

Michala Lónčíková

Unwillingly on the Road

Forced Jewish Migration at the Municipal Level in Slovakia
(1939–1945)

Abstract

Forced Jewish migration in the Slovak State (1939–1945) during World War II is usually approached from the perspective of the deportations to the Nazi concentration camps. Yet, the involuntary migration trajectories of persecuted Jews, even within Slovak territory, also reflected the gradual development of anti-semitic policies and their direct consequences on everyday Jewish life in the wartime period. Numerous members of the Jewish community had experienced forced – in some cases even multi-layered – displacement both at the municipal and intra-state level even before the first transport left from Slovakia to Auschwitz on 25 March 1942. The main aim of this article is to analyse the trajectories of forced Jewish migration at the urban level. It especially considers the personal and spatial consequences of the limitations on the Jewish living space that were brought about by the restrictions on living in and renting apartments in designated zones, such as in the localities renamed after Adolf Hitler and Andrej Hlinka, the founder and first leader of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party.

"I, Adolf Hó, a major official of the state railways, by the end of August [1941], have already been forced to move three times from various apartments which were Jewish property. [...] For longer than three months I am trying in vain to search for any modest stable flat. Now I, as an 82-year-old and ill pensioner with my ill wife, am facing the catastrophe that again we will be kicked out onto the street this wintertime."

A Jewish pensioner, a former state employee, sent this letter to the municipal authorities in Banská Bystrica in November 1941. Even though Jews being made to move out from houses and flats is usually perceived through the prism of the deportations in 1942 and 1944,² the experiences of this Jewish couple demonstrate that the continued implementation of the anti-semitic measures had resulted also in forced relocations, and affected housing conditions and property distribution, even before the mass deportations to the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. Anti-semitic policies gradually impacted on all spheres of everyday life of the Jewish community in Slovakia under the regime of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana, HSLS), and housing represented only one aspect of the systematic impoverishment of Slovakia's Jews.

1 Štátny archív v Banskej Bystrici [State Archive in Banská Bystrica] (ŠABB), f. Okresný úrad v Banskej Bystrici [District Office in Banská Bystrica] (OÚ v BB), b. 129, without number, List Adolfa Hóa Okresnému úradu v Banskej Bystrici [Letter by Adolf Hó to the District Office in Banská Bystrica], 19 November 1941. All translations by the author.

2 See also: Eduard Nižňanský, *Holokaust na Slovensku 6. Deportácie v roku 1942* [The Holocaust in Slovakia 6. Deportation in 1942], Bratislava 2005; Viera Kováčová et al., *Druhá vlna deportácií Židov zo Slovenska* [The Second Wave of the Jewish Deportations from Slovakia], Banská Bystrica 2010.

The Jewish Neighbourhood

The Jewish presence in Slovakia's city centres, including an open demonstration of religious rituals in the urban space, historically depended on contemporary conditions and the political situation. The status of the Jews in the Habsburg, later Austro-Hungarian, monarchy had been gradually changing since the rule of Joseph II (1780–1790). However, the road to their emancipation in the Hungarian part of the empire lasted until 1868, and full civil rights for the Jews were confirmed and ratified in 1895.³ From the last third of the nineteenth century, Jews started to live also in city centres, which consequently led to changes in the cities' topographies and demographic structures. Jewish inhabitants then became more visible in the public sphere and took part in politics, especially during the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938).⁴ This growing trend was dramatically halted by the shifting political discourse that was explicitly determined by the HSL's leaders, who succeeded in creating a single-party system already during the period of Slovak autonomy from October 1938 to March 1939. The establishment of the Slovak State – as a Nazi satellite – on 14 March 1939 confirmed and intensified this political course, and anti-semitic policies developed into a stable paradigm of the HSL's political programme.

Scholarly attempts to identify and analyse specifically Jewish neighbourhoods in urban spaces have more often focussed on segregated areas – ghettos. During World War II, the Nazi authorities created sealed ghettos in various locations in the occupied territories, namely in proximity to cities with a high-density Jewish population. Even though this pattern was not precisely applied in Slovakia, the state and local authorities intended to limit and take control over the Jewish living space. In practice, these measures led to restrictions on residency in certain urban zones, and – in more extreme cases – the internment of whole families in one of the three Jewish labour camps created on the territory of the Slovak state.⁵

Exceptionally, the state authorities originally envisioned the creation of a ghetto in the capital city of Bratislava. The term 'ghetto' frequently appeared on the official agenda, and geographically it referred to a traditionally Jewish neighbourhood in the city.⁶ At the same time, this plan was continually spread and supported via official state propaganda.⁷ Consequently, many Jews in the capital city moved to that neighbourhood after losing permission to live or rent apartments in designated areas. This represented somewhat of a logical personal trajectory because of relatives already living in the Jewish neighbourhood. In many cases, they were forced to live together in a small, private place. For instance, the Holocaust survivor A. M., who was born in

3 Peter Salner, *Židia na Slovensku medzi tradíciou a asimiláciou* [The Slovak Jews between Tradition and Assimilation], Bratislava 2000, 54.

4 Ivan Kamenec, *Vývoj a organizácia slovenského židovstva v tridsiatych rokoch 20 storočia* [The Development and Organisation of Slovak Jewry in the 1930s], in: Ivan Kamenec (ed.), *Spoločnosť – politika – historiografia. Pokrivené(?) zrkadlo dejín slovenskej spoločnosti v dvadsiatom storočí* [Society – Politics – Historiography. The Distorted (?) Mirror of the History of Slovak Society in the Twentieth Century], Bratislava 2009, 35–41, here 36.

