

Post-WWII Purge and the Changes in the City Administration in the Territory of Southern Slovakia: A Case Study of Košice*

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The paper addresses the changes in the city administration after the Second World War related to the process of purge in the territory of southern Slovakia, which between 1938 and 1945 was ceded to Hungary. I intend to examine the changes in the city administration of Košice, a city located on the Hungarian–Slovak ethnic border. Its inhabitants were confronted with anti-Hungarian policies after the war, handled by the local authorities – the members of the Administrative Commission and the National Committee. These members possessed extensive competences concerning the confiscation of the property of “Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators”, land reform, the purge of public and political life, the establishment of national administrations, the restoration and reconstruction of the national economy and tasks in the social and health spheres. This also included legal measures against public and civil servants of Hungarian and German nationality, adopted by the Slovak National Council. In my research, I intend to answer a number of questions: How did the local authorities deal with the civil servants? Which civil servants were dismissed and which remained in place? What criteria were important for them to remain in their posts? Why did some of them continue to work for the city? In addition, how did the loyalty of these civil servants to the restored Czechoslovakia change?

Keywords: History; Urban history; Politics; City administration; Central Europe; Twentieth century; Nationalism; National conflict; Civil servants; Czechoslovakia 1945–1947; post-WWII period; Ethnicity; Košice, Local elites; Loyalty.

Introduction

The paper addresses the changes in the city administration of Košice related to the demand of the purge in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. The city of Košice was situated on the Hungarian–Slovak ethnic border. The political borders of this territory changed several times in the first half of twentieth Century. In 1918, when the Habsburg monarchy collapsed, Košice became part of the Czechoslovak republic, in 1938 after the Vienna Arbitration was ceded to Hungary and in 1945 found itself back in Czechoslovakia. Due to its location, it can be classified among those regions of the former Habsburg monarchy denoted by the term “shatter zone”¹ – a territory characterized by the coexistence of an ethnically heterogeneous population and by a high degree of malleability and the existence of a situational or indifferent ethnic identity. A common practice of the inhabitants of this city was a range of nationally indifferent behaviours, from multilingualism through side-switching to the outright

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1 WATERS, *Borders on the Move*, 2.

rejection of national loyalties.² The practice lasted until 1938 at least.³ After 1945, this indifference was undesirable, as we can see from public speeches.⁴

I intend to examine the changes in the city administration of Košice in the period 1945–1948, during which the city inhabitants were confronted with anti-Hungarian policies. The local authorities – the Administrative Commission and the National Committee – had extensive competences concerning the confiscation of the property of “Germans, Hungarians, traitors and collaborators”, land reform, the purification of public and political life, the establishment of national administrations, the restoration and reconstruction of the national economy, and tasks in the social and health spheres. This included legal measures against civil servants of Hungarian and German nationality, which were adopted by the Slovak National Council. In my research I want to answer several questions: How did the local authorities act towards civil servants? Which civil servants were dismissed and which remained in their posts? What criteria were important for them to remain in their posts? Why did some of them continue to work for the city? In addition, how did the loyalty of these civil servants to the restored Czechoslovakia change? In my research I worked with the minutes of the meetings of the Administrative Commission, later the National Committee of the city, stored in the Košice City Archives. These sources help us to analyse the development of the vetting process of civil servants in Košice, to identify its main issues, as well as the attitude of members of the city’s political elite to the process of purge. The attitude of the elites towards civil servants of Hungarian or ambiguous nationality is illustrated by the memoirs of some contemporary actors, as well as by articles published in the two main opinion-forming newspapers of eastern Slovakia – *Východoslovenská Pravda* and *Demokrat*.

In addition, applications for political and national reliability certificates, preserved in the Košice City Archives, served me for a better understanding of the whole process. Questionnaires on personal circumstances to investigate the state and national reliability of civil servants and public servants often detail the personal stories of individuals and also reveal how individuals’ loyalties to the new regime may have changed.

The purge in post-WWII Czechoslovakia

The demand for the purge of society was one of the basic principles of the post-war social order in Czechoslovakia and was directly related to the lived experience during the war.⁵ In the case of the Czech part of the territory, the experience was of the violence of the occupation authorities; in Slovakia, after the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising, the experience was of the German repressive authorities in the former insurgent territory. Košice, which was annexed to Hungary after the Vienna Arbitration, witnessed an increased level of violence from around October 1944, when the Arrow Cross Party⁶ came to power in Hungary. It carried out several executions in Košice and its surroundings and persecuted its opponents. The repression culminated

2 WATERS, *Adjudicating Loyalty*, 352.

3 FICERI, *Potrianonské Košice*, 272; FICERI, *The traitorous national periphery*, 824–846.

4 See for example speech of Gustav Husák: *Divám sa s optimizmom na vývoj východu*. In: *Východoslovenská Pravda*, 18. 10. 1946.

5 RÁKOSNÍK – SPURNÝ – ŠTAIF, *Milníky moderních českých dějin*, 187.

6 The Arrow Cross Party (Nyilaskeresztes Párt) was a far-right Hungarian ultranationalist party led by Ferenc Szalási.

in the execution of 12 people on Main Street in January 1945.⁷ This period ended on 19 January 1945 with the entry of the Red Army into the town. Košice rejoined Czechoslovakia and in early April 1945 the first post-war government programme was announced.

It was only a few weeks after this occurrence that the daily *Demokrat*⁸ turned to its readers with the editorial "Purged to Life":

Just as we have instituted public showers, de-worming stations to counter the spread of infectious diseases, in the same way every exponent must stand under a public political shower to de-worm themselves of the Nazi-Gardist lice that have spread destruction in our nation in the past.⁹

The article was published at a time when much of Slovakia (and Czechoslovakia) was still under German influence, albeit that the Red Army was advancing in an east-west direction through Czechoslovak territory. Crude to the point of being offensive, the words in the above article illustrate that the hygiene and health connotations, referring to the cleanliness of the body, were associated by politicians of the time with an overall purge of society, which was widely accepted and seen as a legitimate tool of politics in the interest of the smooth running of civil society.¹⁰ Although it initially had a strong ethnic dimension, it was not directed only against ethnic minorities, but as a universal principle, it extended to all sections of society and evolved into a politically and socially motivated purge. As Rákosník, Spurný and Štaif noted in their book, it is difficult to identify the boundary between ethnically, politically and socially motivated purge, especially at the local level.¹¹ In regions and cities with ethnically heterogeneous populations, people whose ethnic identity was not clear also aroused contempt.¹²

In such an atmosphere, there was no political will to return to inter-war democracy based on, among other things, the "free competition" of a large number of political parties. The post-war political system included only those political parties and entities that were loyal to the idea of the Czechoslovak state. This meant the liquidation of any opposition that could weaken the reconstruction of Czechoslovakia, including minority political parties, which had formed part of the Czechoslovak political scene in the interwar period.¹³ In the case of Košice, not only the Hungarian or German parties were affected, but also the Slovak National Unity Party, which had been active in the city as a political representative of the Slovak minority between 1941 and 1944. It was dissolved in February 1945, but some of their members remained active in politics.¹⁴

7 OLEXA – VIPLER, *V tieni šípových križov*, 141.

8 *Demokrat* was a journal of the Democratic Party published in Košice. The city was the headquarters of the party until May 1945, when it moved to Bratislava.

