

“The Martyrdom of the Slovak Jewry”: Knowledge about Slovak Jews and the Holocaust in Slovakia in the Swedish Jewish Journal *Judisk Krönika*, 1938–1945

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This article is an exploration of what information about the situation for Jews in the Slovak Republic was published in the Swedish Jewish journal *Judisk Krönika* between 1938 and 1945. Much of the information published was accurate. However, some reports came much later than the actual events and implementation of certain legislation. In other cases, information seems to have been disseminated more quickly. For example, *Judisk Krönika*'s article on the Jew Codex, which was implemented in early September 1941, was published in October 1941. *Judisk Krönika* was a nationwide journal, read by both Jews and non-Jews. As has been pointed out by previous research, *Judisk Krönika* steadily reported on the Holocaust and without censoring the atrocities. It can be concluded that knowledge about the Holocaust in Slovakia was readily available in Sweden during the war, and that there were conflicting depictions of the role of Slovak antisemitism.

Keywords: *Judisk Krönika*; Swedish Jewish press; Slovak State; Slovak Jews; the Holocaust; knowledge and information; Jewish Code (1941); antisemitism; Sweden; 1938–1945.

Introduction

Sweden's relationship to the Holocaust and Nazi Germany has been the focus of several studies, and so has the Swedish refugee politics preceding and during the war.¹ The standard works on these subjects are Klas Åmark's work of more than 700 pages, *Att bo granne med ondskan* [Living Next Door to Evil],² and Izabela A Dahl and Karin Kvist Gevert's recent anthology *Förintelsen & Sverige* [The Holocaust & Sweden].³ As Pontus Rudberg clearly demonstrates, the notion that Swedish Jews could have done more to help the victims of the Holocaust relies on an exaggerated belief in Swedish Jewish influence on Sweden's refugee policies.⁴ However, in the Swedish historiography of the Holocaust and its relation to Sweden, the attempt of intervening in Slovakia is

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1 E.g., KVIST GEVERTS, *Ett främmande element i nationen*; EKMAN – ÅMARK, *Sweden's Relations with Nazism, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust*. For an overhaul of the study of antisemitism in Sweden, see, e.g., KVIST GEVERTS, *Antisemitism in Sweden*. For more on the study of the Holocaust in Sweden, see HOLMILA – KVIST GEVERTS, *On Forgetting and Rediscovering the Holocaust in Scandinavia*; KVIST GEVERTS, *Refugee Policy in Sweden during the Holocaust*; WAGRELL, "Chorus of the Saved", 31–38. Holocaust studies appeared relatively late in Sweden, but there are still early writings on the topic; see KVIST GEVERTS, *Tracing the Holocaust in Early Writings in Post-War Sweden*.

2 ÅMARK, *Att bo granne med ondskan*.

3 DAHL – KVIST GEVERTS, *Förintelsen & Sverige*.

4 RUDBERG, "A Record of Infamy".

still relatively unknown, as highlighted by Denisa Neštáková and Eduard Nižňanský.⁵ This article investigates what knowledge about the situation for Slovak Jews reached Sweden. More precisely, what was written about Slovak Jews and the Holocaust in Slovakia in the Swedish Jewish journal *Judisk Krönika* (The Jewish Chronicle) between 1938 and 1945.

In Sweden, the Holocaust was already known to the public in 1942. Hugo Valentin, the historian who authored the standard work on Swedish Jewish history and a pioneering expert on antisemitism during the 1930s,⁶ wrote an article called "Utröttningskriget mot judarna" [The Extermination War against the Jews] in October 1942, published in the liberal *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* (GHT). Valentin reported that 700,000 Jews had been murdered in Poland. A few months later, in December 1942, Valentin wrote yet another article about "the Greatest Pogrom in World History".⁷ Valentin continued spreading knowledge about the Holocaust throughout the war.

As the clerico-fascist state of the First Slovak Republic – also known as the Slovak State – was formed in 1939 as a client state of Nazi Germany, antisemitic propaganda was not merely limited to state propaganda, it was, as Michala Lönčíková puts it, "living its own life".⁸ The clerico-fascist Slovak People's Party (Ludáks), under the leadership of the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso, had begun antisemitic campaigns already in 1938.⁹ Soon followed antisemitic laws, from which many non-Jewish Slovaks benefited.¹⁰ As Ján Hlavinka shows in his study of the Holocaust in Medzilaborce, these laws were implemented with precision and efficiency – even in remote areas.¹¹ There are conflicting numbers in the literature, but there is no doubt that the Holocaust meant the destruction of Slovak Jewry – about 91 percent (about 81,000 of 89,000) of all Slovak Jews were deported and murdered.¹²

Generally, the Swedish press was positive towards the United States and Great Britain and critical of the Soviet Union.¹³ During the war, Swedish authorities enacted censorship. Additionally, many newspapers self-censored due to fear of Nazi Germany, which is illustrated by the fact that two major newspapers – the liberal *Dagens Nyheter* and the conservative *Svenska Dagbladet* – both rejected Valentin's aforementioned article.¹⁴ Even though the Swedish state enacted some censoring, Sweden was one of three European countries, together with Ireland and Switzerland, with a somewhat

5 NEŠTÁKOVÁ – NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Swedish Interventions in the Tragedy*. For more generally about the historiography of the Holocaust in Slovakia, see PAULOVÍČOVÁ, *Mapping the Historiography on the Holocaust*. For Holocaust memory, see PAULOVÍČOVÁ, *Holocaust Memory and Antisemitism in Slovakia*.

6 VALENTIN, *Judarnas historia i Sverige*. His book *Antisemitismen i historisk och kritisk belysning* (1935) was translated into English in 1936 and into German in 1937: VALENTIN, *Antisemitism; Antisemitenspiegel*. For more on Hugo Valentin, see BORTZ, *Hugo Valentin's Scholarly Campaign against Antisemitism*.

7 BORTZ, "The Greatest Pogrom in World History". The editor of GHT, Torgny Segerstedt, already warned about Hitler in the Autumn of 1923, CHRISTENSEN, *Ny Tid och Minareten*, 347.