5 Igor Baka, *Židovský tábor v Novákoch 1941–1944* [The Jewish Camp in Nováky 1941–1944], Bratislava 2001; Ján Hlavinka/Eduard Nižňanský, *Pracovný a koncentračný tábor v Sereďi 1941–1945* [The Labour and Concentration Camp in Sereď 1941–1945], Bratislava 2009; Marián Pavúk, *Osud židov vo Vyhne* [The Fate of Jews in Vyhne], Banská Bystrica 2012.

6 Archív mesta Bratislavy [Bratislava City Archive] (AMB), Mestský notársky úrad [Municipal Notary Office] (MNÚ), b. 3033, 1881, *Byty pre vojsko a štátnych zamestnancov* [Apartments for the Army and Civil Servants], 15 July 1942.

7 For example, see: V Bratislave sa vytvára židovské geto [In Bratislava a Jewish Ghetto is Being Created], in: *Slovák*, 80, 5 April 1941, 3; *Tvorí sa židovské geto v Bratislave* [A Jewish Ghetto is Being Created in Bratislava], in: *Gardista*, 79, 5 April 1941, 5.

Bratislava in 1931, remembered the involuntary relocation of her family to the Jewish ghetto, where her uncle had a small house⁸ and he managed to build two apartments on the upper floor.⁹ Finally, the plan for the ghettoisation in Bratislava was halted by the forced displacement from the capital in 1941 and 1942 and later by the deportations to the Nazi concentration and extermination camps.

Comparing the Slovakian situation with the sealed ghettos under Nazi control, analogical responsibilities of the Jewish Council (Judenrat) were given to the Jewish Centre (Ústredňa Židov) in Slovakia. Besides the Jewish religious communities, it served as the only official Jewish institution that controlled Jewish life within the country.¹⁰ Even though sealed and guarded ghettos were not created in the Slovak state, an anti-semitic policy was realised step-by-step that resulted in the setting of limits on Jewish freedom of movement in the public space, forced Jewish residents to change their home addresses, and also altered the private ownership of Jewish-owned real estate.

Intra-State Relocations

The reasons for the intra-city and intra-state migrations differed broadly, from personal ones to orders by the state authorities. Taking into account the continual process of economic impoverishment that originated from restrictions in numerous professions and education and through gradual expropriation, Jews moving out of apartments was a direct consequence of their decreasing economic status, not to mention the 'Aryanisation' of Jewish real estate, which will be discussed later.

In contrary to the personal 'voluntary' moving within or even beyond state borders, forced relocations regularly occurred under the HSLS regime. One of the first anti-Jewish decrees, which made some members of the Jewish community leave their homes, was passed less than a month after the declaration of Slovak autonomy. On 4 November 1938, thousands of Jews¹¹ were evicted and sent to areas on the newly established Slovak-Hungarian borders. This act followed the decision of the German and Italian authorities – as determined under the First Vienna Award – that ordered the ceding of the southern territory of Slovakia with a majority ethnic Hungarian population to the Kingdom of Hungary. Consequently, many Jews were expelled from Slovakia and were stuck in improvised internment camps in the no-man's-land around the new borderline, in particular in Miloslavov and Veľký Kýr, until December 1938. After the Slovakian authorities finally allowed the interned Jews to enter Slovakia, many of them did not have any other possibility other

8 This house was originally located on a corner in the Vydrlica quarter close to Rybné Square. It was demolished – together with a major part of a former Jewish quartersection, including a synagogue – during the construction of a bridge over the Danube in late 1960s. See: Juraj Bončo/Ján Čomaj, *Búranie Podhradia – Stavba Mosta SNP* [The Demolition of the Historic Quarter of Podhradie – Construction of the SNP Bridge], Bratislava 2010; Ivan Bútora, *Kto zbúral Podhradie? Spory o Nový most a tvár Bratislavy* [Who Demolished the Historic Quarter of Podhradie? Disputes over the New Bridge and the Face of Bratislava], in: Eduard Nižňanský/Ivan Bútora et al. *Stratené mesto. Bratislava – Pozsony – Pressburg*, Bratislava 2011, 11-154.

9 USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (VHA), Interview with A. M., IC 27769.

10 Katarína Hradská, *Activities of the Jewish Council in Slovakia*, in: Bohumila Ferencuhová (ed.), *Political and Cultural Transfers between France, Germany and Central Europe (1840-1945): The Case of Slovakia*, Bratislava 2010, 366-405.

11 According to the historian Eduard Nižňanský, the number of deportees in the no-man's-land is estimated to have been 7,500 (Nižňanský, *Židovská komunita*, 76-79), but Michal Frankl's recent research has doubted this calculation and shows that the figure of around 4,000 is more probable. Michal Frankl, *Země nikoho 1938. Deportace za hranice občanství* [No-Man's-Land in 1938. Deportation beyond the Bounds of Citizenship], in: *Forum Historiae* 13 (2019) 1, 97.

than staying in refugee camps, such as in Rote Brücke, which was located near Bratislava-Patrónka.¹²

Another example of the forced relocations took place in Bratislava in 1941. The so-called 'dislocation process'¹³ of the Jews from Bratislava to various places in Slovakia began in October 1941 and it was originally intended to be finished in June 1942.¹⁴ It was organised by the Central Economic Office (Ústredný hospodársky úrad, ÚHÚ), in particular by the Department of Special Affairs of the Jewish Centre which was subordinated to the ÚHÚ. According to the report of the Jewish Centre, some 6,206 out of 15,102 Jews left Bratislava by the end of December 1941.¹⁵ On the one hand, the dislocation is considered to have been a rehearsal for future mass deportations and, on the other, it represented one of the state responses to the lack of housing capacity in the capital city.¹⁶ Even though municipal records had been continually providing information about long-lasting housing problems since the 1920s,¹⁷ the situation worsened when Bratislava became the administrative centre of the newly-established state. Numerous buildings for the ministries, administrative departments and offices, as well as flats for state employees, foreign diplomats, and military officers, were urgently required.¹⁸ A similar situation affected eastern Slovakia and the city of Prešov, which became a new regional administrative centre after the ceding of some border territories – including the city of Košice – to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1938.¹⁹