9 Očistení do života. In: *Demokrat*, 3. 3. 1945.

10 NAIMARK, *Fires of Hatred*, 112.

11 RÁKOSNÍK – SPURNÝ – ŠTAIF, *Milníky moderních českých dějin*, 190; DEÁK, *Europe on Trial*, 191–209.

12 SPURNÝ, *Nejsou jako my*, 107.

13 Two political parties (the Communist Party and the Democratic Party) could participate in political life in Slovakia. Later, two other parties, the Labour Party (Social Democracy) and the Freedom Party, were allowed in Slovakia, but they played a marginal role in the context of post-war developments.

14 The Slovak National Unity Party was the only political party in Hungary representing the rights of Slovaks. The party was founded on 6 September 1941 and was headed by a former high school professor from Košice, Emanuel Böhm. After the restoration of Czechoslovakia, the party was dissolved. Some of its members withdrew

As a part of the purge, an expulsion of Germans took place in Czechoslovakia, but in the case of the Hungarian minority, this solution was not implemented.¹⁵ However, ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia lost their civil rights and some of them were evicted as part of the population exchange agreement concluded between Czechoslovakia and Hungary in February 1946.¹⁶ Estimates of the number of inhabitants of Hungarian nationality evicted from Košice as part of the population exchange vary, but it is around three thousand people. This community owned both farming and factory property and was involved in various areas of commerce.¹⁷ For those who remained, the purges affected all spheres of public life – the labour and legal sphere, business, trades and real estate. However, the eviction of the entire Hungarian minority did not take place, but as an alternative to this solution, the main instruments of the declared purge became their exclusion from public and economic life. In the case of populations of disputed ethnic identity, reslovakization, i.e. the attempt to assimilate an ethnically indifferent group of the population, was considered to be an important tool.¹⁸

Legal measures related to civil servants and their ethnicity

The attitude of the members of the Slovak National Council¹⁹ to the question of minorities gradually evolved after the war. This issue had been present in the circles of the Slovak National Council since the autumn of 1944. The seizure of German and Aryanized enterprises were adopted by Regulation No. 11/1944 Coll. on 8 September 1944, although the first regulations targeted war criminals. After the announcement of the first post-war government programme on 5 April 1945, the principle of collective guilt was also enforced in Slovakia towards the German and Hungarian minorities. The demand for purge affected all areas of the public sphere, including citizenship, property relations, land ownership, criminal law and labour law.

One of the aims of post-war policy in Czechoslovakia was the purge of the bureaucratic apparatus. Only citizens loyal to the state were supposed to work in the public and state administration. In this area, the government's first post-war programme provided for individual scrutiny of the activities of each individual who had been employed in the state and public apparatus of the former "occupying and traitorous" regimes. On 16 April 1945, i.e. less than two weeks after its promulgation, by a decision of the Slovak National Council, vetting commissions were established to assess the activities of public and civil servants.²⁰

Specific solutions to the issue of public and civil servants were implemented by means of Slovak National Council decrees – the first was Regulation No. 44/1945 of

from politics, others (such as Böhm) joined the Democratic Party. More about Slovak National Unity Party: MITÁČ, *Strana Slovenskej národnej jednoty*, 4–18.

15 Participants in the Potsdam Conference did not discuss the issue of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia.

16 As another solution to the ethnic homogenization of the territory of southern Slovakia, the removal of the population of Hungarian nationality to Bohemia was implemented. ŠUTAJ, *Maďarská menšina na Slovensku*, 63.

17 ŠUTAJ, *Zmeny v správe mesta Košice*, 116–117.

18 ŠUTAJ, *Reslovakizácia*, 67.

19 In December 1943, as part of the formation of the resistance against regime, a political body, the Slovak National Council, was established in Slovakia. There were two political currents represented in parity – the civil resistance (later represented by the Democratic Party) and the communist resistance (represented by the Communist Party). At the end of 1944, the Slovak National Council, as a political body, gradually began to assume legislative and executive power in the liberated Slovak territory.

20 GABZDILOVÁ-OLEJNÍKOVÁ – OLEJNÍK – ŠUTAJ, *Nemci a Maďari na Slovensku*, 33–34.

25 May 1945. According to this regulation, civil servants of Hungarian and German nationality were to be dismissed from their services by 31 May 1945. For the determination of the nationality, the decisive factors were the person's origin, language used or declaration of nationality after 6 October 1938. The regulation also allowed exceptions if it was proven that the person was democratic and anti-fascist. If there was no replacement for the employee, it was possible to keep the employee in place for a maximum of 60 days. At the same time, the regulation retroactively confirmed the previous decisions of the review commissions and determined how the review commissions were to be set up.

Due to a number of uncertainties, particularly in the area covered by the notion of national and political reliability, Decree No. 44 was repealed in August 1945 and replaced by Decree No. 99/1945. More attention was paid to the vetting system itself. The task of the vetting committee was to verify the national and political reliability of all civil servants by examining the following facts:

1. Whether the person in question had been convicted by a people's court.
2. Whether they had been active in a People's, Hungarian or Nazi detention or labour camp.
3. Whether they had voluntarily expressed themselves in favour of the victory of Germany and its allies and whether they had approved of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.
4. Whether they had participated in the work of the organizations concerned.
5. Whether they had obtained property advantages, income or distinction and promotion at work by political activity.
6. Whether they had arbitrarily left the territory of the national uprising and fled to non-free territory, had denounced the participants in the uprising and had publicly spoken of the uprising with contempt.²¹

Shifting borders, shifting civil service

During the first half of the twentieth century, the civil servants were changed several times. The first major change of the civil servants in the city came after 1918 with the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Officials who wanted to remain in the service of the city and the state had to take an oath of allegiance to the Czechoslovak Republic. If they failed to do so, it was within the competence of the Ministry of Administration of Slovakia to dismiss such employees. Those who opted for this option remained in place.²² They could thus enter this process actively, by expressing their consent to behave loyally towards the newly established Czechoslovak Republic. In 1918, the state did not require them to give up part of their identity, but they had to identify with the Czechoslovak democratic system.

Together with this cohort, new arrivals in Košice after 1918 formed the interwar Czechoslovak official elite. These mainly Czech officials came to the town to establish a Czechoslovak state administration in this territory.

