

## Address Unknown: Reshaping the Jewish Living Space and Social Mobility in the Slovak State (1939–1945)\*

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Social mobility is a relatively common phenomenon in society; however, in the period of the Slovak State (1939–1945) it was predominantly caused by the economic and social engineering of the single ruling Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. Anti-Semitism was made one of the main pillars of the internal state policy. Systematic pauperisation of the Jewish community gradually affected each perspective of everyday life of Jews in Slovakia, including the limitation of Jewish people's living space. This practice led to involuntary moving out from houses and flats in designated urban zones. Subsequently, this process culminated in the Aryanization of the housing formerly owned by Jews. The main aim of this contribution is to analyse spatial and social consequences of the reshaping of the Jewish housing opportunities with special interest in the entangled social mobilities of both Jews and Gentiles, which will be mainly exemplified through selected cases from the Banská Bystrica district.

Keywords: Jewish Space. Housing Units. Forced Migration. Banská Bystrica. Holocaust. Anti-Semitic Policy.

On 2 February 1941 a short article was published in the daily newspaper *Gardista* (Guardist), an official periodical of the paramilitary arm of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana, HSĽS), the Hlinka Guard. With its typically radical mode of expression, an unsigned author informed readers of the current situation in the city of Banská Bystrica. It referred to negative moods within the majority society about the supposed intention of some Jewish residents to avoid the restriction to move out of designated apartments in the city centre:

One would think that each Jew would obey the measure without any required energetic intervention of the competent authorities. Regrettably, in Banská Bystrica one man came to a Jew and asked him to leave the rented apartment. He got an answer "in vain, I will not move out from here" and he [the Jew – M. L.] claimed that he had got permission for that. This Jew, we will reveal his name if needed, should remember that he will not live on Andrej Hlinka Square!<sup>1</sup>

The content of this article illustrates anti-Semitic policy and discriminatory measures of the HSĽS regime that were also massively spread via state-controlled means of propaganda, including the then dominant print media. One of the continuing dimensions of Jewish persecution in Slovakia was impacting the Jewish living space, which was being gradually limited. This was to include the adoption of a regulation regarding the restrictions on living in or renting apartments in any streets and squares named

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1 *Nariadenie sa vzťahuje na každého!*, 4.

after Adolf Hitler or Andrej Hlinka, the founder and first leader of HSĽS. Realization of this measure was scheduled for the end of March 1941 and dramatically affected the everyday lives as well as the social statuses of many Jewish families who were forced to change their home addresses. Actually, in many cases it was not for the first, and neither would it be for the last time.

The main goal of this paper is to address the impact of the forced downward spatial and social mobility of the Jewish community in Slovakia, in particular focusing on one specific sphere – changes in housing conditions. The entangled social mobilities of Jews and Gentiles will be discussed in relation to selected examples from the Banská Bystrica district.

### Jewish Living Space and Forced Intra-state Migration

An essential change in the status of the Jews in the Transleithanian part of the Dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, to which the territory of the Slovak State had once belonged, was caused by the emancipation following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 (full civil rights for the Jews were confirmed and ratified in 1895).<sup>2</sup> The gaining of civil rights was simultaneously accompanied by a process of modernization which also brought about a rising position and social status for the quickly developing Jewish middle class, perceived with growing hostility especially in such traditional rural societies as the Slovak one.<sup>3</sup> The rapid upward social mobility of the Jewish middle class even accelerated during the democratic regime of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), when some representatives of this community also actively participated in political life.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the general equality of economic conditions in the Czechoslovak Republic must not be overestimated. For instance, attempts to limit Jews in the business sphere were to appear in the 1920s when the Ministry of the Plenipotentiary for Slovakia ordered revisions to the regulations on Jewish business licenses.<sup>5</sup>

Due to the abovementioned political developments, it had only been since the last third of the nineteenth century that Jews had started to move to the city centres. Attempts to define the natural Jewish space in the city would inevitably lead to distinctions between sacred and profane, private and public places. Modernization also directly impacted the Jewish minority and its formerly strictly religious self-identification diversified, facing new social phenomena of secularization and nationalization. Patterns of Jewish “otherness” in contrast to the Slovak majority society were gradually perceived from various perspectives. Among the religious, political and economic ones, nationalistic discourses resonated. Many Jews living in the Slovak territory did not proclaim Slovak nationality or did not speak “proper” Slovak, which did not suit the nationalistic HSĽS regime. Although the nomenclature of Jewish as it applies in the mid-twentieth century, even in the Slovak territory, cannot be simply generalized as denoting a religious community, this aspect still represented a dominant feature among those who would identify as Jewish. Moreover, approximately 75 % of religious Jews in Slovakia belonged to the orthodox branch of Judaism.<sup>6</sup> The presence,