The dislocation plan was ultimately not fulfilled because of the deportation to the Nazi concentration and extermination camps launched on 25 March 1942. By the time the last transport left Slovakia on 20 October 1942, almost 58,000 out of approximately 89,000 Jews had been expelled from Slovak territory. Consequently, this process dramatically impacted on urban structures and the further relocation of Jews, both on the state and local levels. Chronologically, the last forced intra-state mass migration which also affected the remaining Jewish community was caused by the approaching Red Army in the last years of World War II. The evacuation from eastern Slovakia, mainly from Šariš-Zemplín County, to western areas was realised in the spring of 1944.²⁰

12 American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, f. New York Office 1933–44, f. 541, Report on the Refugee Camp in Bratislava-Rote Bruecke. Special thanks to Michal Frankl for this document.

13 Katarína Hradská, Dislokácie Židov z Bratislavy [The Displacement of Jews from Bratislava in the Autumn of 1941], in: Jaroslava Rogulová/Maroš Hertel et al., *Adepti moci a úspechu. Etablovanie elit v moderných dejinách* [Candidates for Power and Success. The Formation of Elites in Modern History], Bratislava 315–324.

14 Katarína Hradská, Holokaust na Slovensku 8 (Úvod) [The Holocaust in Slovakia 8 (Introduction)], Bratislava 2008, 5–41, here 28.

15 Slovenský národný archív [Slovak National Archive] (SNA), f. Policajné riaditeľstvo [Police Directorate in Bratislava], b. 2228, f. 170/42-ZÚ/216, Dislokačná štatistika [Dislocation Statistics], 7 January 1942.

16 Hradská, Holokaust na Slovensku 8, 5–41, here 26.

17 AMB, f. Magistrát mesta Bratislavy [Municipality of Bratislava] (MMB), b. 2414, f. 25200/924 (118/2), Návrh proti rekvirovaní bytov pre vojenských gážistov [Proposal Against the Requisition of Apartments for Military Employees], f. 5078/924 (140/2), Zoznam deložovaných osôb [Register of Evicted Persons].

18 AMB, f. MNÚ, b. 3032, f. 1830, Zpráva o bytovej otázke v Bratislave [Report on the Housing Issue in Bratislava].

19 The Prešov city commissioner, Andrej Germuška, referred to the escalation of the shortage of housing in the city, especially after the autumn of 1938, in the newspaper article: Prešov od 6. októbra 1938 [Prešov since 6 October 1938], in: *Slovák*, 111, 12 May 1940, 20.

20 Martin Pekár, Pomery na východnom Slovensku v posledných mesiacoch existencie ľudáckeho režimu [Conditions in Eastern Slovakia in the Last Months of the Existence of the Ludak Regime], in: Michal Šmigel/Peter Mičko/Marek Syrný (ed.), *Slovenská republika 1939–1945 očami mladých historikov V. Slovenská republika medzi Povstaním a zánikom 1944–1945* [The Slovak Republic 1939–1945 through the Eyes of Young Historians V. The Slovak Republic between the Uprising and its Fall 1944–1945], Banská Bystrica 2006, 278–292.

Two Sides of One Coin: Regulation and Expropriation

As previously mentioned, the intention to limit and regulate Jewish living space was also caused by the lack of housing capacity in some cities. Jewish real estate was to be used to satisfy the demands of the majority society. This approach followed the HSLS's politics, whose main representatives promised social and economic benefits to its members and loyal supporters. In 1940, the ÚHÚ was created as the successor to the Economic Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office (Hospodárska úradovňa predsedníctva vlády) to administrate the comprehensive process of Aryanisation. There were various types of Jewish real estate: whereas the ÚHÚ was in charge of corporate and residential properties, agricultural properties were the responsibility of the State Land Office (Štátny pozemkový úrad).²¹ The political authorities created a mechanism for how applications could be made for expropriated Jewish property and they formally legalised the whole process. Moreover, the chance to benefit from Aryanisation was also widely emphasised in official propaganda:

"This is the motto of our economic policy. Political independence must be supported by economic independence. A strong and economically independent nation can develop and grow in every single direction. Those who seek to get rich honestly are of benefit not only to themselves and their family but bring prosperity to their nation and help build the state. Now there is a unique possibility to do business. It is easy to Aryanise and improves one's social situation. It is necessary to make use of this opportunity and to take over Jewish shops and firms. We have already covered in the press how to Aryanise. It is a pretty easy thing to do. Skills, diligence, entrepreneurship and some money are needed. Also, those without money can Aryanise. It is possible to take a loan. [...] Slovaks, seize the opportunity, take advantage of the opportunity to Aryanise and take the Jewish property into your hands! You, your family, your nation and your state will benefit from it. Be diligent and enterprising! The solution of the Jewish question does not depend only on the authorities but also on you. Now is the most opportune time for a brave and successful Aryanisation".²²

Even though political representatives were proclaiming the possibility for everyone who was in favour of the ruling regime to participate in the Aryanisation, this process ultimately turned into an economic and moral failure. Corruption negatively impacted on the economic situation, and it was widely developed even among the highest political representatives of the Slovak State.²³ Moreover, it soon became evident that demand exceeded supply, so the original promises of the HSLS remained unfulfilled.