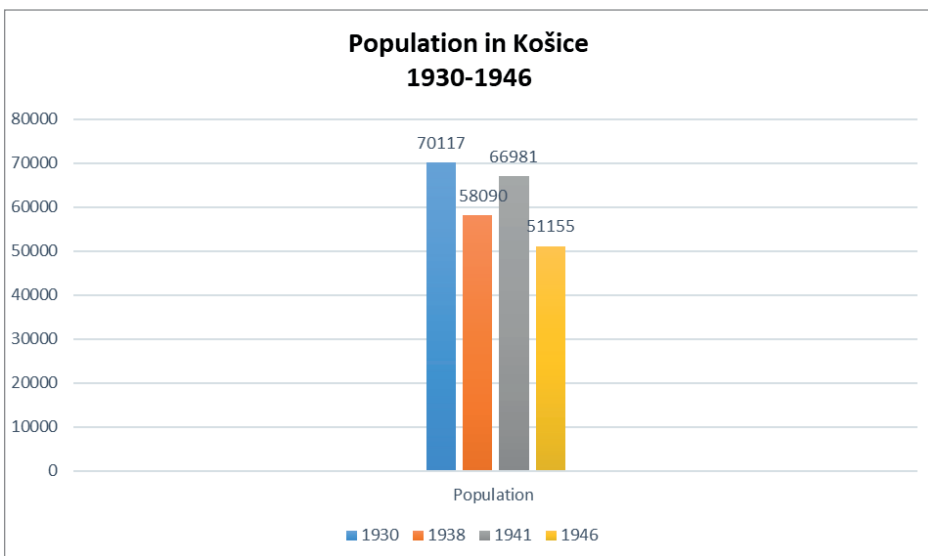
During the twenty years of Czechoslovakia's existence, many new offices emerged in the town. Košice became the seat of such state and public institutions as the Police Headquarters in Košice, the Office of the President of the Province in Košice, the High

21 GABZDILOVÁ-OLEJNÍKOVÁ – OLEJNÍK – ŠUTAJ, *Nemci a Maďari na Slovensku*, 236.

22 For mapping the strategies see: SZEGHY-GAYER, *Mešťanostovia na rázcestí. Stratégie, rozhodnutia a adaptácie najvyšších predstaviteľov miest na nové politické pomery po roku 1918*, 334-360.

State Prosecutor’s Office in Košice, the High Court in Košice and the Rector’s Office of the Technical University. The number of people in the service of the post office and on the railway grew. The arrival of these people was largely connected with the construction development of the city, especially in the field of housing construction.

The development of the town affected the events of 1938, when another change of borders took place and thus also another change of civil servants. After the First Vienna Arbitration and the annexation of Košice to Hungary, several important offices evacuated and many Czech and Slovak officials left the city with them.²³ The real population movement cannot be determined, but the results of the 1930, 1938, 1941 and 1946 censuses give some idea.²⁴ According to the 1930 to 1950 censuses, the ethnicity of the town’s inhabitants also varied considerably.²⁵



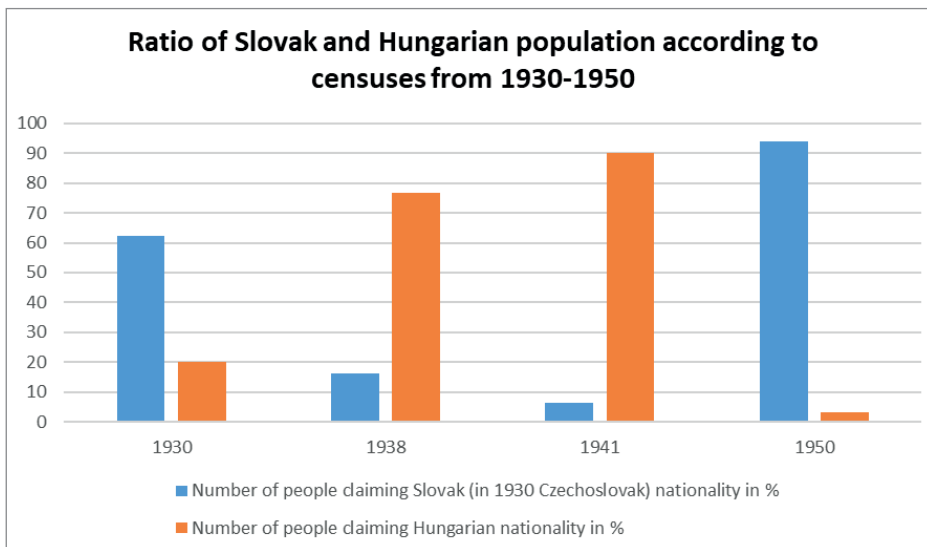
Graph 1: Population in Košice 1930–1946²⁶

23 PEKÁR, *Evakuácia významných úradov*, 77.

24 See Graph 1.

25 See Graph 2.

26 Source: HROMULÁKOVÁ, *Analýza hospodárskej aktivity*, 203.



Graph 2: Ratio of Slovak and Hungarian population according to censuses from 1930 to 1950²⁷

When the first Hungarian military units arrived in Košice on 10 November 1938, the authorities in the city began to adapt to the new conditions. Košice once again became the seat of the Abov-Turnian county and new civil servants came to the city.

Although these changes certainly affected the municipal and notary offices, many officers remained in place.²⁸ These were people, mainly old settlers, who had been active in Košice even before November 1938. Finally, this hypothesis was confirmed by Veronika Szeghy Gayer, in her study on the personal continuity of the municipal committee (a self-governing body – the equivalent of a municipal authority), who found that most of its members participated in the political life of the town even during the duration of interwar Czechoslovakia.²⁹

Nonetheless, civil servants had to go through a vetting process in 1938. Ministerial Decree No. 2300/1939 introduced the vetting of civil servants working in the Czechoslovak administration. Already in this period, Felvidék Loyalty commissions were established to examine the national reliability of civil servants.³⁰ The person under investigation gave a statement detailing their past actions working for the Czechoslovak state and answered questions from commission members. As Leslie Waters noted in her work, an individual's fate and loyalties were decided directly by

²⁷ Source: FICERI, *Potrianiónské Košice*, 77, 186.

²⁸ SIMON, A *Magyar Közigazgatás bevezetésének ellenmondásai az első bécsi döntés által visszkapott felvidéki területsávon*, 240-254.

²⁹ SZEGHY-GAYER, *Personálna kontinuita politickej elity*, 129-140.

³⁰ WATERS, *Adjudicating Loyalty*, 361.

local political elites, who interpreted the loyalty of the interviewee through a variety of criteria, the most important of which was political affiliation.³¹

“A thorough purge is demanded by the Slovak nation in the cities...”

A thorough purge is demanded by the Slovak nation in the towns which have been liberated from the Hungarian invaders. A Slovak from the countryside, when he visits Košice, the centre of eastern Slovakia, wants to feel at home there and therefore wants to hear Slovak conversations not only in the offices but also on the streets.³²

As can be seen from the content of the quoted article, the prevailing opinion among the post-war political elites was that the urban areas, and Košice in particular, posed a problem in terms of ethnic structure. The press in particular emphasized the dichotomy of the ethnic and social structures in the countryside (dominantly Slovak) and in the city (Hungarian).³³ Post-war minority policy was to change the existing ethnic structure in the city. The civil servants constituted one of the first targets of this policy.³⁴

While in most Slovak towns after the war national committees were established in a spontaneous way, in Košice an Administrative Commission was formed. It was a specific body of state self-government established for a temporary period in towns and villages with a predominantly Hungarian population, i.e. predominantly in the southern part of the territory. In Košice, the Administrative Commission was appointed by the Department for Internal Democratic Public Administration of the Slovak National Council.

