Dobromyl suburb. Although the army command condemned such excesses, they only symbolically punished one soldier (docs. 3 and 4). On the other hand, Slovak authorities later on intervened in at least one case when domestic militias arbitrarily attacked Jewish people (doc. 8).

Relations between the Slovak soldiers and Jews were given by regulation about a strict prohibition with regard to contact.² Since Jews were the greatest enemies, they had to be isolated in ghettos in the first phase of the genocide. This was also reflected in orders taken from Germans, according to which “*the fight against bolshevism requires ruthless action against Jews*”. Therefore, their use for ancillary work was prohibited. The only exception was a mass labour. According to the order given on 12 July 1941, the 2nd Division Headquarters made Jews work on road maintenance. However, contemporary photographs also confirm their exploitation by Slovaks.³

Jews were also among the prisoners of war in Slovakia. The dealing with them is described in the order of the Army Headquarters issued on 6 July 1941. It says that prisoners apprehended by Slovak army were supposed to be concentrated in the place specifically used for this purpose. This place is located in the Ukrainian town called Khyriv. They were then supposed to be transported

1 For further information, see BAKA, Igor. Slovenská armáda a protizidovské pogromy na okupovanom území ZSSR v lete 1941, In *Historický časopis*, 2017, Vol. 65, No. 4, p. 111-130.

2 For example, on 5 July 1941, Jozef Turanec, who was the 1st Division commanding officer and Col. of Artillery, issued a special order No. 30: “*I found out that despite the ban rank and file still talk to local Jewish population. I am telling strongly and for the last time to every commanding officer to immediately talk to his soldiers once again about the prohibition regarding any contact between military personnel and Jews. If I find out about another breach of this order, I will act in a strict way and not only towards the wrongdoer but also towards his commanding officer. The reason for this is that if all commanding officers had done a proper check, it would have been impossible for something like this to happen. Limit the contact with the non-Jewish population to the greatest extent possible.*” Vojenský historický archív (abbreviated to VHA) Bratislava, fond (abbreviated to f.) Veliteľstvo armády jún – august 1941, box 3, sign. 27.

3 One photograph was also published by Gardista (a daily newspaper). Jewish people are regarded as soviet soldiers here. However, it was not an effort to conceal the anti-Jewish measures, but as the Ministry of National Defence (Ministerstvo národnej obrany, MNO) pointed out, a mistake due to the absence of preliminary military censorship. For further information, see BAKA, Igor. *Slovenská armáda vo vojne proti sovietskemu zväzu a slovensko-nemecké vzťahy 1941 – 1945*. Bratislava: Vojenský historický ústav (abbreviated to VHÚ), 2019, 245 p.; VHA Bratislava, f. MNO 1939 – 1945, regular files I. part 1941 – 1942, box 68, No. 60.

to the prison camp in Čemerné, Slovakia. However, the transportation did not apply to individuals who had Ukrainian nationality. The exceptions were Jews and unreliable people from Ukraine.⁴ This order was not valid for long, however. Slovaks compulsorily handed the prisoners over to Germans in most of the cases.⁵ Those who had j/Jew designation in the lists were more or less knowingly sent to certain death by the Slovak authorities.

As a result of the Slovak Army Ground Forces reorganisation in the summer of 1941, the Rapid Division (*Rýchla divízia*, RD) as well as Security Division (*Zaistovacia divízia*, ZD) were established. The former fought on the front and the latter was present in the occupied area. In the autumn of 1941, even the ZD commander was confronted with the statements with regard to mass murders of Jewish people committed by the occupation forces. Slovak soldiers did not object to these actions. On the contrary, the reports for Ministry of National Defence (*Ministerstvo národnej obrany*, MNO) indicate that anti-Jewish reprisals also had their sympathizers in Slovakia. Jozef Turanec, the RD Commander and Col of Artillery, was also informed about the mass murders of Jewish people. Despite the fact that there were women and children among the victims, he referred to these people as saboteurs in his diary (docs. 5, 11, 12, 14). This was in accordance with the Nazi terminology. On the other hand, the fact that the government had this information is more shocking in connection with concurrent negotiations about deportations regarding Slovak Jews. They were supposed to be transported to the areas occupied by Germans. Information about genocide was spreading also visually among the soldiers. Preserved photographs of the mass execution of Jews (including women and children) taken by the ZD company soldier prove this. These murders occurred in October 1941 in Myropil and were carried out by occupation forces as well as domestic collaborators.⁶

The extermination character concerning war was also masked by the so-called retaliation actions. A part of this tactics was among other things the fight against partisans and those who helped them. Their deeds were removed from court-martial competence in May 1941 and the punishment for them was death. This happened due to instructions by Upper Command of the Armed Forces (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, OKW). This decision formed a basis for collective responsibility concerning the entire villages. The way *Wehrmacht* fought against partisans is documented mainly by the activity of Security Divisions.⁷ These divisions laid the foundation for military units with regard to allies, which also

4 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, sign. 55-57-6, home order No. 9 issued on 6 July 1941.

5 PEJS, Oldřich. Slovenská armáda a sovětsí váleční zajatci v létě 1941. In *Vojenská história*, 2004, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 30-46.

6 Archiv bezpečnostních složek (abbreviated to ABS) Praha, f. Historický fond Státní bezpečnosti (abbreviated to HFSB), H 770-3, record about Ľ. Škrovina's testimony; For further information, see LOWER, Wendy. *The Ravine: A Family, a Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2021, 272 p.

7 ARNOLD, Klaus Jochen. *Die Wehrmacht und die Besatzungspolitik in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion. Kriegführung und Radikalisierung im „Unternehmen Barbarossa“*. Berlin: Drucker&Humboldt GmbH, 2005, p. 415-425.

included Slovak ZD. They caused death to thousands of civilians, including Jews, since the *Wehrmacht* authorities also acted on the motto “every Jew is a partisan”. In the documents, the operations were camouflaged as a destruction of partisan bunkers despite the fact that a partisan movement was only in its infancy at the turn of 1941/1942.⁸ In addition, Germans incited people’s fear of partisans since they had been trying to kill as many ideological enemies as possible. It was already obvious in the order given by the colonel of the Slovak Rapid Brigade issued on 17 July 1941. Based on this, any type of resistance was to be punished also by terror, e.g., setting houses on fire or taking hostages – preferably Jews. Considering the Slovak Rapid Brigade reorganisation, the order was not carried out (doc. 6).

The Slovak army authorities were also informed in July 1941 about the order given by OKW issued in May. However, the suspicious persons were initially passed to SS or *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD). The Slovak army authorities were to intervene only in case of “danger concerning default”. However, this also gradually applied to executions regarding partisans.⁹ Those took place as early as after the ZD transferred to Zhytomir-Ovruch in October 1941. Yet, ZD Headquarters realistically stated that most of these people had few things in common with partisans. They were mostly former soldiers, persons with “political past”, as well as Jews who were hiding. On the other hand, ZD Headquarters (inspired by Germans) also had a tendency to associate the activity of partisans with the presence of Jews in the region (doc. 9, 13). It was also required by the directives taken from Germans. One of the orders given by ZD and released in late August therefore states that fight against Bolshevism “requires ruthless and vigorous action, above all, also against Jews. They are those who spread it the most.”¹⁰ On 1 December 1941, the first two partisans were executed.¹¹ Then on 15 December 1941, RD received German directives requiring ruthless action regarding decision-making when it comes to suspicious persons’ death. However, soldiers were supposed to behave in more restrained way towards civilians (this most likely did not apply to Jews).¹² Several German commanding officers pursued this strategy, but it failed to be applied in practice. It is proven by the way how command of the Slovak 102nd Infantry Regiment behaved. Its units already committed violence against civilians as well. It is shown by the activity

8 CÜPPERS, Martin. *Wegbereiter der Shoa. Die Waffen-SS, der Kommandostab Reichsführer SS und die Judenvernichtung 1939 – 1945*. Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2011, p. 200-201.

9 BAKA, Igor. Účasť pešieho pluku 102. Zaisťovacej divízie na nemeckých protipartizánskych operáciách v juhovýchodnom Bielorusku v marci a začiatkom apríla 1942. In *Vojenská história*, 2017, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 86.

10 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, sign. 55-57-6, home order HQ Viktor No. 43 issued on 26 August 1941.

11 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, box 32, sign. 305-32-5, a report from ZD Headquarters to MNO – a defence section. It was issued on 18 October as well as on 17 November and sent to Commander-in-Chief of *Wehrmacht* in Ukraine on 11 November 1941.

12 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, box 32, sign. 305-32-5, ZD commanding officer’s report to MNO, a defence section on 6 December 1941; VHA Bratislava, f. RD, box 109, sign. 1-66, No. 5525, directives for fighting with partisans issued on 15 December 1941.

of cavalry platoon led by Lt Ján Záhorák. This platoon was directly under the control of Michal Lokšík, who was a commanding officer of the 102nd Infantry Regiment and a Germanophile. Based on the investigation carried out after the war, this unit tortured and executed several civilians between December 1941 and March 1942.¹³ Lokšík's units, at least in one case, even participated in murdering Jews as well. A note written on 8 and 9 January in a diary proves it and contains information that the soldiers helped Germans to murder Jews in Mazyr by blocking routes from the town. This diary belonged to one of the companies (doc. 16).

At the turn of March and April 1942, almost the entire 102nd Infantry Regiment assisted during the first big anti-partisan operation, code name Bamberg, which took place in south-eastern Belarus. 3,423 people died according to official data. They were mostly civilians. Majority of these murders were "perpetrated" by units subordinate to headquarters of the 102nd Infantry Regiment. However, it is likely that soldiers were inspired by Germans here and, therefore, the overall figures may have been lowered. It can also be assumed that the German 315th Police Battalion initiated the murdering from the very beginning. The battalion was directly under the command of Lokšík's headquarters. Even though several Slovak soldiers acquired the German methods, the commanding officer of the regiment had an SD unit assigned to him that carried out the executions regarding suspicious people. German or Slovak units under Lokšík's command most likely killed 133 Jews, who were hiding in the forests. Reports made by the German 727th Infantry Regiment indicate that. They were made on 2 April 1942 and contain information that within the area where the units of 102nd Infantry Regiment operated "*partisans released Jews before they ran*". In a follow-up report from the same day, it is briefly stated: "*Jews, released by partisans, 133 were shot dead*".¹⁴

ZD was also involved in anti-partisan operations in the following period. Reprisals committed by its soldiers more or less affected Jews as well since they often hid in the forests among the partisans. However, the number of Jews who survived was alarmingly decreasing at that time. Considering the nature of messages concerning the results of anti-partisan attacks (where the liquidation of often defenceless persons is described as the cleansing of villages from partisan elements), it is still not possible to determine how many Slovak soldiers participated in the murders of Jews, who hid in the forests. We learn a few things from testimonies given during post-war trials concerning the ZD soldiers, despite

13 The members of this unit testified and said that from 60 to 100 people were arrested and around 20 to 50 were executed. Štátny archív (abbreviated to ŠA) Bratislava, f. Ľudové súdy (abbreviated to ĽS) v Bratislavskom kraji 1945 - 1948, ĽS 440/48, interrogation minutes regarding J. Baňas, M. Husárik, B.Č. Závodný, M. Prezbruch as well as P. Jaňuš. They were written on 12 April 1948, 24 March 1948, 9 April 1948, 13 March 1948 and 7 April 1948, respectively.

14 Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hg.). *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941 - 1944. Ausstellungskatalog*. Hamburg, 2002, 483 p., report from 727th Infantry Regiment during the Operation Bamberg, p. 1. For further information, see BAKA, *Slovenská armáda vo vojne proti Sovietskemu zväzu...*, p. 301-302.

the fact that the prosecution, be it before the National or People's Courts, did not virtually pay any attention to proving their direct or indirect participation in the murders of Jews.¹⁵ However, the military investigation minutes concerning crimes committed by ZD and made in the mid 1950s have certain informational value. They indicate that at least some Slovak units behaved towards Jews the same way as Nazi occupation authorities (doc. 17-21).

× × ×

The documents are published in accordance with the established rules for the publication of sources for more recent history. They are released in an English translation. Since in several cases only bigger or smaller parts of the documents relate to the topic, not all of them are published in their entirety. The missing part (also if it is unreadable) is marked as [...]. There is a content abstract in the heading, which was created by the editor. Local or geographical names in the Slovak translation are given (if it was possible to trace them) in Ukrainian and Belarussian, but also in Russified form.

15 Ibid., p. 392-397.

Documents

DOCUMENT 1

*Excerpt from the military diary written by the 1st Division Headquarters of the Slovak Expeditionary Army Group describing the anti-Jewish violence committed by local population and occupation troops in the occupied Ukraine.*¹⁶

5 July 1941.

Since the early morning hours, the division units have been moving to Dobromil,¹⁷ thus entering the Soviet Russia for the first time.

[...]

Along the way, the locals greeted us very warmly. People gave and threw bouquets, strawberries and other things into our cars. We also had the opportunity to talk to several people who escaped the Soviet army. They told us how Polish people and Ukrainians fled from there in large numbers and how a lot of them were shot dead because of this.

After the arrival, we went into rooms where we were supposed to stay and furnished our offices.

Locals told us horrible things, such as how Bolsheviks and Jews tortured and murdered hundreds of people in Warz sol,¹⁸ which is around 1.24 miles from Dobromyl. We could not believe it at first. This changed after many of us saw with our own eyes the reality, the crime scenes were nothing short of a horror. No civilized person can comprehend or imagine such a sight. 600 mutilated dead bodies that belonged to civilians were dumped in a deep salt well. All these people lived nearby and disagreed with the Bolshevik regime: Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, as well as their wives and children. Some corpses had their ears, legs, tongues and genitalia cut off. Women had their breasts chopped and they ripped open a pregnant woman's stomach, etc.¹⁹

After the German army arrived, local militiamen took several Jews blamed for taking part in the aforementioned atrocities. They then had to take out and bury the corpses. Militiamen also let themselves to be seized with regard to an inhumane behaviour towards these working Jews. They threw many of them into the already mentioned well while they were still alive. Shockingly, our as well as German rank and file participated in these indiscretions against Jewish people.

16 VHA Bratislava, f. RD, box 7, sign. 28/1/7; LACKO, Martin. (ed.). *Dotyky s bolševizmom. Dokumenty spravodajstva slovenskej armády 1940 – 1941*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2009, p. 134-135.

17 Dobromyl in Russian as well as Ukrainian.

18 It was a salt shaft in Lack municipality.

19 The newest book about this subject matter: STRUVE, Kai. *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt. Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015, 739 p.

DOCUMENT 2

Report by Sr Lt of Infantry Jozef Hrábek about the violence against Jews in Dobromyl on which Slovak soldiers participated.²⁰

Sr Lt of Infantry Hrábek's report issued on 5 July 1941 and released at 9:20 p.m.:

I was informed by our soldiers today that in the plant for exporting salt, Ukrainians force Jews to remove the corpses left there by Bolsheviks. They are beaten and shot at while doing so. Three of our soldiers bragged and said, "we have already killed three" on the way to the salt plant. I was not able to find out their names. In the salt plant, me and my chauffer saw how pion.²¹ beat Jews. Then I heard two shots and supposedly two dead bodies fell to the ground. I watched this happen from around 1,499 inches away. One officer, who provides a logistic support and is from the 1st Division Staff Department, was just looking at it. Several other officers did the same thing despite the fact that I told the 1st Division officers to intervene. The officer who provides a logistic support found an excuse and said that he cannot do that because he is sick. That is why I intervened and ordered every rank and file soldier in the salt plant to muster. After that they marched home under the non-commissioned officers' command. The soldiers who were there told me that some Ukrainian was in charge of the execution. They denied any involvement in torture and murders. However, soldiers talk among themselves that pioneers beat Jews. German rank and file soldiers were just looking at what was happening.

20 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, sign. 55-53-5; LACKO, *Dotyky s bolševizmom...*, p.146.

21 Pioneers.

DOCUMENT 3

The excerpt from military diary that belonged to Jozef Turanec, 1st Division Commander and Col of Artillery. It deals with his opinion regarding the fact that Slovak soldiers participated in anti-Jewish violence in Dobromyl and also with locals' reaction to occupation units.²²

5 July 1941.

[...]

It was reported in the late afternoon that mil.²³ soldiers²⁴ beat and shoot at Jews.

Some of them were allegedly shot dead. These soldiers are from mil. units/field bakeries that are supposed to provide logistics. They are stationed at "Hubichy"²⁵ and "Solina"²⁶.

Commanding officers from every unit stationed here were summoned and strictly ordered to instruct the rank and file about the mission regarding the Slovak army. They have to avoid barbarism in every single case and punish those who do it even by death.²⁷

6 July 1941

Units attended mass in Dobromyl in the forenoon.

A local dean – parish priest also said that Slovak army participates in the liberation of Ukraine.

He mentioned it with cordial and warm words. Civilians were crying. Com.²⁸ Officer of the Division and the Chief of Staff were present as well.²⁹

There are many gifts for Slovak and German troops in the parish office, which is located in the city. They include butter, eggs, hens,

22 VHA Bratislava, f. RD, box 7.

23 Military.

24 Field soldiers.

25 Hubyči in Ukrainian – a municipality north of Dobromyl.

26 Salina (Lack in Ukrainian) – located to the northeast of Dobromyl, now its suburb.

27 Turanec's approach was accentuated by the confidential order No. 2 issued on 6 July 1941 and given by the Army Headquarters (codename Ladislav). Pursuant to this command, action was to be taken against increasing thefts committed by Slovak soldiers as well as inconveniences against Jews. It draws attention to growing instances of Jewish people being beaten publicly, but also to the case that happened in Dobromyl: "Our soldiers also took part in torturing Jews who were removing corpses left by Bolsheviks. Two Jews [?] were shot dead. This happened in salt plant in Dobromyl on 5 July. To make things worse, it was not only rank and file soldiers who did not behave in accordance with the rules regarding battle and did not act in the way that does not contravene provisions in military penal code, but in this case officers and even officers from military staff were looking on and did not intervene in accordance with the effective regulations. This is even more horrible..." Commanders at all subordinate levels were to take immediate action against such cases in the strictest lawful manner possible. They were also supposed to report them. VHA Bratislava, f. 55, sign. 55-57-5; LACKO, *Dotyky s bolševizmom...*, p. 147-148.

28 Commanding Officer.

29 Lt Col General Staff Officer Alojz Ballay was the 1st Division Chief of Staff.

chickens, bread, cakes and fruit.

At 6 p.m. Commanding Officer of the Division as well as the Chief of Staff left and went to AH³⁰ in Khyriv.³¹

At 8 p.m. Special Order No. 15³² was issued.

Gar. Commander's adjutant came to CP³³ by 3 p.m.³⁴

and brought a report, which was in an envelope. Investigation revealed that information about

shooting at Jews is not true. This was found out by the Com.³⁵ Officer of the Division and the Chief of Staff. The latter was at the crime scene:

When he came to the scene to Solina, he saw 2

German non-commissioned officers who were walking away from the pit with two dead bodies dumped there.

A Slovak soldier who was present there told him that these two non-commissioned officers have right at that moment

pushed two Jews into the shaft because they did not want to remove the dead bodies

of Ukrainians. They were drowned. The other was shot

by a Ukrainian present.

1 Slovak soldier shot and killed 1 Jew by the evening.

He was apprehended by a drum. court-martial. The soldier allegedly did it because he felt sorry for him since the Jew was beaten so badly that the pain made him

writhe.³⁶

30 Military Headquarters.

31 Chyriw in Ukrainian and Chyrov in Russian.

32 1st Division Commanding Officer and Col of Artillery Jozef Turanec states in this order that "On 5 July 1941 German and Slovak soldiers together with civilians took the arrested Jews out of the municipality and beat them there to the point that they were not able to move. Then they allegedly shot them dead." Later on, he also writes that "Slovak soldiers cannot be involved in local political affairs and make themselves judges regarding Jews, who are enemies of the Ukrainian people. Act in accordance with Christ's words: 'Do not judge, or you will be judged.' We came here to fix injustice already done and not to contribute to it." Slovenský národný archív (abbreviated to SNA), f. Národný súd (NS), Tnľud 29/4/47, Special Order No. 15 issued by the 1st Division Commanding Officer on 6 July 1941.

33 command post.

34 Garrison.

35 Commanding Officer.

36 The soldier's name is Michal M., he served as a lieutenant colonel with the lowest rank and he was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison due to participation in the murder of a tortured Jew. The reason for this symbolic punishment was the fact that no corpse was found. However, the defence had also played a role in the decision-making. The defence said that the soldier shot due to pity and with the intention to end the pain. The lieutenant colonel was pardoned a year after the murder. For further information, see BAKA, *Slovenská armáda vo vojne proti Sovietskemu zväzu...*, p. 241-242.

DOCUMENT 4

Excerpt from a speech by Minister of Defence Gen Officer of I. class Ferdinand Čatloš addressed to the Slovak Expeditionary Army Group on the Eastern Front on 7 July 1941. He presented the participation in German aggression as fight for freeing nations that were enslaved by the Bolshevik regime. This was in accordance with the then propaganda. He also indirectly defended the pogroms against Jews. The Jewish population was labelled as accomplice in crimes perpetrated by the Bolshevik regime.³⁷

We will honourably do what we are supposed to do in this war.

Ukraine, 12 July.

[...]

Spread the good name of Slovakia! You have the opportunity to talk to people in your native language and to understand them when they answer you. You have the opportunity to find out about conditions that Bolsheviks caused. When you come home, talk about everything you have seen. Many people from Slovakia thought what kind of heaven on Earth this place is. And what do you see? You see plundered villages, pauperised and destroyed individuals, ruined churches and many dead people, who were mutilated and murdered by Bolsheviks during a very fast escape. And be the apostles of belief in victory of the truth and their rights to these impoverished people. [...]

Ukrainians are very happy that you are here. They see you as liberators. In addition, Germans talk about our army with recognition as well as admiration and they are not the only one who are watching you. The entire cultured Europe, indeed the whole world, is doing the same. That is the reason why we must not only maintain this good reputation, but make it stronger as well. Ukrainians saw with their own eyes that we are not against them. We are not against Russian nation either. We fight only against the Bolshevik regime. We do not get involved in anyway in internal stuff concerning regions that have so far been liberated. There were many outbursts regarding hatred and passion. Bolsheviks murdered eminent people, who did not want to do what they were told to do. These people are now settling a score with Jews and act towards them in accordance with what happened. We cannot get involved in this in any way.

³⁷ Svoj podiel vo vojne čestne splníme. In *Slovák*, 1941, Vol. 23, No. 159, p. 3.

DOCUMENT 5

The excerpt from a military diary that belonged to an Artillery Company from later ZD 101st Infantry Regiment. It reflects the fates of Jews on the occupied Ukrainian territory.³⁸

Saturday, 5 July 1941

[...]

We arrived to Ternava where we were supposed to reside at 11 p.m.³⁹ People were happy to see soldiers, but Jews were causing trouble. They gave milk to two soldiers. It was poisonous and therefore the soldiers were poisoned. Ukrainians were very hospitable.

We came to Terava on 6 July 1941 in the evening and stayed overnight. The civilians were waiting for us and they were crying when we arrived. They complained that (Judeo)-Bolsheviks shot them and took everything from them. We left at 7 a.m. and headed towards Dobromyl where we arrived at 12 a.m. and checked-in ourselves in the National House. Russian soldiers stayed there before us.

Monday [...] The civilians welcomed us with tears. The Communists killed all men as well as some women. They were decapitated with their hands cut off and eyes poked out. Their skin was removed and bodies were taken to the salt plant. 1,080 people were killed. So many innocent persons were murdered by Jews. We freed the nation from this plague. If we came later, they would have killed everybody in the area. They murdered mostly students. The reason why they did it is that they do not want Ukrainians to have educated people.

[...]

Ukrainians are very neglected. They do not have schools, even their churches were ruined. If they were seen going to church, the commissioner would write this information down. Only those who could not write well were taken into office so that they could not understand what Jews are doing to the Christian nation. There were Jews and commissioners in every bureau. If Jews wanted to do something, they did it

[...]