Residential property represented a specific category in the expropriation of Jewish property. In the initial phase, attention was mainly paid to corporate properties. However, that does not mean that Jews were freely allowed to stay in their apart-

21 See: Martina Fiamová, "Slovenská zem patrí do slovenských rúk". Arizácia pozemkového vlastníctva židovského obyvateľstva na Slovensku v rokoch 1939–1945 ["Slovak Land Belongs to the Slovaks": The Aryanisation of Land Properties of the Jewish Population in Slovakia in the Years 1939–1945], Bratislava 2015.

22 Arizovať! [To Aryanise!], in: *Ludové noviny* 5 (1940) 1.

23 Ivan Kamenec, Fenomén korupcie v procese tzv. riešenia "židovskej otázky" na Slovensku v rokoch 1938–1945 [The Phenomenon of Corruption in the Process of the Solution of the So-Called "Jewish Question" in Slovakia in the Years 1938–1945], in: *Forum Historiae* 5 (2011) 2, 96–112; Ján Hlavinka, "Kapitál má slúžiť národu ..." Korupcia v arizácii podnikového majetku na Slovensku ["Capital Should Serve the Nation ..."] Corruption in the Aryanisation of Company Assets in Slovakia], in: Peter Šoltés/László Vörös (ed.), *Korupcia [Corruption]*, Bratislava 2015, 374–416.

ments. There were two parallel processes regarding the forced changes in Jewish home addresses: the limitation of the potential living area in the cities, and the preparation for the transfer of properties into 'non-Jewish' ownership.

The process which finally resulted in the expropriation of the residential real estate can be described as follows. The Aryanisation of residential properties was the job of the fifth department of the ÚHÚ. The legal decree 257/1940 Sl. z. determined that, for "severe economic and social reasons", state authorities could appoint temporary building managers.²⁴ This position turned out to be a prestigious and requested side job because all of the potential expenses had to be covered by the original owner and the building manager could automatically live in the house.²⁵ The requirements for potential building managers were relatively low, with professional experience not being necessary. The only criteria concerned the minimum age of twenty-four, Slovakian citizenship, and a good moral character. It was not a coincidence that special attention was paid to the fixing of the building manager's salary. Residences run by the building managers were regularly losing on their original value and the managers often refused to pay the mortgage instalments.²⁶ Ultimately, the nomination of the temporary building manager became the responsibility of district offices.²⁷ There were several kinds of applicants, including private persons, organisations, and the state itself. The German ethnic minority in Slovakia represented a significant factor in the Aryanisation process, including in the applications for the positions of building managers. Complaints about non-compliance with the consensual proportion of German applicants resulted in the establishment of a special commission.²⁸

From 1 November 1941, Jewish real estate, excluding agricultural and corporate property, passed into state ownership.²⁹ In contrary to corporate properties, the direct transfer of former Jewish residential property into non-Jewish ownership started in practice with a considerable delay in 1944. The turbulent and rapid Aryanisation faced severe problems and turned out to be beyond the control of the ÚHÚ. Its first head, Augustín Morávek, was forced to resign from his position in June 1942.³⁰ The sale of Jewish real estate was organised under the charge of Morávek's successor, Ludovít Paškovič. This process was launched only after an estimation of the prices of the Jewish properties.

24 Ján Hlavinka, Vznik Ústredného hospodárskeho úradu a určenie jeho kompetencií do leta 1942 [The Creation of the Central Economic Office and the Determination of its Competence by the Summer of 1942], in: Peter Sokolovič (ed.), Slovenská republika 1939–1945 očami mladých historikov VIII. Od Salzburgu do vypuknutia Povstania [The Slovak Republic 1939–1945 through the Eyes of Young Historians VII. From Salzburg to the Outbreak of the Uprising], Bratislava 2009, 63–92, here 86–87.

25 For a comparison with the different tradition and position of building managers in Budapest, see: István Pál Adam, Budapest Building Managers and the Holocaust in Hungary, New York 2016.

26 Hlavinka, Vznik Ústredného hospodárskeho úradu, 63–92, here 87.

27 Ludovít Hallon/Ján Hlavinka/Eduard Nižňanský, Pozícia Ústredného hospodárskeho úradu v politickom, hospodárskom a spoločenskom živote Slovenska v rokoch 1940–1942 [The Position of the Central Economic Bureau within Slovak Political, Economic and Social Life during the Years 1940–1945], in: Eduard Nižňanský/Ján Hlavinka (ed.), Arizácie [Aryanisations], Bratislava 2010, 11–65, here 46.

28 Ibid., here 44.

29 Government Regulation no. 238/1941 Sl. z., in: Slovenský zákonník, 64, 31 October 1941, 853.

30 Stanislav Mičev/Augustín Morávek, Od arizácii k deportáciám [Augustín Morávek. From Aryanisation to Deportation], Banská Bystrica 2010, 109–110.

Divergent Regulations of the Jewish Living Space

The targeted resettlement of Jewish households started on the municipal level in 1940. The above-mentioned mentioned legal decree no. 257/1940 Sl. z. enabled the ordering of Jewish owners to leave their apartments and the restrictions on Jews for living in and renting houses and flats in designated neighbourhoods. The practical implementation of this law can be considered as a sort of preparatory phase for the further Aryanisation process of residential real estate. Some of the first restrictions concerned the streets and squares named after the main political figures of Nazi Germany and the HSLS, in particular Adolf Hitler and Andrej Hlinka. Initially, this principle was adopted and applied in Bratislava,³¹ but from December 1940 it was valid for the whole territory of Slovakia.³² The renaming of streets is one of the typical tools of the symbolical overtaking of public space by a ruling political regime. The ideological direction of the HSLS was also demonstrated by its particular choice of Hitler and Hlinka. This kind of intervention in the public space did not have just a symbolic or declarative meaning. Consequently, Jewish residents were obliged to move from the apartments located in these areas.