Originally, it had seven members – Štefan Kaifer, Anton Harčár, Július Maurer, Ján Herha, František Bajusz, Pavel Drocár and Štefan Sendek.³⁵ In its first months, the people who dominated the administration of the city came from the Slovak Catholic Circle³⁶

31 WATERS, *Adjudicating Loyalty*, 362.

32 Budujeme domov. Za očistu mesta Košíc. In: *Východoslovenská Pravda*, 15. 2. 1945.

33 “Hovorte slovensky”. In: *Demokrat*, 14. 3. 1945.

34 Dívam sa s optimizmom na vývoj východu. In: *Východoslovenská Pravda*, 8. 10. 1946.

35 Štefan Kaifer (1909, Herľany) – lawyer, chairman of the district organization of the Slovak National Unity Party, responsible for the personal and legal department in the Administrative Commission; Anton Harčár (8. 1. 1914, Močidlany) – theologian, professor, historian, member of the Slovak Catholic Circle, responsible for the cultural and medical department in the Administrative Commission; Július Maurer (19. 6. 1896, Krompachy) – founding member of the local organization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, from 1925 lived and worked in the USSR, editor of the newspaper *Pravda*, regional secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Košice, held the position of vice-chairman in the Administrative Commission and was responsible for the security department; Ján Herha (21. 5. 1890, Košice) – one of the founders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Košice district, later a member of the Social Democratic Party of Czechoslovakia, in 1943, one of the founders of the Slovak National Unity Party in Košice; František Bajusz (10. 11. 1906, Košice) – engineer, pedagogue, director of the industrial school in Košice, later a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, active in several sports clubs, responsible for the technical department in the commission; Pavel Drocár (6. 1. 1903, Krompachy) – founder of the local organization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, organizer of the communist movement in Košice, participant in the Hungarian underground communist movement, arrested and imprisoned several times during the war, responsible for the administrative department in the Administrative Commission; Štefan Sendek (23. 1. 1915) – responsible for the social and housing department. Source: GAŠPAR – BLAŠKOVÁ – MIHÓKOVÁ, *Lexikón Košičanov*, 484.

36 Slovak Catholic Circle established in 1932. One of the founders was Bishop Jozef Čársky. The association was in 1938–1945 a haven of cultural and sporting activities of the Slovak community in the town. However,

in Košice or from the environment of the Slovak National Unity Party. Štefan Kaifer, Anton Harčár, Ján Herha, František Bajusz came from these organizations. These people had engaged on behalf of Slovaks during the war not only in the city itself, but also in the villages around Košice. The head of the Administrative Commission, Štefan Kaifer, who came from Herľany near Košice, had during the war been a member of the Slovak National Unity Party, the only political party of the Slovak minority in Hungary. Its chairman was Emanuel Böhm³⁷ – a teacher from Košice, who was transferred to Budapest in 1940. Štefan Kaifer and other party members were under constant surveillance by the Hungarian authorities. Their activities were strictly monitored and, especially at the end of the war, many of them were in danger of deportation or death.³⁸

Kaifer headed the branch of the party in Košice district and, as a lawyer by profession (he graduated in 1932 in Bratislava), represented Slovaks in Košice and the surrounding area in various disputes. In February 1946, Kaifer addressed a letter to the Office of the Presidency of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, in which he described the measures introduced against Slovaks in the annexed territory, which he knew from his practice as a legal representative. Among other things, the letter also describes the Hungarian authorities' treatment of civil servants. He criticizes the fact that the Hungarians were probably the first in Europe to introduce loyalty commissions, which, according to Kaifer, were primarily intended to eliminate the Slovak element from public and state offices. Kaifer also described in several pages other measures against the Slovaks, which concerned land disputes, the judiciary and the revision of trades. The letter concludes with the statement: "What wonder that the Slovak people, after their liberation, demand similar measures against their oppressor".³⁹

The Administrative Commission began its first purges as soon as it took office. Among the first to be targeted by the purge policy were municipal officials who arrived in Košice after November 1938. In the contemporary press they were referred to as "Anyási" (Immigrants from the territory of inter-war Hungary). All these people came to Košice in connection with the establishment of the Hungarian state authorities and were therefore considered disloyal to Czechoslovakia. Moreover, they were a symbol of the unwanted change in the autumn of 1938. The members of the Administrative Commission intervened against them at the end of February 1945 without any vetting process. As of 28 February 1945, it had affected 27 employees.⁴⁰ Fifteen employees of the city's public enterprises were also dismissed.⁴¹ The next decisions to lay off employees came in March and another 17 employees were affected. The decisive condition for dismissal was whether the employee in question had entered the service of the city after the First Vienna Arbitration and the second condition was the issue of Hungarian citizenship or Hungarian nationality. As of 30 June 1945, a total of 186 employees had been dismissed from the municipal office, more than half of the total

activities of the association were under the supervision of and pressure from the ecclesiastical and state authorities.

37 Emanuel T. Böhm (1909–1990) was a politician, teacher and researcher. He led the Slovak National Unity Party in Hungary.

38 Štátny archív v Košiciach (hereinafter SA KE), fund Michal Potemra (hereinafter MP), box 100, file 181.

39 SA KE, MP, box 100, file 181.

40 It was reported in the press that as many as 94 people in total were laid off from city services. Source: Mesto Košice nebude zamestnávať aňášov. In: *Východoslovenská Pravda*, 10. 3. 1945.

41 Archív mesta Košice (hereinafter AMK), fund Mestský národný výbor 1945–48 (hereinafter MNV KE), Minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Commission of the City, 8. 3. 1945.

number.⁴² Although the ethnic issue was an important factor in the dismissals, at this stage the members of the Administrative Commission focused primarily on employees considered disloyal to post-war Czechoslovakia.

