

SOCIAL STATUS OF THE INTERWAR JEWISH POLITICAL ELITE IN PREŠOV AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SURVIVING THE HOLOCAUST¹

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The paper analyses the social status of the Jewish members of the interwar municipal political elite during the Holocaust in the example of the town of Prešov. They lost their democratically elected mandate due to the dissolution of Jewish parties and opposition parties in Slovakia after Hlinka's Slovak People's Party came to power in October 1938. The main attention is focused on the (declining) vertical social mobility of members of the former elite in order to find out whether their previous political engagement and possible social ties associated with it influenced their social status at the time of the systematic implementation of anti-Jewish policy or helped them to survive during the Holocaust. The paper intends to capture a common model of behaviour, as well as individual actions and apply the acquired knowledge to the whole group of Jewish municipal political elites in the period under review.

Keywords: Holocaust. Jews. Municipal Political Elite. Social Status. Social Mobility. Slovak State. Prešov.

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Introduction

The building of a non-democratic regime and a monopoly of power by Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in Slovakia from October 1938, accompanied by the elimination of political opponents, naturally required a personnel exchange of political representatives even within the lower structures of the bureaucratic apparatus. For this purpose, several legislative measures were adopted to remove inconvenient people at the regional and local political level, especially representatives of direct opposition and Jewish political parties, and to liquidate elected self-government. After the cessation of the activities of these parties and their subsequent ban, deputies were deprived of their democratically elected

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seats and expelled from local representative bodies, thus losing the opportunity to participate in the further management of the town or municipality. The replacement of members of the Jewish minority in public political offices was one of the manifestations of the consolidation of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party's hegemony and further direction of the regime in relation to anti-Semitic policy. In the following years, the Jewish minority was exposed to many discriminatory measures, the deprivation of human rights and, finally, a struggle for survival. Several questions arise in this context, such as whether the advantaged status of members of the interwar elite within the Jewish community were maintained even after the loss of their political mandate, thus whether it is possible to speak in their case about a certain level of social stability or, contrarily, whether and to what extent there was a vertical mobility within the social structure of the Jewish community as a result of the events after the change of the regime in October 1938. Questions also arise with regard to individual reactions to anti-Jewish measures, thus whether the former involvement in communal politics influenced their behaviour or decisions and which reaction became the predominant, and whether membership of the former elite possibly meant a better chance of survival of the Holocaust.

To answer these questions, I analyse the behaviour of members of the interwar Jewish municipal elite during the Holocaust through a microhistorical approach – favouring an individual perspective by examining the individual or small community in the example of the town of Prešov. The aim of this paper is to analyse the social mobility of members of a specific social group during the Holocaust, from a perspective regarding those outside the centre of the main events, in order to find out whether previous political engagement and possible social ties associated with it, influenced the social status of its members at the time of the systematic implementation of anti-Jewish policy or helped them to survive the Holocaust.

In the analysis of the social mobility of the monitored persons, I proceed from the theoretical concept of Pitirim A. Sorokin, according to which social mobility is any transition of an individual or social object or value from one social position to another. From two principal types of social mobility (horizontal and vertical) my attention is focused on vertical mobility, thus the transition of an individual or a social object from one social stratum to another, in this case downwards.² Using a microhistorical approach by analysing the impacts of anti-Jewish policy in the years 1938/1939–1945 on a group of members of the former Jewish elite, I try to capture a social sinking in the sense of the exclusion of individuals from

2 See more: SOROKIN, Pitirim A. *Social and Cultural Mobility*. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959, p. 133. ISBN 0029302706.

a higher social position to the existing lower social positions.³ I aim to reveal the changes in the social structure of society as a whole and to help form a more comprehensive understanding of the social background of the Holocaust in Slovakia, whose research at the local level is currently not fully developed in the Slovak historiography.

Despite the numerous and, in many cases, very high-quality productions of Slovak historians engaged in Holocaust research in Slovakia, the research and interpretation of the Holocaust “from below” still lags behind, since most historians prefer to investigate macro-processes and national policies at the top level. Nevertheless, more attention is currently shifting to the microhistory and the view of local actors at the level of individual cooperation (mostly from the perspective of the victims).

Monographs dealing with the history of Jewish communities in particular towns in Slovakia⁴ and historical town biographies are undoubtedly beneficial for this issue. They are key to forming knowledge of changes in the social background of the Holocaust, although the issue of the Holocaust is mostly treated only as a minor part of the description of the history of the Jewish population in the locality and the professional quality is varied and often without a more rigorous application of scientific historical procedures and methodology.

Indispensable works for researching the changes in the social structure from a local and individual perspective are academic works dealing with socio-economic aspects of the Holocaust (the issue of Aryanization and the liquidation of Jewish property and deportations) and case studies focused on the relationship between the Jewish minority and the Slovak majority. These contributions capture the local aspect of the social background of the Holocaust and offer an analysis of the immediate manifestations of anti-Jewish measures in selected geographical areas in specific conditions, not only in terms of legislation but most importantly also of the social dimension of the Aryanization and liquidation process, and deportations.⁵ Capturing the everyday coexistence and interaction of the majority part of society with the Jewish community in some case studies brings

3 For a closer look at social mobility, see: SOROKIN, ref. 2, pp. 133 – 163.

4 Among the fundamental works dedicated to the history of Jewish communities in Slovakia, it is necessary to include the publication, although older, but beneficial, by Eugen Bárkány and Ľudovít Dojč: BÁRKÁNY, Eugen – DOJČ, Ľudovít. *Židovské náboženské obce na Slovensku*. Bratislava: Vesna, 1991, 438 p. ISBN 808512856X.

5 On the issue of Aryanization, liquidation and deportations, extensive literature has been published in the last few decades. The work most deserving of mention in this regard is undoubtedly that done by a couple of authors, Eduard Nižňanský and Ján Hlavinka, for example: NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard – HLAVINKA, Ján (Eds.). *Arizácie v regiónoch Slovenska*. Bratislava: Stimul, 2010, 231 p. ISBN 8089236863.

a closer knowledge of the social dynamics of the Holocaust. A vital element of the approach in this is focusing mainly on the consequences.

A different perspective in the research of the social processes in society during the Holocaust is provided by works considering the historical memory of direct actors or witnesses published by ethnologists or sociologists, offering a different methodological approach and strengthening interdisciplinarity. Despite the high degree of subjectivity that is an integral part of every piece of oral history, research processing ego documents (narratives, memories or personal testimonies of direct actors) provides a subjective interpretation, which is key to understanding the social reality and brings the different perspective of an eyewitness or a direct participant.⁶

A specific group of works in this regard are biographical/autobiographical books and memoir literature.⁷ Although the authors are usually not historians, and the character of most works has a predominantly literary form (mostly literary prose with such elements of artistic style as expressiveness or imagery), the literary narration does not in principle undermine the substance of the memoirs – the factual account of events and their individual reflection by an author and the expressive value of the works remains. The undoubted advantage of using narratives, memories or personal testimonies of direct actors in Holocaust research is the ability to reveal the motivations and causes of action and decisions of individuals in specific situations, which other sources cannot provide.

Theoretical-Methodological Approach

The subject of analysis are Jewish members of the interwar municipal administration and self-government in Prešov perceived as representatives of the political elite of the town in terms of a theoretical concept of the elite of Gaetano Mosca limiting the political elite almost exclusively to the area of power influence and political power (“political class”). It is, therefore, a specific social group of people, a dominating group, always less numerous (compared with the much more numerous controlled group – “masses”) sharing certain features, which hold the highest positions in important offices with a dominant influence on the policy that is conducted in accordance with their own interests. Thanks to the monopolization of power, the concentration of political authority in their

6 See successfully implemented oral history projects in Slovakia and publication outputs from them that analysed the memories of survivors persecuted during the Holocaust or members of the majority society and their perceptions of the Holocaust by Peter Salner and Monika Vrzgulová.