The initial phase of limiting the private spaces of Jews in cities developed differently in various locales. The ÚHÚ consulted on the precise procedural steps with local organisations of the HSLS and the Hlinka Guard (Hlinkova garda), administrative bodies, local political authorities, as well as representatives of the Deutsche Partei, Freiwillige Schutzstaffel, and local intelligentsia such as doctors, engineers, and notaries. The ÚHÚ, with the personal involvement of Morávek, organised some meetings to discuss the housing policy towards the Jews, for instance in Piešťany, Trenčín, and Prešov, in November and December 1940.³³

An analysis of the particular regulations which were subsequently published by the ÚHÚ points to different approaches in the municipalities. One of the first regulations that was adopted after these meetings pertained to the situation in the famous spa town of Piešťany.³⁴ Regulations from Nitra and Topoľčany emphasised the importance of an apartment's location – Jews were expelled from flats which directly faced streets named after Hitler or Hlinka and, in the case of Nitra, also Josef Tiso Square. Political radicalism, which was noticeable in the Šariš-Zemplín County led by Andrej Dudáš, impacted on restrictions in the city of Prešov, where Jews could not live and rent apartments in an even broader area. Moreover, Jews were allowed to rent flats in different parts of Prešov only with the permission of the Municipal Notary Office.³⁵ A similar pattern was also applied in Topoľčany, where the district chief oversaw this decision-making.³⁶ Considering the divergent competencies in particular cities, it is evident that the system was ambiguously centralised.

Another special regulation was enforced in Bratislava, where the struggle for housing opportunities remained imperative. Just before organising the dislocation of Jews from the capital in October 1941, Jews were officially banned from living in new buildings that had been constructed since 1920. Those Jews who were living in properties built after 1930 were forced to move out of their apartments by 30 Septem-

31 ÚHÚ regulation no. 233/1940 Úr. n., in: Úradné noviny, 51, 9 November 1940, 645.

32 ÚHÚ regulation no. 267/1940 Úr. n., in: Úradné noviny, 59, 21 December 1940, 740-741.

33 Hallon/Hlavinka/Nižňanský, *Pozícia Ústredného hospodárskeho úradu*, 11-65, here 42.

34 ÚHÚ regulation no. 269/1940 Ú. n., in: Úradné noviny, 59, 21 December 1940, 741.

35 ÚHÚ regulation no. 258/1940 Ú. n., in: Úradné noviny, 57, 7 December 1940, 714.

36 ÚHÚ regulation no. 274/1940 Ú. n., in: Úradné noviny, 60, 28 December 1940, 753-754.

ber 1941 and out of those built between 1920 and 1930 by 30 October 1941.³⁷ This regulation was confirmed by the Municipal Notary Office two and a half weeks later.³⁸ Exceptions were made only for state and public employees, doctors with official working permits, members of the board of the Jewish Centre, and foreign citizens living in their own houses. According to the Jewish Centre's records, this regulation could have affected almost 8,000 Jewish inhabitants, and finding enough residences for their temporary placement was seen as highly problematic, if not impossible.³⁹ The subsequent evictions, which started in October 1941, partially 'solved' the declared problem by displacing thousands of Jews to different parts of the city. It is noteworthy that, even after the evictions in 1941 and the deportations from March to October 1942, the municipal authorities called for the need to evict the rest of the Jewish community from Bratislava to stabilise the housing situation in the city.⁴⁰

Involuntarily 'Wandering Jews'

The life experience of Adolf Hó, whose request I quoted in the opening paragraph of this article, reflected the permanent uncertainty and instability of people who were considered by the law to be Jews. The 82-year-old man informed the district authorities in Banská Bystrica about his situation, which had been caused by the systematic and continual persecution of the Jewish community in Slovakia since October 1938. The content of Hó's letter⁴¹ touched the process of impoverishment even more comprehensively. His uneasy housing situation was exacerbated by the fact that his sons had been fired from their positions in the state railways and that both Hó and his wife were suffering from various diseases. They obtained their third accommodation in the flat of his sister-in-law, where the couple lived in a single room and regularly paid rent to the temporary building manager. As was further stated in his letter, on 18 November 1941, he had been informed by J. Paška, a temporary building manager, that the latter would probably be forced to terminate the rental because of another, "Aryan", applicant. A local branch of the HSLS ultimately transferred the responsibility for resolving this situation to the building manager.⁴²

Even though the rest of the process is so far not known to me, the decreased status of Hó's family represents an example of the impoverishment of the Jewish community in Slovakia under the HSLS regime. It took barely three years to get the pensioner, who had been working as a state employee for 47 years, literally to the margins of society. Nevertheless, his other son Pavel, a dental technician, received a 'yellow legitimisation' that should have protected him and his parents from deportation in 1942. Despite this, it is likely that Adolf Hó was transferred from the concentration centre in Žilina on 22 June 1942.⁴³ Files in Yad Vashem indicate that he was deported

37 ÚHÚ regulation no. 374/1940 Ú. n., in: Úradné noviny, 48, 6 September 1941, 1482.

38 ÚHÚ regulation no. 411/1941 Ú. n., in: Úradné noviny, 51, 20 September 1941, 1584.

39 AMB, f. MNÚ, b. 3029, f. 1694, Zákaz Židom bývať v novostavbách [Prohibition on Jews Living in New Buildings], 17 September 1941.

40 AMB, f. MNÚ, b. 3033, f. 1854, Nutnosť deložovať Židov na územie mimo Bratislavy [The Need for Evicting Jews to Outside of Bratislava], 5 January 1943.

41 See the complete transcript of the letter in: Eduard Nižňanský/Michala Lónčíková, Dejiny židovskej komunity v Banskej Bystrici [The History of the Jewish Community in Banská Bystrica], Banská Bystrica 2016, 91.