Dismissed officials marked as "Anyási"	36
Dismissed officials hired under the Hungarian regime	126
Dismissed officials who failed the vetting process	24
Total number of dismissed employees	186

Table 1: Civil servants dismissed until 30 June 1945⁴³

The dismissed staff were to be replaced by Slovaks loyal to Czechoslovakia. The Slovak intelligentsia in particular benefited from these changes. However, in many cases it was not possible to reach for experienced people.⁴⁴ Regardless of their experience, young Slovaks replaced the dismissed Hungarians at the municipal office. The preserved minutes of the Administrative Commission prove that young graduates of the Slovak grammar school applied for jobs themselves. They put forward the demand that students from Hungarian schools should not be recruited to work in the town.⁴⁵

However, Slovaks with sufficient qualifications were lacking in the city. Due to the lack of suitable candidates, the Administrative Commission decided on 9 April 1945 that all civil servants of the city could apply for the retention of their posts or could apply for re-hire.⁴⁶ A number of dismissed civil servants tried to regain their lost jobs by applying for re-employment. However, by the end of June the Administrative Commission had rejected all such applications. The reason given for the rejection was the lack of political and national reliability of these persons.⁴⁷

The records suggest that many employees were willing to renew their loyalty to Czechoslovakia. Some dismissed civil servants tried to retake the vetting process after a longer delay. The archives preserve the file of a former city employee, Jozef B., who applied for vetting in the second half of 1947. He had been dismissed from the city's services in May 1945, as he was of Hungarian nationality and had joined the city services after the First Vienna Arbitration. However, the vetting commission refused to re-examine him, as he was considered loyal to Hungary due to his decision to move from the Slovak town of Michalovce to Košice after November 1938.⁴⁸ Those civil servants who had worked for the city before 1938 had a better chance of being recalled, as the case of Ružena E. confirms. The Commission initially did not grant her a certificate of loyalty because her family came to Košice in 1929 from Komárno and

42 AMK, MNV KE, box 55, file 23395/1945.

43 AMK, MNV KE, box 55, file 23395/1945.

44 AMK, MNV KE, box 55, file 23395/1945.

45 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Commission of the City, 8. 3. 1945.

46 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Commission of the City, 9. 4. 1945.

47 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Commission of the City, 22. 6. 1945.

48 AMK, MNV KE, box 1, file 88/1947.

the family was not Slovak. The decision was changed after the examinee presented them with a certificate of Slovak nationality from 1930.⁴⁹

At the same time, recruitment continued. The city's Administrative Commission was responsible for recruiting new employees for the municipal office, as well as those interested in working in education, health care, the railways or the post office.⁵⁰ The admission procedure already included state, political and national security checks. The vetting process was directly in the hands of the members of the Administrative Commission.

Around mid-April, the vetting of municipal servants began in Košice. A tracing department was first set up to verify information concerning the behaviour of civil servants during the war. The screening was to cover all those who had returned to Košice after the war, or those who were suspected of disloyal behaviour towards the Czechoslovak state. No longer was only the date of entry into city service considered as a criterion for judging loyalty. Every official was judged by specific actions that demonstrated the individual's disloyalty to the Czechoslovak state. If there was a suspicion that an employee was exposing or had exposed themselves in favour of Hungary, their person was to be examined. Within the framework of this suspicion, among the first to be examined was, for example, the forest technical adviser. The vetting of civil servants was to be completed by 15 May 1945.⁵¹ At the same time, audits were also launched in the city's public enterprises.⁵² A member of the Administrative Commission reported that from the city's enterprises more than 300 employees had been dismissed by August 1945.⁵³

The vetting of civil servants gradually became common practice. Those who did not pass the national and political security clearance were dismissed. However, the purge process in the city was slower than some actors expected. According to Július Maurer, the Hungarian "spirit" was still present in the city office. The minutes of the Administrative Commission of 12 June 1945 show that it was considered necessary to ensure the running of the city in such a way that Slovaks would feel "at home" in the city office.⁵⁴ This meant mainly the Slovak rural population, who came to Košice to deal with various matters. Officials were not only forbidden to speak Hungarian while in office, but it was also undesirable for them to speak Hungarian among themselves. On the other hand, the city could not have people who did not speak Hungarian in leading administrative positions. A lot of the agenda (especially from the period of the Hungarian regime) was in the Hungarian language. Among the leading officials, Mikuláš Glatz, Štefan Gaži and Viliam Columby were certainly proficient in Hungarian.

The pressure for a faster purge was intensified in the city by the partisans, who during April and May formed an organization called the Union of Slovak Partisans. In the first half of 1945, a number of demonstrations were held in the public space, in which they also demanded the "immediate and ruthless" execution of a review of all officials. As one of the members, partisan Suchy stated, "The partisans, by their struggle, have earned their homeland and freedom, by their sacrifices they have secured

49 AMK, MNV KE, box 71, file 38782/1945.

50 Žiadosti do štátnej a mestskej služby. In: *Východoslovenská Pravda*, 15. 2. 1945.

51 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Commission of the City, 19. 4. 1945.

52 The city's public enterprises consisted of power, gas, water and sewage plants.

53 AMK, MNV KE, box 55, file 23395/1945.

54 AMK, MNV-KE, Minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Commission of the City, 12. 6. 1945.

the first place in the nation, and they are entitled to both the offices and the leading position in economic life, industry and trades, and the primacy in returning the land to Slovak hands".⁵⁵

But the Administrative Commission was still the only body responsible for the purge in the city office. Initially, the secretary of the Administrative Commission, Michal Potemra,⁵⁶ was in charge of personnel issues, and later Jozef Kalina was hired.

The Administrative Commission, as a temporary body of self-government, was abolished on 22 August 1945 and the National Committee was established. The members of the National Committee set as their main task to make Košice a truly Slovak city.⁵⁷ The composition of the committee followed the principle of parity in the municipal government (following the model of the power arrangement in the Slovak National Council). It meant equal representation in the city leadership for both the Democratic Party and Communist Party. In the Košice National Committee, the Communists had a slight predominance, not only because of Július Maurer, who was the chair, but also because in the membership of the town's Narrower Committee,⁵⁸ the Communist Party had a slight majority. The number of people on the National Committee gradually grew. The list of the members of the Council of the National Committee in January 1946 consists of 13 people.⁵⁹

Some of them had been in charge of the town since January 1945, such as Anton Harčár, who became a member of the Democratic Party. A greater degree of continuity in the city leadership was maintained by the people around the communist Július Maurer, the Communist Party members František Bajusz, Pavel Drocár and Alexander Regecký remaining in their positions.

The bureaucratic apparatus became more professionalized in the course of 1945, its agenda constantly expanding, largely occupied by checks on political and national reliability.

After the establishment of the National Committee, the first specialized vetting commissions were set up in the town. Until then, each application or dismissal had been decided by the personnel officers in charge of personnel affairs in cooperation with the tracking department. One vetting commission was headed by the communist Pavel Podracký, the other by Ján Dudo, vice-chairman of the Democratic Party in Košice,⁶⁰ though Dudo was not a member of the vetting commission as a nominee of the Democratic Party, but as a nominee of the Union of Slovak Partisans. Later, the Democratic Party tried to have him dismissed on suspicion that he was a communist "agent".⁶¹

55 Partizáni za vyčistenie Košíc, In: *Východoslovenská Pravda*, 15. 5. 1945.

56 Michal Potemra (1922–2002) – bibliographer and historian, worked for several decades at the State Scientific Library in Košice. During the war he studied in Budapest, where he also worked as an editor of the daily *Slovenská jednota*. In 1942, he participated in the drafting of a memorandum on Slovak political, educational and cultural demands. After the liberation of Košice, he became secretary of the Košice City Administration Commission. Source: SA KE, MP, Inventory.

57 Úlohou MNV utvoriť z Košíc slovenské mesto. In: *Východoslovenská Pravda*, 23. 8. 1945.