2 SALNER, *Židia na Slovensku medzi tradíciou*, 54.

3 BAUMAN, *Modernosť a holokaust*, 78.

4 KAMENEC, *Vývoj a organizácia slovenského židovstva*, 36.

5 SZABÓ, *Od slov k činom*, 206–219.

6 LÁRIŠOVÁ, *Židovská komunita v Bratislave*, 53.

status and economic power of a local Jewish religious community were demonstrated by the size of the synagogue, which would often attract attention because of its different architectural style.<sup>7</sup>

The main focus of this contribution is to analyse the interference in the private space, in particular in the housing opportunities, of the persecuted Jewish minority. The success story of rapid upward social mobility of the Jewish minority had been unprecedentedly stopped under the HSLŠ regime when anti-Semitism turned from an ideology to a political doctrine. The resultant decreases in the economic and social status of Jews inevitably led to lower housing conditions, but Jews were also facing a targeted engineering of the urban space and experienced, in many cases multi-layered, displacement even at the municipal level.

Several key contributions on the spatiality of the Holocaust have been produced in the past decades, especially by historian Tim Cole.<sup>8</sup> In general, scholarly analyses of particular Jewish neighbourhoods in urban areas are somewhat focused on the ghettos which were established under the Nazi occupation.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, the situation in the satellite Slovak State differed. The Slovak political authorities adopted discriminatory measures, including the limiting of spatial and living conditions, in accordance with Nazi policy before the occupation in 1944.<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to in the occupied territories, for instance Poland, a system of the sealed ghettos was not adopted in wartime Slovakia. An exceptional case occurred in the capital city of Bratislava where the municipal authorities announced a plan to relocate the Jewish residents into a traditionally Jewish district. This area used to be denoted as a "ghetto",<sup>11</sup> including in the periodical press.<sup>12</sup> In fact, after being expelled from their apartments, some Jews were forced to search for a new home address in precisely that zone. There was an evident logic behind this strategy because many of them had relatives already living there. Moving more people into a single house subsequently led to a squeezing of the private space, where possible into a provisory reconstruction of the housing unit.<sup>13</sup> Theoretically, in Bratislava's case we can consider an original intention to create some kind of dispersed ghetto,<sup>14</sup> but further state actions turned out to be different. State authorities had planned to relocate all of the Jews from the capital city. This so-called dislocation process was officially launched in the autumn of 1941. On the one hand, this act was a political response to the long-lasting lack of housing capacity in the city (a problem which had risen further after it became the

7 See: BORSKÝ, *Synagogue Architecture in Slovakia*.

8 COLE, *Traces of the Holocaust*. COLE, *Holocaust Landscapes*. KNOWLES – COLE – GIORDANO, *Geographies of the Holocaust*.

9 For example: COLE, *Holocaust City*. COLE – GIORDANO, *Bringing the Ghetto to the Jew*. COLE – GIORDANO, *Microhistories, Microbiographies*. ENGELKING – LEOCIAK, *The Warsaw Ghetto*. HORWITZ, *Ghettostadt*. BENDER, *Jews of Białystok*.

10 Nazi control over the process regarding the so-called Jewish question in Slovakia before the occupation was secured by nominating the advisor (Berater). For more details on the activities of Dieter Wisliceny, the first Nazi advisor in this field, see: HRADSKÁ, *Případ Wisliceny*.

11 Archív mesta Bratislavy (hereinafter AMB), Mestský notársky úrad (hereinafter MNÚ), box 3033, 1881.

12 For example: *V Bratislave sa vytvára židovské geto, 3; Tvorí sa židovské geto v Bratislave, 5*.

13 Visual History Archive USC Shoah Foundation, interview with A. M., IC 27769.

14 COLE – GIORDANO, *Bringing the Ghetto to the Jew*, 132.

capital city, with an urgent need to create an administrative centre there)<sup>15</sup> and on the other, it could be recognized as some rehearsal for the future mass deportations.<sup>16</sup>

The organisation of this process was in the competence of the Department for Special Operations of Jewish Centre (Oddelenie pre zvláštne úkony, Ústredňa Židov, ÚŽ), the only Jewish organisation allowed from 1940. According to its records some 6,206 out of 15,102 Jews had left Bratislava by the end of December 1941.<sup>17</sup> A comprehensive process was originally to have been completed by June 1942,<sup>18</sup> but it was intersected by the deportations to the Nazi concentration and extermination camps from March 1942.