42 ŠABB, f. OÚ v BB, b. 129, without number, List miestnej organizácie HSLS Okresnému úradu v Banskej Bystrici [Letter of the Local Organisation of the HSLS to the District Office in Banská Bystrica], 5 December 1941.

43 SNA, f. Ministerstvo vnútra [Ministry of Interior], b. 214, f. 106.150/42-Ir-M, Žiadosť o uvoľnenie z vystavovania [Request for a Release from Eviction], 22 June 1942.

to the Lublin district in October 1942.⁴⁴ His further trajectory remains ambiguous but, taking into account his advanced age and health problems, it is highly probable that Adolf Hó was murdered during the Holocaust.

The case of Adolf Hó exemplifies one of the numerous stories of the unwilling resettlement of Jewish families within the same city, not to mention other cases of multi-layered displacement across the country. In his letter, Hó stated that he was expecting to change to a fourth address, but he did not specify the reasons for this. The argument simply continued to be based on the real estate trade in Jewish property. Generally speaking, it must also be said that forced displacement was sometimes also exacerbated by 'voluntary' move-outs that were a direct consequence of the systematic impoverishment of the Jewish population in the Slovak State. So far, the most extensive intra-city migration track record which I have come across represents the fate of the Glattstein family from Bratislava.⁴⁵ According to a post-war rescuer and aid provider's testimony, they changed eight apartments in total, with a continually decreasing quality of their living conditions.⁴⁶

Changes in the urban demographic map in Slovakia culminated after the implementation of the regulations limiting the Jewish presence in particular streets and squares. As mentioned above, the general restriction on residency in the places named after Hitler or Hlinka that was announced in December 1940 was finally applied nationwide. The realisation of this differed due to the specific approaches of the municipal authorities, and some of these misused their political power to enlarge the designated zones through legal norms. Already in early 1941, some administrative bodies stated that the regulation was unclear, and they raised doubts about how to adequately proceed with it.⁴⁷

The main controversy lay in the unclear categorisation of the apartments situated in the restricted living spaces. That specifically meant whether the enforced restriction was to be valid only for the street- or also for the courtyard-facing housing units, which turned out to be a crucial concern in many cases. Secondly, the symbolic political overtaking of the public space meant that zones named after Hitler and Hlinka were located in central parts of the municipalities, in particular often the largest and longest streets with a high density of Jewish residents. On the one hand, the city centre could be considered as a prestigious address, but on the other, old buildings did not necessarily meet the criteria for satisfactory living standards and required hygienic improvements.⁴⁸ At the same time, imprecise specifications and the confusing realisation of these measures opened the opportunities for Jewish residents to negotiate with the local authorities.

44 [https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_lastName=H%C3%B3&s_firstName=&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=\(10 November 2021\)](https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_lastName=H%C3%B3&s_firstName=&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=(10%20November%201921)).

45 Although there are numerous oral history interviews that have been conducted with Holocaust survivors from Slovakia, intra-city and intra-state displacements have been a theme only occasionally. These experiences have commonly been overlaid by a master narrative defined by issues such as deportations, concentration camps, and hiding.

46 VHA, Interview with K. R., IC 38008.

47 Štátny archív v Prešove, pracovisko Archív Poprad [State Archive in Prešov, Poprad Archive Branch] (ŠAPO-PP), f. Okresný úrad v Kežmarku [District Office in Kežmarok] (OÚ v KK), b. 49, f. 1/41 prez., Správa obecného notárskeho úradu pre mesto Kežmarok (okres Kežmarok) [Report of the Municipal Notary Office for the City of Kežmarok (Kežmarok District)], 30 January 1941.

48 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 15/41 prez., Okresný úrad v Kežmarku Štátnemu policajnému úradu a obecnému notárskemu úradu v Kežmarku o sťahovaní Židov z dvorných bytov Hlinkovho námestia a Hitlerovej ulice [The District Office in Kežmarok to the State Police Office and Municipal Notary Office in Kežmarok about Moving Jews Out of the Courtyard-Facing Housing Units in Hlinka Square and Hitler Street], 20 March 1941.

The Case of Kežmarok

An efficient strategy as initiated from below is exemplified by the activities of the Jewish community leadership from the eastern Slovakian city of Kežmarok, which has historically been multi-ethnic with a large German minority. According to the census from 1940, the Jewish community represented 14.35 per cent of the city's population.⁴⁹ Some 491 Jewish residents then lived in Hlinka Square and in Hitler Street in 120 flats (31 of which were street- and 89 of which were courtyard-facing).⁵⁰ On 30 December 1940, immediately after the announcement of the regulation no. 267/1940 Úr. n. on the restriction on Jews living in the streets and squares named after Andrej Hlinka and Adolf Hitler in all towns and villages in Slovakia,⁵¹ representatives of the autonomous orthodox Jewish community and the branch of the Jewish Centre in Kežmarok sent some comments to the municipality, which described the current situation and the impossibility of implementing the adopted measure in its entirety. In the opening paragraph, the Jewish representatives emphasised their will to cooperate in fulfilling the task of relocating Jewish households, but they additionally proposed two major changes. They asked to apply the restriction only to street-facing flats and to a certain part of the main Hlinka Square. In both instances, they substantiated their claims with precedents from other cities, such as Prešov, Nitra, Topoľčany, and Piešťany. A core argument was the lack of other housing opportunities for Jewish residents in the city.⁵² Whereas there was a shortage of housing units in many cities, such as in the above-mentioned cases of Bratislava or Prešov, the situation in Kežmarok was quite the opposite. In addition, it was supposed that, after the construction of military barracks, numerous apartments would remain empty even if Jews were not moved out from the designated zones.⁵³

Most of these remarks were taken into consideration and the government commissioner of Kežmarok city (Vládny komisár mesta), Martin Longa, adopted them into his response to the ÚHÚ. Moreover, Longa pointed out the economic aspect of the required procedure, because approximately 30 per cent of apartment taxes came from the flats which were rented just by the Jews in Hlinka Square and in Hitler Street. Longa also stated that a radical realisation of the plan for the evictions could negatively impact on the Christian house owners in these localities, in particular those who were existentially dependent on rental incomes.⁵⁴ The subsequent reaction showed that these remarks were considered to be relevant: The head of the ÚHÚ, Morávek, approved a proposed reduction of the designated area in Hlinka Square⁵⁵ and recommended that Jews should move out from the courtyard-facing

49 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 15/41 prez., Sčítanie ľudu 1940 [1940 Census].