58 The Narrower Committee (later known as the Council of the National Committee) led the National Committee.

59 AMK, MNV KE, box 3, Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee, 28. 1. 1946.

60 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee, 22. 8. 1945.

61 For more about the Union of Slovak Partisans and their relationship to the process of purge in Košice, see: KARPÁTY, *Zväz slovenských partizánov*, 17–34.

The vetting of civil servants could only get underway in earnest after these commissions were established. However, the vetting process was slow, so in November 1945 it was decided to set up a third vetting commission. The commissions had not been able to process the large number of files relating to vetting.⁶² At the same time, the recruitment of new civil servants was taking place.⁶³

By the end of 1945, the vetting of civil servants began to slow even more. At meetings of the National Committee in early 1946, the Council of the National Committee discussed the better organization of the work of the vetting commissions. Complaints about the lacking of the signatures of the members of the vetting committee were not rare. In addition, there were difficulties in the question of verifying the information about the persons being vetted from the census sheets. The number of vetting committees was increased to four.⁶⁴ The vetting of civil servants remained the responsibility of the Council of the National Committee.⁶⁵ The city of Košice, together with Bratislava, had an exception regarding the vetting of civil servants. Unlike the other national committees, these cities could be autonomous in the vetting process.⁶⁶

The May 1946 elections also left their trace upon the wave of vetting. The elections marked a significant victory for the Democratic Party in Slovakia. In the region of eastern Slovakia, including Košice, the victory of the Democratic Party was even more pronounced.⁶⁷ The election result in Košice was greatly influenced by the activities of the Slovak National Unity Party during the war. Emanuel Böhm, as its former chairman, stood for the Democrats in the elections and helped the party to victory in Košice and the surrounding area. On the contrary, the Communist Party, one of the strongest parties in Košice during the interwar period, did not succeed in the elections. Compared to 1935, they lost 15 % of the vote in the 1946 election.⁶⁸ In Košice, this partly resulted from the interwar period, when the Communists had been a rather linguistically and culturally heterogeneous party. In addition, the confessional issue of the population also played a great role.⁶⁹ I assume that the Communist Party failed in reaching new voters among Slovaks. Unlike the Czechs, the communists in Slovakia failed to convince voters that they were the most patriotic party.⁷⁰

62 As archival sources show, the number of pending files reached almost five thousand by the end of October 1945. Source: AMK, fund Jednotný národný výbor v Košiciach 1949–1954 (hereinafter JNV KE), box 11, file 180/1949.

63 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee, 14. 11. 1945.

64 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee, 28. 1. 1946.

65 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee, 28. 1. 1946.

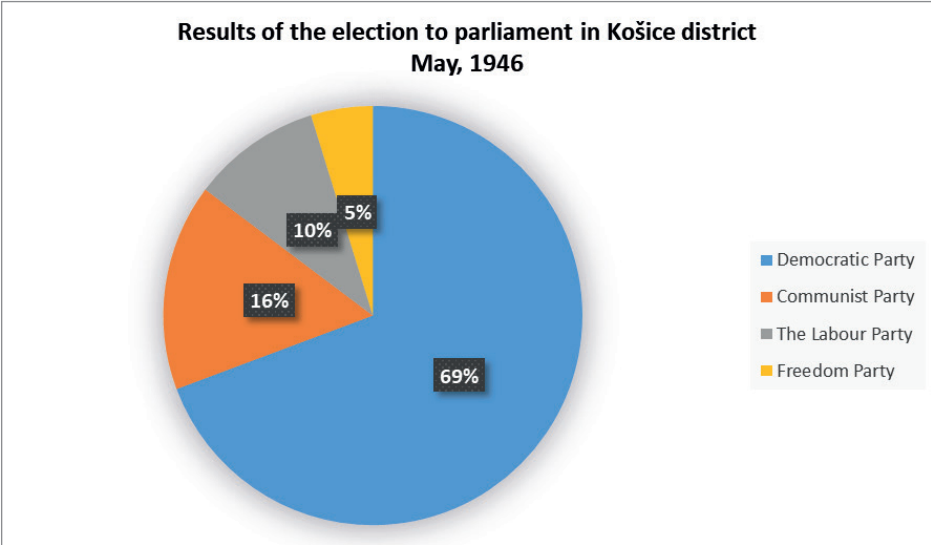
66 SA KE, Okresný národný výbor v Košiciach 1945–1948 (hereinafter ONV KE), box 20.

67 Graph 2.

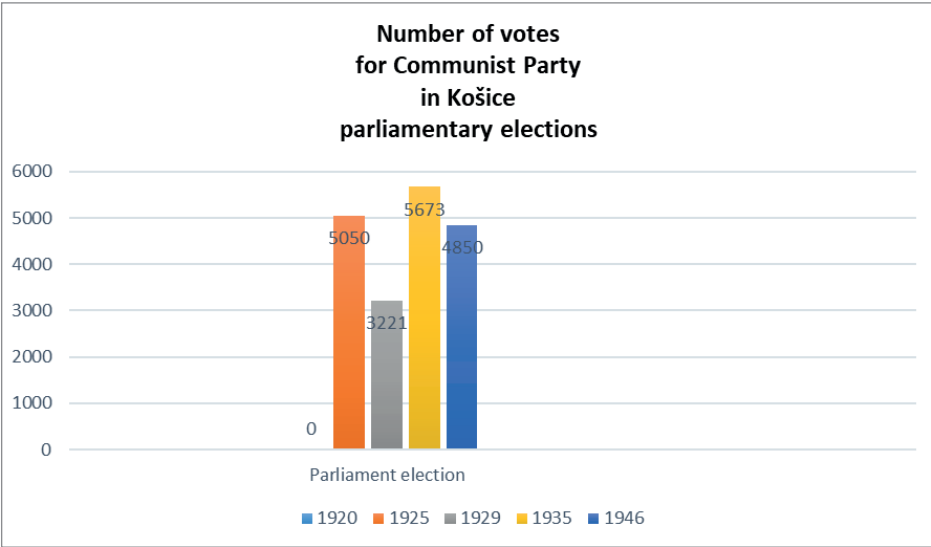
68 Graph 3.

69 There are also other reasons in the literature: Some authors explain the election result as the consequence of the Red Army atrocities in the first months of 1945. See for example: HRBEK, *Slovensko v zväzu války*, 102–120.

70 On the contrary, in the western part of the country, the Communists succeeded in convincing voters of the party's patriotic character. See more in: ABRAMS, *Struggle for the Soul*, 96.



Graph 3: Results of the election to parliament in Košice district⁷¹



Graph 4: Number of votes for the Communist Party in Košice parliamentary elections⁷²

71 Source: AMK, MNV, box 3, file 125/1946.

72 Source: Table 36 – Výsledky volieb do poslancskej snemovne a mestského zastupiteľstva v okrese Košice-mesto v mezivojnovom období. In: FICERI, *Potrianonské Košice*, 200; AMK, MNV, box 3, file 125/1946.