In general, forced Jewish migration in Slovakia in the wartime period has commonly been researched from the perspective of the mass deportations beyond the state borders which were realized in two phases. Whereas the first, in 1942, was organized by the Slovak political representatives, the second was carried out by the Nazi occupying forces in 1944–45.<sup>19</sup> In total, approximately 70,000 out of 89,000 Jews in Slovakia were involuntarily deported to the Nazi concentration camps. Even though these events represented an unprecedented rupture in the everyday life of the Jewish community in Slovakia, closer insight into the migration trajectories of the Holocaust victims reveal a more complex experience with forced displacements within the country even before March 1942.

Apart from these state organized relocations, it is necessary to briefly mention how the leaders of HSLS were already misusing their political power against the Jewish minority in autumn 1938, less than a month after declaring Slovak autonomy. The Hungarian kingdom raised its territorial requirements towards Czechoslovakia soon after signing the Munich Agreement. The foreign affairs ministers of Germany and Italy, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Galeazzo Ciano, signed the First Vienna Award which obliged the ceding of the southern territories of Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, both with dominantly ethnic Hungarian populations, to Hungary. On 4 November 1938 the changing of the state borders was accompanied by the organized expulsion of those Jews who were indigent or foreign citizens or who had the right of domicile in a different municipality to where they currently resided. Thousands<sup>20</sup> of them remained in the “no man’s land” of the provisory internment camps in Miroslavov and Veľký Kýr on the newly-established borderline. Neither country allowed them to enter, so the deportees were stuck literally in the fields in the cold weather until December 1938, when finally they were excepted by the Slovak side. Many of them, especially foreign citizens, did not have any other possibilities than to move to refugee camps such as the one in Bratislava.<sup>21</sup>

15 AMB, MNÚ, box 3032, 1830.

16 HRADSKÁ, *Holokaust na Slovensku* 8, 26.

17 Slovenský národný archív (hereinafter SNA), Policajné riaditeľstvo v Bratislave (hereinafter PR), box 2228, 170/42-ZÚ/216.

18 HRADSKÁ, *Holokaust na Slovensku* 8, 28.

19 See essential publications referring to the first and second wave of deportations: NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Holokaust na Slovensku* 6, 6–87. KOVÁČOVÁ, *Druhá vlna deportácií Židov zo Slovenska*.

20 In recent scholarship, the number of deportees has been estimated at 7,500 by Eduard Nižňanský (NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Židovská komunita na Slovensku*, 76–79) but the latest of Michal Frankl’s research doubted this calculation and leans towards 4,000 (FRANKL, *Země nikoho 1938*, 97).

21 JDC Archives, New York Office 1933–44, file 541, Report on the refugee camp in Bratislava – Rote Bruecke. Special thanks to Michal Frankl for this document.

Chronologically the last act of forced mass intra-state migration occurred in 1944. The evacuation process of the eastern parts of Slovakia was related to the dramatic approaching of the Red Army towards Slovakia.<sup>22</sup> Simultaneously with the voluntary evacuation of the majority society, members of the remaining Jewish community of Šariš-Zemplín County were ordered to move to various places in the Western territory.<sup>23</sup>

### Limitation of Jewish Living Space and Expropriation of Real Estate

As has already been stated and briefly described, the Jewish community was facing various forms of forced migration within the borders of the Slovak State. In my opinion, in terms of spatial studies and in order to achieve a complex analysis of the Jewish migration trajectories in the wartime period within (and then beyond and possibly back to) Slovakia, it is necessary to start from the lowest municipal level.

From the very beginning of the rule of the HSLs regime, Jewish property should have served to satisfy the economic demands of the Slovak majority, and politicians were promising its subsequent fulfilment.<sup>24</sup> Housing real estate also became a part of the so-called Aryanization process which was created and legalized by the state authorities to transfer former Jewish property to non-Jewish owners. For this purpose, a special institution, the Central Economic Office (Ústredný hospodársky úrad, ÚHÚ) was established in 1940.<sup>25</sup> Whereas the ÚHÚ was in charge of the Aryanization of corporate and residential property, the agenda regarding agricultural property belonged to the State Land Office (Štátny pozemkový úrad, ŠPÚ).<sup>26</sup>

The process of the Aryanization of residential property (V. Department) lasted longer than in the other cases. The sale of formerly Jewish houses and flats started only after their price estimation, in 1944. On the other hand, this procedural "delay" in the formal changing of ownership did not mean that Jewish residents had been allowed to stay in their apartments in the interim. Similarly, as in the case of the corporate property, the overall Aryanization was realized gradually by applying the same such strategies as the nomination of building managers in the first phase. According to ratified law no. 257/1940 Sl. z., in case of "severe economic and social reasons", the state authorities were allowed to impose temporary building managers.<sup>27</sup> It quickly became apparent that this position was a rewarding and beneficial side-job.<sup>28</sup> Apart from a regular wage, they could live in the managed building and expenses regarding the maintenance had to be financed by the owner. The requirements on the building

22 ZÜCKERT – SCHVARC – FIAMOVIÁ, *Die Evakuierung der Deutschen*, 169–258.

23 TOKÁROVÁ, *Slovenský štát*, 208.

24 This approach was frequently publicly expressed by the leading HSLs politicians. For example, see the notorious Alexander Mach speech of February 1939: *Na Slovensku nebude viac ani českého ani židovského režimu*, 4.