8 LŇNČÍKOVÁ, *Was the Antisemitic Propaganda a Catalyst*.

9 For more on the topic of the clerical fascism of the Tiso regime, see KUBÁTOVÁ – KUBÁT, *The Priest and the State*; CONWAY, *The Churches, the Slovak State and the Jews*.

10 LŇNČÍKOVÁ, *Address Unknown*.

11 HLAVINKA, *The Holocaust in Slovakia*.

12 KAMENEC, *On the Trail of Tragedy*, 19; NIŽŇANSKÝ – SLNEKOVÁ, *Die Deportationen der Juden*, 33; BITUNJAC, *Between Racial Politics and Political Calculation*, 150; RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 847–849.

13 SCHOLZ, *Sverige under andra världskriget*, 253.

14 BORTZ, "The Greatest Pogrom in World History", 123.

intact freedom of the press.¹⁵ As Antero Holmila summarizes, the “current scholarly consensus largely agrees that during the war, the [Swedish] press reported on the fate of Jews steadily and in an uncensored manner”.¹⁶ Furthermore, Yosef Gorny states that, in contrast to the rest of the Anglo-American press,¹⁷ the American and British Jewish press, as well as the Jewish press in the USSR and Palestine, reported frequently on the Holocaust – often on the front pages.¹⁸ Therefore, it is interesting to see what information reached the Swedish Jewish journal *Judisk Krönika* during the years of the clerico-fascist Slovak People’s Party, 1938–1945. The aim of this article is thus to explore what was reported in *Judisk Krönika* about the situation for Slovak Jews during the years 1938–1945, and which role Slovak antisemitism was ascribed in the persecutions.

Material and Method

The material utilised in this study is from *Judisk Krönika*, a Swedish Jewish journal founded in 1932. The aim of the journal is described by Karin Sjögren as “disseminating Jewish culture and education, promoting self-confidence, and dispelling the prejudice and erroneous notions that were rife in the non-Jewish world.”¹⁹ *Judisk Krönika*, as well as *Judisk Tidskrift* (The Jewish Journal), was printed in Stockholm, but had a national reach with both Jewish and non-Jewish readers.²⁰ For example, the archbishop Erling Eidem stated in the journal in 1952, that he had been a subscriber for many years.²¹ Åmark notices that *Judisk Krönika* was early with publishing news about the Holocaust,²² which makes a study of the journal relevant for establishing what information about the situation for Slovak Jews reached Sweden. Since I do not include all Swedish newspapers nor *Judisk Tidskrift* (1928–1966),²³ I do not gain a full picture – which is not the aim of this small study. We do know, however, that both *Judisk Tidskrift* and *Judisk Krönika* often reported on the Holocaust,²⁴ and it is possible that many of the reports in the latter were also presented in the former.

Using the National Library of Israel, I have gathered articles from *Judisk Krönika* which mention the situation for Jews in Czechoslovakia and Slovakia from 1938 to 1945.²⁵ The search words used are: “Bratislava”, “Pressburg”, “Nitra”, “Slovak*”, “Slovakien”, “Tjeckoslovakien”, and “Hlinka*”. The asterisk makes it possible to catch several different spellings and forms of words. For example, there are hits for different spellings for Slovakia, both “Slovakiet” and “Slovakien”, while “Hlinka*” gets hits on

15 ÅMARK, *Att bo granne med ondskan*, 209.

16 HOLMILA, “A Hellish Nightmare”, 164. Holmila references, for example, RUNDBLOM, *Sweden and the Holocaust*; THOR TUREBY, *Svenska ånglar och hyenor möter*; RUDBERG, *The Swedish Jews and the Holocaust*.

17 E.g., SHAPIRO, *Why Didn’t the Press Shout?*

18 GORNY, *The Jewish Press and the Holocaust*.

19 SJÖGREN, *Judar i det svenska folkhemmet*, 175. My translation.

20 THOR TUREBY, *The Holocaust and the Jewish Survivors*, 251; SJÖGREN, *Judar i det svenska folkhemmet*, 18.

21 “Kyrkodignitärer”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 21, no. 1 (January 1952), p. 8.

22 ÅMARK, *Att bo granne med ondskan*, 258.

23 The main reason being that the material from *Judisk Tidskrift* is not digitally available, as *Judisk Krönika* is. For more on *Judisk Tidskrift*, see, e.g., ENGLUND, *Den nya juden och judiska exilen*.

24 RUDBERG, *The Swedish Jews and the Holocaust*.

25 “Judisk Krönika”, National Library of Israel, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/jdskrn> [accessed 27 August 2023]. On digitization in the National Library of Israel, see, e.g., RINGEL – RIBAK, *Practicing Digitization*.

both “hlinkamän” [Hlinka Men] and “hlinkagardet” [the Hlinka Guard]. All in all, the number of articles and notices about the situation of Slovak Jews during the years 1938–1945 included in this study is twenty-four. As the source material usually referred to the First Slovak Republic as Slovakia, the terms are used interchangeably in the article. As stated above, the aim is to explore what was reported; therefore, this article is mostly descriptive, and, to give insight into the material, I have chosen to transcribe and translate large parts of the material. In order to validate and scrutinize the reports in *Judisk Krönika*, textual analysis is utilized through contextualization by comparing with previous research.

The Establishment of the Slovak State and Antisemitic Laws

In December 1938, when Slovakia was still a part of Czechoslovakia but had gained autonomy through the *Ludáks*, *Judisk Krönika* published a five-page article discussing the possible fate of European Jewry. Under a section entitled “Could the Central European Jewry be saved?” *Judisk Krönika* wrote the following: “While England, France, and the USA discuss the solution to the refugee problem, lots of German-Jewish families are driven to suicide. And not only Germany’s Vassal states, to which nowadays Italy and Czechoslovakia can be included, are going for a violent decimation of their Jewish population, but also Poland, Hungary and Romania”.²⁶ The “refugee problem” mentioned was mainly referring to German-Jewish children, who were in dire need in 1938.