Friday, 1 August 1941. The soldiers worked and had special training until noon.⁴⁰ The company then went to have a bath in a jail, which had a hot water and a shower. Rank and file who could not immediately have a bath [...] examined the rooms where Jews murdered the Ukrainians. 1,200 Ukrainians were killed according to testimonies given by those who guarded the imprisoned Jews. They were then thrown out of the window and straight into a pit where they were buried. As soon as Germans came, Jews had to take out all of the bodies, besides

38 VHA Bratislava, f. Zaistovacia divízia (abbreviated to ZD), box 36, sign. II/96.

39 Village south of Dobromyl.

40 The company was at that time located in a small Ukrainian town called Zolochiv or Zoločev in Russian.

that they had to adjust the pit. 400 Jews were shot dead and buried there. There were boys aged 16 – 18 as well as women among the prisoners. They allegedly reported people who were then taken to prison in Siberia. The soldiers again saw for themselves how terribly the Jewish plague tortured Ukrainian people. [...]

There were two items of clothing that belonged to German aviators, who had to jump out of the plane when it caught fire. Jews caught them and tortured them. They ended up being thrown into the toilet. Jews had to take these men out too. They were non-commissioned officers by profession.

[...] Wednesday, 10 September 1941. Departure from Shepetivka⁴¹ to Polonne⁴² at 10 a.m. There were allegedly 4,000 Jews in Polonne

[...]

Wednesday, 17 September 1941 in Polonne. Regular occupation: Polonne was destroyed to a significant degree by the German air force. A lot of Jews were killed here, around 2,000. Others were forced to become craftsmen.

[...]

41 Šepetivka in Ukrainian, Šepetovka in Russian.

42 Polonne in Ukrainian, Polonnoje in Russian.

DOCUMENT 6

The order given by the Colonel of Slovak Rapid Brigade issued on 17 July 1941, which adjusts the procedure for pacification regarding civilians' resistance. It "legalized", among other things, apprehension and liquidation of hostages based on racial and political principles.⁴³

The Rudolf Headquarters⁴⁴

CP, 17 July 1941.

NoU 78/Intelligence – Confidential 1941.

Intelligence Order No. 2

[...]

2. House-searches conducted in order to remove guns and take action against the insidious.

We are in the territory that belonged to old Soviet Russia⁴⁵ and therefore I remind the soldiers again to pay even more attention to our surroundings. I found out that many members from scarce enemy army wander here. They are in contact and even hide with former Bolshevik functionaries in municipalities. A lot of these Bolshevik officials also bear arms.

I therefore order the soldiers to chiefly find out right after the arrival to accommodation facility whether there are former communist party functionaries. Every official found in the facility has to be arrested. After that you will have to tell locals to give you their guns if they have any and conduct a strict house-searches not only in connection with them but also in the entire municipality. Civilians who will be found with any type of weapon after the order need to be considered partisans and insidious individuals. Soldiers have to take action against them based on this information.

If civilians shoot at our units, the house they fired from has to be surrounded and set on fire. Everybody who will run from such a house has to be shot and killed.

If the civilians commit violence against our soldiers in the accommodation facility at night, soldiers will have to shoot the perpetrator. If the person cannot be found, I order to shoot either 10 former communist functionaries or Jews for each of our soldier. [...]

From the Rudolf Headquarters
order

Inf. Capt. in the Res.⁴⁶

Alex.⁴⁷Kautnik

[signature]

43 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, sign. 55-57-5.

44 Code name of Rapid Brigade.

45 It is meant within the borders until 1939.

46 In the reserves.

47 Alexander.

DOCUMENT 7

Report of the Medzilaborce police group issued on 19 July 1941 and addressed to Divisional area 2 Headquarters in Prešov. The report describes the way Slovak soldiers behaved while they were coming back from the Eastern Front.⁴⁸

the Medzilaborce police group.⁴⁹

Medzilaborce, 19 July 1941.

NoU 6/41. Confidential

Atmosphere between the soldiers and civilians – findings and problems.

Confidential

Mil. District HQ/defence offic.⁵⁰

in Prešov.

We have found out so far that there is a good atmosphere between soldiers who are going through Medzilaborce. They are exemplarily disciplined as well. The soldiers who spend some time here and visit public houses are also well-mannered. We did not spot any problem at all between soldiers or local population. On the contrary, soldiers exhibit military enthusiasm and determination.

Hundreds of young Jews, who are dressed nicely, able to work and obviously covering themselves can be seen wandering in nearby towns, villages and also from Medzilaborce to Prešov. They can be spotted on railway stations, roads and places visible from train. They have a yellow stripe on their left sleeves,⁵¹ which makes them noticeable very easily. Jews who are covering themselves cause a huge outrage among soldiers and civilians. They ask why these Jews are not in work camps and so on. The soldiers almost unanimously say that they should work for the state when they as soldiers have to fight.⁵²

48 VHA Bratislava, f. 53, sign. 53/41-95/5/14 – 6.

49 The police groups in Medzilaborce and Bardejov were established near the State Security Headquarters in Prešov in the middle of July 1941. One of their missions was to check the soldiers' behaviour while they were coming back from the Eastern Front. For further information, see BAKA, *Slovenská armáda vo vojne proti Sovietskemu zväzu...*, p. 245. Majority of the reports issued by the police groups were published by Martin Lacko in the already mentioned book *Dotyky s bolševizmom*.

50 Regional Military Headquarters/ defence officer

51 Marking Jews with yellow ribbons had started as early as April 1941 in the eastern Slovakia. It was probably a regulation issued in cooperation with the German military mission in order to make the German military transports safe. They were taking place in connection with the upcoming attack on the USSR and heading from the Balkan battlefield to the General Government. A report by Defence Officer of Divisional area 2 Headquarters indicated this. In his report, which was released on 28 April 1941 and deals with the measures implemented for the safety of transports, he said that a request had been submitted to the MNO for action to be taken "so that Jews in the Ružomberok County (*"župa"* in Slovak, an administrative region) would also wear yellow ribbons as in the Šarišsko-Zemplinský County." VHA Bratislava, f. 53, sign. 95/5/12-1, An overview with regard to activity during cooperation with Germ. authorities.

52 In reality, immediately after the war started, the exploitation of Jews escalated due to Government Decree No. 153 issued on 4 July 1941 on the employment duty concerning Jews. It was based on the Regulation No. 137 issued by the Ministry of Interior on 2 April 1941. On the basis of this regulation in accordance with MNO the foundation for "work centres for Jews who were discarded from economic life and are able to work" was created. The law already established the obligation of any work concerning Jewish men aged from 18 to 60. For further information, see NIŽNANSKÝ, Eduard – BAKA, Igor – KAMENEC, Ivan. (eds.). *Holokaust na Slovensku 5. Židovské pracovné tábory a strediská na Slovensku 1938 – 1944*. Bratislava – Zvolen: KLEMO, 2004, p. 8-10; doc. 41, p. 94-96.

[...]

On guard!

Vojtech Šmanko
Alojz Nemeček
Jozef Fabuš

Intended for: Comm. Officer Ladislav⁵³, II. Bn,
Military District HQ/defence offic. /in Prešov
the State Security Headquarters in Bratislava.

[Divisional area 2 Headquarters stamp regarding file registration on 20 July
1941 under No. 21,692]

53 Ground Forces Headquarters.

DOCUMENT 8

Daily situational report of the 2nd Division Headquarters of the Slovak Expeditionary Army Group issued on 23 July 1941 about the atmosphere within Slovak troops as well as arbitrary violence (mostly against Jews) committed by Ukrainian militias. The report is intended for Army Headquarters.⁵⁴

2nd Division Headquarters.

CP, 23 July 1941

NoU 3790 reason 2nd Battalion 1941.

Subject matter: Daily situational report
on 23 July 1941

Army Headquarters
2nd Battalion
CP

[...]

2. How Ukrainians behaved towards our units:

According to the report made by Medical Company 2 Ukrainians are sometimes friendly and sometimes colder towards us. The colder attitude is explained by the fact that Ukrainians saw only German units in the fight, while it is said that ours came only in order to occupy a conquered area.

3. Strange events.

According to the report made by III/4th Inf. Battalion⁵⁵ in Sambor⁵⁶, the local Ortskommando announced the Security Battalion Headquarters that several forbidden activities took place in municipalities near Sambor. At the same time, the Security Battalion was asked to find the perpetrators.

The investigation was conducted by 3 patrols from Slovak Security Battalion in Sambor with the following results:

Investigation in Torhanowice⁵⁷ was carried out by the first patrol with negative results.

The second patrol found out that 8 people were killed in Janów⁵⁸. They were all Jews. The murder occurred at night from 15 to 16 July 1941. It was committed by militia members from Janów. The 11 perpetrators were arrested by the patrol and handed over to the Garrison Headquarters in Sambor.

The third patrol investigated the killing of 4 Jews and 1 Ukrainian, which took place in Mondra⁵⁹, as well killing of 4 Jews in municipality called Zasadki⁶⁰. The perpetrators were militia members from Janów. These murders were instigated

54 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, sign. 55-36-1; LACKO, *Dotyky s bolševizmom...*, p. 155-156.

55 III. Battalion within the 4th Infantry Regiment.

56 Sambir in Ukrainian and Sambor in Russian.

57 Torhanovyči in Ukrainian.

58 Undetermined, maybe Ivaniv.

59 Undetermined.

60 Zasadky in Ukrainian.

by militia commanders Ivan Kusín from municipality called Falsztyn⁶¹ and Gavruk Vasil from Janów. The Patrol apprehended Kusín and other 2 men, who also participated in the murders.

Investigation revealed that every murder was instigated by Kusín who issued an order to murder. Everybody who took part in murders was arrested, handed over to Ortskommando in Sambor together with the report and relevant document so that further investigation can be conducted. 14 people were arrested. Most of them belong to militia. They are detained in prison camp in Sambor.

Commanding Officer of the Division:
Col of GS Malár August.
[signature]

[Army Headquarters stamp regarding file registration on 24 July 1941 under No. 6238]

61 Undetermined.

DOCUMENT 9

Report made by Divisional area 2 Headquarters on 25 July 1941 and addressed to Ministry of National Defence. The report deals with the situation on the occupied USSR territory. It draws attention to the reprisals by the locals against the Jewish minority as well as their behaviour towards the occupation armies.⁶²

1941 report

Divisional area 2 Headquarters

Prešov, 25 July 1941.

No. 21.730/reason O.d.1941.

Subject matter: Information from the occupied USSR territory
regarding defence

Ministry of National Defence
a Defence Section,
Bratislava.

I report on the gained information from the occupied USSR territory:

1./ the Jewish Question:

There is enough Jews in every municipality to the east of Sanok within the Ustrzyki Dolne⁶³ – Khyriv – Sambor – Drohobych⁶⁴ area. There was a strikingly large number of Jews Ustrzyki Dolne where working groups have already started to be formed from them. Working groups intended for females are divided into groups for younger and older women. Those aged from 15 to 25 work on the field.

Locals hate Jews intensely. People killed Jews in some municipalities after the Soviet army retreated. Despite these things, Jews behave quite freely, they stand in groups and talk for hours with each other while behaving restrainedly, almost hatefully towards the passing Slovak soldiers. It was revealed by asking and observation that Slovak soldiers do not directly interfere in locals' internal matters or the Jewish Question.

[...]

3. Ukrainian movement-the way people behave:

People behave good towards the Slovak soldiers. However, it cannot be said that the local Ukrainians, Poles, or Russians express any joy and affection with regard to Slovak or German soldiers. Considering the fact that there are many Jews and other irresponsible elements in towns, strict measures were taken. For example: civilians are not allowed to walk on streets after 9 p.m., it is forbidden to look out the window after this hour and night patrols have to arrest everybody who does it right at the spot and intervene in accordance with the orders issued.

On the whole, it is necessary to say that although Ukrainians initially expressed some joy at liberation from Bolsheviks, they are mostly reserved and it seems that they are adopting a waiting stance.

62 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, box 32, sign. 305-32-5; LACKO, *Dotyky s bolševizmom*, p.199-201.

63 Ustrzyki Dolne in Ukrainian.

64 Drohobych in Ukrainian and Drohobych in Russian.

Their active cooperation with Slovak headquarter or German headquarters is very little. On the contrary, it seems that the locals in Drohobych are becoming dissatisfied with the fact that Slovak and German troops occupy the area. It is an anti-German and anti-Slovak propaganda created by Jews and communists.

Ukrainian movement is not very active right now and it seems that there are not even competent people who would be able to organise and properly lead this movement. In general, locals are waiting for the Germans' decision.

4. /Disputes between Ukrainians and Russians:

According to various verified and unverified reports, the local Ukrainian population took advantage of the Bolshevik troops' disorderly retreat and also took revenge on active Communist Party members who remained at home after the Bolsheviks left. There are reports that Ukrainians murdered hundreds of Jews, Russians and Poles in Drohobych, Lviv⁶⁵ as well as Sambor. It was not possible to find out how many people were killed.

[...]

5./ Slovak soldiers' attitude towards the population:

A direct observation revealed that Slovak soldiers or officers do not intervene in exclusively internal matters concerning the local population. This cooperation is certainly reserved for the German local headquarters, which also issues adjustments for the further development regarding the relationship. Slovak soldiers are helpful in maintaining the overall order in the city. This includes traffic and protection. They perform road as well as guard service.

Locals have not expressed any bias so far against the Slovak soldiers and there also have not been any problems that would damage soldiers' attitudes towards civilians.

Intended for: MNO – a defen. sec.⁶⁶ and HQ “Ladislav”.

Defence officer:
[unreadable signature]

[Stamp by Ministry of National Defence regarding file registration on 28 July 1941 under No. 143716]

65 Ľviv in Ukrainian and Ľvov in Russian.

66 Defence Section.

DOCUMENT 10

*Anonymous letter from Slovak soldiers to the Slovak President published in the contemporary press.*⁶⁷

Greetings from the front to Mr President

Your excellency, Mr President!

We are sending you warm greetings from the Eastern Front and we also thank you for your fatherly words, which were written in the leading article of our newspaper "*Slovenský vojak*". We assure you that we will persevere with our German friends until we win. Mr. President, as I was reading your article to my older friends, I saw tears of joy in their eyes because you, our Leader, did not forget about us. Soldiers from the front send you the following request: "Finally, put the things regarding Jews in order!" We have seen the wrongdoings they have done to our Ukrainian brothers.

God bless your work in an overwhelming way. May a benign God give you many years with us. We think about you everywhere we go. You can rest assured that we will preserve Slovak soldiers' honour under any circumstances.

"On guard!"

Your soldiers.

⁶⁷ *Slovenské vojsko*, 1941, Vol. 2, No. 15-16, p. 248. This letter was released because the President's Military Office itself initiated it. On 12 July 1941, the Office instructed the Cultural and Propaganda Section of MNO to publish the letter in the magazines *Slovenské vojsko*, *Slovenský vojak* as well as through radio broadcasting. However, it was also published by the largest newspapers in state *Slovák* and *Gardista*. SNA, f. Kancelária prezidenta republiky, box 103, No. 8009/41.

DOCUMENT 11

Excerpts from military diary that belonged to Jozef Turanec, who was the 1st Division Commanding Officer and Col of Artillery. They describe his reaction to mass executions regarding Jewish population in Ukrainian occupied area.⁶⁸

10 September 1941

[...]

Hospital commander Med. Maj Dr. Mráz from the Surgical Department told me that this morning between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. the German police shot⁶⁹ about 670 Jews in Ruzhyn. They were suspected of sabotage.

[...]

23 September 1941.

[...] I heard that 900 Jewish saboteurs⁷⁰ were executed in Skvyra.⁷¹

68 VHA Bratislava, f. RD, box 7, sign. 30/1/7.

69 Ruzhyn in Ukrainian.

70 Skvyra in Ukrainian.

71 He informed about these cases in more detail during his trial before the National Court as well as in the post-war memoirs. He admitted that these people were innocent and that women as well as children were also killed. SNA, f. Národný súd (abbreviated to NS), box 141, Tn ľud 29/47/1, J. Turanec's minutes of interrogation on 5 February 1947, p. 53; TURANEC, Jozef. *Pramene obrany. Pamäti generála Jozefa Turanca*. Bratislava: Múzeum SNP, 2012, p. 233-234.

DOCUMENT 12

Situational intelligence report on the security situation within the USSR territory occupied by its own units as well as on the people's attitude towards the occupation units. The report also deals with the position that Jewish people had and with the situation in prisoner-of-war camps. It was issued by ZD Headquarters on 22 September 1941 and addressed to the Ministry of National Defence.⁷²

Security Division Headquarters.

CP 22 September 1941.

No. 2169/Confidential the 2nd Section 1941.

Subject matter: Situational intellig. report.

Ministry of National Defence
Defence Section
Bratislava.

I submit a situational intelligence report on the atmosphere in the accommodation facility for ZD:

District organisation:

The district is managed by "Povitova uprava"⁷³ – district administration. Administration is⁷⁴ under Ukrainian control in Starokostiantyniv District. The staff includes a German District Commissioner, his deputy, who is also German as well as secretary, interpreter, and typist. The interpreter is a local German. Commissioner issues directives and gives orders. District administration fulfils them.

Militia organisation:

After the German army came to Starokostiantyniv, local German garrison commander issued an order to organise Ukrainian security service corps. The organisation was entrusted to a man called Karčevský whose father was deported to Siberia by the Bolsheviks and he himself was their political suspect. Militia in Starokostiantyniv has 80 militiamen. City administration has 40 members at its disposal. The city militia commander is a deputy of the district militia commander.

[...]

Population attitude:

Nationality: Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, Jews.

By comparison, out of 10,000 citizens in Starokostiantyniv 40% were Jews, 4% Poles, 2% Russians and the rest are Ukrainians.

At that time, there was significantly less Jews than before. Many fled with Bolsheviks and others were punished for their previous deeds.

The civilians' attitude towards the troops is not as cordial as it was in Drohobych area. It is more indifferent, more aloof, and sometimes it can even be considered almost hostile. As far as could be found out by observation, majority

72 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, box 32, sign. 305-32-5.

73 Ukrainian regional administration.

74 Starokostiantyniv in Ukrainian, Starokonstantinov in Russian.

is happy that there are no more Bolsheviks. The reason for this is the Bolsheviks' already well-known method that they use when it comes to managing finances. A patriotic expression here cannot be even compared to the one we saw in the eastern Galicia⁷⁵. The reason for this is the fact that Ukraine has no intelligentsia. Bolsheviks almost ruined the entire Ukrainian nationalist idea by mass exile of Ukrainians, which ended in 1930.

In general, the locals' attitude is quite reserved.

Situation in Shepetivka – Polonne:

[...]

There is a German prisoner-of-war camp with thousands of captives in Shepetivka. 101st Company helps to guard in watch Shepetivka 2 and 4 since Ortskommando⁷⁶ requested it. Prisoners often try to escape. Many were caught by the members of 101st Regiment and brought back to the camp. There is countless Asiatic people among prisoners. They eat human flesh as well. The head of the 2nd Section saw himself how inspecting authorities in Shepetivka found out that they chew all the flesh off from the dead captive's leg.

[...]

Intended for: MNO – def. sec., Viktor the 2nd Section

Deputising Commanding Officer of the Division:

Automobile army Col Benedikt Dúbravec.⁷⁷

[signature]

[Stamp by Ministry of National Defence regarding file registration on 25 September 1941 under the No. 144711]

75 Halychyna

76 local headquarters

77 At that time, deputised the ZD Commanding Officer Col of GS for a short period.

DOCUMENT 13

Situational intelligence report issued by ZD Headquarters on 27 September 1941 and addressed to the Ministry of National Defence. It deals with the locals' opinion, partisans' activity and with the position that Jewish people had on USSR territory occupied by its own units.⁷⁸

Security Division Headquarters

CP 27 September 1941.

No. 2202/Confiden. the 2nd Section 1941.

Subject matter: Situational intellig. report. Ministry of National Defence

Annexes: 1.

Defence Section

Bratislava.

I submit a situational intelligence report:

[...]

4./ Civilians' attitude:

According to information that gathered, the civilians are generally friendly. Only sometimes one can spot certain reservedness.

5./ Propaganda from the enemy:

A forward ZD group reported that around the 12th day of t.m.⁷⁹ Soviet airplanes threw out the anti-German posters around Bila Tserkva⁸⁰. I annex their translation.

The ZD 2nd Section authority received this yet unverified information from a local fiduciary, "Civilians' attitude is good, but individuals are spoiling it. These persons are Jewish provocateurs. Anti-Jewish regulations are implemented only in the city (Starokostiantyniv), but in the countryside, Jews still walk around freely. They campaign against Germans by spreading the Bolshevik posters and newspapers. It is such a pity that people do not get real Ukrainian newspapers from Kamianets-Podilskyi⁸¹ or Vinnytsia⁸², which would at least partially paralyse this hostile activity and citizens would find out what is really happening. There is a printing office in Medzhybizh⁸³ and a local militia has a suspicion that it is the place where anti-German leaflets and newspapers are printed. These materials are then spread by Jews."

6./ Partisans' activity:

ZD Forward Group reported that according to information provided by the local second most important militia commander 3 - 4 men, who were partisans appeared in the forest near Yanushpol⁸⁴. This happened around 18 September.

78 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, box 32, sign 305-32-5.

79 Meaning "this month".

80 Bila Cerkva in Ukrainian and Belaja Cerkov in Russian.

81 Kamianec-Podil'skyj in Ukrainian and Kamenec-Podoł'skij in Russian.

82 Vinnytsia in Ukrainian and Vinnica in Russian.

83 Medžybiž in Ukrainian and Medžibož in Russian.

84 Unidentified.

German soldiers helped a local militia in an attempt to catch them, but the result was negative. They have not caused any damage by now.

This is the unverified information from a local fiduciary: In the Kapustyn municipality near Starokostiantyniv⁸⁵ a rumour has been spreading that there were 5 partisans in the nearby forest. They shot at a local militia commander and burnt his house down. However, when militia members came to the forest, they found only 1 Russian rifle and 100 rounds. – Also in the forest⁸⁶, a gang of 150 men had been seen formed in the rows and advancing with rifles as well as machine guns. This forest is located in Stara Syniava. – Partisans take guns that Bolsheviks left here and stay in the remaining bunkers.

Shots can be heard every night from the forest near Starokostiantyniv.

A local militia commander explained this by saying that there are many Jews who go to straw stacks at night in order to make a living. The stacks are guarded by militiamen, who are always shot at by Jews, they respond in the same way and that is how gunfights start.

[...]

Intended for: MNO – a def. sec.,

The 2nd Section sig.⁸⁷ staff

The order is issued by:
the Chief of Staff

Lt Col of GS Ján Krnáč
[signature]

[Stamp by Ministry of National Defence regarding file registration on
3 October 1941 under No. 144832]

85 Starokostiantyniv.

86 Starosynjavskyj in Ukrainian.

87 Short for “signal”.

DOCUMENT 14

Situational intelligence report issued by ZD Headquarters on 2 October 1941 and addressed to the Ministry of National Defence. It deals with the locals' opinion, arbitrary repressive activity perpetrated by Ukrainian militia and with the position regarding Jewish people.⁸⁸

Security Division Headquarters.

CP 2 October 1941.

No. 2222/Confiden. the 2nd Section 1941.

Subject matter: Situational intellig. report.

Ministry of National Defence
Defence Section

Annexes: 2.

Bratislava

I submit a situational intelligence report:

[...]

4. / Civilians' attitude:

According to report issued by ZD Forward Group, the Ukrainian citizens are friendly to our troops and they are satisfied with the current atmosphere. However, there are some exceptions. Around 50% of people living in small towns of Ruzhyn⁸⁹ and Makhnivka⁹⁰ are Ukrainians. Jewish people made up 40%, but most of them were shot dead. The rest is constituted by Polish people.

Civilians handed over their guns after they were told to do so. However, some people may have hidden their weapons.

5. / Militia:

A forward ZD group reported that Ukrainian militia started to be organised around a month ago in Ruzhyn. Its commander and adjutant were from Galicia in western Ukraine. They organised militia in the villages as well. However, according to testimonies made by local citizens these men admitted mostly communists and Komsomol members to militia. They did so without any territorial restriction. Commander and adjutant themselves fired at Jews. They also looted their property, stole up to 200,000 rubles as well as many golden things and other stuff. These activities, of course, form a local Feldkommandantur competence. This headquarters

therefore, started to pay closer attention to their actions.