25 It was created as a successor to the Economic Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office (Hospodárska úradovňa predsedníctva vlády).

26 See: FIAMOVIÁ, "Slovenská zem patrí do slovenských rúk"; or her English contribution on this topic, FIAMOVIÁ, *Aryanization of Land in Slovakia in 1939–1945*, 298–312.

27 Law no. 257/1940 Sl. z., 407–408.

28 The position of the building managers presupposes a comparison with the situation in Budapest in 1944 when the dispersed ghetto was established there. In contrast to the traditional function in Hungary, the nominating of building managers in Slovakia was a strategy and agenda of the HSLs regime even before the occupation. These managers were imposed only temporarily. To compare see: ADAM, *Budapest Building Managers*, 37–62. RIGÓ, *Ordinary women and men*, 78–91.

managers were relatively low: the applicant had to be at least 24-years old and a morally upright Slovak citizen. As in the case of corporate property, many of the housing units in the building managers' hands started to lose their original value and they often refused to pay the annuity mortgages.<sup>29</sup>

The same law obliged the building managers to eject Jews from the apartments. Actually, this principle set the framework for further spatial engineering which significantly determined the urban population. One of the noteworthy features of the changing political system is the attempts to intervene in the public space. In the period of the Slovak State, it was common for the main streets and squares to be named after Adolf Hitler or Andrej Hlinka. This style of symbolic taking-over of the city centres was completely in accordance with the ideology of HSĽS, and at the same time it clearly demonstrated alliance with Nazi Germany. It was not a coincidence that ÚHÚ representatives decided to start a limitation of the Jewish living space by banning the living in or renting of real estate in areas named after leading political figures. Initially, this regulation was adopted in the capital city of Bratislava,<sup>30</sup> but from December 1940 it was imposed over the whole country. Designated apartments were to be emptied by the end of March 1941.<sup>31</sup>

The analysing of the application of this regulation in various municipalities also pointed at different approaches. Some of the local authorities used this situation to expand the designated zones where Jews were neither allowed to live nor to rent apartments, for example in the Eastern Slovak centre – Prešov. Additionally, Jews in Prešov could not rent any housing unit in the city without the permission of the municipal notary office.<sup>32</sup> This official procedure was not unified, and evident discrepancies can be exemplified by the situation in the city of Topolčany, where the district chief was in charge of giving this kind of permission.<sup>33</sup>

Probably most critical was the uncertainty of the municipal authorities in how to identify the precise flats from which Jews should unconditionally move out. In some cities, such as Nitra or Topolčany, the orientation of flat became decisive.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, it was primarily those flats with windows looking onto the main street that were to be emptied. Those which faced courtyards were often exempted from the regulation. For instance, the solution in Nitra inspired the representatives of the Jewish orthodox community in Kežmarok to lobby for the application of similar rules in their city too.<sup>35</sup> At first sight, it may seem that living in the city centre represented solely a higher living standard of the residents. In reality, especially where the courtyard-oriented units are concerned, city-centre residents frequently had a low living standard and their properties did not always meet the required health criteria.<sup>36</sup> As a result, it often happened that there were no applicants for these apartments after the eviction of their Jewish inhabitants. In this phase of the Jewish persecution, the contemporary

29 HLAVINKA, *Vznik Ústredného hospodárskeho úradu*, 86-87.

30 ÚHÚ regulation no. 233/1940 Ú. n., 645.

31 ÚHÚ regulation no. 267/1940 Ú. n., 740-741.

32 ÚHÚ regulation no. 258/1940 Ú. n., 714.

33 ÚHÚ regulation no. 274/1940 Ú. n., 753-754.

34 ÚHÚ regulation no. 274/1940 Ú. n., 753-754. ÚHÚ regulation no. 275/1940 Ú. n., 754.

35 Štátny archív v Prešove, pracovisko Archív Poprad (hereinafter ŠAPO-PP), Okresný úrad v Kežmarku (hereinafter OÚ v KK), box 49, 15/41 prez.

36 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, box 49, f. 15/41 prez.