50 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 15/41 prez., Stanovisko mesta Kežmarku ku vyhláske ÚHÚ zo dňa 14. decembra 1940 o zákaze bývať Židom na uliciach a námestiach Andreja Hlinku a Adolfa Hitlera [Attitude of the Government Commissioner of Kežmarok City to the ÚHÚ Regulation of 14 December 1940 Regarding the Restriction on Jews Living in the Streets and Squares Named after Andrej Hlinka and Adolf Hitler], 11 January 1941.

51 ÚHÚ Regulation no. 267/1940 Úr. n., in: Úradné noviny, 59, 21 December 1940, 740-741.

52 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 15/41 prez., Pripomienky ku vyhláske Ústredného hospodárskeho úradu v Bratislave zo dňa 14. decembra 1940 [Remarks of the Autonomous Orthodox Jewish Community in Kežmarok on the ÚHÚ Regulation of 14 December 1940], 30 December 1940.

53 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 15/41 prez., Stanovisko mesta Kežmarku ku vyhláske ÚHÚ zo dňa 14. Decembar 1940.

54 Ibid.

55 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 15/41 prez., Zákaz bývať Židom na Hlinkovom námestí a Hitlerovej ulici [Restriction on Jews Living in Hlinka Square and Hitler Street], 31 March 1941.

flats only when a Christian potential tenant appeared.⁵⁶ In this particular case, a direct and rational argumentation of the Jewish representatives, as well as the proposed solution, was accepted by the government commissioner Longa. However, such an approach was generally not respected by all of the local authorities. Longa was officially criticised by the municipal notary for writing to the ÚHÚ to exempt some parts of Hlinka Square from the restriction, a request which was allegedly sent without the municipal notary's knowledge. In the municipal notary's words, Longa's request faced public criticism, and the municipal notary proposed that the government commissioner's written intervention should have only been sent with the notary's signature.⁵⁷ This situation demonstrated that two local authorities did not reach a consensus on this subject, and the municipal notary evoked a dispute on competence. Longa was several times publicly accused of helping the Jews in Kežmarok, for instance in the case of the businessman Bergmann that was reported on in the local German periodical *Karpathen-Post*.⁵⁸ In 1943, Longa resigned from his position and he was replaced as the city commissioner by the ethnic German Matthias Nitsch.⁵⁹

The dispute on competence, as well as a precise interpretation of the regulation, somewhat represented the key issue for the local political authorities. In praxis, though, there were almost 500 Jews who should have theoretically moved out of their apartments by the end of March 1941. This deadline was, according to the municipal notary's report, tensely expected by 'Aryan circles'.⁶⁰ Despite the above-mentioned factors, housing opportunities in the city were very limited for the Jewish community. Institutional negotiations were accompanied by divergent individual responses to the situation. Some of the affected Jewish households tried to balance the adopted measures by taking advantage of gaps in their wording. In some cases from Kežmarok, Jewish residents moved out only from the rooms which faced the street and kept living in the back parts of the same flat. Others decided to rent the front rooms to 'Aryan' subtenants. The municipal notary noted the case of A. Gruber, who allegedly rented two rooms to a former local high-ranking member of the Communist Party, J. Ruber.⁶¹

56 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 15/41 prez., Sťahovanie Židov z dvorných bytov Hlinkovej ulice a Hlinkovho námestia ako i z Hitlerovej ulice a Hitlerovho námestia [Moving Jews Out from the Courtyard-Facing Housing Units in Hlinka Street and Square and Hitler Street and Square], 6 March 1941.

57 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, f. 1/41 prez., Mesačná periodická správa Obecného notárskeho úradu pre mesto Kežmarok (okres Kežmarok) pre Ústredňu štátnej bezpečnosti za mesiac apríl 1941 [Monthly Periodical Report of the Municipal Notary Office of the City of Kežmarok (Kežmarok District) for the State Security Headquarters for April 1941], 30 April 1941.

58 Käsarker Nachrichten. Wie Longa das Wirtschaftsleben unserer Stadt entjudet, in: *Karpathen-Post*, 25 January 1941, 2.

59 Matthias Nitsch was a school inspector, local leader of the Deutsche Partei, and member of the State Council representing the German minority. He formed a Heimatschutz unit to locally assist in suppressing the Slovak National Uprising. Nitsch was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment by the National Court in 1946. Jozef Chreňo, *Malý slovník slovenského štátu 1938–1945* [A Small Dictionary of the Slovak State 1938–1945], Bratislava, 1965, 134–135. See also: Nora Baráthová, *Z obdobia holokaustu v Kežmarku*, <http://www.holocaust.cz/dejiny/soa/holocaust-v-evropskych-zemich/holocaust-na-slovensku/z-obdobia-holokaustu-v-kezmarku> (15 November 2020).

60 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, no. 1/41 prez., Situačná zpráva Obecného notárskeho úradu pre mesto Kežmarok (okres Kežmarok) pre Ústredňu štátnej bezpečnosti za mesiac február [Situational Report of the Municipal Notary Office for the City of Kežmarok (Kežmarok District) for the State Security Headquarters for February 1941], 27 February 1941.