On 24 September 1941, 8 Ukrainians went by train from Galicia to Ruzhyn so that they could meet with the commander and adjutant. However, Gestapo surrounded the train and arrested every passenger. Various anti-German brochures were found. Gestapo also discovered newspapers that could cause damage as well as other material. – In the meantime, the commander and his adjutant attempted to escape to Russia, but they were arrested in Zhytomyr⁹¹.

88 VHA Bratislava, f. 55, box 32, sign. 305-32-5.

89 Ruzhyn in Ukrainian.

90 Machnivka in Ukrainian.

91 Žitomír in Ukrainian and Žitomir in Russian.

[...]

Deputising commanding officer of the division:
Automobile army Col Benedikt Dúbravec
[signature]

[Stamp by Ministry of National Defence regarding file registration on 7
October 1941 under No. 144891]

DOCUMENT 15

ZD Headquarters order with instructions by Wehrmacht Commander in Reichskommissariat Ukraine for action against sabotage of connecting means. Instructions included taking hostages based on racial and ideological criteria.⁹²

Security Division Headquarters.

CP 14 November 1941.

No. 2416/Confiden.the 2nd Sec. 1941.

Subject matter: Sabotage when it comes to connecting means – defence.

In line ___ with a mailing list.

According to notification issued by Reichskommissar of Ukraine (Reichskommissar für die Ukraine) as well as Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber Ukraine order⁹³ number Ia/III/Ast/H.N.F. Az. III A1 72/41:

Damage to telephone lines: In order to prevent the sabotage regarding telephone lines Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber Ukraine gave these instructions to German

Ortskommandanturs:

Anyone who deliberately or accidentally damages connecting means (cables, telephone wires, etc.) will be shot and killed. Every person who hides the perpetrator will face similar punishment.

Where the culprit cannot be identified, the Ortskommandanturs were told to proceed as follows: They should arrest 5 people in the municipalities with up to 1000 citizens and in those with more inhabitants 10 persons ought to be arrested. If possible, 50% of those arrested should be Jews and another 50% Russians, Poles or even Ukrainians.

If the line is damaged outside in the field, the municipality will have to be held liable.

After the arrest, the mayor has to be notified that those who were apprehended will be shot dead if the culprit is not found.

Ortskommandantur immediately calls the Defence Section Ukraine (Abwehrstelle Ukraine) after detecting a sabotage. Its members then also inform Intelligence Department Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber Ukraine (IC section) via telephone. These authorities will decide whether culprits or hostages will be shot and killed. The punishment is carried out by the German Ortskommandantur.

If the damage is small, the Ortskommandantur might release the hostages and impose punitive damages based on number of inhabitants. Culprit's or hostages' death by shooting is published by Ortskommandantur in a way that deters other people from committing these actions.

For the ZD subordinate units, the following obligations arise from the above-quoted regulation for the German Ortskommandantur:

⁹² VHA Bratislava, f. ZD, box 28, sign. II/45.

⁹³ Wehrmacht Commander in Reichskommissariat Ukraine Gen Aviator Karl Kitzinger.

a., The army unit headquarters will inform the nearest German Ortskommandantur about every detected sabotage of connecting means. This will be done the shortest way possible. Ortskommandantur will then do the necessary things in accordance with the due orders. (Only German authorities have a competence to take hostages, assess fines as well as shoot and kill the culprits. ZD units get involved only if there is a chance that the matters will not be carried out by Germans.)

b., The army unit will give the 2nd Section the ZD report about every single detected case. It should be stated in the report which Ortskommandantur has already been informed about the case.

Intended for: All subordinate units. Commanding Officer of the Division:
2nd Section Superintendent Col of GS August Malár w. h.⁹⁴

Responsible for carrying out the orders:

Sr Lt of Infantry Frant.⁹⁵ Podhorský.

[signature]

94 Handwritten.

95 František.

DOCUMENT 16

Excerpt from a war diary that belonged to the ZD 102nd Infantry Regiment's 5th Company. It includes the information about its involvement in murders of Jews, which took place in a Belarusian city called Mazyr.⁹⁶

8 Januray 1942. Company has not changed its activity. Situation is the same. Soldiers feel pretty good. Yesterday from 5 a.m. to 12 at midnight, we were helping German police officers with shooting Jews in Mozyr. Our soldiers were supposed to surround this city⁹⁷ and prevent Jews from escaping it.

9 January 1942. Company members carried out guard duty and night patrols. The third patrol was sent to the west due to reconnaissance. The group included 1 commander and 20 soldiers. Soldiers feel pretty good. Situation is the same. The shooting in Mozyr continued today.

10 January 1942. Company members carried out guard duty and night patrols.

[...]

11 January 1942. Company members carried out guard duty and night patrols after guards closed the city

[...]

12 January 1942. The company is quartered in Mozyr. Company members carried out guard duty as well as night patrols together with guards who close the city. Those maintaining order and security at night are supposed to inspect people wandering around in Mozyr. [...]

96 VHA Bratislava, f. ZD, box 87, sign. III/190.

97 Mazyr in Ukrainian, Mozyr in Russian.

DOCUMENT 17

Excerpt from a witness testimony that former Slovak army officer Alexandr Vitalay gave to investigators from military counterintelligence in 1955. It deals with the ZD 102nd Infantry Regiment's participation in anti-partisan operation called Bamberg, which happened in April 1942.⁹⁸

Main Administration
of Military Counterintelligence

Želiezovce, 27 March 1955.

Minutes of testimony

witness:

VITALAY Alexandr⁹⁹

[...]

Question:

Talk about this operation.

Answer:

I remember that on 28 March 1942 2/102nd¹⁰⁰ Battalion embarked on the march due to anti-partisan operation in Karpilauka.¹⁰¹ The order to perform this next operation was explained by the fact that Soviet partisans had been carrying out extensive activity here and that they had been shooting at German patrols as well as threatening German units. Companies 5/102nd, 6/102nd, 7/102nd and 8/102nd, which constituted 2/102nd Battalion, participated in this operation. Their commanders were Sr Lt Grunzweig¹⁰², Sr Lt Kleiner¹⁰³, Sr Lt Repko¹⁰⁴, Sr Lt

98 ABS Praha, Sbíрка Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), No. V – 2487 MV, I. part.

99 Alexander Vitalay (1910 – 1998) served as Sr Lt of Infantry on the Eastern Front since August 1941. He was ZD II/102nd Battalion Commander's adjutant. He was transferred to RD in the spring of 1942. Vitalay was active during the Slovak National Uprising. He was later captured by Germans. He joined a Czechoslovak army after the war and was discharged as Inf. Staff Captain in the Reserves in October 1947. He was a Maj in the Reserves since September 1953 and Lt Col in the Reserves since August 1969. CSÉFALVAY, František et al. *Vojenské osobnosti dejín Slovenska 1939 – 1945*. Bratislava: VHÚ, 2013, 262 p.

100 Correctly II/102 – Infantry Regiment 102 II. Battalion.

101 Today a part of small Belarussian town called Akciabrski.

102 Viliam Grünzweig.

103 Ladislav Kleinert (1913 – 1947), investigated after the war on suspicion with regard to committing crimes on the Eastern Front. The National Court sentenced him to death in December 1947. He was executed in the same month.

104 Jozef Repko.

Tibor Samo¹⁰⁵, Sr Lt Ladislav Gindl¹⁰⁶ as KPÚV Company Commander¹⁰⁷ and Sr Lt Dittrich¹⁰⁸ as MCB Commander¹⁰⁹. The operation was carried out by the entire 102nd Battalion together with the nearby German division¹¹⁰ deployed to the north of Karpilauka. 202nd¹¹¹ Battalion, as I recall, transferred through frozen swamps from Kopatkevichi¹¹² to village called Kolki¹¹³ where its Commander Noskovič¹¹⁴ was replaced by Major Werner¹¹⁵. I remember that he arrived on a sledge with his liaison. I already do not remember whether it was in this settlement or in some other, but I know that Major SS Kranebitter¹¹⁶ also came to 2/102nd Battalion. An SS unit, which probably belonged among the smaller ones, arrived with him. Its members were supposed to investigate and kill apprehended suspects.

[...]

Answer:

Then I remember that an old woman and a girl, who might have been 11 years old, were shot dead close to a certain settlement. They were detained by soldiers from one of the 2/102nd Battalion Companies. The old woman and the girl were killed because they were Jews. I do not know who gave the soldiers an order to do that.

105 Tibor Samo (1914 – ?) served as a Commander of Company in ZD II/102nd Battalion since January 1942. He was active in RD between May and August of the same year. He was an Infantry Captain since January 1943. Samo was in German captivity from September to December 1944 as the member of the so-called Eastern Slovak Army, which was disarmed by Germans. He participated in the partisan group between January and May 1945. He joined a Czechoslovak army after the war and became Lt Col. Samo was sentenced to 18 years by court-martial in 1955. His punishment was reduced to 8 years due to the preceding amnesties. CSÉFALVAY, *Vojenské osobnosti...*, p. 210.

106 Ladislav Gindl (1917 – 1997) was Anti-Combat Vehicle Cannon Company Commander in ZD 102nd Infantry Regiment. He was an Infantry Captain since January 1943. Gindl participated in the Slovak National Uprising. After its suppression, he joined the Slovak army and was assigned to the I. training section of HG Main Headquarters. In 1948, he joined a Czechoslovak army for a short time and served as Inf. Capt. Gindl was sentenced to 20 years in 1955 for crimes committed on the Eastern Front. In connection with the preceding amnesties, the punishment was reduced by more than 11 years. *Ibid.*, 73-74.

107 Anti-Combat Vehicle Cannon.

108 Eduard Dittrich.

109 Mountain Cannon Battery.

110 707th Infantry Division of Wehrmacht.

111 Correctly 2/102nd Battalion.

112 Kapatkevičy in Belarusian and Kopatkevičy in Russian.

113 Kolky in Belarusian and Kolki in Russian.

114 Inf. Lt Col Rudolf Noskovič.

115 Infantry Maj Fridrich Werner.

116 *SS-Sturmbannführer* Friedrich Kranebitter (1903 – 1957).

DOCUMENT 18

Excerpt from the witness testimony given by a soldier who served in the ZD 102nd Infantry Regiment. He described an execution of Jewish partisan.¹¹⁷

Description

Trebišov, 13 February 1955

MINUTES OF TESTIMONY

witness

KOCAN Juraj,

[...]

Question:

How was this fight against the partisans carried out?

Answer:

Operations against partisans took place after we found out where they stayed. We discovered the place after they raided some German transport or thanks to intelligence activity done by citizens in the area where ZD was deployed. I do not know how exactly was this intelligence service between inhabitants carried out, but I know that sometimes they brought captured partisans. I know about one case where two partisans were arrested by ZÁHORÁK¹¹⁸. He handed them over to Germans who murdered them. Rank and file told me about this. I also know about an instance when a Jew was apprehended by Germans. This person was a USSR citizen. Lieutenant colonel LOKŠÍK¹¹⁹, who was the 102nd Infantry Regiment Commander, organised the inhabitants in a way that everybody had to witness this murder. All the soldiers from the battalion had to be present as well. LOKŠÍK gave a speech before the murder where he described this person as saboteur, who insidiously fought against fascists. This man was executed by Germans and during the execution they tortured him by letting the rope to tear off. They hung him again after that. Sr Lt Záhorský and Sr Lt KUCHTA¹²⁰ actively helped LOKŠÍK with this “show”.

I correct myself, I do not know who exactly helped him with this...

[...]

117 ABS Praha, Sbirka Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), No. V – 3137 MV, I. part.

118 102nd Infantry Regiment's Cavalry Platoon Commander Sr Lt of Infantry Ján Záhorák, who participated in the Slovak National Uprising, was sentenced to 30 years after the war by People's Court in Bratislava for the crimes he committed on the Eastern Front. For further information, see BAKA, *Slovenská armáda vo vojne proti Sovietskemu zväzu...*, p. 396.

119 Inf. Lt Col Michal Lokšík (1897 – 1973) was tried in absentia after the war and sentenced to death by People's Court in Bratislava.

120 Sr Lt Vladimír Kuchta (1913 – ?) served as a Commander of the 4th Company that was a part of I/102nd Battalion. ABS Praha, f. HFSB, No. H 770-2, 102nd Infantry Regiment officers' and company sergeant majors' placement.

DOCUMENT 19

Excerpt from a witness testimony a former soldier gave to investigators from military counterintelligence in 1955. He served in the ZD 102nd Infantry Regiment's Anti-Combat Vehicle Cannon Company. The testimony deals with reprisals that the unit committed against civilians.¹²¹

Main Administration
of Military Counterintelligence

Nitra, 25 June 1955

Minutes of testimony

witness:

JANOVIČ Karol,

[...]

We were sent to Kopatkevichi to participate in an operation against partisans shortly after we came to Kozinki¹²² in the spring of 1942. I also took part in an action around 80 kilometres north of Mazyr territory. It took place in the summer of 1942 and our company was led by GINDL during this event. 3 children were murdered as this action was going on. I also recall that a Jewish man, who was around 80 years old, died during another military engagement, which happened either in August or in September 1942. I do not remember within which territory this murder took place. This action as well as our company was again led by GINDL. Then I remember the military engagement, which happened in the spring of 1943 in the Rechytsa¹²³ territory. Around 10 Soviet citizens died as a result. I participated in a combat action against Soviet partisans in the settlement called Yuravichi¹²⁴. It happened in the spring of 1943 when I also participated in the military engagement in Kopatkevichi territory, but our company and our units did not encounter each other there. I do not recall other actions where any atrocities would take place or where people would be shot during the fight.

[...]

QUESTION:

How was an 80-year-old Soviet citizen murdered?

ANSWER:

I remember that reconnaissance was carried out either in August or September 1942, but I do not remember anymore to which territory. Our company was led by Sr Lt GINDL Ladislav. Staff Sergeant, intelligence non-commissioned officer serving under Sr Lt BALÁŽ,¹²⁵ also took part in this. One officer was present as

121 ABS Praha, Sbírka Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), No. V – 2487 MV, I. part.

122 Kozenki in Belarusian.

123 Rečyca in Belarusian and Rečica in Russian.

124 Unidentified.

125 Sr Lt of Infantry Ján Baláž, intelligence officer in the 102nd Infantry Regiment Headquarters.

well. It was either Lieutenant VDOVIAK¹²⁶ or officer's deputy Julius MIHAL, who comes from Ružomberok vicinity. The executive SEDLÁK was present as well. The intelligence non-commissioned officer, who I've already mentioned, led an 80-year-old man behind a marching company as it was approaching its next target. This happened after the company soldiers arrived at settlement where they reposed. Staff Sergeant shot him dead in some barn without roof, which was located on the hill. I myself heard the shot and soldiers talked amongst themselves that he shot and killed the man in the barn.

[...]

126 Inf. Lt in the Reserves Ján Vdoviak, platoon commander within the 102nd Infantry Regiment's Cannon Company.

DOCUMENT 20

Excerpt from a witness testimony given by former 102nd Infantry Regiment soldier during interrogation concerning crimes that Slovak soldiers committed on the occupied USSR territory. The questioning occurred in 1955.¹²⁷

The Ministry of the Interior regional administration
in Nitra

Nitra, 28 February 1955

Minutes of testimony.

Pavel DOSTÁL's summons

[...]

Question:

What do you know about the murders of Jewish children and what had Gindl to do with the whole thing?

Answer:

I did not witness this, but there were rumours amongst the soldiers that Gindl and his group shot and killed Jews as soon as they encountered them during military action. I do not know where these murders happened or how many Jews died.

[...]

127 ABS Praha, Sběrka Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), No. V – 2487 MV, I. part.

DOCUMENT 21

*Excerpt from a witness testimony that the former ZD 102nd Infantry Regiment soldier gave to investigators from military counterintelligence in 1955. He describes how three Jewish children were murdered by Slovak soldiers on the Eastern Front.*¹²⁸

Main Administration
of Military Counterintelligence

Jakubčice, 4 July 1955.

MINUTES OF TESTIMONY WITNESS

BELICA, Ján¹²⁹
[...]

QUESTION:

You said in your testimony, which you gave on 14 January 1955, that privates KRAJČÍR, JANOVIČ and PECHO murdered 3 children in Zahal¹³⁰.

¹³¹ Talk about this murder in detail!

ANSWER:

I recall that during summer an action was carried out against Soviet partisans in Mazyr territory. I do not remember the exact place. That was in 1942. I also do not remember whether GINDL participated in this military action. However, I know for sure that the intelligence non-commissioned officer picked out several soldiers from our platoon after the arrival at the certain hamlet. I recall he was of medium-build, had black hair and that he was thin. He told our soldiers to go with him and said that a Jewish family lived in the settlement. He informed them that the task was to liquidate this family. I do not know who told the non-commissioned officer that there was a Jewish family living in this place. I was one of the rank and file who were supposed to murder this family. We and the non-commissioned officer went to the house located near the outer part of the hamlet. He was the first one to step in, but he came back after a short time and said that the mother fled and there are children together with an old woman who looks after them due to this fact. He then said it did not matter that the woman ran away and that children will be shot and killed. Then he told us to voluntarily say who would carry out the murders. I remember clearly that private KRAJČÍR

128 ABS Praha, Sběrka Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), No. V – 2487 MV, I. part.

129 He left for the Eastern Front in March 1942 and served in the 102nd Infantry Regiment's Cannon Company.

130 Unidentified.

131 This deed is also confirmed by other preserved witness testimonies and confessions. However, they differed in the degree of responsibility that the suspects were willing to admit. ABS Praha, Sběrka Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), No. V – 2487 MV, I. part, minutes of interrogation concerning Karol Janovič, Imrich Pecho, Ján Krajčíř.

Ján, JANOVIČ Karol and Pecho Imrich willingly stated that they would commit them. Subsequently, the intelligence non-commissioned officer took these three soldiers to the house. Together with the other soldiers, whose names I do not remember, we went into its hallway and looked through the door into the room. Meanwhile, the non-commissioned officer made the old woman leave the house. The three children she was looking after were 2 to 6 years old. Private JANOVIČ Karol shot the oldest child in the head with a pistol. This killed the six-year-old. I saw it myself. The distance between them was around 3 feet 3 inches. The child immediately fell to the ground. I think it was a boy. The other 2 children cried and KRAJČÍR shot them with a pistol. One died instantly also from the gunshot to the head. He shot the third child in the neck and the bullet came out. The latter fell to the ground as well. Shortly after that, all three men left the flat and set the house on fire. When the house started to burn, we went to look in the room again and saw the third child walking around the room with its hands crossed on its chest. It was completely covered in blood. When PECHO saw this, he took his rifle and murdered this child by shooting it in its temple. All the bodies were left in the room and burned together with the house. Subsequently, we all went to the place where our company was quartered, i.e., to the house in the given settlement.

[...]

The interrogation ended at 5 p.m.

The minutes are written, read, but also signed since they are correct.

[signature]

Senior MAMC Officer¹³²

Lieutenant Commander TRÁVNIČKA Josef

[signature]

investigating MAMC officer

Lieutenant ŠAVRDA Vladimír

[signature]

interrogated:

Ján BELICA

¹³² Main Administration of Military Counterintelligence.

Tamara JANECOVÁ

Stories of Three Slovak Men – Jews Against the Background of Written Requests to the Ministry of National Defence, Prime Minister's Office and Office of the President Between 1939 – 1943

The study is built on Madeline Vadkerty's research and it deals with a written request by three Jewish men – Tibor Korach, František Borský and Šimon Gubič. The letters were sent to the Ministry of National Defence, Prime Minister's Office and Office of the President. The context in which these requests were written is provided and readers are introduced to the situation Jews faced during the Slovak State and shortly before its establishment. Basic information about each of these three men is presented, e.g., date and place of birth, and it is mentioned in the text that their family members also suffered due to anti-Jewish laws. František Borský's willingness to renounce his Jewish ancestry proves how much these regulations affected the lives of Jews in the Slovak State.

Keywords: government decree, labour camp, request, transport

Introduction

Madeline Vadkerty pointed out a relatively unexplored subject – written requests from Jews who between 1939 and 1944 asked the Office of the President for exemption or pardon in connection with the anti-Jewish legislature in Slovak Republic (1939 – 1945). She did so in the study called *People write to Tiso about the Jewish question 1939 – 1944*¹, series of lectures and discussions, as well as in the book called *Slovutný pán prezident (Listy Jozefovi Tisovi)*². I am building on

1 VADKERTY, Madeline. People write to Tiso about the Jewish question 1939 – 1944. In *Judaica et Holocaustica*, 2019, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 46-63.

2 VADKERTY, Madeline. *Slovutný pán prezident: listy Jozefovi Tisovi*. Žilina: Absynt, 2020, 230 p.

her inspiring research focused on the individual fates of people, which form microstories that create “small history”. They reflect the issue of holocaust and functioning of political system and regime in then Slovak State in a specific way.

I focused primarily on archival documents from the Institute of Military History. They are located in the fund “53”, Section II. of Ministry of Defence and in the Ministry of Defence (1939 – 1945) fund in the following sections: the Cabinet of Minister and Confidential files. The analysed documents had to fulfil two criteria: they could not have been published before and they have to reflect the stories of Jews, Slovak citizens who asked the state for exemption considering their military service³. Cases of Tibor Korach, František Borský and Šimon Gubič fulfilled these criteria. Their military experience was relatively varied: the first one was a reserve officer – medical student, the second man was a lieutenant colonel of the General Staff and the third one was a war veteran. They came from different parts of Slovakia. They were not the same age and did not have the same profession. The thing they shared and connected their lives was the fact that they were Jews and they became enemies in the eyes of the regime, which systematically persecuted them. They wrote letters to Ferdinand Čatloš, a Minister of Defence, and to President Jozef Tiso so that they would give them an exemption from anti-Jewish legislation. One of the arguments was their military service.

Context

The gradual pushing of Jews on the margins of society began in 1938 after the Autonomous Land of Slovakia was established. At that time, Jews became second-class citizens. More than 7,500 Jews were deported in November of the same year. They were transported to the territory that was occupied by Hungary after the First Vienna Award⁴. During this period, regulations aimed against Jewish community often took place in the backdrop of general antidemocratic interventions (liquidation in connection with political parties, interference in self-governing bodies and civil society organisations). A committee for solving a Jewish question in Slovakia was established. Its name was *Sidorov komitét* (Sidor’s Committee). It was supposed to prepare an anti-Jewish legislation⁵.

The expulsion of Jews from political, economic and social life also affected the army. The discrimination against them can be divided into two phases.

3 I have already published a part of them in the study: JANECOVÁ, Tamara. People write to Čatloš (Appeals from Jews addressed to the Ministry of National Defence in the period 1939 – 1942). In *Historický časopis*, 2021, Vol. 69, No. 2, p. 345-369.

4 NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Židovská komunita na Slovensku medzi československou parlamentnou demokraciou a slovenským štátom v stredoeurópskom kontexte*. Prešov: Universum, 1999, p. 293; FRANKL, Michal. Země nikoho 1938. Deportace za hranice občanství. In *Forum Historiae*, 2019, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 92-115; BAKA, Igor. *Politický systém a režim Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939 – 1940*. Bratislava: Vojenský historický ústav (abbreviated to VHÚ), 2010, p. 22.

5 NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Politika antisemitizmu a holokaust na Slovensku v rokoch 1938-1945*. Banská Bystrica: Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania, 2016, p. 168; NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Politika antisemitizmu na Slovensku v roku 1939*. In SYRNÝ Marek. (ed.). *1939 – rok zlomu*. Banská Bystrica: Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania (abbreviated to MSNP), 2019, p. 251-274.

During the first one (1939 – 1940), an anti-Semitic legislation was being formed. Jews were expelled from military due to this, while in the second one, Labour Corps together with the 6th Battalion were created in 1941⁶.