ÚHÚ chief, Augustín Morávek, in some cases ordered the emptying of only those flats in the designated zones which were already of interest to specific non-Jewish candidates.<sup>37</sup>

A long-time demand for real estate in the capital city of Bratislava led to the implementation of another extraordinary regulation: In the autumn of 1941, representatives of the ÚHÚ proceeded to toughen restrictions and Jews were consequently banned from living in any buildings which had been constructed since the 1920s.<sup>38</sup> This measure was confirmed by the municipal notary office, and exemptions were made only for active state and public employees, doctors licensed for medical practice, members of the board of directors of the Jewish Centre and, temporarily, foreign citizens who were living in their own houses.<sup>39</sup> The interval between this regulation coming into force and the decision to force all Jews to completely move out of Bratislava was a mere 22 days. This remarkably short intermezzo between 1 and 23 September 1941 was in fact intersected by the adoption of regulation no. 198/1941 Sl. z., known as a Jewish Code. Previously implemented anti-Semitic legislation was summarized in this measure and the plan to displace the Jews from the capital city was legally based on § 28.<sup>40</sup> Prompt realization of this order culminated in the abovementioned so-called dislocation process of 1941–1942.<sup>41</sup> Finally, based on regulation no. 238/1941 Sl. z.,<sup>42</sup> all of the formerly Jewish real estate, except the corporate and agricultural, passed into the ownership of the state and started to be sold to non-Jewish applicants in 1944.

### Unprecedented Downward Social Mobility of the Jewish Community in Slovakia?

Analysis of social mobility inevitably requires an understanding of social stratification. Sociologists speak of this phenomenon to describe the inequalities among the individuals and groups in societies.<sup>43</sup> The concept of class has been central in the studying of social stratification. In modern societies class divisions are not officially recognized but commonly are determined by economic factors. Stratification depends on inequality in possessions and material resources;<sup>44</sup> however, contemporary social mobility studies also take into consideration the dimensions of gender and ethnicity.<sup>45</sup> In general, social mobility, understood as the movement of groups as well as individuals between different socio-economic positions, is considered to be relatively common in society.<sup>46</sup> Social mobility is the leading factor, at least in the Weberian tradition, in explaining the structural transformations of various social structures.<sup>47</sup>

37 ŠAPO-PP, f. OÚ v KK, box 49, f. 15/41 prez.

38 ÚHÚ regulation no. 374/1941 Ú. n., 1482.

39 Municipal Notary Office regulation no. 411/1941., 1584.

40 Regulation no. 198/1941 Sl. z., 643–684.

41 HRADSKÁ, *Dislokácie Židov z Bratislavy*, 315–324. KAMENEC, *Po stopách tragédie*, 146–153.

42 Regulation no. 238/1941 Sl. z., 853.

43 See the classic contributions in the field of social mobility: SOROKIN, *Social Mobility*. LIPSET, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*.

44 GIDDENS, *Sociology*, 470.

45 GIDDENS – SCRUTTON, *Essential Concepts*, 221. GRUSKY, *Social Stratification*. KATRŇÁK, *Třídní analýza a sociální mobilita*.

46 GIDDENS – DUNEIER – APPELBAUM – CARR, *Essentials of Sociology*, 195. ERIKSON – GOLDTHORPE, *The Constant Flux*.

47 ÅBERG, *Social Mobility*, 249.

It is necessary to emphasize that social changes regarding the Jewish community in wartime Slovakia were realized under anti-Semitic policies in a non-democratic system. This minority was first principally persecuted as a religious, then from 1941 like in Nazi Germany as a racial, group and systematic pauperization was reflected by decreased social and economic status. The previous system of norms and values that conferred social status upon individuals according to their education, property and achievements was transformed into a model of society which prioritized "racial status", personal assets coming to have only limited validity for the excluded.<sup>48</sup> This approach was adopted and applied in the Nazi as well as in the HSLŠ social model in the wartime period. In fact, the Slovak middle class was formed during the Slovak State<sup>49</sup> as a consequence of restrictions placed on the professional lives and the dismissals mostly of Jews and Czechs from their positions. The notion that all Jews were wealthy and belonged to high society would more suitably correspond to the contemporary propagandistic discourse than to the reality of, for example, the classic orthodox Jewish family in a small village in Eastern Slovakia in the late 1930s. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind that downward social mobility will be investigated mainly with regard to the cases of Jews who used to belong to the middle class (or higher) and who in consequence of state politics lost their position. In this particular perspective, Jews from the lower classes were not thus affected, not climbing any further down the social ladder. On the other hand, the chances of the poorest members of the Jewish community surviving the later phases of the Holocaust were considerably lower, gaining an economic exception or having money to manage living in hiding being that much less likely.