The following year, in March 1939, *Judisk Krönika* reported that the “dramatic events which ended the freedom of the Czechs and the Slovaks and the Carpatho-Ukrainians [...] has driven another 300,000 Jews into a catastrophe, which by all accounts will surpass the one that affected the Austrian Jews”. Furthermore, the article stated that “the Gestapo has, with the aid of [...] the pro-Nazi Hlinka Guard, become the true master of Czechoslovakia”. After discussing the anti-Jewish laws that Tiso had promised, the article ended with the “unnecessary” statement that “all the righteous minded in Czech and Slovak circles” were opposed to the anti-Jewish measures.²⁷ The following month, under the recurring section “Events of the Month”, a notice with the title “Persecutions in Slovakia” discussed the “anti-Jewish excesses” of the Hlinka Guard following Hitler’s fiftieth birthday.²⁸ These antisemitic actions by the Hlinka Guard followed the Slovak declaration of independence from Czechoslovakia in March 1939.²⁹ This report formed just a small part of the issue, which focused on antisemitism in Europe and the United States and Jewish refugees. Here, we see lines being drawn, Nazi Germany was portrayed as responsible for Slovak antisemitism while “righteous” Slovaks were opposed to antisemitic measures.

26 “Månadsrevy”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 7, no. 10 (December 1938), 157–162, here, p. 159. All translations by the author.

27 “Ytterligare 300,000 judar i nazisternas våld”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 9, no. 3 (March 1939), 42–43. On the formation of the Hlinka Guard, see ZAPOTOCZNY JR, *Road to Auschwitz*, 14–18.

28 “Månadens händelser”, *Judisk Krönika*, 8, no. 4 (April 1939), 62–63, here, p. 62. On the antisemitic legislation of 1939, see FIAMOVIÁ, *Preparation of Anti-Jewish Legislation*. On the Hlinka Guard, see, e.g., JELINEK, *Storm-Troopers in Slovakia*.

29 ZAPOTOCZNY JR, *Road to Auschwitz*, 44ff.

The Slovak People's Party played on antisemitic tendencies in the country, both within the Slovak majority and the German minority.³⁰ Jews became a primary target for the party when establishing its enemies. In 1940, the first mention of the situation of the Jews in "Nazistlydlandet Slovakien" [the Nazi vassal state Slovakia] is from March. The article described how the Hlinka guard had gained immense power and had begun discriminating against Jews. Already in this article, it is discussed that all Slovak Jews would possibly be deported, since the Slovak minister of the interior had initiated an investigation regarding the subject.³¹ This was due to the 1938 deportations, as it was about one and a half years before the deportations to Auschwitz began.³² Two months later, an article described the Slovak Jews' situation as much better compared to that of those in Germany but wrote that the anti-Jewish laws had become all the more noticeable.³³

In the following year, 1941, *Judisk Krönika's* reporting was sporadic, with six mentions of the situation in the Slovak State. The journal reported on the implementation of the Nürnberg laws, ghettos, courses held in the "'science' of antisemitism", and "Aryanization" of companies, but also that there were signs of resistance among Slovaks – such as taking over Jewish businesses *pro forma* only, and not implementing a true "Aryanization".³⁴ In a notice in the April issue, the journal reported thus:

In many cities, ghettos have been set up, and the Jews are not allowed to show themselves in other districts. Hitherto, 4,300 companies have been "Aryanized". All Jewish houses have been put under compulsory administration and all Jewish organisations have been dissolved. In their place, a centre has been founded, which every Jew must belong to. The Nürnberg laws have been incorporated into the Slovak lawbook. The Jews, who's numbers in Slovakia reach 88,000, are not allowed to study or to engage in liberal professions. The Jewish Quarter in Pressburg [Bratislava] has been torn down to give way for a park. Courses in the "science" of antisemitism are being arranged. Those who take these courses obtain a diploma, which gives them the right to take over the management of Jewish companies.³⁵

Where the information came from is uncertain, but *Judisk Krönika's* reports were mostly correct, though often several months after the events. Indeed, a Jewish Centre had been created, which was the only secular organisation allowed for Slovak Jews, and membership was obligatory. Furthermore, in 1941, the destruction and "Aryanization" of Jewish businesses was well underway. Out of about 12,300 businesses, some 2,300 were "Aryanized" (forcibly put under new management) while circa 10,000 were

30 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*; SCHVARC, "We Are Telling You..."; KLAMKOVÁ, *The Universality of Anti-Semitism*; SZABÓ, *Catholic Racism and Anti-Jewish Discourse*. For more on the Catholic Church and antisemitism, see TETER, *The Catholic Church*.

31 "Från judehatets länder", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 9, no. 3 (March 1940), 40–42.

32 NIŽŇANSKÝ – SLNEKOVÁ, *Die Deportationen der Juden*; NEŠŤÁKOVÁ – NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Swedish Interventions in the Tragedy*, 26; BITUNJAC, *Between Racial Politics and Political Calculation*, 149.

33 "Judarnas läge i Europa", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 9, no. 5 (May 1940), 66–68.

34 E.g., "Från skilda länder", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 10, no. 7 (September 1941), p. 107; "Från skilda länder", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 10, no. 8 (October 1941), 120–124.

35 "Från skilda länder", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 10, no. 4 (April 1941), p. 61.