The Government Decree No. 63/1939 of Slovak Code contained the definition of “Jew”. It was based on combination of national and religious principles⁷. The Government Decree No. 74/1939 of Slovak Code⁸ includes information that Jews could not be employed by the state. This also applied to military service. These laws were adopted in 1939. Oldřich Pejs said that after passing of these laws *“nothing seemingly changed. Their effect in army was not examined in detail. One could say that the soldiers let things flow. The army had to deal with many other things. The Hlinka Guard and Ministry of Interior took care of these laws. The army was dealing with the transformation from ‘old’ Czechoslovak army to the ‘new’ Slovak one.”*⁹ Comment made by general Ferdinand Čatloš, who was a Minister of National Defence (*Ministerstvo národnej obrany*, abbreviated to MNO), indirectly confirms this. In the summer of 1939, he said the following about an anti-Jewish law-making in the army: *“We took this thing into consideration already in March this year. However, we found out that there are not many Jewish officers in the army and that is why we did not push for the solution and waited until other ministries within state administration would not find a universal resolution concerning the Jewish question.”*¹⁰

The situation had changed when the Government Decree No. 150/1939 of Slovak Code was adopted on 21 June 1939. It adjusted the military obligations of Jewish people. Officers, sergeant majors, as well as rank and file soldiers were removed from mandatory military service to special work units and they were forbidden to wear military uniforms or use their military rank as a designation. This also applied to Jews serving in the military reserves, who would participate in a military training.

The Government Decree No. 230/1939 of Slovak Code was adopted on 19 September. It repealed a June decree No. 150/1939 of Slovak Code and contained

6 KRALČÁK, Peter. *Pracovné jednotky slovenskej armády 1939 – 1945*. Bratislava: Pro Militaria Historica, 2014, p. 11.

7 A “Jew” was considered to be a person who *“follows or followed Judaism even if he or she converted to Christianity after 30 October 1918”, “is not or was not religious and has at least one parent who follows Judaism”*. A person with ancestors who followed Judaism was also considered to be Jewish. This also applied to people who married persons fulfilling the abovementioned criteria after the regulation was adopted or cohabit with them. Their descendants were also considered to be Jewish. In *Slovenský zákonník 1939*, p. 77.

8 According to the decree adopted on 24 April 1939 concerning the expulsion of “Jews” from public services, it was prohibited for them to be employed by *“state, public self-governing corporations or other public institutions in general”*. In *Slovenský zákonník 74/1939* released on 24 April 1939, p. 88.

9 PEJS, Oldřich. Židé a slovenská armáda v prvom roce po jejím vzniku. In *Vojenská história*, 2020, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 90.

10 Vojenský historický archív (abbreviated to VHA) in Bratislava, fond (abbreviated to f.) Hlavné vojenské veliteľstvo 1939 – 1940 (Main Military Headquarters, abbreviated to HVV), box 76, No. 211.265, Report concerning the meeting between the command staff, MNO and HVV that took place on 22 June 1939 in the Friedrich Palace Hall of Mirrors. The meeting was led by Minister of National Defence General First Class Ferdinand Čatloš. This document was brought to attention by: BAKA, Igor. Postavenie Židov vo vzťahu k slovenskej brannej moci v rokoch 1939 – 1941 (do vzniku VI. robotného práporu). In *Acta Judaica Slovaca*, Vol. 14, 2008, p. 59.

a formulation that Jews who are in the reserves within all military categories and Jews discharged from military service will be divest of the military ranks (the decree No. 150/1939 of Slovak Code caused that it was prohibited for Jewish people to “wear a military uniform or use their military rank as a designation”¹¹). The difference between the earlier and later government decrees is also a possibility to give an exception concerning the abovementioned regulation. This exception could be given by Minister of National Defence.

Military Act of the Slovak Republic was adopted in January 1940. It says that military force (i.e., Slovak army) “was made to defend a state integrity and freedom of the nation, to ensure internal order as well as security, but also to increase work readiness together with national productivity. The army was also made to cultivate spirit of national togetherness.”¹² According to Section 38, Jews could not serve in the army and were supposed to work in special groups¹³. Two groups were formed due to this. “Aryans” were in the first one and served as “conscripts in work service” while Jews and “Gypsies” were in the second one as “members of work duty.”¹⁴ Katarína Zavacká pointed out the fact that in the Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee Report this decision was explained by principles of modern biology and sociology¹⁵: “The Slovak State was created in a historical environment where the principles of modern biology and sociology were used for the first time ever. From these new trends the state administration and political leadership of the new state also had to adopt as many guiding ideas and directives as were naturally compatible with Christian-eugenic principles. Various cultural problems our nation had pointed out that we will have to deal with those who spread certain worldviews and thus save our original organic as well as cultural nature.”¹⁶

As can be seen, the characteristic way of using metaphors in that time is present here. This usage was inspired by Nazi discourse: the nation is likened to a single body, an organism threatened by “cultural problems”. Werner Bohleber thinks that people (not only) in Germany were heavily influenced by the ideal

11 *Slovenský zákonník 1939*, p. 301.

12 *Slovenský zákonník 1940*, p. 21.

13 Jewish labour camps are mentioned for the first time as early as August 1939. See: NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard – BAKA, Igor – KAMENEC, Ivan. *Holokaust na Slovensku Zv. 5. Židovské pracovné tábory a strediská na Slovensku 1938 – 1944. Dokumenty*. Zvolen: Klemo, 2004, p. 44-45. In document No. 5 there is a report of the Presidium of Ministry of Interior of 19 August 1939 intended for Ministry of National Defence. It deals with the Jewish soldiers placed in labour camp in the High Tatras. The book was published in 2004 by Klemo. Igor Baka drew attention to the fact that in August 1939 there were about 22 Jewish soldiers in the military log cabins in the High Tatras who had allegedly been stripped of their military ranks and were marked with blue bands on the right sleeves of their blouses. It is not clear whether this happened just once because there are not any known similar regulations from those times and this was the first time that Jews were marked. BAKA, *Politický systém a režim...*, p. 98.

14 See: KRALČÁK, *Pracovné jednotky...*, p. 22.

15 ZAVACKÁ, Katarína. *Protižidovské zákony a právne normy v brannej politike Slovenského štátu*. In KNEŽO-SCHÖNBRUN, Bernard. (ed.). *Pracovné jednotky a útvary slovenskej armády 1939-1945. VI. robotný tábor: zborník materiálov z medzinárodného seminára Bratislava 22. – 23. novembra 1995*. Bratislava: Zing Print, 1996, p. 17.

16 1940 Assembly of the Slovak republic, Report of the Constitutional and Legal Committee, on Section 38, p. 8.

of national unity, which led to the destructive behaviour towards Jews. Bohler focused on explaining anti-Semitism through psychoanalysis. He points out a large Nazi figurative scale that expresses the demands for eliminating Jews from racially clear “ethnic body” (*Volkskörper*) concerning German nation: *“Anti-Semites long for a clean and united world, which they try to protect by repelling the intruders (Jews), who they make responsible for all the suffering and straits. They discharge the blocked instinctive motives on Jews. These motives became unfamiliar and dirty. [...] Jews are not only dirty in anti-Semitic prejudices, but they are also foreigners representing contradiction and amphibology. ‘Unity through cleanness’ was one of anti-Semitic slogans.”*¹⁷ Nazis’ rhetoric and metaphors about Jewish people as parasites, disease and impurity was also adopted by Slovak government officials. It is obvious from the Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee deliberation.

Pursuant to Section 58 of the previously mentioned Military Act, Jewish people were discharged from the army and they were assigned a work duty lasting 24 months. Military bureaus had difficulties with ascertaining a Jewish origin of people who could be considered Jewish due to the aforementioned Government Decree No. 63/1939 of Slovak Code that define the term “Jew”. This information often was not included in the men’s fundamental letters. Igor Baka wrote that, *“the soldiers who were baptised before they joined the army were among them. This is the reason why Jews were not discharged from the army or reassigned to work duty as fast as it might seem at first glance. State and political authorities had to assist through supplementary county headquarters. The deadline was set on 1 January 1940, but even this was not met after all.”*¹⁸

Work duty concerning Jews and “Gypsies” was adjusted by Regulation No. 130/1940 of Slovak Code passed on 29 May. Based on this, they were obliged to do a work that benefited the state defence. Ministry of National Defence determined what type of work it would be. Pursuant to Section 6, a ministry could grant an exemption from this duty in specific cases. However, *“work groups created due to this regulation were not really formed. Solution regarding the Jewish question was heading in a different direction and at a different tempo.”*¹⁹

In January 1941, the MNO Labour Corps was created and it reported directly to the Minister of National Defence. Organisation-wise it was divided into two groups: a western and eastern labour group, the latter consisted of two “Aryan” battalions and the 6th Battalion with Gypsies, Jews and “Aryan” convicts. On 8 February, the Minister of National Defence Ferdinand Čatloš ordered it to be

17 BOHLEBER, Werner. K Fenichlově teorii antisemitizmu. In TEHLEROVSKÝ, Roman – MAHLER, Martin. (eds.). *Strach z cizího. Antisemitizmus, xenofobie a zkušenost’ „uncanny“*. Prague: Česká psychoanalytická společnost, 2015, p. 71.

18 BAKA, Postavenie Židov vo vzťahu..., p. 63.

19 KAMENEC, Ivan. Nútená pracovná povinnosť ako súčasť politickej a rasovej perzekúcie občanov I. Slovenskej republiky. In KNEŽO-SCHÖNBRUN, Bernard. (ed.). *Pracovné jednotky a útvary slovenskej armády 1939-1945. VI. robotný tábor: zborník materiálov z medzinárodného seminára Bratislava 22. – 23. novembra 1995*. Bratislava: Zing Print, 1996, p. 21.

named the “labour battalion”, while the others were called “work battalions”²⁰. Allegedly, “the Minister of National Defence himself, General First Class Ferdinand Čatloš, cynically expressed this dehumanising intention by saying: ‘Work – honour, labour – duty!’”²¹

Those who were in the 6th Work Battalion differed from the “Aryan” soldiers also when it comes to clothes – Jews got old, discarded uniforms that belonged to combat engineers. They were dyed with a blue colour and had a round blue cap instead of a side cap²². Work duty was a part of discrimination and persecution concerning Jews. Therefore, it is a paradox that they avoided deportations in 1942 due to belonging to the 6th Work Camp. In Eduard Nižňanský’s opinion it also could have been caused by the fact that “Čatloš (as well as MNO officer corps) had to witness the murders of Jews and civilians on the Eastern Front. This could have made Čatloš not to allow the deportation concerning Jews from the 6th Battalion”.²³ However, he kept these considerations in a hypothetical level due to the insufficient evidence. The newest research conducted by Igor Baka shows that Jews were really supposed to be handed over to the Ministry of Interior and deported by 31 August 1942. However, this was not prevented by F. Čatloš but by the Slovak parliament. Its members pointed out at the last moment that according to the constitution Jews can be exempted from the conscription only by law, which failed to be passed until the deportations stopped.²⁴ The decisive factor was the conscription law passed in March 1943²⁵, which says that Jews were no longer subjects to conscription even within the military work service and those in the 6th Battalion were transported to labour camps controlled by the Ministry of Interior.

Stories of three men

In the following part, I tell the stories of three men, Jews, who found themselves in a situation where they decided to apply for an exemption or pardon from legislation in the Slovak Republic. This situation was caused by anti-Semitic laws. Their requests form a starting point for these stories. These things are exactly what serves as a testament to the collision between an individual and system. As the men were dealing with it, they tried to save themselves and their loved ones by writing letters. They adverted to their military service, which

20 KRALČÁK, Peter. Generál Čatloš a Pracovný zbor národnej obrany. In BAKA, Igor – František CSÉFALVAY – Peter KRALČÁK. *Ferdinand Čatloš – vojak a politik (1895 – 1972)*. Bratislava: Pro Militaria Historica, 2011, p. 115.

21 ŠVANDA, Petr. Služba Židov a Rómov vo vojenských pracovných jednotkách slovenskej brannej moci v rokoch 1940 – 1943. In *Fenomén holokaustu: ideové korene, príčiny, priebeh a dôsledky: zborník z medzinárodnej vedecko-odbornej konferencie konanej dňa 27. – 28. marca 2008*. [S.l.]: ŠEVT, 2008, p. 169.

22 NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Politika antisemitizmu...*, p. 169.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

24 BAKA, Igor. VI. robotný prápor Pracovného zboru MNO a deportácie Židov v roku 1942. In *Vojenská história*, 2022, Vol. 26, No. 2, about to be released.

25 *Slovenský zákonník 1943*, Section 38, p. 249.

was not only about their men's honour: they showed the loyalty to the country they considered to be their homeland. They emphasized their attitude towards Slovakia, thus indirectly refuting precisely that part of contemporary anti-Semitic stereotype, in which Jews were perceived as a foreign element, national enemy. The stories are arranged chronologically. As far as I could, I tried to find information about these men and their close relatives before as well as after the requests were written. The first one was written by Infantry Lieutenant in the Reserves **Tibor (Teobald) Korach**²⁶. His parents were merchant Leo Korach and Gizella Färberová. He was born on 25 October 1911 in Levoča and finished gymnasium there in 1932. Korach started his compulsory military service in April 1933 and he served in the mountain battalion. According to the fundamental letter, Korach was a native German speaker, but he was also fluent in Hungarian and Slovak²⁷. He enrolled at university after completing his basic military service. Preserved university enrolment records (nationale) include information that Korach studied at Faculty of Medicine of the German University in Prague between 1935 and 1938²⁸. He passed the doctoral oral exam on 20 June 1938²⁹. Korach enrolled at Faculty of Medicine of the Slovak University in the 1938 – 1939 academic year. It was his sixth and seventh term concerning study. It is not sure whether he left Prague and came to Bratislava due to socio-political circumstances (the Munich Agreement, Slovak autonomy) or it was caused by private matters. Korach had to submit an index and dimissory³⁰ from the Faculty of Medicine of German University in Prague when he enrolled at the university in Bratislava.³¹ He was not enrolled at the Bratislava university during the winter term of the 1939 – 1940 academic year because he took part in the attack on Poland in September 1939. Jews who enlisted due to mobilisation were concentrated in special labour camps during the war against Poland³². However, *“Despite these measures, there were still several Jewish officers serving in the Slovak army during the attack on Poland, which took place in September 1939. They were mostly doctors”*,³³ just like Tibor Korach. He stated in a letter written

26 Tibor Korach's file is located in: VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 6.

27 VHA, master records: Tibor Korach.

28 Archiv Univerzity Karlovy (abbreviated to AUK), f. Lékařská fakulta Německé univerzity v Praze, university student records.

29 AUK, f. Lékařská fakulta Německé univerzity v Praze, doctoral thesis: Theobald Korach.

30 Dimissory is a so-called leaving certificate. This document was needed for transfer to another university. It did not include only information on student, but also a list of attended subjects with the teachers' names written down term by term. If there were some differences, the new university could order difference exams.

31 Archív Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave (abbreviated to Archív UK), f. Zbierka matrík zapísaných študentov, Lekárska fakulta Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave - zimný semester 1938/1939, No. 223; Archív UK v Bratislave, f. Zbierka matrík zapísaných študentov, Lekárska fakulta Slovenskej univerzity v Bratislave - letný semester 1938/1939, No. 197.

32 BAKA, Igor. Postavenie Židov vo vzťahu k slovenskej brannej moci. In *Fenomén holokaustu: ideové korene, príčiny, priebeh a dôsledky: zborník z medzinárodnej vedecko-odbornej konferencie konanej dňa 27. – 28. marca 2008*. [S.l.]: ŠEVT, 2008, p. 84.

33 KRALČÁK, *Pracovné jednotky...*, p. 17.

on 6 February 1940 and addressed to the medical faculty professorial staff of the Slovak University: *“During the last mobilisation I was enlisted and did field medical service as a battalion doctor in the 104th Infantry Battalion. I can prove with documents. On 14 December 1939, I received a new military card where my original rank as Infantry Lieutenant in the Reserves was confirmed.”*³⁴ He enrolled again in the summer term of the 1939 – 1940 academic year (it was the 8th semester regarding his studies).³⁵ He turned to the Ministry of National Defence in March 1940 and asked for a permission to continue in his studies because he expected the professorial staff will put in a good word for him. Korach was 28 years old at that time and went through seven terms. He passed a state exam and had only 18 months left to complete the studies.

In his request for permission to continue his studies, Tibor Korach referred to the Government Decree No. 184/1939 of Slovak Code passed on 25 July, which included guidelines on how many Jews could practice medicine. A percentage was set and Jews could make up only 4% from all the medical chamber members (considering the situation on 30 June 1939). It was required for this ratio to be revised and adjusted to the 96:4 by the first day of each calendar year. Tibor Korach asked the Ministry of Defence to include him to this 4% quota. Apart from his military service, he mentioned another reason. It was a circumstance in life that was not supported by sections, but by hope for leniency. Korach wrote, *“as a retired soldier I cannot start a new life in this age, I stand behind my request.”*³⁶

H group superintendent Infantry Maj Michal Lokšík was in charge of his file. According to the aforementioned Government Decree No. 184/1939 of Slovak Code, the Ministry of Interior was supposed to decide who would and would not join the defined 4%. In addition, Article 3 of the Section included information that if there was a public need, the ministry could keep more Jewish doctors active in their field than set by the limit. However, Infantry Maj Lokšík austerey rejected Korach’s request, *“He is a Jew and out of question as far as military is concerned”*. He then put a file into a card index.

Tibor Korach was discharged from the army on 31 January 1940 and assigned to work duty in a reserve battalion within the 1st Infantry Regiment. However, he was not sent to the 6th Work Battalion (as a reservist he could be called up for work as part of the Jews’ two-month work obligation).

Thanks to the Tibor Korach’s family microhistory we can also see other consequences caused by the policy of anti-Semitism. Economic anti-Semitism had an effect on Aryanisation process as well as liquidation of Jewish trades and businesses. It was revealed that his mother’s shop with shear and knitting goods was closed on 22 March 1941 and her store with belts was liquidated on 28 June³⁷. As Kamenec writes, a mass closing of Jewish businesses and shops was the

34 VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 6, sign. No. 154, 271.

35 Archív UK, f. Zbierka matrík zapísaných študentov, Lekárska fakulta Slovenskej univerzity v Bratislave - letný semester 1939/1940, No. 233.

36 Document 1 in the appendix.

37 Available at: <<https://www.upn.gov.sk/projekty/likvidacie/>>. (cited on 21 October 2022).

largest part within the Aryanisation process. Although the liquidation started in 1939, it reached its fullest extent with the so-called second Aryanisation act – Decree No. 303/1940 of Slovak Code. Closing usually occurred in order to fulfil selfish interests the local regime prominent persons had³⁸. However, it was also a way to pauperise the Jewish population which later “served as a good excuse to displace those Jews whose property was taken away from them. These people were labelled as burden for Slovak economy. They were placed in the so-called ‘new homes’, i.e., extermination camps.”³⁹

Korach's fundamental records contain data from 1941, when information about him was relocated numerous times in connection with record keeping (it was put in the files of 5th Infantry Regiment Reserve Battalion, Eastern Labour Group and Supplementary County Headquarters). The last information in the fundamental files comes from 1943 when he was discharged as a Jew from the work duty due to the military act. However, it was just an automatic across-the-board record that was used to “close” fundamental files of Jewish soldiers. It tragically reflects a “dead souls” principle in the Nazi bureaucratic acts since all that is known about Korach after 1941 is the fact that his name, birthplace and date of birth were included in the list containing the names of Slovak Jews who were transported from Žilina to Lublin District on 3 April 1942⁴⁰. It seems he eventually was in a transport that went to Auschwitz⁴¹ because, according to ITS Arolsen, Tibor Korach died on 6 August 1942 in Auschwitz concentration camp⁴².

His father, Leo Korach (born 1879), as well as his mother Gizella Färberová (born 1886), were deported to Lublin and Izbica on 29 May 1942⁴³.

38 KAMENEC, Ivan. *Po stopách tragédie*. Bratislava: Archa, 1991, 104 p.

39 HALLON, Ľudovít. Arizácia na Slovensku 1939 – 1945. In *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*, 2007, Vol. 15, No. 7, p. 159.

40 *List of Jews from Slovakia transferred via Zilina camp to the Lublin region, 3 April 1942, No. 173*. Available at: <www.yadvashem.org>. (cited on 21 October 2022).; Transportation from Žilina to Lublin took place on 5 April 1942. See: Document 61, Zoznam židovských deportačných transportov v roku 1942. In NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Politika antisemitizmu a holokaust na Slovensku v rokoch 1938 – 1945*, Banská Bystrica: Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania (abbreviated to MSNP), 2016, p. 347.

His name is also included in an undated list of prisoners in Majdanek at number 13. However, information on year and birthplace is missing. This list is attached to the letter by Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs in Exile, who wrote it on 18 Sept. 1943. It was addressed to several ministries, Czechoslovak Red Cross, Federation of Czechoslovak Jews and Ing (an academic title of an engineer) A. Frischer: “Ministry of foreign affairs sends three lists with the names of deported individuals in the attachment. They were transported to Lublin, Majdanek and Trawnicky labour camps. These lists were received by consul Čejka in Lisbon and written by Dr Kopecký in Geneva.” List of Czechoslovakians deported to labour camps in Poland, Selected records from National Archives in Prague. Ministry of Interior, London, MV-L (fond JAF 828). Available at: <<https://www.ushmm.org/>>. (cit. 21 Oct. 2022).

41 He might have been in the transport that left Poprad on 3 April 1942. Document 61, Zoznam židovských deportačných transportov v roku 1942. In NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Politika antisemitizmu...*, p. 347. 42 Database available at: <<https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/>>-under the name Theobald Korach>. (cit. 21 Oct. 2022).

43 Database can be found at Yadvashem.org; Transport from Spisska Nova Ves, Spis, Slovakia, Czechoslovakia to Izbica, Krasnystaw, Lublin, Poland on 29 May 1942. This date is also confirmed by Document 61, Zoznam židovských deportačných transportov v roku 1942. In NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Politika antisemitizmu...*, p. 347.

The second story is about **František Borský**. There are numerous portraits concerning this military personality. They were written by Alex Maskalík⁴⁴, Jozef Bystrický⁴⁵ and Marek Meško⁴⁶. In addition, on the website of the Slovak municipality of Banka there is an article based on Peter's, Borský's grandson, narrative (made into a text by Viktor Vrábek)⁴⁷. I will try to complement the aforementioned factually saturated and encyclopaedic portraits as well as the retrospective article focused mainly on the Slovak National Uprising era. I will do so by talking about František Borský's life against the background of documents I found in archives.

He was born in 1889 in Šandorf (now Prievaly) to a Jewish family as Zikmund Berger. His parents were Ignác Berger and Antónia Bergerová, née Jiposová. His military career began to develop in 1917, when he joined the army due to compulsory military service – he attended officer's school and fought on Italian as well as French front. He grew professionally during the next twenty years in the Czechoslovak army. Borský also graduated from War College in Prague in 1935. He changed his name considering the growing anti-Semitism and since 16 February 1939 his name was František Milan Borský. He changed his religion twice in 1938 and 1939 – first, he joined the Czechoslovak Hussite Church and then Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession⁴⁸. He joined the Slovak army after the creation of the Slovak State. However, he realized that considering the growing hostility towards Jews and intensification regarding the anti-Semitic law-making his position was in danger. It is proven by the letter he wrote on 20 June 1939, where he asked for exemption from the Government Decree No. 63/1939 of Slovak Code. Borský's arguments were connected to his national and confessional affiliation, *"I was born in the region that is purely Slovak and I became so close with locals that I've never had a reason to doubt that I am looked at as a Slovak. I was never really interested in a Jewish religion that I grew up in."*⁴⁹

It is obvious from Borský's request written on 25 May 1940 that Prime Minister's Office did not respond to his request of June 1939. In the former request, he turned to Ministry of Defence due to single financial compensation in lieu of regular payment. He wrote: *"Under the Act No. 9/1940, every person*

44 MASKALÍK, Alex. *Elita armády: československá vojenská generalita 1918 – 1992*. Košice: HWSK, 2012, 115 p.

45 BYSTRICKÝ, Jozef. Generálmajor František Milan Borský. In ŠTAIGL, Jan. *Generáli: slovenská vojenská generalita 1918-2009*. Bratislava: Magnet Press Slovakia, 2009, p. 22; BYSTRICKÝ, Jozef. Borský, František Milan. In CSÉFALVAY, František. *Vojenské osobnosti dejín Slovenska 1939 – 1945*. Bratislava: Vojenský historický ústav (abbreviated to VHÚ), 2013, p. 26-27.

46 MEŠKO, Marek. Brigádny generál (generálmajor in memoriam) František Milan Borský (1899 – 1986). In *Obrana*, 2008, Vol. 8, No. 16, p. 29.