The reconstruction of the National Committee took longer than expected⁷³ and its renewal took place on 24 October 1946. A verification process of the national and political reliability of all candidates preceded it.⁷⁴ The vetting of candidates was the result of months of pressure from the communists. They pushed at the national level for the re-vetting of all candidates for the national committees. The official position of the communists was that this vetting was to prevent people from the underground of the "Hlinka Guard" from getting into the leadership of towns and villages. The vetting of new National Committee members was already done on the basis of political reliability.

The National Committee in Košice had 48 members – 33 members for the Democratic Party, 7 members for the Communist Party, 5 members for the Social Democrats and 3 members for the Freedom Party.⁷⁵ The leadership of the city changed dramatically. At this stage, the Communist Party came to have only a marginal representation on the National Committee. The Democratic Party dominated in Košice and also held the post of chairman.⁷⁶

In the following period, the vetting commissions became a target of political struggle and an instrument of personal revenge. A file on the unfair practices of certain members of the vetting commission – Jan V. and Martin L. – has been preserved in the archives. Both were accused of corruption.⁷⁷

Shifting the loyalty

As mentioned above, many of the dismissed civil servants attempted to appeal the dismissal decision. When in January 1946 the city decided to dismiss another 58 employees of Hungarian nationality, three of them decided to take advantage of the exemption under paragraph 4 of Law No. 991/1945, as persons of democratic and anti-fascist thinking.

One of them was Alžbeta V., a town clerk born in Košice in 1900 and who had worked at the municipal office in Košice since 1917, enduring several turbulent changes.

During her career as a civil servant, Alžbeta had experienced the Habsburg monarchy, the interwar Czechoslovak Republic, the Kingdom of Hungary and, after 1945, had worked at the office in Košice and in the restored Czechoslovakia. She was fluent in Hungarian, Slovak and German as a city clerk. However, her mother tongue was undoubtedly Hungarian. This was a factor that the commission took seriously. Despite this fact, Alžbeta considered herself a democratically minded citizen and took the oath of allegiance to Czechoslovakia as early as 1918.⁷⁸

73 Slovak Communists refused to organize national committees according to the parliamentary election. They demanded the creation of special vetting commissions to examine the national and political reliability of all proposed candidates.

74 AMK, MNV KE, box 3, Minutes of the meeting of the District Electoral Commission Košice, 17. 10. 1946.

75 AMK, MNV KE, box 3, Zápisnica zo zasadnutia obnoveného národného výboru, 24. 10. 1946.

76 The head of the city was Tichomír Brezenský (born in 1909 in Levoča). He gained experience in state administration as head of the State Water Management Office in Košice. He came from Košice and worked in the Košice municipal administration until 1938. He was one of the officials dismissed by the Hungarian regime, so worked in Bratislava during the war. He was not previously involved in politics. His candidacy for the post of chairman of the National Committee in Košice was proposed by Jozef Styk – one of the leading representatives of the Democratic Party. See: ŠUTAJ, *Emanuel Böhm a Jozef Styk*, 91; see also: Dnes sa schádza obnovený NV mesta Košíc. In: *Demokrat*, 24. 10. 1946.

77 AMK, MNV KE, box 1, file 213/1946, file 43/1947.

78 AMK, MNV KE, box 617, file 14706/1948.

The vetting of Alžbeta took place in the autumn of 1946. In her application to the National Committee in Košice, she asked for an exemption pursuant to Section 3 of Act No. 99/1945. In her application, she referred to her democratic and anti-fascist sentiments. Before the members of the National Committee, she declared that she had always been a loyal citizen of Czechoslovakia. This was confirmed by the reports of several witnesses. In examining her democratic outlook, the vetting committee took into consideration activities of her husband Artur. As a person of Jewish origin, he was deported to a concentration camp in 1944. Although he managed to return after the war, his stay in the concentration camp had left its mark on him in the form of ill health. This left the family in existential distress, and it was important for Alžbeta to remain in her previous job. In the questionnaire on personal circumstances, she stated Slovak as her mother tongue for existential reasons, despite the fact that previous documents in her personal file showed that her mother tongue was Hungarian. She admitted before the vetting committee that she had reslovakized for practical reasons. She intended to stay in her workplace in Košice and she did so on the advice of her husband and friends.

The vetting committee postponed a final decision until a later date, but continued to keep Alžbeta in her position until the next meeting. It was after the Communist takeover, in August 1948, when she was placed in position finally. In her case, it was her long experience which was decisive at a time of a shortage of qualified clerical staff, which still prevailed in 1948.⁷⁹

The shortage of qualified personnel was a problem that persisted throughout the period under review. Moreover, it caused chaos, resulting in the number of city employees increasing to 582 even during 1945. Some members of the National Committee pointed out that only 417 city employees were envisioned. Such a state of affairs represented an unbearable financial burden for the city. The high number of city employees resulted from the extraordinary activities of the National Committee, including the post-war agenda. It was also a consequence of the purge processes in the city offices, when experienced employees were dismissed from the city and young Slovaks without experience replaced them. These personnel changes caused a slowness and low efficiency in the work of the offices.⁸⁰ During 1947, the vetting of civil servants continued. A number of employees of Hungarian nationality remained in their posts, as there was no adequate replacement for them. For example, it had long been a problem to obtain qualified personnel for the town's music school.⁸¹

Some former civil servants also applied for national and political security clearance. By obtaining this, they could either apply for a job or obtain a trade licence. They had to prove before the commission that they possessed anti-fascist sentiments. The application of Aladár Šipoš (Siposs), former secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, included information about how he had tried to help Slovaks who had been dismissed from the municipal office during the Hungarian regime precisely because of the vetting process. He also referred to the use of the Slovak language at work. The commission called on him to show how he had contributed to the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic, but in the end concluded that his anti-fascist sentiments could not be proven. The commission decided not to grant him a certificate of political and national reliability. It concluded its reasoning: "*The appointee had always – both during the former*

79 AMK, MNV KE, box 617, file 14706/1948.

80 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee, 4. 2. 1946.

81 AMK, MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee, 6. 6. 1947.

*Czechoslovakia and during the Hungarian occupation – claimed Hungarian nationality. With regard to his political reliability, the commission was not to be convinced of his political activity in favour of Czechoslovakia.*⁸²

Management of the City in the hands of experienced officials

It was important for the running of the municipal authority that the heads of departments were qualified and experienced officials. In particular, the first three departments – 1) presidial, 2) administration and 3) economy – were essential for the running of the city. Dr Jozef Kalina, who had moved to Košice from Zvolen, headed the first department. He was released from the Board (Ministry) of Agriculture and Land Reform. He had led the personnel department at the Central Directorate of State Forests and therefore belonged to the cadre of experienced officials. In his case, he was a newcomer to Košice. It is important to mention that his services were so desirable to the city that the members of the administrative commission decided to hire him without verifying his state and national reliability.⁸³ The head of the second department was Tibor Lieskovský⁸⁴ and the head of the third department was Dr Štefan Gaži.