“liquidated” (forcibly destroyed). *Judisk Krönika* does not seem to have distinguished between the two. Vanda Rajcan, Madeline Vadkerty and Ján Hlavinka point out that this process was heavily corrupt, with party members enriching themselves.³⁶

Judisk Krönika most likely received some of its information from the Jewish weekly paper *Vestník* which was published by the Jewish Centre in the Slovak State during the war.³⁷ In May, *Judisk Krönika* wrote:

A Jewish weekly newspaper is published in Slovakia and is provided to every Jewish family. The Jewish businesses are rapidly “Aryanized”. Germans from Bukowina and Bessarabia are arriving in Slovakia, which the Slovak newspapers are dissatisfied with, as they want to keep the gains from the country’s “Aryanization” for their own countrymen and keep the places, which have become free, open only for Slovaks, who are returning from France and Belgium.³⁸

Additionally, the creation of the antisemitic “Jew Codex” was discussed, which was a governmental decree of 9 September 1941.³⁹ This codex contained 270 antisemitic laws forming the basis for deportation, discrimination and disenfranchisement, and was drafted with the participation of Dieter Wisliceny, an “advisor for Jewish questions” from Nazi Germany.⁴⁰ The Jew Codex stripped Slovak Jews of all their human rights.⁴¹ This was clear to the authors of the article in *Judisk Krönika*:

All antisemitic laws in Slovakia have been collected in a special Jewish codex. It contains no less than 40 pages. In 270 paragraphs all Jewish life is regulated. Except for a Jewish main centre, no other Jewish organization is allowed to exist. Contracts between Slovaks and Jews are invalid. Of Jewish wealth, 20% is to be paid to the state treasury. Yellow armbands are obligatory for all Jews. Radio and photographic apparatus, telescopes and gramophones must be handed over. 8,275 Jewish businesses have hitherto been liquidated. Of deposited funds, only 150 to 400 Slovak crowns are allowed to be withdrawn, so that, as it is explained in the ordinance, Jewish funds will last longer, of which some can be used for the completely impoverished Jews and the final expulsion of them all. In Bratislava, Jews have had to evacuate their apartments, with the rationale that their residences constituted a hygienic danger for the whole population! The Hlinka Guard’s newspapers demand official control of the “Aryanization” of Jewish businesses, since it is said to have been established that members of government bestow the good businesses

36 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 845. For more on the Jewish Centre, see NEŠŤÁKOVÁ, *The Jewish Centre*.

37 LANDAU, *The Jewish Leaderships*, 43.

38 “Från skilda länder”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 10, no. 5 (May 1941), 75–78, here, p. 76.

39 NEŠŤÁKOVÁ – NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Swedish Interventions in the Tragedy*, 25. For a thorough discussion of the Jew Codex, see ZAPOTOCZNY JR, *Road to Auschwitz*, 71–138.

40 BITUNJAC, *Between Racial Politics and Political Calculation*, 147.

41 SALNER, *The Holocaust in Slovakia*, 24. Even the sexuality of Jews was regulated; see NEŠŤÁKOVÁ – NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Regulating of Sexual Relations*.

upon their wives and their relatives. Secrecy of correspondence is repealed for Jews. The Slovak Jews are not allowed to visit public places, theatres or restaurants. Milk stores are open to them only before 8 o'clock in the morning, the other stores only until 10 o'clock.⁴²

As this excerpt shows, the creation of the Jew Codex in September 1941 was already reported upon in *Judisk Krönika* in October 1941. The corruption in the process of Aryanization was also clear from the outside perspective.⁴³

The displacement of Jews, forcing them into ghettos and work camps, taking place in Slovakia, was reported on in November. According to the article, Jews were only allowed to live in fourteen places in the Slovak State, travel in third class while travelling by train and not visit the restaurant on board nor book a sleeper compartment. Furthermore, they wrote that "[l]etters to and from Jews must be affixed with a stamped Star of David. Jews are not allowed to travel by car. All relations between Jews and Slovaks are forbidden."⁴⁴ The information provided in this article was true; Jews had to affix yellow stars on their correspondence, which was not mandated by antisemitic legislation in other countries, not even by authorities in Nazi Germany.⁴⁵

The next article mentioning Slovak Jews came already in the next issue, in December 1941, when one could read the following in *Judisk Krönika*:

The Jewish sports associations have been forced to hand over all their gymnastic and sports equipment to the Hlinka Guard: shoes, balls, ski equipment, tennis balls, dumbbells etc. Jews are not allowed to own a bike anymore, they must hand over their fishing equipment, they are only allowed to stay in the synagogues during time for prayer, and they are not allowed to walk in groups in the streets. They are only allowed to buy milk before 8 o'clock in the morning, other foodstuffs before 10 o'clock; they are not allowed to show themselves outside after 9 o'clock in the evening nor visit any non-Jewish home. Theatres, movie theatres, exhibitions and parks are closed to them; only certain hotels and restaurants are allowed for them. Without written permission, they are not allowed to leave their place of residence, and when they receive a travel permit, they must carefully follow the specified route. The 6,000 Jews expelled from Bratislava have been placed in a camp near Oremlaz. In Slovakia live about 80,000 Jews.⁴⁶

As one can tell from these excerpts, *Judisk Krönika* was well-informed of the seizure of Jewish property, restrictions on travel and restrictions on procuring groceries. Just as with other news from the antisemitic persecutions during the war, *Judisk Krönika* reported what information they could find about the situation for Slovak Jews. In

42 "Från skilda länder", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 10, no. 8 (October 1941), 120–124, here, p. 121.

43 There is, however, no mention of voices raised against the Jew Codex. These protests were not public in a manner which made it possible for *Judisk Krönika* to report about them; PAULOVICOVÁ, *Rescue of Jews*, 262.

44 "Från skilda länder", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 10, no. 9 (November 1941), 138–140, here, 139–140.

45 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 846.

46 "Från skilda länder", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 10, no. 10 (December 1941), 155–157, here, p. 157.

these 1941 articles, the persecutions were no longer blamed on Nazi Germany; Slovak antisemitism was all the more acknowledged.

The Persecutions Intensifies

The most mentions of Slovakia were in 1942, with eight different articles – a third of the material – mentioning the situation. With one additional article about the power of resistance of the Zionist Chalut-movement briefly mentioning Slovakia together with Yugoslavia.⁴⁷ The first report, from January 1942, revolved around the harshness of the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation in Slovakia and how Jewish property, clothes, furniture and more was being confiscated and distributed among the members of the Hlinka Guard. It was also stated that Jewish cemeteries which had not been in use since 1921 were to be converted into sports grounds. Furthermore, they wrote “[t]he deportations to Poland are said to have been called off during the winter, since the Slovaks in America have been protesting against them and businessmen have stated that the expulsions have caused an economic crisis”.⁴⁸ Indeed, some Slovaks were negative about the treatment of Slovak Jews, and there was an internal resistance – as well as external protests – against the deportations,⁴⁹ which was acknowledged in *Judisk Krönika*. Thus, *Judisk Krönika* once again focused on the resistance in Slovakia.