7 From memoir literature, see the works within the *Judaica Slovaca* edition of the Slovak National Museum – Museum of Jewish Culture or the works by Slovak authors published abroad (or in emigration) mostly in English or Hebrew.

hands and the executive or regulatory powers at their disposal, they are actively involved in political decision-making on important issues not only of political but also of economic and cultural development.⁸

Within the meaning of this definition, the analysed group includes all Jewish deputies (including alternates) in Prešov during the interwar period – members of the municipal committee and council operating before the first municipal elections in 1923 (which had the competence of the municipal assembly and the members of which were appointed by the County Governor)⁹ and all Jewish deputies of the municipal bodies (municipal assembly, municipal council and commissions) elected for both Jewish and non-Jewish political parties in the municipal elections in 1923, 1927, 1928 and 1932.¹⁰ The research sample also includes the Prešov lawyer Dr Aladár Böhm, who was not an elected member of the municipal assembly but held the municipal prosecutor and financial controller positions¹¹ and participated in municipal assembly meetings.

The methodological procedure involves mainly a group-biographical analysis of members of the selected social group and their decisions in the form of a collective case study based on the systematic collection and analysis of data from preserved materials, mostly of official records made out by central and regional public institutions of the Slovak state (inventories of the Jewish population, inventories of Jewish housing property, lists of temporary building

8 See more: MOSCA, Gaetano. *The Ruling Class*. New York; London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939, 514 p.

9 Správny výbor mesta Prešova. In *Šarišské hlasy*, 1920 (18. 1.), vol. II, no. 3, pp. 1 – 2. Nové mestské administratívne výbory. In *Šarišské hlasy*, 1920 (11. 7.), vol. II, no. 28, p. 1. Mestská rada v Prešove. In *Slovenský denník*, 1923 (9. 1.), vol. VI, no. 5, p. 7.

10 For election results, see: For 1923 – A községi választások eredményei. In *Uj Vilag*, 1923 (17. 9.), p. 1; or Štátny archív v Prešove [State Archive in Prešov] (hereinafter ŠA PO), fund (hereinafter f.) Mestský úrad v Prešove, 1923–1945 [Municipality Office in Prešov, 1923–1945] (hereinafter MÚ PO), inventory number (hereinafter inv. no.) 1, Zápisnica zostavená v Prešove dňa 27. októbra 1923 roku v mimoriadnom zasadaní mestského zastupiteľského zboru. For 1927 – ŠA PO, f. MÚ PO, inv. no. 5, Zápisnica zo dňa 29. decembra 1927 v mimoriadnom zasadnutí mestského zastupiteľstva, vydržiavaného pod predsedníctvom podstarostu Júliusa Róvó vz. For 1928 – Výsledky obecných volieb v Prešove. In *Slovenský východ*, 1928 (11. 9.), vol X, no. 208, p. 3. For 1932 – ŠA PO, f. Okresný úrad v Prešove I, 1923–1945 [District Office in Prešov I, 1923–1945] (hereinafter OÚ PO), box 54, inv. no. 221, Mesto Prešov – Výsledok obecných volieb konaných dňa 25. IX. 1932. The composition of the municipal assembly in 1938 was based on the results of the municipal elections in 1932 because the municipal elections planned in Prešov for the autumn of 1938 were not held due to the developments after Munich. See: DOMENOVÁ, Marcela – PEKÁR, Martin (Eds.). *Pamätná kniha mesta Prešova III (1938 – 1941)*. Prešov: Štátna vedecká knižnica v Prešove, 2011, pp. 2 – 3. ISBN 9788085734942.

11 BÜCHLER, Róbert J. *Encyklopédia židovských náboženských obcí. Vol. II (L–R)*. Bratislava: SNM – Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 2010, p. 166. ISBN 9788080602284.

administrators, lists of Aryanized and liquidated corporate property, records of Jewish employees, lists of work permits and yellow ID cards, deportation lists etc.). This procedure is in order to capture individual decisions, as well as a common model of behaviour (major trend) and to apply the acquired knowledge to the whole group of Jewish municipal political elites and thus help to explain universal processes.

It is not my intention to identify or explain the motivations of decision-making. I am aware that individual behaviours were all situationally determined and the probability of survival of individuals largely depended on particular circumstances, great fortune, the ability and foresight to escape, often aided by individual resilience. Nevertheless, I assume that not all members of the Jewish community had the same conditions for survival. My hypothesis is that it was the members of the former elite who would have had a better chance of survival. Despite the fact that the entry among the members of the communal political elite in the interwar period was not conditioned by education or socio-economic status and people from all social groups were able to take part in active politics (after election to the municipal representative bodies), several years of involvement in municipal policy and the associated more diverse social ties and contacts could have created better factors, conditions or situations to mitigate the negative effects of anti-Jewish policy and the Holocaust.

The analysis of the social mobility covers initial phases of the whole process of the destruction of the Jews in terms of the division of the process by Raul Hilberg into several stages (sequential steps), from the first phase of defining the term Jew to the beginning of the last phase – the deportation.¹²

Based on the theoretical framework of elite research of Barbara Wasner,¹³ as part of the analysis and subsequent comparison I monitor the following dimensions: (1) personal characteristics (age, gender, civic status, religion, education, profession) which provide a formal image about members of the municipal elite; (2) social background during membership in the political elite (respectively during the whole interwar period) – public, social and religious engagement and the positions they held in addition to the political mandate (membership of political, economic, religious and cultural organizations, property relations etc.), which helps answer the question of whether a career and social status was based purely on the parliamentary mandate or whether the

12 Raul Hilberg divided the process of destroying the Jews into four phases: (1) definition, (2) expropriation, (3) concentration and (4) deportations. For more, see: HILBERG, Raul. *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Vol. 1. New York; London: Holmes & Meier, 1985, p. 53. ISBN 0841909105.

13 WASNER, Barbara. *Eliten in Europa: Einführung in Theorien, Konzepte und Befunde*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004, pp. 23 – 27. ISBN 381003875X.

monitored actors also held other important public and social positions within or outside the Jewish community of the town; (3) a common model of behaviour of members of the former elite – the similarity of reactions to the adopted anti-Jewish measures (whereas the vast majority of the monitored persons was married, the implications of anti-Jewish policy were marginally monitored within close relatives – wife, children and their spouses); and (4) interconnection within the Jewish municipal political elite (family/neighbourhood ties, social, economic connection).

The Jewish Political Elite of Interwar Prešov

A nationally and confessionally heterogeneous interwar Prešov provided the Jewish population with relatively broad options for involvement in the life of the town. Jews represented about 20% of the town's population and although the ratio of the percentage of the Jewish population to the majority population was following a declining trend, the number of Jews in Prešov was actually increasing.¹⁴ The Jewish minority, as in other areas of Slovakia, belonged to the traditional middle class of the population, had gradually penetrated the local business circles relatively successfully and actively participated in the economic development of the town.¹⁵

Jews held significant positions in trade and industry and in liberal professions and state and public administration offices. They were also very much involved in the public and political life. The opportunity for political engagement was provided mainly through the municipal assembly, which was the highest body of the municipal self-government authorities, composed of 36 (and from 1932 of 42)¹⁶ democratically elected members of political parties and which used to reflect not only the political or social, but also the national (Slovaks, Hungarians, Jews etc.) and confessional (Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Evangelicals, Israelis etc.) diversity of the town.¹⁷ In addition to the Hungarian Land Christian-Socialist

14 In 1921 the share of the Jewish population was 19.8% of the total population of the town; out of a total number of 17,577 inhabitants of Prešov, 3,477 were inhabitants of the Jewish religion. In 1930 the proportion of the Jewish population was 18.2%; out of the total number of 21,775 inhabitants of Prešov, 3,965 were of the Jewish religion. This remained at approximately the same level for a later period: in 1938 the number of inhabitants claiming to be of Jewish nationality (still on a voluntary basis) increased to 2,134 of the total population of the town of 21,016, in 1940 the number of Jews increased to 4,381, which was almost 18% of the total population and at the beginning of 1942 there were 5,134 persons of the Jewish faith in Prešov. BÜCHLER, ref. 11, p. 158.