61 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, no. 15/41 prez., Obecný notársky úrad pre mesto Kežmarok (okres Kežmarok) Okresnému úradu v Kežmarku o sťahovaní židov z dvorných bytov Hlinkovho námestia a Hitlerovej ulice [Municipal Notary Office of the City of Kežmarok (Kežmarok District) to the District Office in Kežmarok about Moving Jews Out from the Courtyard-Facing Housing Units in Hlinka Square and Hitler Street], 3 April 1941.

Another pragmatic and reasonable Jewish response was the attempt to satisfy the housing requirements of potential candidates by offering them an alternative apartment instead of the requested one. Mrs. Glücksmannová lived in a courtyard-facing flat in 72 Hlinka Square and J. Kromka, a tax officer in Kežmarok, officially declared his interest in moving into this place. At the same time, O. Böttcher, a policeman in Kežmarok, asked for an appropriate apartment for himself. Both demands were fulfilled by Glücksmannová and her son, Dr. E. Glücksmann, a secretary of the local Jewish religious community. Glücksmann left a double-room flat at 6 Lányi Martinová Street for Böttcher, and Kromka moved into Böttcher's previous flat in Lubica, a nearby village. Based on these circumstances, Glücksmannová asked to continue to live in her flat in Hlinka Square because she was old and seriously ill and would not be able to move in a short time.⁶²

Engineering the Jewish Absence

The above cases epitomised the general situation and the problems that were had by Jewish households at the 'incriminated' addresses. The expectations of the majority society were not immediately fulfilled in Kežmarok as well as in other places. The most influential daily newspaper in Slovakia, *Slovák*, reported that not all of the designated apartments had been emptied by 1 April 1941, even under the threat of penalty. One Jewish resident, whose case served as a 'cautionary example' that was spread by the media, paid a fine of 300 Slovak crowns.⁶³ Furthermore, in a report to the District Office in Kežmarok dated 27 February 1941, the municipal notary stated that Jews who had been ordered to move out from the designated apartments in the city centre were not doing anything about that because they supposedly did not have other places to go to.⁶⁴ Considering Tim Cole's concept of binary Jewish 'presence' and 'absence',⁶⁵ it seems that the main intention of the Slovak authorities was predominantly focussed on the 'absence' aspect. Jews were ordered to leave their apartments according to the wording of the adopted measures, but without any specification of their new residential addresses. Even with regards to the attempt to create a somewhat unsealed ghetto in Bratislava, I am not aware that Jews were rigorously instructed to settle down there.

To conclude, the engineering of the Jewish living space in the Slovak State resulted in significant limits, restrictions, and multiple ways of forced intra-state migration, starting from the municipal level. This multi-layered process affected many of the Jewish families more than once, even before the deportations to the Nazi concentration and extermination camps beyond the Slovak borders. The analysed cases illustrate the role of housing policy in the systematic persecution of the Jewish community and point out some selected noteworthy 'nomadic fates' that did not even involve stepping out of a single city, such as those of the Hó and Glattstein families. The study shows that the symbolic occupation of the public space in Slovakia was realised in favour of the official ideological doctrine, and it had a much more significant

62 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, no. 15/41 prez., List Okresnému úradu v Kežmarku [Letter to the District Office in Kežmarok], 8 April 1941.

63 Nechceli sa vystahovať [They did not Want to Move Out], in: *Slovák*, 86, Easter 1941, 18.

64 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, b. 49, no. 1/41 prez., Situačná zpráva Obecného notárskeho úradu pre mesto Kežmarok (okres Kežmarok) pre Ústredňu štátnej bezpečnosti za mesiac február [Situational Report of the Municipal Notary Office of the City of Kežmarok (Kežmarok District) for the State Security Headquarters for February 1941], 27 February 1941.

65 Tim Cole, *Holocaust City. The Making of a Jewish Ghetto*, New York 2003, 36-39.

impact on everyday Jewish life than just the changing of street signs. Analysing trajectories of the forced Jewish migration from below could make Holocaust research more complex by rethinking the aspects which have been usually overlooked in recent scholarship in Slovakia, such as the involuntary changing of home address and its spatial and social consequences.

In contrast to the personal stories of the persecuted Jewish victims, the analysed aspects of the anti-semitic policy that was applied in Slovakia also reveal the limits of the state system. Even though political representatives created a legal basis to cope with housing capacity by targeting the properties owned or inhabited by Jewish citizens, the implementation of these regulations faced numerous problems and concerns already in its initial stage. The responsible authorities had to additionally adapt the rules in order to reflect the contemporary situation in certain cities and towns. In the frame of the functionalism-intentionalism debate, research on forced Jewish migration at the municipal level in the Slovak State would support the functionalist perspective. However, the research results are more complex than this duality suggests. Disputes about regional competence resulted in an inconsistent system and varied decision-making, and the power to move Jews from the designated urban areas shifted among various regional and local political representatives. Similarly, their attitudes towards the impoverished Jews varied on a large scale, from acting even more harshly than the law determined, to attempts to negotiate with the state authorities to ensure at least more tolerable conditions.

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Michala Lónčíková is historian at the Institute of the Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, v. v. i., currently participating as a researcher in the project *Genocide, Postwar Migration and Social Mobility: Entangled Experiences of Roma and Jews*. Her main research interest is the modern Jewish history in the 20th century, especially the Holocaust in Slovakia and its aftermath. She participated in the international comparative project on *Post-WWII Anti-Semitic Pogroms in East and East Central Europe: Collective Violence and Popular Culture* (Gerda Henkel Stiftung, 2015–2018). Since 2020 she is working at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences and as such she is working as a researcher in the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) project.

E-mail: michala.loncikova@gmail.com

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