Two of the leading civil servants of the city – Dr Mikuláš Glatz and Dr Štefan Gaži – had worked at the municipal office in Košice before 1938. In the administration of the city of Košice, they thus represented those officials for whom one can speak of continuity. Glatz, together with Ľudovít Valkay,⁸⁵ handed over the administration of Košice to the Red Army on 19 January 1945.⁸⁶ Gaži, for a few days, even had all the powers of a mayor. The decree on his appointment was signed by the co-chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic - Vavro Šrobár.⁸⁷

Mikuláš Glatz had joined the city services in November 1935 and worked there during the war years.⁸⁸ In the post-war city administration he was responsible for the personnel subdivision of the First Department, taking over personnel issues in the city.⁸⁹ Štefan Gaži had been a city employee even longer. He had joined the city services as a young high school graduate in 1928.⁹⁰ Like Glatz, he remained in the service of the city of Košice after 1938⁹¹ and continued to work there even after 1945. His responsibility included the management of the economic department. He was Municipal Chief Director.⁹²

82 AMK, MNV KE, box 66, file 32 286.

83 AMK MNV KE, Minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Commission, 30. 5. 1945.

84 There is no information about Tibor Lieskovský and his relationship to the city and to the city administration.

85 Like them, Ľudovít Valkay also remained in the administration of the city of Košice. However, his fate was different from Gaži's and Glatz's in that he was deported to the USSR in January 1945. He did not return to Košice until August 1948, after the communist takeover. He joined the city services as an experienced civil servant in November 1948 and remained in his post for another 10 years. More about Valkay: SZEGHY-GAYER, *Dél-szlovákiai magyar*, 137–145.

86 AMK, Kassa város átadása 1945. január 19.-én az orosz katonai városparancnoknak.

87 SA KE, fund Ľudový súd Košice, file Tk 369/48 Štátny zamestnanec Dr. Štefan Gaži.

88 AMK, JNV KE, box 25.

89 AMK, MNV KE, box 2, file 284/1947, Minutes of the meeting of the Council of the National Committee, 29. 7. 1947.

90 AMK, JNV KE, box 237.

91 Gaži worked at the Housing Bureau in Košice during the war. He was a member of the committee which carried out the inventory of sealed Jewish homes. See: CSÖSZ – GAYER, *Petitioners of Jewish Property*, 87.

92 AMK, MNV KE, box 2, file 284/1947, Zápisnica zo zasadnutia Rady Národného výboru Košice, 29. 7. 1947.

However, their political and national reliability was questioned in the press during this period. The attacks of January 1947 from the periodical *Hlas oslobodených*⁹³ were already part of the ongoing political struggle between the Democratic Party and the Communist Party.⁹⁴

In October 1947 the central authorities of the Slovak National Council issued a decree on the relocation of civil servants in southern Slovakia.⁹⁵ By the decree the Slovakization of the southern territory was to be continued by assigning employees from other parts of Slovakia. The national committees were therefore to draw up a list of civil servants who had admitted Hungarian nationality in 1930 (even if they had expressed an interest in reslovakization), had worked in the civil service between 1938 and 1945, had lived in the same household with Hungarians or had Hungarians in their close family. These civil servants were to be transferred to other parts of Slovakia by 31 December 1947 at the latest. Their places were to be taken by employees who did not speak Hungarian,⁹⁶ albeit the practice was different. It was not possible to replace these employees with internal migration from purely Slovak parts of Slovakia. This is also proven by the stories of Alžbeta V., Mikuláš Glatz and Štefan Gaži, who remained in their positions in Košice, although their fates varied after 1948 and some of them did not escape persecution by the communist regime.⁹⁷

Conclusion

The issue of purge based on ethnicity was one of the fundamental topics of post-war Czechoslovakia, as it was believed ethnic minorities had caused the disintegration of the First Republic. At the local level, these ethnically-motivated purges seamlessly escalated into social and political purges. As part of it, purging the bureaucratic apparatus was crucial for the restored state. In Slovakia, specific solutions were implemented by Slovak National Council regulations – the first was Regulation No. 44/1945 of 25 May 1945. Later, in August 1945, Regulation No. 99/1945 was adopted. According to these regulations all civil servants of Hungarian or German ethnicity were to be dismissed. The ethnicity of civil servants was investigated in various ways. During the vetting process, the language used by the employee in the family was investigated. The data of the previous census, in 1930, was also an important indicator of ethnicity for the vetting commission. The members of Hungarian or German political parties were automatically excluded in the vetting process.

In Košice, a city ceded to Hungary during the war, the first purges against civil servants of Hungarian nationality took place at the end of February 1945. The intervention was aimed against all civil servants who had been hired after the First Vienna Arbitration and who were of Hungarian nationality. It was assumed that these persons were not loyal to Czechoslovakia. The dismissal of these employees was decided by the members of the Administrative Commission that took over the administration of the town in early February 1945.

93 AMK, MNV KE, box 1, file 14/1947.

94 In addition to them, Jozef Kalina, the head of the first department, was also mentioned in the article.

95 SA KE, ONV KE, box 20, file 1385/1947.

96 This solution was approached after discovering that the results of the population exchange between Hungary and Czechoslovakia had not brought the desired result – the homogenization of the ethnic structure of the southern part of Slovakia. See: ŠUTAĽ, *Reslovakizácia*, 16.

97 SA KE, fund Krajská prokuratúra v Košiciach I. 1949–1960, box 80, file Dr. Štefan Gaži.

After the establishment of the National Committee in August 1945, the first specialized vetting commissions were set up in the town. The vetting commissions were based on similar principals as loyalty commissions in the Hungarian regime. Although in many cases the nationality to which the interviewee had subscribed in 1930 was the decisive factor, also still investigated was the language used in the private sphere of the interviewee and their family conditions. It was also examined, for example, whether the respondent subscribed to Slovak newspapers during the war and how they acted towards the Slovak community during the war. Their contact with members of the National Committee also played an important role.

The vetting of civil servants gradually became common practice. Those who did not pass the national and political security vetting were dismissed. The task of the National Committee established in August 1945 was to make Košice a Slovak town. Therefore, the number of vetting commissions was increased, not only vetting the civil servants of the city, but also post office, railway and other state office employees. Many civil servants intended to change their loyalties again and therefore asked for exemptions pursuant to Section 3 of Act No. 99/1945.

Vetting commissions could decide autonomously whether to grant an exemption, and did so including on the basis that the municipal administration lacked qualified staff. Therefore, some experienced civil servants remained in senior positions also after 1945. They were familiar with the city's agenda and also had a good command of the Hungarian language, which was important in the processing of the war agenda. However, they had undergone a reslovakization process.

The vetting became part of the political struggle when, after the victory of the Democratic Party, the Communists pushed for further vetting of newly elected members of the National Committee. However, the purge of public life, which was described by post-war politicians as an important factor in the post-war development of Czechoslovak democracy, was to become both an instrument of revenge and a space for corruption at the local level.

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