15 BÜCHLER, ref. 11, p. 166.

16 The increase in the number of deputies was related to the overall increase in the population. See: § 9 of Law no. 75/1919 Sb. z. a n. of 31 January 1919.

17 PEKÁR, Martin – TOKÁROVÁ, Zuzana. Výmeny mestských politických elít na Slovensku

Party and the left-wing Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the Jewish Party held a relatively strong political position within the municipal administration and self-government. The Jewish Party managed to win regularly and relatively successfully in the municipal elections and could count on a traditionally stable voter support of about 1,000–1,300 votes. In the municipal assembly it used to hold a stable 5–6 seats. Economic and political interests of Jewish entrepreneurs were also actively promoted by the candidates of other Jewish parties (the Jewish Republican Economic Party, the Jewish Republican Trade and Crafts Electoral Group, the Jewish National Party)¹⁸ or Jewish deputies elected for non-Jewish political parties.¹⁹ Through their mandate they were significantly involved in the town policy and represented a relatively stable component within the interwar municipal elite.

The Jewish part of the interwar elite represented an internally relatively homogeneous social group representing predominantly the middle and older generation of interwar politicians born mostly in the 1870s and 1880s, who were entering the Slovak state as elderly men but still at a productive age, mostly between 50 and 65, and with a few exceptions (typographer, official and business traveler) they embodied two dominant professions – merchants (or entrepreneurs, tradesmen) and lawyers. Largely they had been politically experienced deputies, actively participating in municipal politics during several election periods (as directly elected members or alternates), in some cases even during the entire interwar period of Czechoslovakia, naturally in the case of some politicians in the leading positions of local political parties²⁰ or in the management of the

po páde medzivojnovnej československej demokracie (Prešov, 1938–1944). In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2019, vol. 23, no. 1, p. 150. ISSN 1338-7219. Members elected a chairman from among themselves (and two sub-mayors) and 12 (from 1932 – 14) members of the municipal council. As a subsidiary body, municipal commissions were established from among the members of the municipal assembly, as well as non-members. See more: SEDLÁK, Imrich. *Dejiny Prešova*. Vol. 2. Prešov: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo v Košiciach, 1965, pp.116 – 118.

- 18 For the percentage results in municipal elections in Prešov for Jewish parties, see: SZEGHY-GAYER, Veronika. „Vráťme si mesto!“ Prejavy nespokojnosti „mestského občana“ v politickom diskurze v Prešove 1918–1938. In *Forum Historiae*, 2015, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 59. ISSN 1337-6861.
- 19 Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Electoral group of middle-class business and trade homeowners and citizenship and the Municipal Civic Party.
- 20 Dr Karol Ferbstein – the chairman of the Jewish Party in Prešov, Dr Artur Maibaum – the chairman of the Communist Party in Prešov, Ľudovít Preisz – the chairman of the Jewish Republican Economic Party in Prešov and Herman Lichtig and Dr Zigmund Neuwirth – members of the presidency of the Jewish Party in Slovakia. Ing. Eugen Bárkány was a founding member of the Municipal Civic Party in Prešov.

town.²¹ Although a smaller number of the deputies were directly involved in the decision-making process of the town management only for a short time (during one election period), they used to move for longer in political circles than representatives of local political parties.²²

The political involvement of elite members was directly linked to stable positions in the non-political sphere. By membership in local professional and interest organizations (and in their management)²³ and in various cultural associations, they participated in the modernization of the town and development of the economic and cultural life of the region.²⁴ Naturally, as representatives of the Jewish community, they actively intervened in the management of the life of the local Jewish community. Whether as chairmen of Jewish religious communities,²⁵ or as members of the leadership or only members of Jewish support associations and charities (especially the Jewish Museum Association,²⁶

21 Dr Jozef Eger – Deputy Mayor of Prešov from 16 August 1919, Dr Karol Ferbstein – in the period 1928–1932 Deputy Mayor of Prešov. See: Mestská rada v Prešove. In *Slovenský denník*, 1923 (9. 1.), vol. VI, no. 5, p. 7. Voľba starostu v Prešove. In *Slovenský denník*, 1923, (12. 10.), vol. VI, no. 233, p. 5. Voľba mešťanostu v Prešove. In *Slovák*, 1928 (28. 9.), vol. X, no. 219, p. 5. BÜCHLER, ref. 11, pp. 165 – 166.

22 Several of the interwar municipal deputies also ran in the county elections. For example, in 1923 ran (and were also elected as alternates): Dr Jozef Eger (for Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), Dr Jozef Propper, Dr Zigmund Neuwirth, Dr Alex Zahler, Ľudovít Preisz and Dr Karol Ferbstein (for Jewish Party). See: Štátny archív v Košiciach [State Archive in Košice] (hereinafter ŠA KE), f. Košická župa, 1923–1928 [Košice County, 1923–1928] (hereinafter KŽ), inv. no. 21, sign 1924.

23 For example: National Economic Corps for Šariš and Neighboring Districts, Prešov Electric Corporation in Prešov, Business Alliance in Prešov, Tradesmen's Association in Prešov, Jewish Credit Union etc.

24 In addition to involvement in associations, Samuel Reiner and Artúr Spányi were also the editors of two Jewish weekly magazines published in Prešov (Samuel Reiner of *Jüdische Nachrichten* and Artúr Spányi of the Hungarian liberal weekly magazine *Új Világ*). AMIR, Giora. *Prešov: osud židovskej obce, jednej z mnohých*. Bratislava: SNM – Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 2004, Prešov, p. 62. ISBN 8080601364.

25 Among the monitored representatives of the political elite in Prešov, the chairmen of the Neological Jewish religious community were: Dr Jozef Propper in 1920–1924, after him the chairman was Dr Alex Zahler in the period 1925–1936 and also Ing. Eugen Bárkány in the period 1940–1942. The Prešov Orthodox Jewish religious community was chaired by representatives of the political elite: Ľudovít Preisz in the periods 1922–1925 and 1931–1932, Dr Zigmund Neuwirth in the periods 1926–1930 and 1933–1936 and Dr Július Spira in the period 1937–1938. Dr Karol Ferbstein was the founder and chairman of the Prešov group of the Union of Zionists in Czechoslovakia, one of the central organizations of the Zionist movement in Slovakia in the interwar period. Along with Dr Karol Ferbstein, Herman Lichtig was also a member of the leadership of the Union of Zionists in Czechoslovakia. BÜCHLER, ref. 11, p. 165.

26 The chairman of the association was Ing. Eugen Bárkány, among the leading members of

Chevra Kadischa, Chevra Sefardim, Makkabi or Mizrachi in Prešov), which accounted for at least 19% of associations in interwar Prešov,²⁷ they played a crucial role in the development of the Jewish community life and its activities.