47 BORSKÝ, Peter – VRÁBEL, Viktor. Partisan movement in the surrounding forests. František Milan Borský. Available on the website of the Banka municipality:

<<https://www.obecbanka.sk/navstevnik/zaujímavost/odboj-na-banke/>>. (cit. 21 Oct. 2022).

48 VHA, f. HVV, No. 29506, Captain of General Staff František Milan Borský – change of religion, 28 Sept. 1939.

49 Document 2 in the appendix.

discharged from a state service in whose case acts No. 63/1939, 74/1939 and 9/1940 should be applied has to inform the office they belong to whether they want a lump sum in lieu of regular payment. The person has to do so by 3 months after the Act No. 9/1940 came into force⁵⁰. Anyone who fails to provide this information within the time limit loses the right to a single financial compensation in lieu of regular payment upon the discharge. This time limit ends on 31 May 1940. As no decision has yet been taken on my request which I submitted to the Ministry of National Defence under number 202.386/1 person on 22 June 1939 and under the Act No. 63/1939, all the above laws also apply to me, and therefore I submit the prescribed application for a lump sum in lieu of regular payment in case of my discharge from state service so that I comply with the time limit required by law.”⁵¹

Both letters testify to Borský's foresight regarding the possible loss of his job due to anti-Jewish laws, which he was aware of despite the fact that at that time he already had twenty years of military experience and was advancing in his career. He proved to be very good during the campaign against Poland as well. He served as a railway track commanding officer and managed the transport of Slovak soldiers on the east and north as well as back to the original garrisons⁵². Germans were also satisfied with his work, which had an effect on him. I will come back to this later on.

In connection with Borský and his work placement Peter Kralčák quotes the biography about the MNO Labour Corps main organiser Jozefa Kručka⁵³: “GEN Čatloš redeployed Borský under my command in 1940 and gave me this order: I redeploy the officer to the Labour Corps so that he is not in plain sight regarding Germans and other officials. He is of Jewish origin and his skills are amazing. You have an obligation to inconspicuously employ him with the due respect and consideration.”⁵⁴ Kralčák does not comment this quote in any way, but since this is a subjective memoir, it has to be looked at as a source with limited validity. Moreover, the memoirs were written in 1964, which is more than twenty years later. Kručka also mentions his opinion in another part of the memoir. He says, “Although Jews and Gypsies were in separate battalion within WC [Labour Corps – T.J.], which was in accordance with legal regulations, it was this thing that absolutely protected them from racial and other persecution in their army unit.”⁵⁵ Despite the already mentioned paradox that the membership in this battalion prevented their deportation, this statement is a contradiction since the very existence of separate battalions is a discrimination and persecution.

50 A single payment instead of regular payments.

51 VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 198, No. 1352 301.

52 MEŠKO, Brigádny general..., p. 29.

53 Jozef Kručka (1895 -?) – he was entrusted with organising the MNO Labour Corps. He also served as its commander from April 1940. He was a main organiser of the Slovak army. MASKALÍK, Alex. Jozef Kručka. In CSÉFALVAY, František. *Vojenské osobnosti dejín Slovenska 1939 – 1945*. Bratislava: VHÚ, 2013, p. 138-139.

54 KRALČÁK, *Pracovné jednotky...*, p. 50-51.

55 Vojenský historický ústav v Bratislave (abbreviated to VHÚ), f. Ferdinand Čatloš, Jozef Kručka's memoir written in 1964, p. 5.

Kručko's stereotypical opinion about Jews with an obvious disrespect can be seen numerous times in the memoir: "*As equal individuals and without non-Jewish impact, Jews were not able to get along.*" They often quarrelled and fought in groups due to petty things. This was going on until their non-Jewish superordinates did not intervene.⁵⁶ With these critical formulations, in which he describes Jews as disobedient children who actually needed (non-Jewish) supervision, Kručko in some way excuses Labour Corps as well as his involvement in it. Thus the words he used to express his memory of Čatloš's order are not surprising. He talked about "hiding" Borský from the Germans with "due respect and consideration".

On the other hand, Čatloš really interceded on behalf of František Borský and other officers of the Slovak army in the letter written on 14 January 1941 addressed to the Prime Minister's Office. These soldiers were "*truly needed in the military service*", but they faced "*various disadvantages*" due to the Government Decree No. 63/1939 of Slovak Code⁵⁷. However, the Presidency-in-Office of the government did not respond to this by the time Jewish Code⁵⁸ was issued. Subsequently, at the end of 1941, MNO also did not recommend the president to grant an exemption.

František Borský became an ambassador of Labour Corps Office in Bratislava in February 1941. During his tenure, Borský, as a lieutenant colonel, wrote a thin book for the Ministry⁵⁹. This book was published by the MNO Labour Corps Headquarters. He summarised all the activities Labour Corps did since it was established (regulation of the Morava River, national open-air theatre in Martin, Šúr drainage, harvest assistance, etc.). Style-wise, this text is written well. It maintains the harmony between factuality, enumeration regarding the activities done by Labour Corps and rhetorical style conditioned by agitational nature the brochure has. It was supposed to guide people on exhibition organised in February 1942, its motto and the name of the book were the same – *Rok Pracovného zboru MNO* (One year of the MNO Labour Corps). Borský used imagery, simple, striking sentences, rhetorical questions as well as parallelisms in his text. Therefore, it can be easily read. This is testimony to his versatile talent. Borský was not only a competent soldier but also a good stylist, who knew how to write well. He was discharged from the army in April 1942 without retaining his military rank. A statement that it happened due to racial reasons is repeated in the portraits. However, nothing else is mentioned about this. That is why I will try to figure out what exactly happened. Alexander Mach set events in motion with his letter written on 28 March 1942 and addressed to Ferdinand Čatloš, who was a Minister of the Interior. Mach complained about Borský, who allegedly came

56 VHÚ, f. Ferdinand Čatloš, Jozef Kručko's memoir written in 1964, p. 7.

57 Document 3 in the appendix.

58 It was released on 9 September 1941 and based on the Nuremberg Laws. It followed the previous discriminatory regulations and contained new provisions surpassing human rights and freedoms. This was "*one of the cruelest anti-Jewish laws in modern history*". KAMENEC, Ivan. *Po stopách tragédie*. Bratislava: Archa, 1991, 125 p.

59 BORSKÝ, František. *Rok pracovného zboru MNO*. Bratislava: Veliteľstvo pracovného zboru MNO, 1942.

to the camp in Patrónka to intercede on Anna Rotterová's behalf so that she would not be deported. Anna was Borský's sister-in-law. Mach further requested that Čatloš take measures and prevented senior officer from protecting Jews in a service uniform⁶⁰.

According to the stamp, the letter was delivered to the Ministry of Defence on 4 April 1942. On the same day, Čatloš responded to Mach with a letter. František Borský's testimony about the fact that he interceded on his sister-in-law's behalf formed an attachment to it. The testimony was written as early as 1 April 1942. At the same time, Čatloš informed Mach that Borský was discharged from the Slovak army pursuant to Government Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code. In the text, there is a note written by hand next to the cross: "*Off. of the pres. sent the decision on the exemptions only on 4 April 1942. Borský was not discharged earlier due to this fact.*"⁶¹ Peter Kralčák wrote in his study about the relation between Čatloš and Labour Corps that "*Čatloš initially asked for presidential exemption concerning Borský, but Tiso did not grant it*"⁶² – Kralčák might have proceeded from this note written by hand, which may be a proof that Čatloš had been postponing his response to Mach regarding Borský until he did not receive the answer to (his) request for granting an exemption to Borský, but Kralčák does not specify this issue. In addition, Borský got an exemption in July 1942, thus it does not seem logical that the Office of the President would deny and then accept the same request within a few months. The above quotation ("*Off. of the pres. sent the decision on the exemptions only on 4 April 1942. Borský was not discharged earlier due to this fact*") does not imply that Čatloš asked for Borský to be exempted, which is the way P. Kralčák interpreted this excerpt. The note is probably connected with the already mentioned request of June 1939. In it Borský asked for an exemption from the Government Decree No. 63/1939 of Slovak Code (i.e., he did not want to be considered a "Jew"). Many requests for exemption from this government decree were not answered to and it can be supposed that it was also Borský's case. In May 1940, he pointed out that at that time there was no decision made regarding his 1939 request. Moreover, there was also no response to the already mentioned Čatloš's recommendation for exemption, which he wrote in January 1941.

That is the reason why it is likely that as Borský's case was opened in 1942 the decision was quickly made to reject his original request for exemption, as Čatloš noted or more precisely he "justified" that there was no action taken earlier. František Borský was discharged from the Slovak army on 10 April 1942. He was deprived of his military rank (in reference to the Government Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code and § 58 of the Military Act) and stopped receiving salary. In addition, he was required to give back a commemorative medal

60 See Document 4 in the appendix.

61 VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 198, No. 1352 293.

62 KRALČÁK, Generál Čatloš a Pracovný zbor národnej obrany. In BAKA, Igor – CSÉFALVAY, František – KRALČÁK, Peter. *Ferdinand Čatloš...*, p. 115, footnote No. 22.

“Javorina” and medal “For merit” with all the relevant patents⁶³. He was also required to return patents regarding his promotion to major and lieutenant colonel as well as his and his wife’s railroad passes.

Col. of GS Štefan Tatarka’s official record written on 7 April 1942 is interesting. It deals with Col. Roeder von Diersburg’s visit⁶⁴. He was a German transportation officer, who interceded for František Borský and suggested that he should not be completely discharged but reassign to a civilian post in the Ministry of Transport⁶⁵.

In the same month, František Borský sent a request to president Tiso where he asked him for exemption from the Government Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code. Borský wanted Tiso to grant him pardon. On 25 April 1942, the Office of the President turned to MNO and asked for the statement “*mainly as to whether the information of the requests correspond with reality and also concerning the potential proposal. The applicant also states he claimed Slovak as his mother language in the Austrian-Hungarian army.*”⁶⁶

The answer for the Office of the President was prepared by Anton Pulanich who deputised a minister⁶⁷. He confirmed Borský’s military qualities: “*Borský developed the Slovak military transportation as far as organisation and personnel are concerned. He proved to be very good on this post. A testimony to that is a smooth transfer of military transports concerning the Slovak as well as the German army in March 1939 and during a field campaign against Poland.*” The quoted evaluation from the German line commander for Slovakia, Col. Roeder, as well as Borský’s work in the labour corps are also mentioned: “*He proved to be very good on this post as well. Borský contributes to the development of labour corps with his organisational skills.*” Considering these facts, the MNO recommended the agreement with the request to be pardoned concerning the Government Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code. The president granted an exemption to František Borský, his wife and their two sons on 24 July 1942⁶⁸.

Borský’s sister-in-law, whom he tried to save from deportation to Patrónka, was born in 1911 in Lakšárska Nová Ves. Her name is mentioned in the 1940 Matica Slovenská Register: Matica asked the notary’s office in Lakšárska Nová Ves to find out the nationality of the Matica members in the municipality and to focus on members who were Jews. It is stated in the register that the

63 It was a distinction awarded for participation in military measures in the fight against Hungarian invasion in March 1939 and for participation in the campaign against Poland in September 1939.

64 See Document 6 in the appendix.

65 A cooperation between Borský and Roeder (especially during the campaign against Poland) is also proved by preserved documents, e.g., Franz Barckhausen’s official record about subordination of the Slovak army to the German main command. It was written on 27 August 1939. Franz Barckhausen was a head of the German Military Commission in Slovakia. NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard et al. *Slovensko-nemecké vzťahy 1938 – 1941 v dokumentoch. 1. Od Mníchova k vojne proti ZSSR*. Prešov: UNIVERSUM-EU, 2009, p. 596-597, Document No. 212.

66 VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 198, No. 1352 308.

67 VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 198, No. 1352 306.

68 See Document 8 in the appendix.

notary's office sent an answer with information "about a businesswoman Anna Rotterová's nationality".⁶⁹

Her name and year of birth is on the list of Jews deported from Patrónka⁷⁰. It was the first transport from Bratislava and it took place on 27 March 1942 (one day after Alexander Mach wrote a complaint against František Borský for his efforts to save her). It is not known what happened to her.

František Borský worked from June to the end of 1942 as a workman at the Railway Construction Administration in Prešov and since April 1943 he was an accountant at the State Land Office in Piešťany. Borský joined the Slovak National Uprising and was accepted to a renewed Czechoslovak army as a lieutenant colonel in April 1945. He was promoted to a brigadier general two years later. He worked for the Ministry of Defence in Prague. His grandson described what happened to him next: "He was tried by communist in a fabricated trial in 1950. They did not prove he had done anything wrong, but they forced him to leave his job and army, which had a big emotional impact on him. He lived as a recluse in a municipality called Chrastrné, near Košice, and worked as a farmer in a cooperative. He died in Nitra in 1986."⁷¹

The third story is about Šimon Gubič. He was born on 23 December 1892 in Levoča, his father's name was Jakob. He started his mandatory military service in 1913. The First World War broke out while he was serving. He got to a Russian front, where he was wounded near Krašník⁷². He came back at the end of 1914 and fought on Serbian, Italian, and again on Russian front⁷³, where he was seriously injured and captured by Russians – Gubič spent the next five years in a prisoner-of-war camp in Siberia. He came back to Slovakia only in 1921. Medical Commission of the Office for Injured in War stated he was a war invalid due to traumatic neurosis, which was a result of head injuries. This diagnosis was confirmed in 1933 by Juraj Komár, who later became a state doctor in Nitra. He said, "Šimon Gubič has a severe neursthanía caused by trauma. Considering everything mentioned, he cannot have a constant job and he cannot be employed. His ability to work is significantly lowered and the disorder will get worse. The incapacity for work is 65%."⁷⁴

69 The register is available on the website: <http://matica.sk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Supis_-Matica_slovenska_-II_rocnik_-1940.pdf>. (cited 21 October 2022).

I contacted the Matica slovenská archive with a request for access to these documents, but I did not receive any response.

70 *List of Jews from Slovakia transferred via Patrónka camp to the Lublin region, 27 March 1942, No. 498.* Available at: <www.yadvashem.org>. (cited 22 October 2022). In accordance with the order issued on 13 March 1942 by the Ministry of Interior, two transports from Patrónka (27 and 28 March) went to Auschwitz. Document 39, see: NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Holokaust na Slovensku: [dokumenty]*. 6, *Deportácie v roku 1942*. Zvolen: Klemo, 2005, p. 144-146.

71 BORSKÝ, Peter – VRÁBEL, Viktor. *Partisan movement in the surrounding forests. František Milan Borský*. Available online on the website of the Banka municipality: <<https://www.obecbanka.sk/navstevnik/zaujímavost/odboj-na-banke/>>. (cit. 22 Oct. 2022).

72 This small town is now situated in Poland. Between 23 and 25 August 1914, heavy fighting took place here between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies during the battle of Galicia.

73 Close to Ridkivtsi and Toporivtsi municipality in today's Ukraine, near the city called Chernivtsi.

74 VHA, f. MNO, Kabinet ministra (1940 – 1941), box 3.

His wife died in 1940 and he stayed alone with his two sons. Šimon's as well as his children's names were written in a so-called register of Jews: Ministry of Interior ordered a registration of the Jews in early 1942 as part of the preparations for the deportations. The Ministry ordered it to be carried out pursuant to § 6 of the Government Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code⁷⁵ ("Jewish Code"). It⁷⁶ did not apply to Jews who were doing mandatory military service at that time. The register was divided into lists A, B and C. All the Jews whose names were not written in the second and third list were registered in the first one regardless of their sex, age, or ability to work⁷⁷. List B included men aged 16 to 60 and their occupation. Šimon Gubič is registered in the list B as a business functionary of the Jewish Centre (*Ústredňa Židov*).⁷⁸ His sons Heribert (1930) and Valter (1931) are mentioned in the list A⁷⁹. These registers formed a basis for deportation lists. Gubič and his sons avoided deportation in the first phase. It is not known why they were not deported in 1942. They⁸⁰ came to the camp in Sereď on 8 May 1943⁸¹. On 4 June 1943, Šimon Gubič turned to "His Excellency" Minister of Defence Ferdinand Čatloš with a desperate plea: "*as a war invalid, I humbly ask for mercy and release from Jewish labour camp in Sereď.*"⁸² He did not refer to bad living conditions or inhuman treatment in the camp – mails were subjected to censorship⁸³. In the letter, Gubič focuses

75 "Municipal (district) notary offices – Police Directorate in Bratislava – create a register of Jews residing in the district of their jurisdiction. Police Directorate in Bratislava creates a register of those Jews who spend time in the Slovak Republic, but they do not reside in this area. Ministry of Interior creates a central registry pursuant to Subsection 1 and 2." *Slovenský zákonník 1941*, p. 644.

76 Later on I paraphrase a regulation by Presidium of the Ministry of the Interior in order to describe it. This regulation was issued on 12 February 1942 and it deals with the register of Jews. See NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Holokaust na Slovensku...*, p. 103-108; Document 8 in the appendix.

77 List C was supposed to include Jewish man over the age of 60, who, due to their advanced age, were not subjects to work duty, and women who were 16+ years old as long as they were left in the work process.

78 Štátny archív (abbreviated to ŠA) Nitra, f. Okresný úrad (abbreviated to OÚ) Nitra, box 468, Nitra zoznam B in 1942, sheet number 27, No. 455.

79 ŠA Nitra, f. OÚ Nitra, box 468, Nitra zoznam A in 1942, sheet number 49, No. 896 and 897.

80 Letter from the German Ministry of Finance written on 24 Oct. 1952 and addressed to Allied High Commission for Germany International Tracing Service regarding Šimon Gubič. Document was provided by USHMM.

81 During deportations in 1942, the camp in Sereď was also a concentration centre for Jews before deportation. Jewish people were transported to concentration camps from their homes and they were taken to concentration centre before they got there. These centres were in Bratislava – Patrónka, Žilina, Poprad as well as in Sereď and Nováky camp. Deportation trains were then despatched from a concentration centre. All these trains had to go through Žilina. See: NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. (ed.). *Holokaust na Slovensku 6. Deportácie v roku 1942. Dokumenty*. Bratislava: Dokumentačné stredisko holokaustu (abbreviated to DHS), 2005, 646 p.

82 Document 9 in the appendix.

83 "According to the memo issued in February 1943 by a camp commissioner I. Vašina, 'any type of mail' is checked by a camp commissioner. [...] J. Pečúch, who was a government commissioner of Jewish labour camps, received several letters, requests and complains from Jews. They lived in the labour camps and sent it to MI. As a result, Pečúch issued a memo to every camp and centre, with which he forbade any correspondence 'that circumvents relevant regulations and censorship.' The memo was published in February 1943." HLAVINKA, Ján – Eduard NIŽŇANSKÝ. *Pracovný a koncentračný tábor v Sereďi 1941 – 1945*. [S.l.]: DHS, 2009, 81 p.

on the facts of his military service during the First World War – given his mandatory military service as well as time spent in the Russian prisoner-of-war camp, he served for eight years and it significantly impacted his health. He emphasised that he was never punished and that he raised his children as Slovaks. It was a reaction to the national level regarding the anti-Semitic discourse. It was based on the idea that *“Jews are not Slovaks. ‘Language’ stance was based on the fact that Jews talked predominantly in German, Hungarian, or Yiddish.”*⁸⁴

Both at the beginning and at the end of the letter written from the barracks in the labour camp, Šimon Gubič shows his humility and hope for the fact that the ministry will be lenient. This is evidenced by two photographs he sent enclosed to the written request. He was on the first one, while his sons were on the second one. They could be around seven to eight years old and stood in front of the picture with Nitra Castle, winter skates slung over their shoulders. By attaching these photographs, Šimon Gubič was also trying to tell that dimension of his plea that was not included in a censored letter addressed to the institution. However, it shows that the letter was written by a real person, father of two children, not by an anonymous individual – a number in the register. The ministry did not respond to this letter.

The labour camp in Sered' was closed after the Slovak National Uprising broke out and subsequently reopened. Therefore, it is likely that Šimon Gubič and his family were hiding somewhere. Only few things are known about their later life. Deportations from this camp started after Alois Brunner became its commander. Eleven deportations took place in Sered' between 30 September 1944 and 31 March 1945. *“First five transports went to Auschwitz concentration camp and the rest to other concentration camps (Bergen-Belsen, Oranienburg, Ravensbrück, Jews were subsequently removed to other camps – some even got to Mauthausen concentration camp).”*⁸⁵ Šimon Gubič was in one of the first transports, which started after Brunner became a commander. He got to Auschwitz concentration camp. His sons, Heribert and Valter, were deported later. They were probably in the second transport heading to Terezín, which left Sered' on 16 January 1945 and came to Terezín on 19 January 1945. They were then transported to Mauthausen concentration camp, where they arrived on 25 January 1945⁸⁶. Heribert died on 9 February 1945⁸⁷, he was 14 years old. The fate of Valter Gubič is unknown. Šimon Gubič survived. He lived in Israel in 1952.

84 NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Politika antisemitizmu...*, p. 32.

85 Ibid., p. 153.

86 I found the information on the database: < <https://arolsen-archives.org/>>.

87 I found the information on the database: < <https://raumdernamen.mauthausen-memorial.org/>>.

Documents

DOCUMENT 1

Bratislava, 26 March 1940 – Tibor Korach's request addressed to MNO for permission to continue his studies on Faculty of Medicine on the Slovak University.⁸⁸

Inf. Lt. in the reserves MUC89 Tibor Korach, 1st Infantry Regiment, Levoča.
Subject matter: Request for recommendation.

Bratislava, 26 March 1940

Dear

Ministry of National Defence,
in Bratislava.

Undersigned infantry lieutenant in the reserves Tibor Korach turns to the honourable Ministry of National Defence with a respectful request to support the attached application and recommend it for a favourable result. The application is intended for the medical faculty professorial staff of the Slovak University. It deals with the permission to continue and finish his studies by adding him to a 4% quota that is allowed for the Jewish students. Reasons for the application are the following:

During the last mobilisation in 1939 I did field medical service as a battalion doctor. I received a new military card and my rank as a lieutenant was confirmed. Both things happened in December 1939. Since I am one of the few Jewish college students who participated in the mandatory military service, I hope that the honourable Ministry will allow me with its kind recommendation to finish my studies. One of the major reasons for this is the fact that I have only six months left. As a retired soldier I cannot start a new life in this age, therefore I stand behind my request.

I submitted an application to the medical faculty professorial staff. I attach it in the description. Repeating my respectful request, I hope for a favourable result.

Inf. Lt. in the Reserves [hand-signed] MUC T. Korach Bratislava, Kuzmányho 19

⁸⁸ VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 6, No. 154,271.

⁸⁹ The abbreviation MUC is from Latin *medicinae universae candidatus* and was used as a designation for a student after the first state examination.

DOCUMENT 2

Bratislava, 20 June 1939 – Staff Capt. František Borský's request for granting an exemption from the Government Decree No. 63/1939 of Slovak Code.⁹⁰

Staff Captain František Milan Borský, Bratislava

Subject matter: request for an exemption pursuant to the Govt. Decree No. 63, Subsec. (2) Bratislava, 20 June 1939

Annexes: in accordance with the list

Presidency-in-Office of the Slovak State.Bratislava

I, undersigned František Milan Borský, ask for exemption pursuant to Section (2) of Government Decree No. 63 passed on 18 April 1939. This exemption would cause that I would not be looked at as a Jew. I was born on 6 February 1899 in a municipality called Šandorf in Senica District. I am a Staff Captain and, at that time, I worked as a railway track commanding officer. I also ask for this special permission to be applied to my wife and children. These are the reasons for my request:

I was born in the region that is purely Slovak and I became so close with locals that I have never had a reason to doubt that I am looked at as a Slovak.

I was never really interested in a Jewish religion that I grew up in. I attended a Slovak Roman Catholic primary school as a child. It was just out of respect towards my parents that me and my family formally converted to Christianity only after they died.

In terms of the fact that I always proclaim Slovak as my mother language, I ask for testimony from:1.) Managing Board of the municipality I was born in. I am also a member of this board.2.) the local HG⁹¹ headquarters in Šandorf in a form of opinion

3.) many Slovak officer with whom I served in the former Czechoslovak army; I mention by name Mr Turanec, a Lt Col and Artillery Commanding Officer of MNO, Mr Novotný, a Maj of GS and H.V.V. Vice Chief, Mr Krivoš, an Infantry Maj, Mr Klučík, an Artillery Captain, and others.