In April, a report from Slovakia stated that Jews over the age of six had to wear a yellow star, Jews were not allowed to ride a bike nor use a telephone, the Jewish retirement home had been evacuated since the government agencies had confiscated the house, and that a typhus epidemic had broken out in the concentration camp in Sered, where 15,000 Jews had been interned.⁵⁰ Once again, such reports are corroborated by previous research. The article is, however, from April 1942, one year after it was enforced that Jews had to wear these badges.⁵¹ The following month, a brief notice read: “[t]he Slovak Jews are designated as the number 1 enemy, which must be completely liquidated. The surplus from the sale of Jewish property will be used to finance the construction of concentration camps on the Polish–Slovak border.”⁵² Here, we see yet again the “liquidated” used by *Judiska Krönika*.

The numbers *Judisk Krönika* published were in several cases dependent on statements of Slovak government officials, such as minister of the interior Alexander Mach. In July, the journal wrote that Mach “recently explained for foreign correspondents that 45,000 Jews had been forced to leave the country up to the end of May. To the end of September it would be the turn of the remaining 45,000. Then, the last Jew would be deported to Poland”. In the same notice, it was also reported that “32 Jews were jailed as suspects and executed” by the Hlinka Guard for the murder of a police officer, which later turned out to have been committed by a non-Jew. Furthermore, it

47 Chalut, or Halutz, were Zionist youth resistance movements; MORRUS, *Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust*, 100.

48 “Från skilda länder”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 1 (January 1942), 10–12, here, p. 12.

49 BITUNJAC, *Between Racial Politics and Political Calculation*, 156–157; RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 847; KIRSCHBAUM, *Sister Margit Slachta of Hungary*. People on both sides of the issue of the “Jewish Question” wrote to Tiso during the war; see VADKERTY, *People Write to Tiso*. These deportations were the result of discussions with Nazi Germany, which took place in the Autumn of 1941; see NIŽNANSKÝ, *The Discussions of Nazi Germany*.

50 “Från skilda länder”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 3 (April 1942), 42–46, here, p. 44.

51 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 845.

52 “Från skilda länder”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 4 (May 1942), 58–61, here, p. 59.

was stated that “differences have arisen between the government and the Catholic Church, since the state wants to forbid baptisms of Jews”.⁵³ Once more, focus was put on all forms of resistance against – and disunity within – Slovak authorities.

“The Extermination War”

A month before Valentin’s 13 October 1942 article “The Extermination War against the Jews” was published on the frontpage of *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, an article with the same title was published in *Judisk Krönika*.⁵⁴ Directly preceding this article was one entitled “The Martyrdom of the Slovak Jewry”, which stated:

More than 700 years ago, the first Jewish communities were founded in Slovakia. During these seven centuries, the Jews have farmed the land, created industries, founded schools, which have gained world fame. In Bratislava, Nitra, Tirnau and other places, they have lived in peace – and especially during the time between the two world wars, 1919–1939, under the leadership of Masaryk and Benesj [Beneš], they enjoyed full freedom and lived under friendly circumstances with their Christian countrymen. Now, on Hitler’s command, the puppet “state” Nazi-Slovakia has initiated their complete annihilation through forced migration to unknown concentration camps in occupied Poland and Russia. 80,000 Jews, men, women and children, old and young, sick and elderly have to leave the country. From one day to another, whole communities are destroyed, and all their property is confiscated. Men have to leave their wives, and the Bratislava published Nazi newspaper *Gardista* speaks of special concentration camps for “Jewesses and prostitutes”. Even patients in hospitals are taken away, and the Bratislava radio proclaims that “in one night, 96 Jewesses were captured and deported, who had been in hiding”. The Church is strictly commanded not to intervene in these measures, and one priest, who from the pulpit is condemning the persecutions, is arrested. A solemn protest meeting was held in London on the 10th of June this year. The Chief Rabbi of the British Empire presided over a large and representative gathering of Christian and Jewish participants. Members of the Czechoslovak government and the English parliament spoke. In the midst of civilization’s war against the horrors of Hitler’s new order, one could hear the voice of freedom in London.⁵⁵

Thereafter followed quotes of condemnation by the British Chief Rabbi, the Archbishop of Westminster, the Czechoslovak minister in exile Dr Juraj Slavik, and members of the British parliament – Lord Strabolgi and Major Victor Cazalet. This article is one among several others which describe the destruction of European Jewries, for

53 “Från skilda länder”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 6 (July 1942), 90–91, here, p. 91.

54 “Utrotningskriget mot judarna”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 7 (September 1942), 101–102; VALENTIN, Hugo. “Utrotningskriget mot judarna”, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, 13 October 1942, p. 1.

55 “Den slovakiska judendomens martyrium”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 7 (September 1942), p. 101.

example the Lithuanian Jews.⁵⁶ As can be seen, the article ascribes responsibility and initiative to Nazi Germany, while the Slovak fascists are seen as puppets.