The change of regime headed by the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in the autumn of 1938 meant a fundamental change in their life so far. The Jewish deputies of the municipal representative bodies of Prešov were deprived of their seats after the suspension and later banning of opposition and Jewish parties and excluded from municipal self-government authorities. Subsequently, the Land Office in Bratislava dissolved the town's representative bodies on 24 October 1938,²⁸ and on 27 October 1938, the Prešov town administration was handed over to the appointed Government Commissioner Alexander Chrappa.²⁹ After territorial-political changes as a result of the Vienna Award in November 1938, in connection with the loss of Košice from which several key offices and institutions were transferred to Prešov, Prešov became the largest and strategic centre of eastern Slovakia and from January 1940 also the seat of the County Office of the newly established Šariš-Zemplín County. The high percentage of the Jewish population in the town, together with their strong political and economic positions, were used to fuel a rapid strengthening of anti-Semitic attitudes which developed (not only in Prešov) immediately after the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party came to power and were accompanied by open anti-Jewish attacks. Besides these, the initiative of local institutions and political actors contributed to a significant intensification of anti-Jewish policy in the region in the following period and to the adoption of anti-Jewish measures in the County with increased intensity, in advance and sometimes with a stricter character compared to the

the association were: Dr Zigmund Neuwirth, Dr Mór Rosenberg, Samuel Reiner and Dr Michal Gottlieb. ŠVANTNEROVÁ, Jana. Dejiny Židovského múzea v Prešove. In *Poklady Židovského múzea v Prešove*. Bratislava: Židovské komunitné múzeum, 2019, p. 17. ISBN 9788096972098.

- 27 For more information on Jewish associations in Prešov in the interwar period, see: SZEGHY-GAYER, Veronika. Fragmenty spolkového života židovskej komunity v Prešove. In *Poklady Židovského múzea v Prešove III*. Bratislava: Neinvestičný fond židovského kultúrneho dedičstva – Menorah, 2021, pp. 153 – 175. ISBN 978-80-973651-1-9.
- 28 PEKÁR, Martin. Prešov 1938 – 1945: kapitoly z dejín mesta a jeho obyvateľov. In DOMENOVÁ, Marcela – PEKÁR, Martin (Eds.). *Pamätná kniha mesta Prešova III. (1938 – 1941)*. Prešov: Štátna vedecká knižnica v Prešove, 2011, pp. XVIII – XX. ISBN 9788085734942.
- 29 Already before October 1938 the self-governing bodies in Prešov had been dissolved several times. In the years 1919–1922 and also in 1927. See: SEDLÁK, ref. 17, pp. 117 – 118; PEKÁR, ref. 28, pp. XVII–XX. On the transfer of political power to the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in Prešov from the autumn of 1938, see more: PEKÁR – TOKÁROVÁ, ref. 17, pp. 144 – 157; PEKÁR, Martin. Replacement of Municipal Political Elite as a Tool for Seizing Power and Consolidating an Authoritarian Regime in Slovakia 1938–1940. In *The City and History*, 2020, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 98 – 100, 102 – 104. ISSN 1339-0163.

rest of Slovakia or beyond central regulations and decrees or official instructions from superior authorities. Regarding the mentioned specifics of local processes and local dynamics, the case of Prešov is very suitable for investigating the behaviour of Jews at the micro level of society.

Social mobility during the Holocaust³⁰

The first changes indicating a shift in the social (political) stratification of the society occurred, as was mentioned earlier, in connection with the loss of the political mandate of the Jewish members of the municipal assembly due to expulsion from the representative bodies after the banning of the relevant political parties in the fall of 1938. However, the increasing anti-Semitism after October 1938 also contributed to the decline of social status in the non-political sphere. Several legal norms directed against Jewish entrepreneurs were adopted and applied locally during this period, such as the Regulation for Sunday rest, which was adopted to restrict the business especially of Orthodox Jews³¹ and to some extent meant the social decline of part of the monitored group – merchants. Similarly, other anti-Jewish measures were implemented. For example, the removal of Eruv-wires in Prešov on the basis of the Regulation of the Land Office in Bratislava of 22 October 1938³² or the unprecedented deportations of the Jewish population from Slovak territory in November 1938, during which thousands of people were forcibly deported to the territory ceded to Hungary after the Vienna Award.³³ It can be assumed that although these measures or deportation did not directly affect the monitored members of the former Jewish

30 Members of the former elite who died or emigrated before 1939 were naturally excluded from the analysis – Dr Jozef Propper died in 1924 (SZE GHY-GAYER, Veronika. *Rodina Proppe-rovcov*. In *Poklady Židovského múzea v Prešove II*. Bratislava: Neinvestičný fond židovského kultúrneho dedičstva – Menorah, 2020, p. 85. ISBN 9788097365202); Dr Jozef Eger died in 1924 (Burials in the Presov Neolog [Liberal] Jewish Cemetery; the work is accessible on-line: <https://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/presov-n.txt>) [cit. 2021-08-12]; Dr Karol Ferbstein emigrated to Palestine in 1933 (AMIR, ref. 24, p. 79); Dr Zigmund Neuwirth died in 1937 (REINITZ, Salomon. *70 Jahre. 1871–1941 aut. orth. jüd. Kultusgemeinde in Prešov*. Prešov: Buchdruckerei M. Herman Klein, 1940, p. 101); Jozef Fischgrund died in 1938 (Burials in the Presov Orthodox Jewish Cemetery; the work is accessible on-line: <https://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/presov-o.txt>) [cit. 2021-08-12]; Herman Lichtig probably died or emigrated before 1939; Adolf Goldstein died sometime between 1939–1940.

31 NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Politika antisemitizmu a holokaust na Slovensku v rokoch 1938 – 1945*. Banská Bystrica: Múzeum SNP, 2016, p. 38. ISBN 9788089514403.

32 NIŽŇANSKÝ, ref. 31, p. 38.

33 More about deportations in November 1938 see for example: NIŽŇANSKÝ, ref. 31, pp. 40-46; or NIŽŇANSKÝ, Eduard. *Deportácie Židov v novembri 1938 zo Slovenska v hláseniach styčných dôstojníkov*. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 1998, vol. 7, pp. 259 – 284. ISSN 1338-7219.

elite, they clearly influenced the collective status of Jews as a minority, as well as the view of majority population of the town on their social position and the status of its representatives.

The significant intervention into the social status of the analysed group was the implementation of the first anti-Jewish legislative measures immediately after the establishment of the Slovak state, in particular, Government Decree no. 63/1939 Sl. z. of 18 April 1939 defining the term Jew. As Raul Hilberg notes, although the definition itself did not directly harm anyone, it had administrative continuity in further legislative steps,³⁴ on the basis of which the Jews were economically and socially isolated in the following phases. In the case of a group of lawyers, this was actually immediate. The second part of the mentioned decree limited the number of Jews in advocacy to 4% of the total number of members enrolled in the Bar Association,³⁵ which restricted the exercise of the legal profession in one of the dominant professional spheres of the Jewish population, as well as within the former elite. For some members, who represented the leading figures of the Prešov Bar Association, it meant a ban on practicing law and exclusion from the Bar Association, and only two of the monitored persons, Dr Aladár Böhm and Dr Július Spira, remained to practice law after 1939.³⁶ In the case of the second dominant profession – merchants (respectively entrepreneurs and tradesmen), the systematic process of excluding Jews from economic life launched in March 1939 intervened in the exercise of their profession in the form of the revocation of trade licenses,³⁷ the appointment of so-called trustees to Jewish businesses and companies,³⁸ voluntary and later forced Aryanization and finally the liquidation of Jewish corporate property.³⁹ From March 1939, trustees were installed in all Jewish enterprises within the analysed group.⁴⁰ During the year 1941, they were

34 HILBERG, ref. 12, p. 54.

35 According to § 9 of Government Decree no. 63/1939 Sl. z. of 18 April 1939 there was a ban on holding the office of notary public for Jews and § 10 stipulated that a Jew may be the editor of only a Jewish magazine.