I have never been politically active, because I dedicate all my time and efforts to my professional improvement and to proper fulfilment of my service duties. As a proof, I refer to commendations from Battalion Headquarters and Division Headquarters. I received it “for an outstanding service”.

With repeating my request, I ask the honourable Presidency-in-Office to kindly take into account the aforementioned reasons with my humble assurance that a great honour and trust that would be given to me and my family with this exceptional act would always encourage me to continue diligently and perseveringly in a manly as well as honest work for army and thereby also for the nation and state.

Staff Capt. František Borský

90 VHA, f. MNO, Spisy důverné 1940 – 1942, box 106, inv. No.130.

91 Hlinka Guard.

DOCUMENT 3

Bratislava, 14 January 1941 – Recommendation by the Minister of Defence Ferdinand Čatloš addressed to the Prime Minister's Office concerning the granting of an exemption to František Borský and other Slovak army employees with regular payment from the Government Decree No. 63/1939 of Slovak Code.⁹²

Ministry of National Defence.

No. 50.761 reason I/3 – 1941.

Subject matter: Exemption from Govt. Regulation No. 63/39 Coll. concerning some military employees with regular payment and their wives – recommendation.

Bratislava, 14 January 1941

Presidency-in-Office of the Slovak State

Bratislava.

I send a request by Maj of GS František Milan Borský as an annex and ask for it to be discussed on the next Ministerial Council meeting. I also ask for it to have a favourable result since Borský is an outstanding expert in military transportation. He has a special training in railway service as a railway track commanding officer and he is irreplaceable for the Slovak army.

Wives of Infantry Maj Jozef Husár, Cav. Maj Ján Malár, Aut. Maj Henrich Makoň, Econ. Capt. Artur Ševčík, Aut. Sr Lt Emil Surovjak, Dep. Officer of Inf. Rudolf Poledník and Econ. Rep Peter Klenovič are considered Jewish in accordance with Govt. Decree No. 63/39 of Slovak Code. As a result, their husbands, who are officers in the Slovak army, also face various disadvantages, which are connected with its application.

For these reasons, as all the aforementioned Slovak army employees with regular payment are indispensable for the military service, I ask for favourable results concerning the wives' applications.

Karol Waldmann and Karol Hauser, who are civilian employees in the military administration, applied for dispensation pursuant to Subsection 2, § 1 of Govt. Decree No. 63/39 of Slovak Code. Their request was sent to Presidency-in-Office. I intercede for them as well and ask for the favourable decision regarding their application, because they are also irreplaceable.

“On guard.”

Minister

[hand-signed] F. Čatloš

⁹² VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1942, box 106, inv. No.130.

DOCUMENT 4

Bratislava, 28 March 1942 – Minister of Interior Alexander Mach writes to Ferdinand Čatloš, who is a Minister of National Defence. The letter deals with Lt Col František Borský's intervention in order to help Anna Rotterová and asks for similar cases to be prevented.⁹³

Bratislava, 28 March 1942

No.: 1185/1942

Your excellency, Mr Minister!

I heard about the following case:

Lt Col of GS Borský tried with various interventions to prevent his sister-in-law Anna Rotterová – a Jew – from being transported. When Borský thought he was successful, he came with his wife to a Jewish camp in Patrónka to pick her up. The fact that a high-ranking officer of the Slovak army would come dressed in a uniform to a Jewish camp and intervene in order to help a Jewish woman was outrageous for all the Aryans present, Slovaks and Germans alike. It is understandable that not everybody knows Lt Col Borský and his wife are Jews.

I respectfully ask for appropriate measures that would once and for all prevent [this – handwritten] senior officers-[handwritten] from publicly protecting Jews while wearing a uniform as well as avoid giving the impression to the public that a senior officer can obstruct lawful anti-Jewish measures. Since Borský himself is a Jew and so is his wife, I ask you to consider whether he should be punished at all. Thank you!

On guard!

Mach [hand-signed]

⁹³ VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 198, No. 294-296.

DOCUMENT 5

Bratislava, 1 April 1942. Lt Col František Borský's testimony concerning intervention in order to help Anna Rotterová.⁹⁴

Lt Col of GS František Borský Copy of the original text

Declaration

I declare in connection with the alleged intervention I made with an intention to achieve my wife's sister's release:

1. / It is true that my wife sent a stamped application to the Ministry of Interior in order for her sister Anna Rotterová to be released from a Jewish centre. The application was enclosed with the official documents proving that my 65-year-old father-in-law is sick and needs to be taken care of by his daughter Anna.

2./ Neither I nor my wife had any idea that Jewish women in the centre will be transported on that day and I also did not know whether the application was processed or not. It is only a coincidence that we went in front of Patrónka on that exact day.

When I came to eat lunch, I was in a uniform and intended to go back to the office, because I had to take care of many things.

As I was leaving, my wife told me she would go in front of Patrónka just in case to hear something about her sister. At first, I walked with her to the trolleybus. She then asked me to walk a little further with her. So I went with her to the final trolleybus station. I had no intention to intervene anywhere.

I had never been in Patronka before; therefore, I had no idea where the barracks with Jewish women are and how far people are allowed to go.

I saw men from the Ministry of Interior, when I came near one of the barracks, where names of Jewish women were called out. I felt awkward due to the fact that they could see me there so I immediately went to the city centre by trolleybus without speaking to any of them.3./ Although the circumstances are against me, I ask you to look at my actions benevolently. When I think about it clearly, I myself admit that maybe due to her dejection I walked further with her than it was appropriate.

I was always aware of my duties during the 24 years in military service and I never failed nor was I ever disciplinarily punished. I have never sought favouritism, because my legitimisation has always been my faithful work for which I have already received several commendations and honours, including Slovak honours of merit as well as medals for March and September 1939.

4./ In case that my officer's word is still relevant in this situation, I declare I will never get to a similar situation.

Bratislava, 1 April 1942

handwritten by Lt Col Borský

94 VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 198, No. 297.

DOCUMENT 6

Bratislava, 7 April 1942. Lt Col Štefan Tatarka's official record about the German army Colonel Roedera von Diersburg's intervention in favour of František Borský.⁹⁵

Official record.

Bratislava, 7 April 1942.

German army Lt Col von Roeder came to me on 7 April 1942 at 11:20 a.m. He asked me to pass his request to Minister of National Defence General Officer Čatloš. The request dealt with Lt Col of GS Borský's discharge from the Slovak army. Roeder said that he knows a lot about Slovak transportation matters and that if we discharge him now without giving him money, he can potentially cause problems to us and the Germans.

Colonel von Roeder asked me whether Mr Čatloš and minister Stano could make a deal and solve this issue in a way that Lt Col of GS Borský would be placed in a lower post than a civilian employee for Ministry of Transport. Colonel von Roeder then stated that he has already talked to minister Stano about this issue⁹⁶.

When I read to him and made him aware of Col Becker's⁹⁷ announcement regarding Borský, he said that Becker does not know Borský well, but that he knows him himself very well since he used to work with him for quite some time.

Lt Col of GS Tatarko

95 VHA, f. "53" in the 2nd MNO Section, No. 5342-88111.

96 Július Stano – Minister of Transport and Public Works, vice-president and member of the Presidium of the HSĽS.

97 Heinrich Becker – a military *attaché* from August 1939 to mid-1944.

DOCUMENT 7

Bratislava, 25 April 1942 – Request made by Lt Col Antonín Bardon, a foreman of the Military Section of the Office of the President. It was addressed to the Minister of National Defence due to his opinion about František Borský's request for exemption from the Government Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code in a form of mercy.⁹⁸

Bratislava, 25 April 1942

Borský, František, Milan, former Lt Col of GS –
request for exemption from the Government Decree
No. 198/41 in a form of mercy.

Ministry of National Defence,
name and description section foreman

Bratislava.

Office of the President sends an annexed request due to President's order. It is sent in order to express an opinion, mainly as to whether the information in the requests correspond with reality and also due to the submission of a possible proposal.

The applicant also states he claimed Slovak as his mother language in the Austrian-Hungarian army.

Let the report be kindly signed by Minister of National Defence himself, please submit it no later than 27 April 1942.

Please, return the attachment.

Military Section superintendent
of Office of the President:
handwritten by Lt Col Bardon [hand-signed]

⁹⁸ VHA, f. MNO, Spisy dôverné 1940 – 1945, box 198, No. 308.

DOCUMENT 8

Bratislava, 24 July 1942 – Announcement by Office of the President addressed to František Borský concerning the decision on his request for granting an exemption from the Government Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code.⁹⁹

Copy of the original text.

Number: 1567 cab. /1942 on 24 July 1942.

Mr
František Milan Borský
former Lt Col of GS

in Bratislava,
Svätá Anna 3 Rd.

On 24 July 1942, Mr President granted you an exemption from the regulation and § decree. He did so pursuant to § 255 Decree No. 198/1941 of Slovak Code. The exemption is also granted to your wife Hermína, née Rotterová, born 15 August 1902, as well as to your sons František Jaromír, born 20 May 1929, and Ladislav Milan, born 7 April 1935.

Office of the president informs you about that:

On guard!
On behalf of the Office of the President:
Dr Neuman, hand-signed

⁹⁹ VHA, f. "53" in the 2nd MNO Section, No. 81044.

DOCUMENT 9

Sereď, 4 June 1943 – Request by Štefan Gubič addressed to Minister of National Defence Ferdinand Čatloš concerning the release from a Jewish labour camp in a form of mercy.¹⁰⁰

His excellency!

Ministry of National Defence!
in Bratislava,

Undersigned Šimon Gubič, a war invalid, humbly asks for mercy and release from Jewish labour camp in Sereď.

Reason:

I was born in Nitra in 1892. I started a mandatory military service in 1913. The war started in 1914 and I was one of the first soldiers who went on a Russian front. I was injured near a town called Krašník. I came back in December 1914, but this time I was on a Serbian front. We were transported on the Italian one in June 1915, where I was wounded again. I went on a front for the third time in December 1915. It was a Russian front. On 17 May 1916, I was sent as a corporal to a patrol. The fight broke out and the Russians captured me with serious injury and gunshot wound to the head. I spent 5 years in Siberia.

I was honoured twice, once with bronze and once with a small silver medal.

I came back home in 1921 as an invalid unable to work and from then on and I have to see a doctor regularly.

I got married, but my wife died three years ago and I stayed alone with two underage children. I have never been in prison. I raise my kids as Slovaks and I can prove it with the help of the Nitra police.

As the evidence, I attach two medical reports, one letter by the Ministry of Social Care in Prague and two photographs.

I refer to my comrades-in-arms who are still alive Baláž, a butcher's assistant at Čapoš's near Turecká brána, Nitra. Žák, a worker at the landowner Rolfes in Nitra.

I repeat my request and hope in its favourable result. I conclude my letter with my deepest respect:

Sereď, n/V. 4/VI. 1943.

Šimon Gubič

Jewish labour camp

Barrack II.

¹⁰⁰ VHA, f. MNO, Kabinet ministra (1940 – 1941), box 3, No. 350 315.

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Jozef KLEMENT – Eduard NIŽŇANSKÝ

Life of Rudolf Klein-Klement, DVM¹

The text is the personal account of Rudolf Klein-Klement from the period when Jews were persecuted during the existence of the Slovak State.

The interviewee:

*I was born on 11 March 1906 in Liptovský Mikuláš. My father was a small sole trader – a bookbinder (...). He became ill and died in Nitra in 1910 at the age of 61. He left behind four sons. These small children were raised by their mother, who became a widow. She stayed in Liptovský Mikuláš. There was four of us: my oldest brother Martin, born in 1898, Alexander *1899, Artur *1903, and finally me, the baby of the family, born in 1906. My mother's name was Rozália Kleinová, née Richterová. She came from a family with 8 children. She had 4 brothers and 4 daughters, all of whom lived in Budapest. Only her nephew is alive now. He lives in London.*

I spend my student years in Liptovský Mikuláš where I attended Jewish folk school until 1912. Then I enrolled in the Reálne reformné gymnázium (type of grammar school) in Liptovský Mikuláš. This school changed later on when the 1918 overthrow took place.² I enrolled to the third grade at gymnasium in the same year. It was in a Slovak school where I completed my secondary education in 1924 with the school-leaving exam (maturita). That same year I started to attend Vysoká škola zverolekárska in Brno³. I graduated from this university in 1929 with the doctoral examination. Then I practiced veterinary medicine. I completed two years of military service in the cavalry regiment from 1929 to 1931, which was before I started to practise medicine. I completed it in Berehove.⁴

Then I lived in Považská Bystrica where I worked as a veterinarian. I started to work there in 1931 and practised veterinary medicine until the creation of the Slovak State in 1939. I was prohibited to do my work here. It was interesting. The Slovak State protected

1 Viera Skákalová interviewed Rudolf Klement, DVM as a part of Shoah-Spielberg Foundation on 16 Sept. 1997 in Turčianske Teplice. The interview is released with the permission of Rudolf Klement's son Jozef Klement and his daughter Zuzana Klementová-Altmanová, MD.

2 This refers to the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Hungarian was the language of instruction at the *Reálne reformné gymnázium* in Liptovský Mikuláš until 1918.

3 It was called *Vysoká škola zverolekárska* in Czech and it was established in 1918. Right now, it is called *Veterinární univerzita Brno*.

4 Berehove is now a city in Ukraine. It was a part of Carpathian Ruthenia during the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918 – 1938). Carpathian Ruthenia was a part of this state at that time.

veterinarians.⁵ This is how I got to Trnava. I started to work as a private veterinarian in Trnava in 1942 and I stopped providing my services there in 1944.

Question: What were the relations between the Jewish community and the rest of the population (in Považská Bystrica) before the war? Did you experience anti-Semitism during that period?

Answer: No, I did not. Považská Bystrica was quite a tolerant town. We attended church.⁶ It looked nice from the inside. Religious life was not very strict. They were all moderate neologists. It was a neological church. It formally observed Jewish feasts.

Jews were more important when it comes to politics. They were important in the communist party. (...) They were assessed as communists and deported among the first.⁷ As far as I know, none of these young people survived concentration camps. One of them was a very eminent painter Imro Weiner Král'⁸ as well as young Jewish men, Dr Heller and Dr Adler. After the 1942 deportations started, they were included in the transports and died in a short time.

Question: How did the 1942 deportations affect your family?

Answer: Nobody from the family was deported⁹.

Question: When did you get married?

Answer: I got married in 1942. My wife's name was Alžbeta, née Tausová. Our wedding took place after the deportations started. The fact that she married me saved her. The entire family was then protected.



Klement family in 1967

5 Slovak State was not able to replace Jewish citizens in some occupations. For example, doctors, pharmacists, veterinarians, and engineers were socially necessary for the Slovak majority, therefore, they were given exemptions. That was also DVM R. Klein's case. The state was not able to replace these professionals immediately because the Slovak majority did not study such things in sufficient numbers. However, it was only a question of time when Jewish citizens would be replaced.

6 A synagogue

7 He talks about the first wave of deportations of Jews in 1942, which took place from 25 March 1942 to 20 Oct. 1942.

8 Imro Weiner-Král', whose name is often written as Imrich Weiner-Král' (1901, Považská Bystrica - 1978, Bratislava), was a Slovak painter and printmaker of Jewish origin. He was one of the most original representatives of the Slovak visual art surrealism and Art Nouveau expressionism. He and F. Malý organised the first surrealist exhibition in Bratislava in 1936. He emigrated to Paris in 1938. He lived there until 1950. Then he came back to Czechoslovakia.

9 He talks about the first wave of deportations in 1942.

Remark and question: This means that you practised veterinary medicine during the Slovak State until the Uprising in 1944.¹⁰ Then the exceptions probably ceased to exist.

Answer: As soon as the Germans came, we were left at the mercy of the Hlinka Guard members and they truly used this opportunity.

Question: Could you talk in a little more detail about your life in that period, please? You worked in Trnava. When the Uprising broke out, what happened to you?

Answer: Me and my wife went to the mountains as soon as the Uprising broke out. We created a small group there. To be more specific, it was in Stará Lehota near Piešťany. We stayed in this place for about three weeks. We were quietly hiding in an old building, but we were given away. No one used to go out, we were protected. There was some local citizen, maybe a neighbour, who probably saw my wife and gave us away. Members of the Hlinka Guard came after that. This happened at the end of September. They surrounded the entire group at the beginning of October. They deported us to prison in Nové Mesto nad Váhom. We were transported from there to the camp in Sered'.¹¹

This was not the case of my wife. She went to get her own mother, whom she also had taken to this camp. In a meantime, I was loaded into a wagon and deported to Auschwitz. It happened on 10 October 1944. Since then, I had not seen my wife for a long time.

She was protected in Sered'. There was a police that safeguarded her. This was happening thanks to an acquaintance from Trnava, Dr Galko, who was the gendarmerie commander. She worked in the camp from October to November. She managed to survive and work under false documents as a wife in a mixed marriage with an Aryan from Tarnovo. This served as her protection.¹² Her Jewish origin was given away by Komlóš from Piešťany. He was a very nice man, but he started to work for commander Bruner in the concentration camp.¹³ She was exposed by him. My wife was therefore loaded into the transport and she went to Ravensbrück in Mecklenburg in November 1944. The train went directly there.¹⁴

Question: What happened to you?

Answer: We went to Auschwitz concentration camp where we were placed in

10 This refers to the Slovak National Uprising of 1944.

11 They were transported to the concentration camp in Sered'. The Germans reopened this camp in September 1944 and carried out the second wave of the deportations of Jews from Slovakia from here.

12 The husband was Aryan according to the false documents.

13 Alois Brunner (1912–2010?), SS-Hauptsturmführer, he was one of Adolf Eichmann's collaborators. He was in charge of deportations of Jews from Vienna, Thessaloniki, and France. He worked in Slovakia from September 1944 to March 1945. His duty was to organise the deportations of Jews from the Jewish concentration camp in Sered'.

14 Nazi Ravensbrück concentration camp existed between years 1939 and 1945. Around 130,000 people were imprisoned there. It was designated for women, but there were also men, especially since 1944. The prisoners were freed on 30 April 1945 by the Soviet army.



Alžbeta and Rudolf Klement in Luhačove in 1947

a Gypsy camp. We were not allowed to go out at all. As soon as I saw that chlorine lime everywhere as well as how the life was there, but also as soon as I smelled the death smell and the prisoners were told that there are possibilities to work, me and my friends from Trnava decided to volunteer. We were a small group and left for Gleiwitz.¹⁵ That was on 15 or 17 October 1944. I worked there in a wagon repair shop as a locksmith. That is the reason why they lost the war. Conditions were quite tolerable there. Only the camp commander Boyl (?) executed people for every triviality. Death was a punishment for everything – if somebody fell asleep, they would come to *Appellplatz* 5 minutes later.

The prisoner would then be killed. If the execution took place in the repair shop, other prisoners would have to bring the body to the camp so that there would be a total number of the prisoners when they were counted. A certain turning point occurred on 17 January 1945. Soviets started a big offensive close to Baranavichy near Warsaw. They broke the front and got close to Auschwitz concentration camp that was liberated at the end of January.¹⁶ It happened when we were there. On 17 January the dismantling of the engine house began and we were subsequently forced to join the death march, which lasted 4 days. We had to walk during the day and also during the night. We got to Blechhammer¹⁷ and waited there the entire night. We met many people from Auschwitz concentration camp. The conditions there were good as was the coexistence between the authorities and prisoners. The conditions were quite human. There were even remnants of flowers and flowerbeds but almost no food. Bread and sauerkraut was all we had. We pried open the storehouse and found sauerkraut there. That was our food until Soviets arrived. On 22 January 1945 Soviets broke the camp wall with an artillery fire and prisoners were set free.

That is how our march started. We walked and got near a small forest. We heard soldiers, they were in tanks. We did not know whether they were Germans

15 This city is now in Poland and its name is Gliwice. Gliwice was the location of four satellite camps of the Auschwitz concentration camp between years 1944 and 1945. DVM Klement was probably in the Gleiwitz I camp, where he worked for the company named Reichsbahnausbesserungswerk Gleiwitz.

16 The Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated on 27 Jan. 1945 by the Soviet army.

17 This is now a city in Poland called Blachownia Śląska.



Rudolf Klement with his brother Artur Klein in 1985

or Soviets. If they were Soviets, we would be saved. If they were Germans, we would be doomed. We were a small group of around 10 prisoners, who set out on the march. I recall names Blody, Weiss, Schneider. We always stayed together. It turned out that Soviets were coming. They welcomed us very cordially and gave us sugar as well as bread. It was obvious that good relations were still present in this camp. Then we marched. This is how we got to Częstochowa. That was in early March. We found accommodation there. We volunteered to work in the kitchen of a French restaurant, where we were unwillingly but nevertheless accepted by others. They also gave us something to eat. This lasted until 07 March 1945 when we marched to liberated Prešov. We moved from Prešov to Humenné by any means we could – on foot, by car, or by train. We stayed there until the end of March. Then we travelled by train through Miskolc in Hungary and got to Trnava on 17 April 1945. New life started after that. The phase of reconstruction and revival came.

My wife was taken to Ravensbrück, where she was set free only on 08 May 1945. She was transported with the women from Lidice to Czechia and came back home through Prague. We met in June. She was destroyed and her health was in a bad shape. That is how we started our new life.

Question: What happened to the other members of the family?

Answer: My oldest brother Martin, a doctor, was murdered in Kremnička together with his wife Ilona and daughter Eva. The same thing happened to

my aunt, who was born around 1885. Another brother Alexander and his wife were hiding in Kopanice. They managed to survive. My last brother Artúr was hiding with his wife in Branč near Senica, they survived. My mother-in-law was deported and died in a concentration camp. Two of my brothers-in-law, my wife's brothers, were so exhausted that they were shot and killed during the death march. Our family was not so impacted.

Question: What was life like after the war?

Answer: I had to stop working in Veľký Meder due to health reasons – pleurisy. I moved to Turčianske Teplice, where I live right now.

Children are my consolation. Daughter Zuzana Altmannová is a paediatrician, her husband became ill and tragically passed away. I also have granddaughters. They bring happiness to my life. I have one son, too. He lives in Zvolen and owns a company called Klemo. The bride is a doctor of natural sciences and works in the haematology department. The granddaughters are schoolgirls.

Question: Would you like to mention any other extraordinary event from your life?

Answer: While I was imprisoned in Nové Mesto nad Váhom, the Hlinka Guard members found a dynamite in an old building (probably in the one where I was hiding). They accused Mr. Klement of possession of it and wanted to execute him.

Fortunately, a German from Vienna was present during the investigation. He looked into it properly and found out that it was old, mouldered dynamite, which was probably used in the construction of the road and bridge.

Question: Have more things like this happened to you?

Answer: We were psychologically broken. There was no resistance. We always gathered in the camp¹⁸ and tried to make some kind of resistance, but we didn't succeed. There were always traitors who informed on others. Our friends were punished. There was a physical punishment – 25 strikes with a stick. This is how they silenced us. In the beginning, there was discrimination in the Slovak State when it comes to the practice of one's profession. I went to do a medical exam, to find out the health condition of some young animal from the livestock. There was a colleague and he said that I could not do it because I was Jewish. This discrimination lasted from 1939 to 1942. It stopped when I came to Trnava. I performed my duties there, it was a rather good life until 1944.

Question: Have you experienced anti-Semitism after the war?

Answer: There has not been the obvious anti-Semitism after the war. It was hidden, pushed into the background. Concealed anti-Semitism exists to present days. I have never experienced the patent racism when someone would attack me or shout derogatory terms at me.

18 This means concentration camp.

Judaica et Holocaustica

Reviews

CODDINGTON, Andrea. *Moje javisko svet*. Bratislava : Ikar, 2021, 256 p.
ISBN 978-80-551-8018-2.

“History is written. It just needs to be made eternal.”

Andrea Coddington wrote many bestsellers, including biographical novels *Židovka* (2010), *Jozef Bednárík* (2014), or *Tenis je môj život* (2019), which were a success with readers. The author introduces Dalma Špitzerová to the readers in her newest biographical novel *Moje javisko svet*. She was an acclaimed actress who told Coddington about her life story during pleasant personal meetings in a flat under the Bratislavan Calvary. Her journey was marked by the cruel events, which occurred during the Second World War. Coddington made notes from these meetings, which she subsequently published as a fictionalised interview. Its twenty chapters describe the woman's strength. She *“was always the same, only the world continued to change”*¹, and she had never been broken by any person or regime. She was overpowered only by death. Dalma died two weeks prior to her ninety-sixth birthday.