I make the presumption that the most efficient way to examine social mobility and its reflection in housing conditions is to focus on microhistory. In general, it seems that in recent years historians have produced several works specializing in the history of the local Jewish communities in Slovakia, including during the Holocaust.<sup>50</sup> For the purposes of this contribution, I have decided to analyse selected cases from the city of Banská Bystrica. This approach enables us to follow the forced vacating of apartments and the further Aryanization process at the municipal level. Therefore, targeted local historical research and knowledge of the broader local context seems to be the ideal presupposition for this kind of analysis.<sup>51</sup>

### Microcosmos: Banská Bystrica

In November 1941, 82-year-old Jewish pensioner A. Hó sent a letter to the district office in Banská Bystrica asking for permission to stay in a rented room in flats on Horná Street at least until he could find another apartment. His request was made due to he and his wife already having been forced to move out from three apartments which were in Jewish properties. He decided to compose this letter because the same scenario looked likely to be soon repeated, moreover in the coming wintertime. The

48 BAJOHR – LÖW, *Beyond the 'Bystander'*, 5.

49 NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Holokaust na Slovensku* 7, 7.

50 For example, see: PAULOVICHOVÁ, *Židovská komunita v dejinách mesta Hlohovec*. HLAVINKA, *The Holocaust in Slovakia: The Story of the Jews of Medzilaborce*. JAKOBYOVÁ – NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Dejiny židovskej komunity v Dolnom Kubíne*. FRANKL, *Židia v Žiline*.

51 Together with Eduard Nižňanský, we co-authored a monograph on the Jewish religious community in Banská Bystrica: NIŽŇANSKÝ – LÖNČÍKOVÁ, *Dejiny židovskej komunity v Banskej Bystrici*, 62–106.

building manager informed him that some non-Jewish applicant had appeared but Hó still had not succeed in finding another place to stay. His critical family situation was also exacerbated by the fact that two sons had been fired from their jobs for the state railway and both of the elderly parents were suffering from various illnesses. Finally, the local branch of HSLS delegated the solution of this situation to the building manager.<sup>52</sup>

Even though, according to the current state of research, I am not able to say how exactly the situation of the potential moving out of Hó and his wife from the room on Horná street proceeded, the experience of this Jewish family is representative of the rapidly decreasing social and economic status of the persecuted minority under the HSLS regime. It had taken barely three years for a man who had been working for 47 years in the service of the state to be forced to the margins of society. In 1942, A. Hó should have been covered by the "yellow legitimization" of his other son, a dental technician, and therefore released from the concentration centre in Žilina.<sup>53</sup> Registers in Yad Vashem claimed that he was deported to the Lublin district in October 1942.<sup>54</sup> Taking into account his advanced age and health problems, there is a high probability that he became a victim of the Holocaust.

As was stated in the quoted newspaper article in the opening paragraph of this contribution, Jews living in Banská Bystrica were also forced to move out from the designated urban zones.<sup>55</sup> The ideological taking-over of the public space by the renaming of streets in the city after Hitler and Hlinka and subsequent discriminatory restrictions impacted the living conditions of Dr K. Weisz. His apartment was in Súdobná Street, which was renamed Hitler Street (after World War II it became Stalin Street and nowadays, maybe paradoxically, it is called Skuteckého Street after a famous painter of Jewish origin). The former Weisz real estate was finally given to O. Balluch as compensation for his lost farm in the southern Slovak territory which was ceded to the Hungarian Kingdom after the First Vienna Award of November 1938. Balluch argued that he, a breadwinner and father of three sons, should be preferred among the other candidates.<sup>56</sup> This was only one of numerous examples of the HSLS regime using formerly Jewish property to satisfy the demands of the majority society, reasoning it as an alleged social justice. Furthermore, this particular case shows that changing the state borders caused more diverse migration trajectories, not only the forced expulsion of thousands of Jews and some, so far not precisely enumerated, Romani people<sup>57</sup> which was ordered by the state authorities. In his application, O. Balluch denoted himself as a "refugee" from the Dunajská Streda district. After the end of World War II it was two years before K. Weisz officially regained ownership of his apartment on what had become Stalin Street.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, Balluch's case partially touched another important layer of the struggle for personal profit and better housing conditions – the involvement and

52 Štátny archív v Banskej Bystrici (hereinafter ŠABB), Okresný úrad v Banskej Bystrici (hereinafter OÚ BB), box 129, without no.