36 *Soznam členov advokátskych komôr na Slovensku*. Martin: Knihtlačiarsky účasť. spolok, 1940 – 1942, p. 27 and 23.

37 Government Decree no. 40/1939 Sl. z. of 30 March 1939 and no. 169/1939 Sl. z. of 11 July 1939.

38 Government Decree no. 19/1939 Sl. z. of 15 March 1939 and no. 137/1939 Sl. z. of 20 June 1939. The Government decree no. 244/1940 Sl. z. of 30 November 1940 introduced adjustments in the appointment of the trustees. Further adjustments were made on the basis of Government Decree no. 327/1939 Sl. z. of 21 December 1939.

39 Government Decree no. 169/1939 Sl. z. of 11 July 1939; Law no. 113/1940 Sl. z. of 25 April 1940 (so-called First Aryanization Law); Government Decree no. 256/1940 Sl. z. of 11 October 1940 and Decree no. 303/1940 Sl. z. of 30 November 1940 (so-called Second Aryanization Law).

40 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 17, inv. no. 207, sign. 920a/1939 prez.; box 19, inv. no. 208, sign.

gradually liquidated⁴¹ (in addition to the trade in beer of Samuel Schnitzer who received an exemption by County Office of the Šariš-Zemplín County in 1941 and consent to keep the company under temporary administration)⁴² which of course meant the loss of the main source of income. In addition, from April 1939 according to Government Decree no. 74/1939 Sl. z. of 24 April 1939 Jews were excluded from public service. As a result, their memberships of public corporations (Business Alliance, business boards, etc.) were revoked and their social status markedly declined.

The decline in the economic position of members of the former elite as a result of restrictions on the exercise of their professions and the Aryanization of the corporate property was intensified by the process of forced expropriation of other forms of ownership – Jewish housing property, forests and large estates, and bank deposits (and valuables).⁴³ Representatives of this social group belonged to the wealthier residents of the town. Actually, in the case of several of them, the strong economic positions in the town and involvement in direct municipal policy-making were reflected in their penetration among the richest inhabitants of Prešov. In addition to corporate property, which some of them owned (merchants), the vast majority owned housing property including courtyards or gardens,⁴⁴ possibly further supplemented by the ownership of agricultural land and part of the forest.⁴⁵ By the realization of the Aryanization of housing property – which was intended to deprive Jews of property and at the same time resolve the acute problem of lack of accommodation in the town – the

1089/1940 prez.; box 85, inv. no. 229, sign. 1065/1940 adm.

- 41 Ing. Eugen Bárkány was the owner of a construction company (the liquidation in: *Úradné noviny*, 1941 (19. 7.), no. 37, p. 1147), Henrich Danciger was a co-owner of a book printing company; Adolf Goldstein owned a store with lime and building materials (*Úradné noviny*, 1941 (22. 2.), no. 9, p. 305), Ľudovít Preisz owned a rum and liqueur company (*Úradné noviny*, 1941 (16. 8.), no. 45, p. 1384), Samuel Reiner owned a general store (*Úradné noviny*, 1941 (8. 2.), no. 7, p. 200; the ban on inn and tap trades also affected his wife); Ľudovít Szánto owned a construction company (*Úradné noviny*, 1941 (22. 2.), no. 9, p. 279) and quarry; Samuel Schnitzer was a co-owner of a trade in mineral oil and a trade in beer; Leopold Tydor owned a trade in substances (*Úradné noviny*, 1941 (8. 3.), no. 11, p. 413) and Cudek Hersch Weisz was the owner of a bakery (*Úradné noviny*, 1941 (12. 7.), no. 36, p. 1106).
- 42 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 20, inv. no. 209, sign. 330/1941 prez., no. 323/II/1941 prez.
- 43 The expropriation of bank deposits and valuables was determined by Government Decree no. 271/1940 Sl. z. of 18 October 1940; Decree no. 272/1940 Sl. z. of 25 October 1940 and by Government Decree no. 293/1940 Sl. z. of 8 November 1940.
- 44 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 98, inv. no. 231, sign. 6794/1942.
- 45 For example: Jozef Fischgrund, Ľudovít Szánto, Dr Aladár Böhm owned agricultural land. Dr Aladár Böhm was also a co-owner of 40,63 ha of forest, Dr Alex Zahler was owner of agricultural land and 1,24 ha of forests and Ľudovít Szánto owned 0,96 ha of forests. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 81, inv. no. 228, sign. 12500/1939; box 90, inv. no. 230, sign. 46/1941, no. 57.511 – XII. oddel.1940.

Jews lost ownership of this property. As in the case of the Aryanization process of corporate property, temporary building administrators were initially appointed to their housing property⁴⁶, authorized to deprive Jews of the dwelling (including the owners themselves).⁴⁷ Subsequently, after 1 November 1941, the Jewish housing property was transferred to state ownership and in 1944 gradually sold off to applicants.⁴⁸ First, by the end of 1940, a temporary administration covered Jewish houses, located almost exclusively on Hlinkova Street.⁴⁹ In 1941, under the baton of the District Office in Prešov, temporary building administrators were also appointed in other localities of Prešov, above all in a small central part of the town (later also on the outskirts of Prešov).⁵⁰ In connection with this, an unprecedented systematic process of the involuntary eviction of Jews from houses and apartments in these selected areas of the town took place. After the issuing of Regulation no. 258/1940 Úrad. nov. by the Central Economic Office, the eviction of Jews from the street named after Andrej Hlinka in Prešov was ordered by the end of December 1940.⁵¹ However, in the case of the town of Prešov, the initiative of the local authorities went beyond the scope of this regulation and the defined zones, from which the Jews were forcibly evicted, were extended to other streets (Slovenská Street, Štefánikova Street) and the ban of living covered other streets in the narrower and wider centre of the town.⁵² It was the houses on the main street (Hlinkova Street)⁵³ and in the most lucrative parts of the town in the narrow centre (Pittsburgh Agreement Square,⁵⁴ Sabinovská Street, Levočská

46 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 17, inv. no. 207, sign. 920b/1939; box 97, inv. no. 232, sign. 54/1942; box 98, inv. no. 231, sign. 6794/1942.

47 According to Law no. 257/1940 Sl. z. of 11 October 1940.

48 Regulation of the Slovak state Government no. 238/1941 Sl. z. of 30 October 1941. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 95, inv. no. 231, Zoznamy domov v bývalom vlastníctve Židov podľa ulíc – Prešov B–H; box 96, inv. no. 231, Zoznamy domov v bývalom vlastníctve Židov podľa ulíc – Prešov J–Š; box 97, inv. no. 231, Zoznamy domov v bývalom vlastníctve Židov podľa ulíc – Prešov Š–Z.

49 First, Central Economic Office imposed an interim building administration on a total of 32 Jewish houses, of which 31 on Hlinkova Street and one on Slovenská Street. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 17, inv. no. 207, sign. 920b/1939.

50 In January 1942, an interim building administration was imposed on 197 Jewish houses in Prešov. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 98, inv. no. 231, sign. 6794/1942.

51 According to § 2 of Central Economic Office's Regulation no. 258/1940 Úrad. nov. of 28 November 1940. Later the involuntary eviction of Jews from the streets named after Andrej Hlinka and Adolf Hitler was extended to all towns and villages in Slovakia. See: Central Economic Office's Regulation no. 267/1940 Úrad. nov. of 14 December 1940.