Another article entitled "The Extermination War against the Jews" followed in the next issue, in which the use of gas chambers to exterminate Jews was reported under the headline "Barbaric Method", which was the first time the word "gaskammare" (gas chamber) appeared in the journal.⁵⁷ Under the following section, entitled "Sale of Slovak Jews", *Judisk Krönika* reported on the "slave trade" between the Slovak State and Nazi Germany, describing how the latter took on the deportation of Slovak Jews to lower its debt to Slovakia. Once again, the blame for the treatment of Slovak Jews was cast on Nazi German authorities, who, according to the article, "forced" the Slovak leadership to enact antisemitic measures and deportations, which is contrary to the fact that the Hlinka Guard, the Slovak People's Party and its leadership were more than willing accomplices in the persecution of Slovak Jews.⁵⁸

Among the different methods of the Nazi regime, attention must also be directed to the treatment which has been used against the Slovak Jews. After having forced the Slovak government to decide on the deportation of the Slovak Jews, the Nazis have used these politics to liquidate their debt to Slovakia. As Germany was unable to pay for deliveries of valuable goods and for labour from Slovakia, its debt to this country rose to 2,500 million Slovak crowns. Germany had nothing to export to Slovakia and therefore made a deal with the Slovak minister of the interior Sano Mach to take the Slovak Jews for 4,000 marks per person. This business transaction, the Czechoslovak minister of the interior in London, Dr Juraj Slavik, explained in a radio broadcast to his country, was intended to significantly lower the German debt to Slovakia by Germany undertaking the deportation of the majority of the 80,000 Slovak Jews. The agreement is viewed in Czechoslovak circles as being one of history's worst slave trades, based on German extortion and the criminal servility of the Slovak Quislings. Most of the 56,000 Slovak Jews have been sent to the Polish cities Chelm, Lukow and Medzeresce-Podlaski and the notorious concentration camp Oswiecim [Auschwitz]. Hlinka Guards arrested 1,200 Jews in Bardyjov and drove them into the largest synagogue, where they were forced to cut off their hair, beards and sidelocks. They were thereafter sent to Poland by a freight train. Hundreds of Slovak Jews, who have escaped to Hungary, have been interned there. Hungarians first tried of course to get rid of the refugees, but Slovakia refused to accept them again, reasoning that they, due to their escape, have lost their Slovak citizenships.⁵⁹

56 "Utrotningen av de litauiska judarna", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 12, no. 5 (June 1943), 70–72. In this article, it is mentioned that the Jews from Czechoslovakia who arrived in 1941 faced the same fate as the Lithuanian Jews. On the exile government, see JAKUBEC, *Navigating Relationships in Exile*.

57 "Utrotningskriget mot judarna", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 8 (October 1942), 122–124, here, p. 123.

58 NEŠŤÁKOVÁ – NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Swedish Interventions in the Tragedy*, 24–27; RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 844–848.

59 "Utrotningskriget mot judarna", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 8 (October 1942), 122–124, here, 123–124.

The sale of Jews refers to the unique contract between Slovakia and Nazi Germany. According to this agreement, the Slovak state had to pay 500 reichsmark to Germany for each deported Jew – a lower number than mentioned in the article in *Judisk Krönika*.⁶⁰ Already in this article, Auschwitz is mentioned as being “notorious”; it was no secret – it had been mentioned before.⁶¹ Most Slovak Jews who arrived at the death camp in 1942 were immediately sent to the gas chambers.⁶² In 1943, only a single article mentioned the situation in Slovakia – a retrospective of the “black year” of 1942.⁶³ With internal disputes in the Slovak regime escalating, and the Lúdáks’ grip of power becoming more unstable, the deportations ended in October 1942.⁶⁴ This explains why *Judisk Krönika*’s attention was directed elsewhere. The reports about the Holocaust did not cease but rather changed focus.⁶⁵

In August 1944, Nazi Germany took direct control of the territory of the Slovak state and thus directly oversaw the deportations.⁶⁶ As the deportations of the Slovak Jews resumed, attention was once again directed towards Slovakia. Articles entitled “The Germans’ Extermination of the Jews” discussed the events of the Holocaust in Europe. In one such article, one section entitled “Liquidation in Slovakia” read:

The Jews in Slovakia became worried when a governmental decree was made public, that they all had to report to the Bratislava police between the first and the ninth of February. They were to bring their birth certificates, and proof of residence and work permits. The provision also applies to the few hundred Jews, who by a special permit signed by Tiso, have been able to reside in the Slovak capital city. The uneasiness amongst Jews is also due to the deportations, which took place in 1942, and was preceded by such a registration. During the last weeks, many Jews have been fired from the firms, which have a good relationship with the Germans and the Hlinka party and have been sent to concentration camps. Now they fear that the remaining Jews also will be sent to concentration camps or deported to Germany and later to Poland. Until now, the seizure of Jewish property has brought in five million Slovak crowns to the Slovak state. The combined value of confiscated Jewish houses in 1941 was estimated to reach 1,300,000 Slovak crowns. The Slovak registration decree is a result of Hitler’s most recent attack against the Jews, which gave rise to misgivings among them in Central and Southern Europe. Some escape attempts have of course been made when Jews have sought to escape to the relative safety of the Hungarian territory. The antisemitic newspaper *Gardista* explains that the smuggling

60 NIŽŇANSKÝ, *The Discussions of Nazi Germany*, 118.

61 The concentration camp at Oswiecim (Auschwitz) was first mentioned in April 1942; “Från skilda länder”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 3 (April 1942), p. 43.

62 SZULC, *I skuggan av Auschwitz*, 58–59.

63 “Återblick på ett svart år”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 12, no. 1 (January 1943), 2–5.

64 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 847–849.

65 E.g., “Utrotningen av judarna”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 12, no. 3 (April 1943), 38–41.

66 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 844.

of Jews on a grand scale takes place on the borders of eastern Slovakia, where railroad officials have helped Jews to reach Kosice in Hungary.⁶⁷

Here we see that information about the situation for Jews in Slovakia was still reaching Sweden. The daily newspaper *Gardista*, which was, as Lönčíková puts it, “the mouthpiece of the most radical parts of the Hlinka Party”,⁶⁸ is referenced. Once more, initiative and responsibility were placed on Nazi Germany, and not Slovak authorities. In March 1944, the deportations of Hungarian Jews had not yet begun. It was still “relatively” safe, as *Judisk Krönika* put it. Two months later, the journal wrote, as part of yet another longer article, about the “Plunder in Slovakia”:

Serious disputes have risen among the different elements of the Slovak population which are eager to acquire Jewish property for free or for a bargain. The chair of the Central Economic Office in Bratislava, Paskovic, recently made a statement regarding the sale of such property. He said, that houses and gardens had been taxed by an official commission between November 1942 and July 1943. Therefore, it had been decided, that the price for a house had to be paid within 45 days and that it had, to make it possible for poorer families to buy these houses, been agreed with the banks to give loans for up to 45% of the price and to 5% interest. Applications for these loans must be done in two copies, one for the Central Economic Office and one for the Hlinka party or the German party’s regional organisation, depending on what nationality one belongs to. The Central Economic Office only concerned itself with applications which were recommended by either the Hlinka party or the German party. Altogether, Paskovic concluded, “objects” for a value of several hundred million crowns would be sold. The anti-Jewish Bratislava newspaper *Grenzbote* has sharply criticized the manner of this liquidation of Jewish property. It complains that there is no official list of former Jewish houses, that the governmental agencies, party institutions and “privileged individuals” got to pick first and that the prices which the houses had officially been assessed at is being kept secret. Dr Juraj Slavik, the Czechoslovak minister of internal affairs, has in a radio broadcast from London to the Slovak people praised the railroad workers who saved Jews from the clutches of Nazism, and warned the people not to join in the plundering. “There is not a shred of doubt that the one who profits from such property will not live for long. Through participation in the dispersion of such property you make yourself complicit of all the crimes which have been committed towards your Jewish countrymen, and you will be judged accordingly.”⁶⁹

67 “Tyskarnas utrotning av judarna”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 13, no. 3 (March 1944), 37–38, here, p. 38.

68 LÖNČÍKOVÁ, *Was the Antisemitic Propaganda a Catalyst*, 82.

69 “Utrotningen av judarna”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 13, no. 5 (May 1944), 67–69, here, p. 68.

Many Slovak antisemites coveted Jewish property, and the process was, as stated above, corrupt, while others were indirect beneficiaries.⁷⁰ In the excerpt above, it is clearly shown that this corruption was no secret. Also, the involvement of the Deutsche Partei was made clear, who's role, as Michal Schvarc points out, has not been fully studied in relation to the Holocaust in the Slovak Republic.⁷¹

About six months later, in November 1944, Slovak Jews are briefly mentioned again in the statistics of victims of the Holocaust, gathered from a report published in the *New York Times*. According to the report, more than 1,715,000 Jews had been murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau between April 1942 and April 1944, whereof 30,000 were Slovak Jews.⁷² In fact, during 1942, 57,628 Jews had been deported from Slovakia, of which only a few hundred people survived.⁷³

In February 1945, another article discussed the extent of the Holocaust. In it, a section entitled "The Fate of the Slovak Jews" described the Holocaust in Slovakia:

Very few Jews are now left in the former great communities in Slovakia. After the German occupation of the country, all Jews in the cities of Nitra, Trenein, Nove Mesto, Zilina and Tarnava were deported – altogether about 4,000. All Jews in Bratislava were deported, even half-Jews and the baptized and those who were married to Christians. Their number was up to 4,000. Only three Jews remain in Bratislava. One believes, that all the deported have been sent to the liquidation camp in Oswiecim [Auschwitz]. During the Slovak uprising, some 7,000 Jews, of which a third had been saved from work camps, joined the Slovak partisan army, but since the uprising was crushed, most of them were captured and murdered. Eugen Rot, one of the Slovak Jewish youth's leaders, fell in battle. In eastern Slovakia, no Jews remain and, in the territories liberated by the Red Army, only a few. In Humenne, for example, where 3,000 Jews lived, nowadays only 30 remain, and only two or three Jews were found alive in other cities. In Subcarpathian Russia (Ruthenia), a few hundred Jews of the ages 18–40 years remain, who carried out forced labour during the Hungarian occupation. Not even one Jewish woman or a single child was found in these areas.⁷⁴

Nazi-German troops had occupied the country and crushed the Slovak National Uprising in 1944.⁷⁵ Thereafter, deportation of the remaining Slovak Jews resumed. In January 1943, about 19,000 Jews remained of the 89,000 who had lived in the territory of the Slovak State in 1939. Between September 1944 and March 1945, about 13,500

70 WARD, *The 1938 First Vienna Award*; RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 845; HUTZELMANN, *Slovak Society and the Jews*.

71 SCHVARC, "We Are Telling You...", 26. The Deutsche Partei was also involved in the Aryanization processes, HLAVINKA – SCHVARC, *Report of the Deutsche Partei*.

72 "Tyskarnas utrotning av judarna", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 13, no. 9 (November 1944), 141–143, here, p. 141.

73 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 847.

74 "Nya detaljer om utrotningen av judar", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 14, no. 2 (February 1945), 26–28, here p. 27.

75 For more on the Slovak National Uprising, see, e.g., ZÜCKERT – ZARUSKY – ZIMMERMANN, *Partisanen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*; ZAPOTOCZNY JR, *Road to Auschwitz*, 163–166.

Jews were deported – to Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück and Terezín.⁷⁶ Of all the Jews living in Slovakia at the outbreak of the war, only approximately 8,000 survived.⁷⁷

In an article published in May 1945 – an issue mostly dedicated to the upcoming peace, which was underway – entitled “The Extermination of Europe’s Jews: An Overview”, Lena Kaplan noted: “[i]t has of course been, during the obstructions of the years of war, been almost impossible to fully verify the factuality of reproduced data about events and numbers, but during the verification, which, to the extent possible, was made in connection with producing this overview, it has shown itself, how correct the given information in fact was”.⁷⁸ In the eight-page article, Slovakia is mentioned only briefly. When summarizing 1942, Kaplan wrote that “already in May [1942], half of the 80,000 Jews living in Slovakia had been taken away”.⁷⁹