53 SNA, Ministerstvo vnútra, box 214, f. 106.150/42-Ir-M.

54 [https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&rs\\_lastName=H%C3%BA3&rs\\_firstName=&rs\\_place=&rs\\_dateOfBirth=](https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&rs_lastName=H%C3%BA3&rs_firstName=&rs_place=&rs_dateOfBirth=) [Accessed on 5 April 2020].

55 See also: *Poznámky. Židovčina*, 3.

56 SNA, Povereníctvo priemyslu a obchodu, VII. reštitučný odbor (hereinafter PPO, VII. RO), box 420, sign. 919.

57 FIAMOVÁ, *Deportácie Židov v novembri 1938*, 225.

58 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 420, sign. 919.

prioritization of the leading political representatives. Actually, if someone wanted to get an apartment which used to be Jewish property, they needed to be proactive and send an application on their own initiative to the ÚHÚ. Actually, Weisz's apartment was not mentioned in Balluch's original request: firstly he applied for a different house, but that real estate was preferentially given to the county secretary of the HSL'S, Alexander Andreides.<sup>59</sup> Political power and influential contacts regularly turned out to be decisive in the nominating of an adequate non-Jewish candidate. In general, corruption was a significant determinant within the whole Aryanization process<sup>60</sup> and the hunt for housing units was no exception.

Andreides was one of those political protégés who appeared to be a powerful player in the game of formerly Jewish residential property. In addition to the abovementioned Klopštock's house, he proactively expressed his interest in a former Jewish garden where he wanted to relax after working hard for the contemporary single-ruling party, as he rationalized in his application:

I have ill children and a 60-year-old widowed mother who needs, according to the doctors, to move in the fresh air. I am a beekeeper and fruiterer and I have not had an opportunity to spend my free time in this occupation for many years. As an active HSL'S worker I am often nervously exhausted, and having a garden I should be able to forget about worries and work while working in it.<sup>61</sup>

Based on the recommendation of the general secretariat of the HSL'S, Alexander Andreides got a chance to pursue his hobbies in the requested garden. Andreides personally profited during the HSL'S regime and his political position catalysed an upward social mobility which was also reflected by increasing living conditions. Ultimately, he did not continue to enjoy this benefit of his pro-HSL'S political career – the garden was given back to its former owner during the restitution process.<sup>62</sup>

Andreides cannot be counted as any exclusionary case of the misusing of a political position to apply for formerly Jewish real estate. Simultaneously as this regional politician, the contemporary speaker of the assembly of the Slovak Republic, Martin Sokol, decided to apply for an apartment in Banská Bystrica where he was running his notary office. The apartment on Hitler Street used to be a Jewish property and, due to the previously described scenario, the Jewish residents had had to move out when the street was renamed. Afterwards, from April 1941, Sokol had been renting a four-room flat in the ground floor of this building. When the selling of Jewish residential property began in 1944, Sokol, officially represented by his assistant P. Bukový, applied for this apartment. At the same time, he was asking for rooms to run his office, as well as for a private flat for Bukový on the first floor of the same building.<sup>63</sup>

A similar double apportioning, with the gaining of both a formerly Jewish business and apartment, took part in G. Klopčeková's strategy. In the first step, she succeeded

59 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 425, sign. 1077.

60 See: KAMENEC, *Fenomén korupcie*, 96–112. HLAVINKA, „Kapitál má slúžiť národu...“, 374–416.

61 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 421, sign. 932.

62 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 421, sign. 932.

63 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 421, sign. 942.

in getting A. Steiner's cloth shop<sup>64</sup> and then she later applied for his former house. She did not hesitate to try to make account of her personal relations. Widow Klopčeková did not forget to mention that her husband was a Slovak notary and "ľudak",<sup>65</sup> and that as such he would have experienced persecution under the previous political regime. Furthermore, she was applying together with her future son-in-law, the director of Hlinka Guard cinemas. Finally, the general secretariat of HSL'S recommended the approval of her demand.<sup>66</sup> After the fall of the HSL'S regime this real estate was returned to A. Steiner's legal heirs.<sup>67</sup>

Interest in using or later possessing formerly Jewish real estate was not shown only by individuals but also by state institutions such as ministries, administrative bodies, municipalities etc.<sup>68</sup> The government commissioner of Banská Bystrica city (Vládny komisár mesta) Michal Samuhel had already in 1942 informed the ÚHÚ that Jewish real estate should preferably serve public objectives. Samuhel proposed a plan for city regulations regarding road construction and the placing of some administrative offices in order to turn Banská Bystrica into a modern city. In his request, he reasoned that designated Jewish houses in the city centre should inevitably be used for this purpose.<sup>69</sup> In accordance with this argument, the city succeeded for instance in acquiring the house at 1 Moyzesova Street; however, another private applicant, P. Tóth, offered almost 200 thousand korunas more than the officially set price.<sup>70</sup> Tóth was demanding real estate as compensation for his house having been expropriated by the ministry of transport and public works, which aimed to build a new post office there. He was searching for a house where he could run a pub and he mentioned three alternatives acceptable to him, and finally he was allowed to get the house of R. Rothová.<sup>71</sup> One of the former owners of the real estate at 1 Moyzesova Street became its temporary administrator after the war and subsequently took part in the further restitution process.<sup>72</sup>