52 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 97, inv. no. 231, sign. 912/1942, Vyhláška Okresného úradu v Prešove no. 912/42 z 30.1.1942.

53 In the interwar period named Masarykova.

54 In the interwar period named Trhovisko.

Street) that were owned or inhabited by members of analysed group.⁵⁵ As a result of the established ban, Jewish members of the elite living on Hlinkova Street at the time had to relocate mostly to the periphery of the town. After the forced eviction of the Jews, only four members of the former elite remained living on Hlinkova Street after 1941: Artúr Spányi,⁵⁶ Dr Aladár Böhm, Henrich Danciger and Dr Július Spira.⁵⁷ Despite the ban, Ľudovít Preisz also managed to stay in Sabinovská Street until 1944.⁵⁸ The obligation to change residence also affected Ing. Eugen Bárkány,⁵⁹ who did not live on Hlinkova Street, or on a street in the narrowest centre of the town, but who nevertheless in 1941 was forced to leave his villa on Francisciho Street and rent a house in a more remote part of the town.⁶⁰

It must be emphasized that the placement of temporary building administrators in Jewish housing property, as well as the trustees to the Jewish corporate property, opened up space for upward social mobility for the other social group of the population, gentiles. The position of the trustee or temporary building administrator was a prestigious and highly beneficial post, from which approved applicants could personally benefit socially and especially economically, as it provided a regular financial income. The temporary administration became a real opportunity for social climbing, especially for the members and sympathizers of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, Hlinka Guard or Deutsche Partei. They often benefited from their personal contacts and protectionism for opportunistic reasons, which accompanied the entire nomination process.⁶¹

55 SPÁNYI, Artúr. *Adresár mesta Prešova a Prešovského okresu*. Prešov: Vydaný kníhtlačiarňou Minerva Prešov, 1931, 304 p.

56 For more on Artúr Spányi in the interwar period see: GAYER, Veronika. Spányi Artúr és az „eperjesi közeposztály“ a két világháború között. In *Regio: Kisebbség Kultúra Politika Társadalom*, 2015, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 109 – 135. ISSN 0865-557X.

57 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 98, inv. no. 231, sign. 6131/1942 adm., Súpis Židov – Zoznam B, notárstvo Prešov; Súpis Židov – Zoznam C.

58 ŠA PO, f. Policajné riaditeľstvo v Prešove 1938 – 1944 [Police Directorate in Prešov, 1938–1944] (hereinafter PR PO), box 6, inv. no. 26, cat. no. 35, Zoznam Židov v Prešove ku dňu 1.–2.2.1944.

59 For more on Ing. Eugen Bárkány see: BORSKÝ, Maroš – ŠVANTNEROVÁ, Jana et al. *Eugen Bárkány: Medzi Prešovom a Bratislavou*. Bratislava: Neinvestičný fond židovského kultúrneho dedičstva – Menorah, 2018, 215 p. ISBN 9788096972081.

60 With the Farkaš family, he rented the summer villa behind Torysa. See: PRIATKOVÁ, Adriana. Inžinier Eugen Bárkány – projektant a staviteľ. In *Poklady Židovského múzea v Prešove I*. Bratislava: Židovské komunitné múzeum, 2019, p. 40. ISBN 9788096972098.

61 See for example: HLAVINKA, Ján. Korupcia v procese arizácie podnikového majetku. In *Forum Historiae*, 2011, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 113 – 134. ISSN 1337-6861. (the work is accessible on-line: <https://www.forumhistoriae.sk/sk/clanok/korupcia-v-procese-arizacie-podnikove-ho-majetku> [cit. 2021-08-12]). In connection with the Jewish representatives of the Prešov

Similarly, temporary supervision was established of Jewish forests and large estates.⁶² As early as 1939, an inventory of all Jewish agricultural real estate was made, and gradually the Jews lost the right to actively dispose of their property;⁶³ subsequently, the agricultural property of the Jews was to be gradually bought by the State Land Office.⁶⁴ By the end of 1941, members of the Jewish elite were as a result of state policy deprived of all their property and lost their financial incomes, which accelerated the whole process of downward social mobility.

As well as other Jews in the town, members of the former elite had to face other forms of anti-Jewish measures, which, in a legislative way, contributed to a dramatic deterioration of social status and living standards. After the State Security Headquarters granted the authorization to carry out house searches of persons of Czechoslovak attitudes or suspects of anti-state activities on 14 September 1940,⁶⁵ Jewish households, in particular, became the target of police raids aimed at controlling the illegal possession of money and the collection of food. Detainees in such raids were, for example, Ing. Eugen Bárkány, Dr Július Spira and Ľudovít Preisz.⁶⁶ In February 1943, the State Security Headquarters issued an order to carry out systematic house searches of Jews, regardless of whether they held an exemption.⁶⁷ Following the issuance of other ordinances of a local character, the Jews were expelled from the public space (restricting the free movement of Jews within public parks, markets, orchards, cafes, cinemas,

municipal elite, among members and supporters of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party benefiting from the Aryanization, were included for example: Štefan Sabol (secretary of the town) and Bartolomej Germuška (hospital administrator), relatives of important representatives of the regime in Prešov (of Anton Sabol Palko and Andrej Germuška) or František Očkay (the official at the District Office of Prešov) who repeatedly became trustees in Jewish companies and temporary administrators of Jewish household property. See: ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 98, inv. no. 231, sign. 6794/1942.

- 62 Government decree no. 39/1939 Sl. z. of 30 March 1939. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 18, inv. no. 208, sign. 403/1940.
- 63 Government decree no. 147/1939 Sl. z. of 21 June 1939. The decree was later followed by Government Decree no. 46/1940 Sl. z. of 22 February 1940.
- 64 Decree with the power of law no. 93/1941 Sl. z. of 19 May 1941 the whole process of the Aryanization of agricultural real estate was adjusted.
- 65 ŠA PO, f. Odbočka Ústredne štátnej bezpečnosti pri Policajnom riaditeľstve v Prešove, 1938–1945 [State Security Headquarter's Branch at the Police Directorate in Prešov, 1938–1945] (hereinafter ÚŠBO-P), box 26, Materiálové spisy 49/19, no. 1000. prez/1940.
- 66 ŠA PO, f. PR PO, box 6, inv. no. 26, cat. no. 9, Služobné hlásenia ÚŠB; box 6, inv. no. 26, cat. no. 10, Zápisnice – rozsudky. For example the investigation of political confidence of Ing. Eugen Löwy see: ŠA PO, f. Šarišsko-zemplínska župa, 1940 – 1945 [Šariš-Zemplín County, 1940–1945] (hereinafter ŠZŽ), Štátnobezpečnostné oddelenie, 1940 – 1944 [State security department, 1940–1944] (hereinafter odd. ŠB), box. 109, sign. 608/40 ŠB.
- 67 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 25, inv. no. 211, sign. 643/1943.

spas and sports facilities or establishing sections in which Jews were forbidden to move)⁶⁸ and they were forbidden to meet in private apartments,⁶⁹ their driving licenses were revoked⁷⁰ or, for example, they were ostracized after the introduction of the obligation to wear Jewish designation, which was implemented in the Šariš-Zemplín County many months earlier than in the rest of the Slovak territory.⁷¹ The downward social mobility of the research subjects culminated in the first wave of the deportation of the Jewish population, which started in spring 1942. There were only two ways to avoid deportation (to some extent also other forms of anti-Jewish measures): either escape (hiding) or the use of the legal means of obtaining the status of a protected person through an exemption. According to Yehuda Bauer, the reactions of Jews could have been determined by several factors or a combination of factors, for example by the attitude of the local population to the genocide, the nature of the occupying regime, and the traditions of victims' communal leadership.⁷² The degree of anti-Semitism in the country and anti-Jewish regulations or the importance of norms and social ties certainly could be included in the decision. At the local level, the position of the Jewish community in the town in the pre-Holocaust period and the relationship to the non-Jewish population undoubtedly played an important role. Apart from all the determinants, membership in the former elite might have provided certain

68 For example, according to the Regulation of the County Office of the Šariš-Zemplín County no. 20/1941 Úrad. nov. of 31 December 1940 or the Regulation no. 100/1941 Úrad. nov. of 1 March 1941.