The author writes about the impressions she got from the actress right in the prologue—she sees her as an ethereal, fragile but strong woman, who has a Jewish origin deep-seated in her. This ethnicity has always been a part of her family. Dalma Špitzerová grew up in Liptovský Mikuláš during the times when *“everybody was equal”*.² At the same time, she talked very sensorily about the atmosphere in the town, mentioning scents, flavours, and colours. She was very proud of her ancestors, whom she described in a quite chronicle way. However, she went through a hard time during the Second World War due to her origin and identity – as the nationalism grew, so did the anti-Jewish sentiment in the society and fears of war increased. This caused Dalma to mature quickly. She had a desire to become an actress, but the only thing she *“was really left with was only her life”*.³ Paradoxically, it is acting thanks to which Dalma survived. She had to pretend to be someone else during the times when her ‘own self’ was suppressed and unwanted. However, in her own words, *“only the wisest realize that they always play themselves”*.⁴

1 CODDINGTON, Andrea. *Moje javisko svet*. Bratislava : Ikar, 2021, p. 244.

2 Ibid., p. 37.

3 Ibid., p. 73.

4 Ibid., p. 17.

Dalma's description of events escalates quickly – hearsays about Jewish transports to the camps were confirmed, and due to fear of the unknown, her parents decided to send their two older daughters to stay with the family in Budapest. After their arrival, the parents also sent a 15-year-old Dalma there. She finds work and a place to live in Budapest. However, it is obvious from what she said that life in this city was full of humiliation connected with the loss of identity and privacy. She points out the fragile line between dignity and death—immediately after the authorities found out that the three sisters had been staying there illegally, they sent them to the Slovak border. Two sisters were deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp and Dalma was left alone “*without help and feeling vulnerable*”.⁵ Apart from a short stay in a hospital, her passion for acting and the ability to show traits that are not natural to her also saved her from being transported together with her sisters.

Coddington captured Dalma's *élan vital* well. It was strong and truly indestructible. The famous actress still had this vital force during the interview with the author and it did not disappear despite the times she went through after her discharge from the hospital, imprisonment in Uzhhorod and subsequent transportation to the camp in Nováky. It sustained in spite of the fact that in the hard times there was no room for individualism and life was reduced only to the pure self-preservation instinct. The only thing that kept a person alive was human closeness. She experienced it with Juraj Špitzer, who was a writer and later a dissident. He took her under his wing and they married after the war. They fell in love in the camp. They had known each other, but they became closer only in alienation and inhumanity. Paradoxically, her acting career also started in the camp—prisoners used to perform Čapka's play *The Makropulos Secret* and Dalma got her first role there.

The interview with Dalma Špitzerová, who was an actress at *Nová scéna* (a theatre in Bratislava) and later on at the *Tatra Revue* (a cabaret in the same city), retrospectively captures the growing distaste and undying love of life, which could be felt from her even in old age. Dalma received several awards, including the Ľudovít Štúr Order 2nd class and The Memory of Nations Awards. Old age is precisely the important moment on which Coddington built the novel – its contrast with youth is obvious mainly in the experience and perception regarding various phenomena from two points of view. All these things appear in the book when Dalma's continuous speech is episodically interrupted. This has a very captivating effect and it is a moment that makes reader stop for a short time and think: “*Do you know what it feels like to be transported to your own death?*” she asked me. She was looking me straight in the eye. I shrugged my shoulders, sympathising with her, but no, I could not even imagine something so horrible.”⁶

5 Ibid., p. 127.

6 Ibid., p. 121.

The relativisation of meanings is also connected with the generational difference regarding the way reality is perceived. These meanings differ with experiences and a contrast like this causes them to become more serious: *"I acknowledge, you, young people may think that words are guns. [...] That is because nobody has pointed a real submachine gun at you, Andrea. Everything is relative to its own degree."*⁷

However, contrasts used by the author are not present only in the generational difference and related differences in life experiences. Certain paradoxical connections are in the entire novel. This fact highlights the grievousness with regard to the described situations: humanity is confronted with inhumanity, dignity with humiliation, closeness with strangeness...

As Dalma was growing up, her view of the world and the life situations she got into also changed. There is a certain degree of *naïveté* associated with childhood, but gradually she forms her own opinion and gains wisdom, deliberation, courage to speak up her mind, as well as ever-increasing effort to survive regardless of the circumstances. This is also the way she describes the important historical events that formed those times: she describes the signs concerning anti-Jewish attitudes in society with a certain level of *naïveté*. This is also true regarding their growth. However, as she was growing up, she started to have a more realistic view – Hitler's rise to power is associated with distaste and ironic remarks. As she was becoming older, her statements towards the regiminal representatives became more expressive: *"Tiso hid the way he lived – as a dirty dog."*⁸ Her growing distaste for the regime culminated when she started to feel the desire to join the Slovak National Uprising together with Juraj. He did not allow her to do that, so she left for Banská Bystrica. However, she fled with a group of Russian partisans as the uprising was gradually suppressed into the mountains. However, after the release, she found out that her parents were shot dead despite being exempt.

The way Coddington took down her statements, the talking about the war period and the socialism that followed, when she had to deal with the negative consequences of being a dissident's wife and therefore lost her job in *Slovenský rozhlas* (Slovak Radio) as an assistant director, underlines the vital need for belonging, ever-renewing hope, and individual's strength despite the fact that the protagonist's emotions are in the background and the events, together with the effort to capture them precisely, come to the forefront. However, the fact that Dalma's inner life as a narrator is suppressed to the background is already explained by the author in the introduction: *"She would like to repress those [memories] that are painful, but she no longer tries to forget."*⁹ Dalma did not break a promise she and her sisters made to one another – never to talk about what they had to do in order to save themselves. This is the reason why she spoke about her story and not about her personal sacrifices.

7 Ibid., p. 13.

8 Ibid., p. 201.

9 Ibid., p. 6.

However, it is important to note that the author has also written several novels intended for women, such as *Predohra*, *Milovanie*, or her debut autobiography *Mal to byť pekný život*. Thus, I think that novel *Moje javisko svet* is greatly influenced by this experience the author has – her style is sometimes very reminiscent of women’s novel, full of sentimentality and superficial effect on reader through emotiveness and not through aesthetics of the novel. I would expect that language and stylistic gradation would accompany the escalation and gradation concerning the events described in the novel – however, language and its stylistic use is the same in the entire book, everything seems to happen involuntarily and the seriousness of the events is not appropriately expressed by language. The fact is, however, that works depicting stories of people just like Dalma are still equally relevant and urgent, because “*history is written. It just needs to be made eternal.*”¹⁰, so that we constantly remind ourselves that everything bad has already happened and we need to learn from it.

Romana Antalová

10 Ibid., p. 6.

ČENĚEL SOLČANSKÁ, Mariana. *Proces s mŕtvym*. Bratislava : Ikar, 2021, 320 p. ISBN 978-80-551-8127-1.

Mariana Čengel Solčanská's book, *Proces s mŕtvym*, is a prose fiction adaptation of Jozef Tiso's post-war trial and related historical events. It deals primarily with the time period from Tiso's arrest in Altötting until his execution, which took place on 18 April 1947. Čengel reconstructs the basic historical facts and contexts related to the trial with a creative possibility to deviate from a language norm. They are enriched with the experiential-literary layers that add to the factual basis of prose.

The story revolves around a fictional archaeologist Cyrila Gregus. She is the author of the historical reconstructions, which she places within the framework of the "*procesu s mŕtvym*" (trial of the dead), which is already introduced in the title of the book. The title represents a double shift in meaning and refers to the fact that archaeology brings back historical figures. It also refers to Tiso's fatalistic attitude during his trial, "*he used to say to his lawyer, 'In reality, I am already dead, Mr. Žabkay. I live for an extra time.' This is also a trial. I will deliver a verdict as well. Bring in the dead.*"¹ The tension between the historical and fictional levels is formulated already at the beginning through Cyrila Gregus. It is articulated almost as an obligatory genre signal: "*I know what happened. Everybody talked and wrote about it. I know archives like a palm of my hand; it is my job to dig in its recess, the earth, a masonry, and graves. [...] Maybe I am making things up, but that does not mean that every word is not true.*"² The concept of "truthfulness" is very blurred since it can imply a factual objectivity on the one hand and an artistic "probability" on the other. Both approaches are equally legitimate because they meet in the process of connecting individual and collective, subjective and objective. This is mainly true in terms of conscience matters and moral responsibility.

The move from the individual to the general (collective) is exactly what is characteristic for this book – a narrative basis is formed by a narrative line of Cyrila Gregus' family history. This turns the reader's attention to the relations between the individual and general history. Research regarding the family history starts with Gregus' great-grandparents Emília and Jozef, who was drafted into the army during the First World War. This happened after their wedding. The responsibility motif connects the main storyline, which is Tiso's trial, with a secondary narration about the bishop in Nitra, Tomáš Debrethey, and his illegal relationship with Anna, a fisherwoman, who gave birth to an unacknowledged child. Apart from this, the book contains dramatic sequences from Auschwitz concentration camp. However, their peripheral position in the overall narrative plan creates a risk regarding a disproportionate thematic simplification of the issue; in general, concerns formulated in a relatively old polemic are renewed

1 ČENĚEL SOLČANSKÁ, Mariana. *Proces s mŕtvym*. Bratislava : Ikar, 2021, p. 24.

2 Ibid., p. 24.

during the reading of the parts in question. This disputation deals with the fact whether the Holocaust should be rendered reverently and austerely (Claud Lanzmann's film called *Shoah* and László Nemes' *Son of Saul*) or in a dramatically intensified way (e.g., Spielberg's *Schindler's List*). Since the book has something else as a thematic centre, a sufficient reflection concerning these issues is not possible.

Prose reconstructs the past as a structure, in which individual narrative threads overlap and connect often seemingly unrelated facts. The narrative "archaeological" impulse manifests itself in the tendency to go deeper into the past regarding the events and uncover the layers of possible connections, causes, and contexts. The result is a rather rich tapestry of historical characters (the truth), who usually interact in dramatically effective constellations (the probability). However, it needs to be said that dramatically probable sometimes becomes histrionically improbable: *"Looking at the mouldering remains that belonged to Alica Politzerová, doctor's granddaughter, Alexander Mach, who is the Hlinka Guards commanding officer and Minister of Interior, started to cry. 'I did not know about this!' he lamented over himself, 'I swear! It is true that I wanted Slovakia without Jews but not in this way! I did not want it this way!'"*³ In general, however, the chosen proportion between facts and their literary representation is productive as far as readers are concerned. The author uses her experience with film in order to create a "vivid" picture of the past, which means that she employs an edited change concerning storyline levels with an emphasis on a sensorily specific visual detail: *"A three-year-old boy, their youngest child, was sitting on the ground playing with a squeaky wooden bird. Mach sighed loudly, his face suddenly looked even more haggard and ashen than before"*.⁴ The author's procedure characteristic of Čengel Solčanská is a citation and an intertextual reference (often documented in a footnote) – Dominik Tatarka's *Navrávačky* is quoted in the passages where he appears as a journalist dealing with Tiso's trial. However, the author also uses an implicit paraphrase, for example sequence in which *"little Domino [...] inconspicuously walked closely around to see a white breast full of milk and a dark nipple as big as a coin"*⁵ is probably an allusion to a similar passage in Tatarka's book called *Sám proti noci*. Prose also uses a false quotation attribution, for example Anton Neuwirth's utterance that a priest who commits homicide becomes *irregularis* and he can no longer celebrate mass is attributed in the book to Tiso himself. This utterance appears in Trančík's documentary called *Tisove tiene*.

The dramatic core of the central storyline is formed by the ambivalent relationship between Jozef Tiso and his lawyer Ernest Žabkay – the role of Tiso's second defence attorney, Martin Grec, is made less important here. In the text, Žabkay is basically the one who tries to find the answers to questions

3 Ibid., p. 219.

4 Ibid., p. 21.

5 Ibid., p. 59.

concerning moral responsibility, while his interactions with Tiso are on the one hand characterised by the will to cooperate and communicate, on the other a mutual ironic-condemning distance is also present. The trial course itself is contextualised by the passages recapitulating Tiso's life up to that time. Čengel Solčanská writes about his birth, childhood, a field curator post during the First World War, and relocation from the Nitra bishop's office to the parish in Bánovce after he was convicted in 1923 of the public manifestation of anti-Czech attitudes. She also writes about his promotion to the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party leader following Andrej Hlinka's death. However, the core is the wartime Slovak Republic. The author mentions the events leading to its establishment (Tiso's and Hitler's meeting on 13 March 1939 in Berlin). She does not omit the Salzburg Conference, Tiso's infamous anti-Jewish speech in Holíč, and the honouring of German soldiers on 30 October 1944 in Banská Bystrica after the suppression of the Slovak National Uprising. The last thing had an impact on the period following the transfer of the front to the Slovak State and after Tiso's subsequent escape westward.

The resulting image of Jozef Tiso mainly emphasizes his narcissistic traits as well as the effort for his own moral exculpation and the moment when Tiso "closes his eyes" to the depressive reality with regard to the evidentiary situation: "*Tiso, with cassock protruding on his stomach, does not watch the film. He does not see Alica, the granddaughter of the doctor, who filled his lungs with life fifty-nine years ago*".⁶ At the same time, a general conceptual tendency tends more to the reproduction of facts and asking consequent questions than to the formulation of explicit conclusions or evaluations.

Patrik Miskovics

6 Ibid., p. 221.

LIPSTADTOVÁ, E. Deborah. *Antisemitizmus tady a ted'*. (translation by Václav Petr). Prague : TRITON, 2020, 263 p. ISBN 978-80-7553-761-4.

The lifelong professional and expert activities of historian Deborah E. Lipstadt, who is currently a professor of modern Jewish history and the Holocaust at Emory University in Atlanta, stood out among the world's academic as well as general public, especially in connection with the Irving v. Penguin Books Limited, Deborah E. Lipstadt litigation.

In 1996, David Irving, British amateur historian and probably the most famous figure of revisionism, sued the publishing house and Deborah Lipstadt for libel since she called¹ him, among other things, a manipulator of historical facts, who tries to deny the existence of the holocaust. This trial, which ended in 2000 and led to the conclusion that Irving, among other things, actively denies the existence of the holocaust, was also an inspiring impulse for cinematographic production. In 2016, the film *Denial* was made in an attempt to reflect the events connected with the litigation in question and complex circumstances of the evidentiary process. Lipstadt herself comes back to the trial in some of her works.² One of them is *Antisemitizmus tady a ted'* (Ant-Semitism: Here and Now).

The name itself suggests that the author wanted to reflect one of the oldest political and social phenomena but also to analyse it in terms of current forms. Concerning geographical area, she examines contemporary anti-Semitic discourse in America and partly in Europe as well.

Structure of the book is thematic. The monograph has an analytical and essayistic character. The author wrote the book as a correspondence between three people – professor Lipstadt and two fictional characters. These characters are a Jewish student Abigail and Joe, who is a teacher at faculty of law. This type of communication lasted a year. He and Abigail are supposed to represent a rich scale of impulses from real protagonists, students and colleagues. This outlined representation of the topic is clear, appealing to readers and interesting with regard to genre. In terms of form, the work is divided into seven main thematic parts and several smaller sections. A written dialogue is set in 2018. The characters primarily draw on contemporary topics, but they are also interested in the previous events, and especially those that happened in the past twenty years. The monograph is full of information. It is a selection from large number of topics, which in the author's rendition give the whole picture of present forms of anti-Semitism in connection with the hatred problem. In terms of methodology, the author draws from the large literary material, including professional literature, media and institutional documents.

1 LIPSTADT, E. Deborah. *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*. New York : Penguin Books, 1994. Available in Czech translation: LIPSTADTOVÁ, E. Deborah. *Popírání holocaustu. Silící útok na pravdu a paměť*. Prague : Paseka, 2001.

2 LIPSTADT, E. Deborah. *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier*. New York : Ecco, 2005. Available in Czech translation: LIPSTADTOVÁ, E. Deborah. *Historie před soudem: můj den u soudu s Davidem Irvingem*. Prague : Epoque, 2006.

The work needs to be seen, among other things, through a prism of its didactic value. The minimum it presents to the reader is the way how one can become involved in a dialogue about the current socio-political phenomena in educational process at different levels of educational institutions.

Lipstadt with her reactions subsequently offers inspiration how to thoroughly analyse the complex phenomenon of hatred, conspiracy thinking, extremism and prejudice, which result in anti-Semitism, racism, as well as xenophobia. This type of inspiration also pertains to the problem of the holocaust denial. This work also demonstrates how students or other conversational partners can become actively involved in these reflections and how it is possible to further develop their own contemplations with creative and coherent feedback. These examples go well beyond the historical context. They clarify the continuity of the individual problems, which are seemingly isolated from one another.

In the preface, Lipstadt outlined her perspective from which she approaches the issue, as well as the basic line of the book: The author says she tried to name what we are actually witnessing today. She then evolves other questions (p. 10). One of the monograph's crucial theses is at its beginning and it says that if the objects of the hate speech are from the Jewish community, the question of safety pertains to other minorities as well, and the issue that started as anti-Semitism can also "spill over" to other minorities (p. 11).

In the first chapter called *Antisemitizmus: konverzace* (Anti-Semitism: A Conversation), the author focused, i. a., on the definition of the anti-Semitism, etymology and transcription of the term itself. In the next part called *Taxonomie antisemitů* (A taxonomy of the anti-Semite), Lipstadt categorises the forms of anti-Semitic manifestations and those who spread them.

Reflections aimed at naming the methods of those who are nowadays involved in radical and extremist movements can be regarded as constructive. These methods are used in public discourse. The given considerations can be deemed as constructive and, to tell the truth, definitely topical in Slovakia. They try to camouflage their appearance also by intentional use of ambiguous language. The real meaning of these words is understandable only in a broader and often referential context.

The author then describes the phenomenon of the so-called "alternative right" or *alt-right* movement. An explicit anti-Semitism is not its conceptual part. Members of this movement present themselves as "*white nationalists, and patriots who are convinced of their own marginalisation or more precisely endangerment by other ethnic and racial groups*" (p. 44). Lipstadt subsequently analyses what is this movement like and says that in the future we probably will not see Nazi or racist symbols during its communities' demonstrations. However, she thinks that their ideology and thinking is as extreme as those of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) members because they "*spread superiority of white race and in their opinion a typical American citizen is a white Christian*". She uses what Richard Spencer did as an example. He honoured "*white America*" by raising

his hand while holding a glass and shouted: “*Hail Trump! (...)*” This happened few days after the 2016 American elections. After all, the author is especially right about the fact that it is crucial to pay close attention to what the so-called alternative right writes and says. These statements still contain anti-Semitic and racial postulates (pp. 44-45).

In relation to the given problem, Lipstadt did not omit the need to ask questions regarding the protesters who do not necessarily identify with the groups mentioned above, which are either ideological or based on certain idea (pp. 38-41).

It is also true that the increasing tendency concerning anti-Semitic expressions can be partially attributed to the rise in the virtual communication and the development of the social media, which have a potential to attract more recipients in a short time and provide more opportunities to share various content (p. 41).

This topic is directly connected with the matter of responsibility regarding the members of political and public life. The aforementioned responsibility relates to the spread of hate speech. One can certainly agree that if somebody shares on the social media the openly anti-Semitic posts by these groups or their implicit references concerning anti-Jewish postulates, it leads to their legitimization and shift in acceptance of hate speech to the level of communication norm. The reasons to do this are various and often pragmatic, starting with the effort to broaden the electorate.

In this monograph, right side and left side of the political spectrum are subjected to the same critical reflection. As an example, the author uses Donald Trump’s political campaign in the USA and Jeremy Corbyn’s activity in Great Britain (pp. 46-69).

The third chapter called *Zasazení antisemitismu do kontextu* (Contextualizing anti-Semitism) contains, i. a., many different examples how individual stereotypes continue to exist in various types of action. People who do these things do not, at first, have to realise that their attitudes reflect certain level of prejudice. A good example regarding this fact is the case of candidate to judicial university body in the student council. When it comes to some students, her Jewish identity and activity in local community a priori disqualified her. She was elected in the second round, only after the teacher, who was in the council, told that the membership in Jewish organisations does not necessarily mean a conflict of interest (pp. 90-91).

In a part about conspiracy thinking, the author expresses certain scepticism regarding the fact that education and rational evidence can influence “*committed anti-Semites*” (p. 82) and those who create conspiracy theories. Right after this, she says that education has an irreplaceable function concerning mainly the rest of the population with less extreme attitudes.

The following passages are a thematic selection with regard to rationalization of religiously, ethnically or racially motivated attacks but also murders, as well

as comparison between racism and anti-Semitism, as an issue of radical Islam. In the fifth chapter called *Popírání holokaustu: od tvrdého jádra k měkkému jádru* (Holocaust denial: from hard-core to soft-core, pp. 126-147), Lipstadt tells the reader about her own experience with holocaust denial. The author critically analyses the most frequent arguments used by those who deny it. This includes “methodology” concerning the aforementioned phenomenon, which truly cannot be regarded as a responsible way of handling the factual material.

She subsequently talks about the atmosphere on campus where the tension between Israelis and Palestinians is reflected. She shows convincing evidence that prejudice, sometimes even radicalism inspired not only by classic anti-Semitism, but also by BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions), are present in academic and intellectual circles as well. She writes about anti-Semitism of left-wing and progressive communities. This attitude is based primarily on the rejection of Israel (either politically or in general) and Zionism, which they regard as racism. Author then shows that extreme reactions definitely are not only right-wing domain and that in these cases left-wing or progressive groups also lack the ability to criticize their own members. She calls this “*the awareness of anti-Semitism only in connection with those others*”. The phenomenon of political tolerance regarding anti-Semitism for the sake of economic cooperation between individual states in Europe and Israel is not left out.

The last chapter seamlessly concludes the dialogue concerning the contemporary anti-Semitism with the case of collective dealing with the discriminatory practices against Jews at Emory University’s faculty of stomatology. The case takes place between 1948 – 1961. In the symbolic farewell, the author does not talk to the correspondence addressees as analyst anymore, but as a concerned individual and a Jew. She describes the difficulties regarding the understanding of Jewish collective experience. She does it also through Salo Wittmayer Baron’s concept. He was a Jewish historian, who at the end of 1930s called this phenomenon “*a slippery slope of suffering and persecution*” (p. 210). Lipstadt again rejects uncritical labelling of any objection regarding Israel as anti-Semitic. In the final references, she encourages “student Abigail” to persevere, but at the same time warns her against adopting the so-called permanent victim identity. This means that the ongoing anti-Semitism or holocaust should not become the sole determinant regarding her identification.

The translator’s occasional notes about some terms are definitely helpful step when it comes to addressee who is less informed about this subject matter, or the person whose interest leads them to read this monograph. Recipients will also appreciate the fact that the translator enriches some contexts with details or adds the Czech as well as other translations of the sources the author mentioned. Considering the subject I write about, as well as the limited range this review has, I would like to mention two remarks regarding the translation of the monograph. Concerning anti-Semitic shouts during football matches, the

translator adds the comment that in relation to the practices of Sparta fans (a football club in Prague) “(...) it is most likely just a (very embarrassing) joke. An original anti-Semitic undertone faded away a long time ago.” This remark can be accepted only as the translator’s personal opinion. The likelihood he mentioned is not substantiated (p. 99).

Another comment that is not convincing enough is the one where the translator tries to balance Lipstadt’s line concerning racially motivated distrust and disproportionate use of coercive measures by the police in the USA. He mentions “*American official law enforcement statistics and especially data reflecting criminality*”. These data show that “white Americans” constitute disproportionately lower percentage of violent crime offenders (p. 95). If it is not possible to quote, I think it would be right to at least consider specification regarding the basic source of information, especially in connection with this type of sensitive empirical data. This concretisation includes: the office within the US law enforcement agencies that compiled the statistics, period the data come from, time frame they cover, etc.