The last, but by no means least, of the selected examples of how people benefited from the limiting of the Jewish living space in Banská Bystrica points at the church's activities in this sphere. Andrej Škrábik, later to become bishop, made a claim in the name of Banská Bystrica bishopric for L. Szantó's garden, located in the neighbourhood of the bishop's residence. According to his words, staying there without this garden would be "practically impossible".<sup>73</sup> So far it is not clear to me how this initiative finished but the bishopric is not mentioned in the references of the general secretariat of HSL'S. On the other hand, this was not his only attempt to acquire some formerly Jewish property; Škrábik had already asked in 1941 for a house to use for the purposes of the bishopric and religious associations. Even though a local branch of HSL'S recommended

64 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 368, sign. 11697.

65 A supporter of HSL'S, it is not clear from the application whether he used to be a member of the party but it is highly probable that she would have used this argument if possible.

66 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 421, sign. 927.

67 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 421, sign. 927.

68 For more examples see also: HALLON – HLAVINKA – NIŽŇANSKÝ, *Pozícia Ústredného hospodárskeho úradu*, 59–62.

69 ŠABB, Mestský úrad v Banskej Bystrici (hereinafter MÚ BB), box 202, 698/1942.

70 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 420, sign. 917.

71 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 563, sign. 5354.

72 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 420, sign. 917.

73 SNA, PPO, VII. RO, box 420, sign. 909.

the bishopric as an adequate candidate to buy this real estate, the ÚHÚ rejected it because the government had not proceeded with its expropriation yet.<sup>74</sup>

### Epilogue

The unknown author of the newspaper article which I mentioned at the very beginning criticized the reputed unwillingness of Jews in Banská Bystrica to fulfil the measure to leave the apartments on Hlinka Square. Actually, Jews were not the only ones who were denounced in the contemporary anti-Semitic discourse. The image of the “internal enemy” incorporated also those non-Jewish members of the majority society who were trying to help persecuted Jews. Those helpers were denoted as “white Jews”.<sup>75</sup> The local periodical *Naše Pohronie* (Our Pohronie<sup>76</sup>) published a resentful article with the symptomatic heading “White Jewess in Banská Bystrica and Her Flats”. This public verbal attack on C. Turzová referred to her alleged preference in renting the apartments in her building to Jewish families when there was a lack of housing opportunities in the city. She was blamed for rejecting the application of a member of Hlinka Guard as well as other “Christian” candidates and, according to the last paragraph of this article, she was allegedly an avowed Hungarian and politically against the Slovak State.<sup>77</sup> This case represented one of the propagandistic methods by which to identify potential scapegoats and to accuse them of being responsible, in this instance, for the ongoing housing crisis in the city – if it was not a Jew, it could be their helper. Even negative experiences of both Jews and Gentiles with the HSLS regime were sometimes literally entangled.

Actually, such significant changes as the targeted persecution of Jews necessarily impacted upon the whole society. The demographic imbalance of persecuted Jewish minority and Slovak majority society under the specific political circumstances of the Slovak State developed into the defining of the opposite and mutually-causal directions of these groups’ social mobilities – the Jewish downward in contrast to the Slovak upward one. Although this was the general trend in the analysed period, it must be strictly highlighted that this scheme cannot be automatically applied to all individuals belonging to both of these groups. Furthermore, the entangled ascents and descents of the social ladder were not a result of some “natural” development but of the intentionally anti-Semitic policy of the HSLS regime and its systematic intervention into the Jewish private space and the expropriation of Jewish-owned real estate. More of the abovementioned examples demonstrated this process, reflecting the changes in the housing policy in Banská Bystrica. At the same time, these cases also correspond to arguments about the opportunistic and not necessarily anti-Semitic motives of part of the majority society – from ordinary people to high ranking politicians – for participating in the division of the formerly Jewish property.

74 NIŽŇANSKÝ – LÔNČÍKOVÁ, *Dejiny židovskej komunity v Banskej Bystrici*, 97.

75 LÔNČÍKOVÁ, *Zakazovaná solidarita?*, 190–202.

76 Name of the Slovak Region.

77 *Biela Židovka v Banskej Bystrici a jej byty*, 3.

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