69 During the raid, Dr Michal Gottlieb along with other people was detained in the apartment of Dr Julius Spira on 20 October 1941. ŠA PO, f. PR PO, box 6, inv. no. 26, cat. no. 22, sign. 6988/41 prez.

70 The driver's license was also revoked to Ing. Eugen Bárkány. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 19, inv. no. 208, sign. 2058/1940 prez.

71 By the issuing of the special Regulation of the Šariš-Zemplín County Office no. 144/1941 Úrad. nov. of 31 March 1941. See more: KAMENEC, Ivan. *Po stopách tragédie*. Bratislava: Archa, 1991, p. 121. ISBN 8071150150. For more details on the local aspect and specifics of anti-Jewish policy in the Šariš-Zemplín County, see for example: TOKÁROVÁ, Zuzana. Represívne zásahy proti židovským obyvateľom v Prešove v rokoch 1939 – 1942. In *Dejiny*, 2014, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 50 – 66. ISSN 1337-0707; or works of Ján Hlavinka: HLAVINKA, Ján. Židovská komunita v Humennom v rokoch 1918 – 1945. In BELEJ, Milan – HLAVINKA, Ján – LEVICKÝ, Juraj. *Dejiny židovskej komunity v Humennom*. Humenné: ADIN, s.r.o., 2013, pp. 30 – 61. ISBN 9788089540389; HLAVINKA, Ján. *Židovská komunita v okrese Medzilaborce v rokoch 1938 – 1945*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2007, 281 p. ISBN 978-80-969296-8-9; HLAVINKA, Ján. *Príprava a priebeh deportácií Židov na území Šariško-zemplínskej župy v roku 1942*. In SOKOLOVIČ, Peter (Ed.). *Slovenská republika 1939 – 1945 očami mladých historikov. Zv. 7. Perzekúcie na Slovensku v rokoch 1938 – 1945*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2008, pp. 361 – 388. ISBN 978-80-89335-08-4.

72 FINKEL, Evgeny. *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival During the Holocaust*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, p. 8. ISBN 978-0-691-17257-6.

benefits in both cases. Better and more diverse social contacts could have helped obtain false documents for escape and a work permit/economic exemption that could have provided short-term or long-term protection to them and their family members from deportation and a better opportunity to survive.

The predominant response among members of the monitored social group to the adopted anti-Jewish legislative acts was to adapt to the growing seriousness of anti-Jewish measures. The vast majority of elite members examined in this study relied on survival by using legal methods of protection offered by the bureaucratic system in granting exemptions. Until spring 1942, through collective applications or individually, they asked for work permits/exemptions⁷³ granted to almost everyone. These were mainly economic exemptions granted by the Ministry of Economy related to employment in economically important companies (Henrich Danciger, Jakub Golberger, Ludovít Preisz, Samuel Schnitzer, Artúr Spányi, Ludovít Szánto, Dr Alex Zahler, Dr Aladár Böhm).⁷⁴ In two cases the exemption protected them as a family relative of an economic exemption holder (Samuel Reiner as the father of Alica Reinerová⁷⁵ and Leopold Tydor the father of Maximilián Tydor)⁷⁶, lawyer Dr Julius Spira were granted a yellow ID card issued by the Ministry of the Interior⁷⁷ and in one case an exemption was received resulting from timely conversion before 14 March 1939 (Artúr Spányi – exemption granted in 1943)⁷⁸ and from a mixed marriage with an Aryan (Ing. Eugen Löwy).⁷⁹

73 ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 17, inv. no. 207, sign. 1949/1939; box 81, inv. no. 228, sign. 12500/1939; box 99, inv. no. 231, sign. 9280/1942 adm.; box 102, inv. no. 231, sign. 34552/1942; sign. 34949/1942; box 24, inv. no. 210, sign. 1976/1942, box. 24, inv. no. 210, sign. 2147/1942.

74 Slovenský národný archív [the Slovak National Archive] (hereinafter SNA), f. Ministerstvo vnútra, 1938–1945 [Ministry of Interior, 1938–1945] (hereinafter MV), box 222a, sign. 14, Sústredovanie Židov – výnimky; box 6, cat. no. 33, Zoznam Židov skutočne sa nachádzajúcich v Prešove a Humennom; box 250, sign. 14, Súpis Židov v Prešove zo dňa 2.9.1942; box 413, sign. 14, Zoznam Židov – rozhodnutia ministerstva hospodárstva; box 417, sign. 14, Zoznam Židov – výnimky, rozhodnutie ministerstva hospodárstva z apríla 1943.

75 At first, Samuel Reiner was the holder of the exception as a support officer at the district branch of the Central Jewish Office in Prešov, later, he was protected by the exception as a relative. ŠA PO, f. PR PO, box 6, inv. no. 26, cat. no. 24, Zoznam funkcionárov a zamestnancov okr. odb. Ústredne Židov v Prešove. SNA, f. MV, box 222a, sign. 14, Sústredovanie Židov – výnimky.

76 SNA, f. MV, box 222a, sign., 14, sign. 2211/42, Sústredovanie Židov – výnimky.

77 SNA, f. MV, box 222a, sign., 14, Sústredovanie Židov – výnimky. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 23, inv. no. 210, sign. 1194/1942 adm., Židia – žlté legitimácie.

78 SNA, f. MV, box 413, sign., 14, Sústredovanie Židov – výnimky. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 23, inv. no. 210, Zoznamy Židov ponechaných v hospodárskom živote – pokrstení pred 14.3.1939.

79 SNA, f. MV, box 250, sign., 14, Spis Židov v Prešove – dňa 3.9.1942; box 413, sign., 14,

After the start of the deportation from the Slovak territory in late March 1942, the escape was chosen only in two cases among the subjects surveyed. Ing. Eugen Bárkány fled with his wife from Prešov to Budapest in April 1942 and thanks to false documents, they managed to hide until the end of the war.⁸⁰ Dr Mór Rosenberg escaped deportation from the Slovak state by fleeing to Budapest in 1942. However, as a result of the radicalization of the regime in Hungary after the taking of power by the Hungarian Nazi Arrow Cross Party headed by Ferenc Szálasi in 1944, he was killed by its members.⁸¹ During the first wave of deportations from March to October 1942, five members of the former Prešov Jewish elite (Dr Michal Gottlieb, Dr Artúr Maibaum, Samuel Reiner, Cudek Hersch Weisz and Dr Alex Zahler) were deported from Slovakia in the transport on 13 May 1942 to the Lublin region⁸², where they perished.⁸³ Two of them, Samuel Reiner and Dr Alex Zahler, were deported despite being exemption holders.⁸⁴

The downward social mobility of the remaining members of the group, who were protected in the first wave of deportations from March to October 1942 thanks to the exemptions granted, finally culminated in the dislocation process in May 1944 – when as a result of the ordered transfer of the rest of the Jewish population from Šariš-Zemplín County, they were forced to move to the western part of the Slovak territory (during 12–15 May 1944, relocated from Prešov were Henrich Danciger, Jakub Goldberger, Ľudovít Preisz, Artúr Spányi and Leopold Tydor),⁸⁵ and in an effort to save bare life during the direct German occupation

Zoznamy Židov ponechaných v hospodárskom živote – Miešané manželstvá.