Apart from these remarks, it should also be said that sometimes it is not enough even if statistical indicators are mentioned. Summarizing as well as other factual data are not immune to misinterpretation. In worse case, they are subjected to severe manipulation just like in this situation, which happened in 2020.³ This incident attracted media attention. *Reuters*⁴ agency, *USA Today*⁵ (a daily newspaper) or German *PressePortal*⁶ belonged to those media sources that reacted to it in the summer and autumn of 2020. They also denied this false information.

Besides the aforementioned parts, the book also contains acknowledgements, notes, name register, selection of author’s other books and the translator’s review.

Deborah Lipstadt’s monograph is definitely necessary as well as comprehensive contribution. It has a potential to make readers or students studying humanities and their subdisciplines more competent to comprehensively think about (not only) the contemporary anti-Semitism. These are the reflections when they take into account the entire world, the hatred phenomenon and broader context.

Katarína Bohová

3 After the protests against the racial discrimination, which were a respond to George Floyd’s death, a post from 2015 started to spread on social media again. At the time, it was shared by then-presidential candidate Donald Trump. It contained a false statistic about criminality in the USA. Based on these numbers African Americans were responsible for killing up to 97% of African-American and 81% of “white” U.S. citizens in 2015. Available online: <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-data-racial-murder-idUSKCN24I2A9>>. (cit. 4. 1. 2022).

4 Available online: <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-data-racial-murder-idUSKCN24I2A9>>. (cit. 4. 1. 2022).

5 Available online: <<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/09/29/fact-check-meme-shows-incorrect-homicide-stats-race/5739522002/>>. (cit. 4. 1. 2022).

6 Available online: <<https://www.presseportal.de/pm/133833/4614670>>. (cit. 2. 1. 2022).

HOLINOVÁ, Nataša. *Prípád starej dámy*. Bratislava : IKAR, 2020, 192 p. ISBN 978-80-551-7253-8.

A literary work *Prípád starej dámy* is a documentary novel written by a Slovak writer and publicist Nataša Holinová, who has been focusing on social topics for a long time (she received the Journalism Award by Open Society Foundation for her articles on child abuse). This book tells a story of a Jewish person and it stems from an affair, which took place between years 2012–2014 in Ružinov and affected Ph.Mr. et RNDr. Anna Majerová as well as her daughter Tatiana, who has been deprived of legal capacity. The author herself participated in the investigation of the case and set the events in a fictitious Bratislavan quarter. Not only did she change the characters' names, but she also created a fictitious character who acts as the narrator and describes the course of the investigation. Mrs. Majerová is introduced here as Mrs. Anita Glasnerová, an old lady who was forced to leave her flat without explanation and was therefore separated from her ill daughter. The tension rises with each chapter, with Mrs. Glasnerová's memories of Auschwitz concentration camp being included. This is the second instance in her life when she lost everything she had.

Just like the author, the narrator is a forensic expert, interpreter and, above all, someone who writes social texts about people whose problems no one wants to listen to. That is the reason why he is the one who Mrs. Glasnerová contacts. He acts patiently, respectfully and mainly confidentially so that she is able to tell him her story. They develop a relationship based on trust, which leads to the revelation of her past. The narrator learns more about it thanks to the documentary called *Shoa Survivors*, which she took part in. This is where retrospective insertions start to appear from time to time alongside the solutions to the case. The story from Mrs. Glasnerová's past is focused on her individual feelings and the way she perceived certain situations. She talks about her strict father, who taught her to be self-reliant. Despite the situation getting worse for Jews, her mother did not believe it. In the end, she and her entire family were taken from ghetto to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Anita Glasnerová was the only one who survived. *"Come on, I do not believe at all that something like this can happen in the 20th century.' Later on, when smoke was rising in Auschwitz-Birkenau, I thought about the fact that she, a poor soul, found out first-hand that it could happen."* This disturbing description of the situation supplemented by Mrs. Glasnerová's mother's words offers a parallel to what a person would think in the 21st century. They would say that what happened to the old lady and her daughter is impossible in these times. However, the opposite is true. Inhumane conditions such as cold, abuse, or an encounter with doctor Mengele have to be mentioned when the concentration camp is described. The rule in the camp was that whoever would work would stay alive. Mrs. Glasnerová revealed that she survived thanks to the fact that she worked in a special prison unit tasked with bringing food to the barracks.

The narrator approaches the case subjectively, but his narration sufficiently reflects the objective reality. Narratively, there is an interweaving between the past and the present. Therefore, the reader can notice significant traces of persisting anti-Semitism. Given that the trial may appear to be a seemingly different thing compared to the captivity in a concentration camp, contextually there are similarities that can be seen especially when it comes to Mrs. Glasnerová's separation from the family and the way in which property was forcibly taken away from her. As Nataša Holinová writes, Mrs. Majerová was greeted with "*shalom, shalom*" as she was entering the courtroom. The judge and the prosecutor pretended that they did not hear it. She was verbally attacked and there were attempts to humiliate her. This all escalated to people wishing her death. In this regard, the novel is important mainly because it captures the cruelty and ruthlessness, which are still present. Based on this, an emphasis on realisation of problematic connections depicting human suffering starts to shape. Objectification concerning victims of holocaust is also mentioned: "*It is ideal for us when victims of holocaust are dead. Ok, ok, they can be alive but only on some memorials and somewhere in showcases. We do not want them to cause trouble. We do not want them to ask for anything. The most important thing is that they don't want anything, dammit!*" (p. 123).

In addition to the fact that Mrs. Glasnerová had to face questioning concerning her experience, there were remarks made during the trial that "*chimney will emit her smoke*". Anti-Semitism but also fascism can be seen here. "*Given the fact that fascists drove people onto trains and did not ask them whether they want to live together or separated. They also did not ask them where they want to live, if they want to go to buy flowers at the market or become a prisoner in their own flat. Nobody asked them a question whether they want to live – tap into you on the stairwell is enough*" (p. 126).

Designating something as fascist may seem exaggerated to some, but the author, working with similarities, points mainly to facts and context. She said in an interview for Denník N: "*I saw a parallel there – in 1942, our state took everything from her by legal means. This includes her family since she was the only one who survived the concentration camp and she came back home on foot. Despite the fact that she later became an expert, who would easily become successful not only here but also abroad, Mrs. Majerová decided to stay and give this country another chance. The state thanked her in a way that after seventy years she was again deprived by legal means of everything she had. This means that she was separated from her daughter. To me, it was fascist how the authorities made it obvious to her that one human being is more valuable than another.*"⁸

In her novel, she points out the present problematic position of senior citizens as well as people with mental disorder and draws the attention mainly to the

8 SUDOR, Karol. Z Ružinova a jeho starostu sa jej obracal žalúdok, vystaňovala sa preto do Rakúska. In *Denník N*, 4. 12. 2016 [online]. Available online: <<https://dennikn.sk/625276/z-ruzinova-a-jej-starostu-sa-jej-obracal-zaludok-vystaňovala-sa-preto-do-rakuska/>>. (cit. 1. 8. 2022).

fact that people have not changed much in many moral scopes as time went by – hate is still manifested and a lot of innocent individuals are denied the basic human rights. The attitude of the institutions that are supposed to fight against it is also alarming. *“If our judiciary had been in charge of the Nuremberg Trials, the final verdicts would have been delivered around the time when I was born, which is thirty years after the war.”*⁹ As it is stated in the book, this is not an isolated case when a senior citizen was attacked. For this reason, the prevalence of prejudices, underestimation regarding the situation, undisguised indifference and open hatred can be regarded as the main reasons why these trials last for a long time. However, despite the thing that Mrs. Majerová had to face and which became an impulse for this book, she never stopped being courageous, persistent, and patient. Nataša Holinová said about her: *“Most people her age would not be able to resist this. However, she was unbelievable and stood up for herself until she did not win. I even saw a sparkle in her eyes due to her desire to fight. I think it is the experience from Auschwitz-Birkenau that made her this way.”*¹⁰

Despite the difficulty and complexity that prevailed throughout the novel, the narrative style has the power to appeal to the reader and make them feel as if they are a part of what is going on. Therefore, a novel as a genre is an appropriate way of conveying the case through the characters' emotions – for example, an uneasy feeling that the readers may sometimes have due to the lengthy trial is lightened by the narrator's humorous and ironic comments on the situation. Illustrations by Vlado Holina play an important role concerning another aspect. They look like drawings from comic and portray some important events and ideas from the plot, thus helping to turn one's attention to them as well as to think about stuff that we should stop finding excuses for.

Nina Zborovančíková

9 HOLINOVÁ, Prípad starej dámy, p. 53.

10 SUDOR, Karol. Z Ružinova a jeho starostu...[online]. Available online: <<https://dennikn.sk/625276/z-ruzinova-a-jej-starostu-sa-jej-obracal-zaludok-vystahovala-sa-preto-do-rakuska/>>. (cit. 1. 8. 2022).

The “Open Depository” Project

Over the recent years, protection vs. accessibility has been one of the biggest dilemmas of modern museology. While the fundamental duty of museums is to protect collections, making them accessible is a legitimate demand of the public. However, this dilemma can be solved by a simple compromise – the creation of an open collection storage. Such place not only provides protection for objects of tangible cultural heritage, but also offers the public a unique view of these objects and the means of their storage. A view they would not have under other circumstances. The creation of an open collection storage, also called the Open Depository project, is currently being implemented in the premises of the Memorial in the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising (hereinafter referred to as the Museum of the SNU) on Kapitulská Street.

What is an Open Collection Storage?

In a nutshell, an open collection storage, or how it is named in the project – “Open Depository”, maximises public access to historical and artistic collections that would otherwise be hidden from public view. In an open collection storage, objects are usually not displayed in the same arranged manner as we are familiar with in modern museum exhibitions. Instead, they are stored on shelves or right next to each other. Such space also allows visitors to see behind the scenes of a museum or gallery. Visitors are able to see how many objects there are in a collection, how these institutions store and take care of them.¹

In museums it is a common practice that only a small fraction of the objects of historical value that the museum owns is displayed in its exhibitions. Many of the world’s leading museums see the way to solve this situation in building open collection storages. One example is Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen, which is part of the Museumpark in Rotterdam (*Fig. 1 and 2*). Last year, the museum made its incredibly extensive collection available to visitors, consisting of 151,000 objects, including those that were currently undergoing conservation. The museum’s representatives state that the institution embodies changing visions for the management of collections and collection objects. Until 2021, the museum’s collection storages had never been made accessible to such large extent.²

Gradually, more and more museums are embracing the idea of opening their collection storages. Among them are, for example, the Beamish Museum, which, thanks to the open collection storage, is able to make up to 80% of its collections

1 SALDAN, F. So What Exactly is Visible Storage? In *Everhart Museum* [online], 1. 4. 2020. Available online: < <https://everhart-museum.org/blog-what-is-visible-storage/>>. (cit. 4. 10. 2022).

2 ABRAMS, A. This Dutch Museum Is the World’s First to Open Its Storage to the Public, Putting Its Entire 151,000-Piece Collection on View. In *Artnet News* [online], 4. 11. 2021. Available online: <<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/depot-boijmans-van-beuningen-opens-2029819>>. (cit. 4. 10. 2022).

available to the public³ (Fig. 3 and 4), the Lapworth Museum of Geology, which has incorporated the form of an open collection storage into its exhibition (Fig. 5), the Victoria and Albert Museum in the United Kingdom (Fig. 6) (planning to open in 2023), the Übersee-Museum in Germany (Fig. 7), or the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the United States (Fig. 8).⁴



Fig. 1 and 2: open storage of the art collection at Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands⁵



Fig. 3 and 4: open collection storage at Beamish Museum, Beamish, UK⁶

3 DUDACHEK, D. Beamish open stores – making collections accessible to the public. In *Museums and Heritage* [online], 15. 7. 2016. Available online: < <https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/features/beamish-open-stores-making-collections-accessible-public/>>. (cit. 4. 10. 2022).

4 OBROVSKÝ, J. Otevřený depozitář brémského Übersee Museum. In *MÚZEUM SNP. Zborník príspevkov medzinárodnej konferencie: Modernizácia múzejných depozitárov a podmienky ich prístupňovania verejnosti*. Banská Bystrica, 2021, p. 101-107.

5 ABRAMS, A. This Dutch Museum Is the World's First to Open Its Storage to the Public, Putting Its Entire 151,000-Piece Collection on View

6 DUDACHEK, D. Beamish open stores – making collections accessible to the public



Fig. 5: open collection storage in the exhibition premises, Lapworth Museum of Geology, Birmingham, UK⁷



Fig. 6: open collection storage in the Porcelain Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK⁸

7 MURPHY, A. Lapworth Museum of Geology – factoring in public access to stores as part of a major redevelopment. In *Museums and Heritage* [online] 15. 7. 2016. Available online: <<https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/features/lapworth-museum-geology-factoring-public-access-stores-part-major-redevelopment/>>. (cit. 5. 10. 2022).

8 V&A webpage, History of the Ceramics Galleries & Ceramic Staircase [online]. Available online: <<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/history-of-the-ceramics-galleries-and-ceramic-staircase>>. (cit. 5. 10. 2022).



Fig. 7: pull-out panels of the herbarium collection in the Übermaxx open storage, Übersee-Museum, Bremen, Germany⁹



Fig. 8: open collection storage The Henry R. Luce Center for the Study of American Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA¹⁰

It is not only the way of making historical artefacts accessible that is changing in these institutions. The museums are also adding other novelties, such as various activities or new insights into the work in museums. For instance, visitors to these open collection storages, can observe the conservation of historical artifacts, their interpretation, related research, technical work around them,

⁹ Übersee-Museum Bremen webpage. The Visible Storage [online] Available online: <<https://www.uebersee-museum.de/en/exhibitions/dauerausstellungen/the-visible-storage/>>. (cit. 5. 10. 2022).

¹⁰ The MET webpage. The Henry R. Luce Center for the Study of American Art. [online] Available online: <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/the-henry-r-luce-center-for-the-study-of-american-art>>. (cit. 5. 10. 2022).

and participate in educational activities.¹¹ Although open collection storages are unique in their idea and construction and technological design, this idea is just starting to take off in Europe. The open collection storage of the Museum of the SNU will become the first type of this global trend in Slovakia.

About our Collections

Since its founding in 1955, the collection fund of the Museum of the SNU has grown to 16,776 items of tangible cultural heritage of significant value to the Slovak nation (the items varying from everyday objects, those linked or used during the WWII and the Uprising, as well as personal items of Holocaust survivors and victims – items documenting Slovak history between 1938 – 1945 and beyond). These items are professionally processed and stored within the limited possibilities and according to the structure of the collections in several storage rooms. The storage space was created gradually in several stages, since the construction of the Memorial in 1969. They now mainly consist of office cabinets, storage racks and wooden racks for rifles (*Fig. 9, 10 and 11*). Such storage can no longer fulfil the real needs of protection and care for our valuable collection items. Any form of damage can lead to loss of the informative value of an item.



*Fig. 9, 10 and 11: present-day view of the Museum of the SNU's collection storages*¹²

11 MURPHY, A. Collections: making museum treasures more accessible and better cared for. In *Museums and Heritage* [online] 15. 7. 2016. Available online: <<https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/features/collections-making-treasures-accessible-better-cared/>>. (cit. 6. 10. 2022).

12 *Fig. 9, 10 and 11: internal documents of the Museum of the SNU*

Aims of the Project

One of the main goals of the project is to create suitable conditions for storage, presentation and study of collection items. Optimum temperature and light conditions, optimum humidity level and safety systems will also be ensured in the premises of the new open storage. Thus, the current care of collection items will significantly improve. The new storage of the collections in the open storage will also bring a new possibility of their presentation for visitors. Collection items in the open storage will be assigned a 2D code. After loading the code through mobile application, visitors will be able to access even more interesting information about the given object.

Education

An important part of the creation of new spaces will also be education through collection objects. In general, such a way of experiential education brings a higher interest in history and enables a closer look at national and world history. Moreover, the educational process of the museum will be directly connected with the presentation activity of the collection fund.

All historical objects “talk”, they have their own story, their own past. The collection items exhibited in the open collection storage represent one of the best opportunities for education about national history (e.g., the Slovak National Uprising, the Slovak State 1939 – 1945) and world history of the 20th century (the outbreak and course of World War II, etc.). On the other hand, they can also stimulate discussion about today’s problematic topics, such as the forms of modern extremism, racism and social intolerance in the field of human rights and freedoms – all topics that the lecturers of the Museum of the SNU focus on.

The educational aspect of the project focuses on various groups of visitors. One of them are primary and secondary school students, and teachers not only from the city of Banská Bystrica. Others targeted groups are the professional public (employees of cultural institutions, private researchers, media, etc.) and the general lay public (museum visitors of various ages, levels of education, interests and nationalities).

The Final Look

Only a small number of artefacts from the collection funds is displayed in the Museum of the SNU’s exhibitions. The reality in museums is that the majority of material documents of history are, unfortunately, stored in protective storage spaces to which visitors do not have access. The open storage challenges this reality and offers a solution for the visitors’ growing demand for access to a greater number of historical artefacts.

The open collection storage with a total area of approx. 267 m² will consist of three areas:

The open exhibition will be the main part of the open collection storage. Here, the collection items will be stored in shelves specifically constructed for each item, or a group of items, so that they are visible even when stored in bulk.

The open conservation laboratory will be running permanently as a professional workplace. It will allow visitors to watch individual conservation interventions. In case of greater interest, expert staff members will be allowed to give visitors consultations or demonstrations of such interventions.

The open study room with professional services will be created for the professional public (external researchers, collectors, students). It will be built as a study room connected to the collection storage.¹³



Fig. 12: floor plan drawing with individual sections¹⁴

13 Internal document of the Museum of the SNU.

14 Fig. 12: Ibid.



Fig. 13, 14 and 15: visualisation of the premises of the open collection storage¹⁵

International Cooperation

The Open Depository project received a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in the amount of EUR 849,452.45 through EEA Grants. The project has been co-financed in the amount of EUR 149,903.55 from the state budget of the Slovak Republic. An equally important part of the project is the cooperation of the Museum of the SNU with the museum in Narvik, Norway – the Narvik War and Peace Centre. This cooperation is based on the mutual exchange of experience with an open collection storage, in the form of seminars, conferences, publication of conference proceedings, exchange visits and realisation of workshops on the topic of active and passive protection of collections and education through museum objects. Naturally, the cooperation with the partner will continue even after the project is ended. Furthermore, project results will be summarised through a website, as well as some collection items of both museums will be made available online. The website will also feature professional blogs about collection management and protection, as well as a section dedicated to the general public.

¹⁵ Fig.: 12, 13, 14 and 15: Internal documents of the Museum of the SNU.



Fig. 16, 17 and 18: reconstruction in the administrative premises of the museum¹⁶

Grant amount: EUR 999,357.00

Length of project implementation: 37 months

Provider: Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation of the Slovak Republic within the Culture programme

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Eva Bullová

¹⁶ *Fig.: 16, 17 and 18: Internal documents of the Museum of the SNU.*

Judaica et Holocaustica

Publication Guidelines for the Authors

An article to be published in *Judaica et Holocaustica* edition should only be sent in electronic form as a.docx or.doc text formats (preferably in English).

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The text has to contain:

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Reference to a monograph (up to three authors)

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BYSTRICKÝ, Valerián – MICHELA, Miroslav – SCHVARC, Michal. *Rozbitie alebo rozpad*. Bratislava : Veda, 2010, 575 p.

Reference to a monograph (more than three authors)

HOLEC, Roman et al. *Stopäťdesiat rokov slovenského družstevníctva : Víťazstvá a prehry*. Bratislava : Družstevná únia SR, 1995, p. 201-202.

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Reference to a study in proceedings or collective publication

NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. Dvojnásobné zmocnenie sa vlády na Slovensku v rokoch 1938/39 v porovnaní s „Machtergreifung“ v rokoch 1933/34 v Nemecku. In GLETTLER, Monika – LIPTÁK, Ľubomír – MÍŠKOVÁ, Alena. (eds.). *Nacionálno-socialistický systém vlády: Ríšska župa Sudety, Protektorát Čechy a Morava, Slovensko*. Bratislava : AEP, 2002, p. 185-211.

Note: Names of multiple authors are listed with a hyphen with a space on either side of the hyphen, range of pages also hyphenated, but no spaces

Reference to a study published in a periodical

BAKA, Igor. Mechanizmus, ciele a metódy pôsobenia ľudáckej propagandy v rokoch 1938 – 1939. In *Historický časopis*, 2003, Vol. 51, No. 2, p. 277-294.

Reference to an Internet source

KUCIANOVÁ, Anna. Personálie v elektronickej súbežnej Slovenskej národnej bibliografii. In *Bibliografický zborník 2000 - 2001* [online]. Martin : Slovenská národná knižnica, 2005, p. 136-139. Available online: <http://www.snk.sk/nbuu/Zbornik_2000_2001.pdf>. (cit. 20. 5. 2014).

Reference to an already mentioned source

SZABÓ, *Od slov k činom*, p. 36.

NIŽŇANSKÝ, Dvojnásobné zmocnenie sa vlády na Slovensku, p. 190.

NB: If the same source is mentioned several times in succession, use “Ibid.”, if the quoted page is changed, indicate its number as well.

Reference to the archive periodical press

ZLATOŠ, Štefan. [when name is indicated] Kresťanská spravodlivosť a židovský zákon. In *Slovák*, 1939, Vol. 21, No. 106, p. 4.

Ťažká práca zahraničnej HG. In *Gardista*, 1939, Vol. 1, No. 9, p. 9.

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Reference to an archive source

When referencing an archive source for the first time, specify the archive, name of the fond or collection, box, signature number.

Slovenský národný archív (abbreviated to SNA), fond Ministerstvo vnútra (abbreviated to MV), box 1, No. 1111/38.

When referencing again, use only abbreviations

SNA, fond MV, box 33, No. 1111/42.



All articles should be submitted to the following e-mail: katarina.ristveyova@muzeumsnp.sk

Judaica et Holocaustica

Authors and their affiliation

Bc. Romana Antalová

student at the Faculty of Education (*Pedagogická fakulta*), Trnava University (*Trnavská univerzita*), Trnava

antalovaromana@gmail.com

PhDr. Igor Baka, PhD.

researcher at the Institute of Military History (*Vojenský historický ústav*), Bratislava

igorbaka@centrum.sk

Alicja Bartnicka, PhD.

assistant professor at Department of Early Modern History and Source Editing, Institute of History and Archival Sciences, Faculty of History, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń

ala.bartnicka@wp.pl

Mgr. Katarína Bohová

student at the Department of General History (*Katedra všeobecných dejín*), Faculty of Arts (*Filozofická Fakulta*), Comenius University (*Univerzita Komenského*), Bratislava

bohova2@uniba.sk

doc. PhDr. Anton Hruboň, PhD.

associate professor at Department of Security Studies (*Katedra bezpečnostných štúdií*), Faculty of Political Science and International Relations (*Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov*), Matej Bel University (*Univerzita Mateja Bela*), Banská Bystrica,

anton.hrubon@umb.sk

Mgr. Tamara Janecová, PhD.

assistant professor at the Department of Slovak Language and Literature (*Katedra slovenského jazyka a literatúry*), Faculty of Education (*Pedagogická fakulta*), Trnava University (*Trnavská univerzita*), Trnava

tamara.janecova@truni.sk

Jozef Klement

self-employed tradesman, Zvolen

jklement@klemo.sk

doc. Tomáš Lang, PhD.

associate professor emeritus at Budapest University of Jewish Studies, Budapest, Nové Zámky

tlang@novotrade.sk

Mgr. Patrik Miskovics

PhD student at Department of Slovak Language and Literature (*Katedra slovenského jazyka a literatúry*), Faculty of Education (*Pedagogická fakulta*), Trnava University (*Trnavská univerzita*),
Trnava

patrik.miskovics@tvu.sk

prof. Mgr. Eduard Nižňanský, CSc.

professor at Department of General History (*Katedra všeobecných dejín*), Faculty of Arts (*Filozofická Fakulta*), Comenius University (*Univerzita Komenského*), Bratislava

eduard.niznansky55mail.com

Nina Zborovančíková

student at the Faculty of Education (*Pedagogická fakulta*), Trnava University (*Trnavská univerzita*),
Trnava

nina.zborovancikova@tvu.sk