Kaplan’s article was well-informed, and about 29,000 Jews had been deported from Slovakia already in May 1942.⁸⁰ Certainly, it was not half of the entire Slovak Jewry, but not far from it. As Kaplan summarized the year 1943, she wrote: “[a]t the end of the year [1943], about three million European Jews had fallen victim to the German lust for murder”.⁸¹ Throughout the article, she described the horror of the Holocaust and the efficiency of the Nazi German extermination machinery. The data presented in the article was based on the many articles published by the journal throughout the war. Concluding her summary of the Holocaust, Kaplan wrote: “[t]he insight that the world so easily overcomes its indignation when they, who fell victim to the bestiality, are ‘only Jews’, should be a bitter lesson for the Jewish people. But in the Central European concentration camps, the Germans did torture not ‘only Jews’ to death, but also hundreds of thousands of people from Norway, Denmark, Holland and other European countries. It may become the toll, which these countries had to pay to the German human slaughterhouses, that will open the eyes of world to the danger which hides in movements such as Nazism.”⁸²

Several articles in the following years dealt with the Holocaust, but already in November 1945, a translated article authored by a member of the Jewish Brigade was published in *Judisk Krönika*. In said article, dealing with the postwar situation in Czechoslovakia, the author describes the situation in Bratislava. Half of the stores were empty, and those that were open still bore the marks of the “Aryanization”: “In Bratislava, like in the rest of Slovakia, antisemitism flourishes, as the victories of the Slovak Partisans have heightened their national pride”.⁸³ The article continued by reporting about continuing persecutions of Jews after the war,⁸⁴ even though hundreds of Jews were part of the Partisans. However, the report on Slovakia ended on a more positive note, that Jewish youth organizations and the Jewish community in Bratislava

76 RAJCAN – VADKERTY – HLAVINKA, *Slovakia*, 847–849.

77 BITUNJAC, *Between Racial Politics and Political Calculation*, 150.

78 KAPLAN, Lena, “Utrotningen av Europas judar – en översikt”, *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 14, nos. 5–6 (May 1945), 73–80, here, p. 73.

79 *Ibidem*, 75.

80 SALNER, *The Holocaust in Slovakia*, 25–26.

81 KAPLAN, “Utrotningen av Europas judar”, 78.

82 *Ibidem*, 80.

83 “De judiska överlevande i de av ryssarna befriade områdena”, *Judisk Krönika*, (November 1945), 159–160.

84 Antisemitic violence continued after the war, see LÖNČÍKOVÁ, *Atrocities in the Borderland*.

had resumed their activities. It continued by stating that the situation in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia was promising, but that many were to leave for "Erets Israel".⁸⁵

Concluding Remarks

In this study, I have described and discussed articles in the Swedish Jewish journal *Judisk Krönika* in which reports of the situation of Slovak Jews are present. These mentions of Slovakia often formed part of the numbers of murdered or displaced Jews and news about antisemitism across Europe which were regularly published in the periodical throughout the war.⁸⁶ Therefore, sole attention was seldom given to the Slovak State, but rather, it came as part of the wider reports on anti-Jewish legislation and pogroms throughout Europe. It is clear that readers of *Judisk Krönika* could read, as early as 1942, of the already notorious extermination camp Auschwitz (Oswiecim), and the fate of the Slovak Jews was discussed from 1939 and throughout the war, except for during 1943 when attention was focused elsewhere. The examples in this study of the Holocaust in Slovakia in a Swedish Jewish journal show that, even though the spread of information was hampered by the war, news about the situation of Jews in Slovakia reached Sweden. Of news about all the so-called "anti-Jewish excesses" during the Holocaust, the specific reports on Slovakia constituted a small portion. After the war, *Judisk Krönika*, as well as *Judisk Tidskrift*, continued to report on the Holocaust and about survivors.⁸⁷ And, in the 1950s, *Judisk Krönika* became the main journalistic channel for Swedish Zionism.⁸⁸

As has previously been noted about both the Swedish press and international Jewish press, reports on the Holocaust were published continuously during the war.⁸⁹ Even though the reports in *Judisk Krönika* were readily available for the Swedish public, further inquiries into how the Swedish press in general reported about the Holocaust in Slovakia would be of interest for comparison with this study's findings to see which outlets were first in reporting on information reaching Sweden.⁹⁰ What can be concluded from this study is that Swedish readers, both Jews and non-Jews, could have been well-informed about the situation for Jews in Slovakia during the existence of the first Slovak Republic. The information was readily available in *Judisk Krönika*. However, the depictions were conflicting on the role of Slovak antisemitism. During the course of the war, the finger of blame shifted back and forth. *Judisk Krönika* sometimes downplayed antisemitism in Slovakia, in some instances by emphasizing Slovak resistance against antisemitism, while in some depictions, Nazi Germany was – both implicitly and explicitly – seen as the sole actor, such as in counterfactual claims that antisemitic legislation was forced upon the Slovak State, thus reducing Slovak agency and responsibility. In other articles, Slovak antisemitism was exposed – not

85 "De judiska överlevande i de av ryssarna befriade områdena", *Judisk Krönika*, (November 1945), p. 160.

86 E.g., "Utrotningskriget mot judarna", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 7 (September 1942), 101–102; "Utrotningen av judarna", *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 12, no. 3 (April 1943), 38–41.

87 THOR TUREBY, *The Holocaust and the Jewish Survivors*, 252ff.

88 SJÖGREN, *Judar i det svenska folkhemmet*, 175.

89 RUNDBLOM, *Sweden and the Holocaust*; THOR TUREBY, *Svenska änglar och hyenor möter*; RUDBERG, *The Swedish Jews and the Holocaust*; HOLMILA, "A Hellish Nightmare"; GORNY, *The Jewish Press and the Holocaust*.

90 E.g., in the database "Svenska dagstidningar", the search word "hlinkagardet" [the Hlinka Guard] gives 114 hits, across 14 Swedish newspapers, whereof the grand majority, 103, are from October 1938 until October 1940. Most hits are from the most widespread newspapers of the time, such as *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*. Kungliga biblioteket, "Svenska dagstidningar", <https://tidningar.kb.se/> [accessed 5 September 2023].

least in the article depicting the situation for Jews in Slovakia immediately after the war, which corresponds to the fact that antisemitism did not cease after the fall of the clerico-fascist Slovak State.

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