80 PRIATKOVÁ, ref. 60, p. 41.

81 See: ATLASZ, Miklós. *Az élet forrásai: egy orvos életrajza: orvosi, művészettörténeti és útijegyzetek*. Tel-Aviv: Lino-tur Ny., 1968, p. 32. Thanks to Veronika Szeghy-Gayer for the information.

82 SNA, f. MV, box 209, sign. 14, Transport č. 28, 13. 5. 1942 Prešov – Lublin. See also: Yad Vashem, Transportná listina: Prešov zo dňa 13. 5. 1942; Prešov, II. transport 1080 osoby – 13. 5. 1942. (the work is accessible on-line: <https://documents.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&search=global&strSearch=Presov&GridItemId=3687945>). [cit. 2021-08-29].

83 Zoznam obetí holocaustu z Prešova a okolia. In KÓNYA, Peter – LANDA, Dezider. *Stručné dejiny prešovských Židov*. Prešov: Podnik výpočtovej techniky Bratislava, a.s. divízia Prešov, 1995, p. 14, 26, 31, 41, 43. ISBN 8096725343.

84 After 1942, traces of Dr Aladár Böhm are lost. It is not clear whether he escaped (hid) or was deported. He did not survive the Holocaust after all. Dr Július Spira was detained in June 1942 by order of the 14th Department of the Interior Ministry with an order to deliver to an internment camp in Ilava. Even he did not survive the Holocaust. ŠA PO, f. OÚ PO, box 23, inv. no. 210, sign. 1965/1942. See: Zoznam obetí holocaustu z Prešova a okolia, ref. 83, p. 6, 36.

85 ŠA PO, f. PR PO, box 6, inv. no. 26, cat. no. 33, Zoznam Židov odsunutých zo Šarišsko-zemplínskej župy. SNA, f. MV, box 583, sign., 14, no. 1119/44-ÚŠBO.

of Slovakia from the autumn of 1944, when any exemptions granted ceased to apply, and the saving of lives depended on luck or the help of the Gentiles. Anti-Jewish actions undertaken by German security forces in Slovakia in cooperation with the Hlinka Guard finally meant the killing or the deportation of most of the monitored persons to concentration and extermination camps outside Slovakia, where they perished.⁸⁶ Of the analysed group, just a few members of the Prešov interwar political elite survived the Holocaust – Ing. Eugen Bárkány, who survived thanks to fleeing to Budapest,⁸⁷ Ľudovít Szánto, who hid in Slovakia with the help of Gentiles,⁸⁸ and Samuel Schnitzer, whose fate after 1942 remains unknown but who survived the Holocaust.⁸⁹ Similarly unknown is the fate of Ing. Eugen Löwy after March 1944,⁹⁰ and it is not clear whether he survived the Holocaust.

Conclusion

As analysis of local processes in Prešov has shown, in the case of Jewish members of the interwar political elite, we cannot speak of a maintenance of social status. The change of regime in October 1938 and the subsequent systematic implementation of anti-Jewish policy in Slovakia in 1939–1945 resulted in a radical decline in their social status. It turned out that regardless of their previous social status, members of an until then the influential social group were affected to the same extent by anti-Jewish policies. Not even several years of involvement in municipal policy would create more advantageous conditions to avert the negative effects of anti-Jewish policy. It was an even more pronounced economic and social downturn due to previous property conditions in their case. The vertical downward social mobility of members of the former elite, which accompanied the whole process of anti-Jewish policy application, was based on a wider complex of factors, political (definition of the term Jew) and economic (the cessation of financial income from employment, deprivation of property etc.), and finally culminated in a struggle for survival.

The hypothesis adduced in the theoretical-methodological part of this paper was not confirmed. The membership in the former elite did not mean a better

86 Zoznam obetí holocaustu z Prešova, ref. 83, p. 6, 13, 30, 36, 37, 39.

87 PRIATKOVÁ, ref. 60, p. 41. Prešovskí Židia, ktorí prežili nacistickú genocídu. In LANDA, Dezider – KÓNYA, Peter. *Pietne odhalenie Pamätníka martýrov v Prešove 18. augusta 1991*. Prešov: Židovská náboženská obec v Prešove, 1992, p. 12.

88 PEKÁR, Martin. *Príbeh Juraja Szánta: Rozhovor o záchrancoch a obeti*. Košice: UPJŠ v Košiciach, 2018, pp. 100 – 101. ISBN 978-80-8152-583-4.

89 Prešovskí Židia, ktorí prežili nacistickú genocídu, ref. 87, p. 17.

90 ŠA PO, f. PR PO, box 6, inv. no. 26, cat. no. 36, Zoznam pokrstených Židov v Prešove ku dňu 1. marca 1944.

chance of survival. Although it is not possible to identify the motivations of behaviour and decisions, it turns out that involvement in municipal policy did not significantly affect them. The predominant response was the adaptation to deteriorating conditions and efforts to survive by obtaining protective status/exemption, which proved to be unsuccessful in the long run. Even prominent positions within the Jewish community before 1938 and other benefits associated with it, such as better income-related economic status and more diverse political and social contacts, failed to guarantee preferential status during the Slovak state and a higher chance of survival. The low survival rate within the analysed group signifies that possible personal acquaintances and social ties outside the local Jewish community failed, and survival of the Holocaust became more a matter of particular situation and accidental circumstances than a consequence of the use of advantaged position within the Jewish community before the Holocaust.

SOZIALER STATUS DER JÜDISCHEN POLITISCHEN ELITE DER ZWISCHENKRIEGSZEIT IN PREŠOV UND IHR EINFLUSS AUF DAS ÜBERLEBEN DES HOLOCAUST

ZUZANA TOKÁROVÁ

Nach der Machtergreifung durch die Slowakische Volkspartei Hlinkas im Oktober 1938 und nach dem Verbot jüdischer Parteien verloren die Mitglieder der politischen Elite jüdischer Herkunft in Prešov die Möglichkeit, an der Verwaltung der Stadt mitzuwirken. Als Angehörige einer verfolgten Minderheit mussten sie sich in den Folgejahren einer diskriminierenden antijüdischen Politik stellen und letztlich um die Rettung von Leben kämpfen. Trotz des früheren besseren sozialen Status, der sich aus der Beteiligung an der Kommunalpolitik in der Zwischenkriegszeit ergab und verbunden mit einem besseren wirtschaftlichen Status und vielfältigeren politischen und sozialen Kontakten war, konnten die prominenten Positionen innerhalb der jüdischen Gemeinde vor 1938 keine bessere Position oder eine höhere Überlebenschance während des Slowakischen Staates garantieren. Der Prozess systematischer Umsetzung der antijüdischen Politik in den Jahren 1939–1945 wurde von einer schnellen vertikalen sozialen Abwärtsmobilität von Mitgliedern der ehemaligen Elite begleitet, die auf einem breiteren Spektrum von Faktoren, insbesondere wirtschaftlichen, beruhte und schließlich in einem Kampf um Überleben gipfelte. Die vorherrschende Reaktion innerhalb dieser sozialen Gruppe – die Anpassung an sich verschlechternde Bedingungen und das Streben nach Überleben durch Erlangung eines Schutzstatus (sog. Ausnahme) – erwies sich als erfolglos.

Das Überleben des Holocaust wurde mehr Frage bestimmter Situation und zufälliger Umstände als ein Ergebnis der Nutzung einflussreicher Position innerhalb der jüdischen Gemeinde vor dem Holocaust.

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