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The Story of Andrej Horn

A Case Study in the Microhistory of the Holocaust

Abstract

This article examines the fate of Andrej Horn, a thirty-seven-year-old Jewish businessman from Velká Bytča, Slovakia, who on 21 February 1942 petitioned Slovakia's President Jozef Tiso for an exemption from antisemitic legislation. It discusses how entreaties reflect Jewish victimisation during the Holocaust and some of the complex social dynamics and governmental processes that contributed to the deportation of nearly 58,000 Jews under the auspices of the Slovak authorities in 1942. Using a victim-centric, microhistorical approach, the communications about Andrej Horn in all of the known files in Slovak archives were placed in chronological order in order to trace his experiences during the Holocaust within their historical context. This method displays how some Jews in Slovakia attempted to navigate their precarious predicament, various aspects of minority (Jewish)-majority (Christian) interactions, and some of the local-level persecutory dynamics that contributed to the tragic denouement of the Holocaust in Slovakia.

Introduction

Andrej Horn was born on 25 November 1905 in Velká Bytča. The town of 2,846 people¹ is roughly 200 kilometres northeast of the Slovak capital of Bratislava. The presence of Jews there is recorded as far back as 1727.² There were approximately 300 Jews living there at the outset of World War II.³ The synagogue, built in 1886, is an imposing structure close to the main square. Today, it stands abandoned in a state of disrepair.

Slovakia's President Jozef Tiso was also from Velká Bytča. His family could trace its origins there back to the sixteenth century.⁴ In a town of this size, the Horn and Tiso families may have known each other, or at least known of each other. However, Tiso was eighteen years older than Horn. He left Velká Bytča to attend high school in Žilina when he was eleven years old, before Horn was born, making it unlikely that the two men were acquainted personally.⁵

Horn had inherited his shares in Horn Brothers, which sold leather for use in making shoe soles domestically and abroad. The company had twenty-eight employees and exported to England, Hungary, Switzerland, the Protectorate of Bohemia

1 "Osudy slovenských Židov 1939–1945, Súpis Židov (1942), Zoznam obcí okresu Velká Bytča" [The Fates of Slovak Jews 1939–1945, Jewish Census (1942), Velká Bytča Region Directory], Ústav pamäti národa [National Memory Institute], accessed 15 July, 2023, <https://www.upn.gov.sk/projekty/supis-zidov/zoznam-obci?okres=608>.

2 Jaro Franek, "Bytča," [holocaust.cz](https://www.holocaust.cz/zdroje/clanky-z-roschodese/ros-chodes-2008/zari/bytca/), accessed 15 July 2023, <https://www.holocaust.cz/zdroje/clanky-z-roschodese/ros-chodes-2008/zari/bytca/>.

3 Ústav pamäti národa [National Memory Institute], Osudy slovenských Židov, accessed 26 July 2023, <https://www.upn.gov.sk/projekty/supis-zidov/zoznam-obci?okres=608>.

4 Milan S. Ďurica, *Jozef Tiso (1887–1947): Životopisný profil* [Jozef Tiso (1887–1947): Biographical Profile] (Bratislava: LÚČ, 2006), 25.

5 *Ibid.*, 28.

and Moravia, and Germany. Andrej Horn and his first cousin Ladislav Horn, a chemist, each owned 40 per cent of the company's shares and an "anonymous individual" owned the remaining 20 per cent. Horn Brothers was designated as strategically important by the Slovak military.⁶ On 21 February 1942, Horn petitioned Tiso for an exemption from anti-Jewish legislation. This article explores how the study of petitions from Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe can help contribute toward an integrated history of the Holocaust.

Literature

Petitions are an ideal scholarly resource about the Holocaust for three reasons. First, they represent an attempt at Jewish agency during the period, demonstrating that Jews were not entirely passive vis-à-vis their persecution. Second, the files exhibit an intersection of majority-minority perspectives thanks to the fact that the files' contents are hybrid in nature. Third, the system which the government used to process petitions reveals regime priorities concerning the desired contours of Slovak society. Wolf Gruner and Thomas Pegelow Kaplan aptly state that "petitions provide fresh insights into the difficult negotiations of persecuted populations that the kind of integrated histories of the Holocaust with multiple combined perspectives call for."⁷

However, there has been a tendency to underrate the usefulness of studying entreaties. In his 1961 study, Raul Hilberg commented that "in various forms, some more eloquent than others, the Jews appealed and petitioned wherever and whenever the threat of concentration and deportation struck them: in the Reich, in Poland, in Russia, in France, in the Balkan countries, and in Hungary. Everywhere the Jews pitted words against rifles, dialectics against force ... they lost."⁸ Dan Diner has contended that "Jewish petitioners ultimately wrote their entreaties 'for the garbage bin' of Nazi administrators."⁹ Recent research indicates that petitions were not uniformly unsuccessful and that governments devoted resources toward handling them. According to Ivan Kamenec, 95 per cent of the petitions from Jews in Slovakia to Tiso were rejected, indicating a five per cent success rate. He states that there may be as many as 20,000 letters concerning the "Jewish question" in the files of the *Kancelária prezidenta republiky* (Office of the President of the Republic, KPR) at the *Slovenský národný archív* (Slovak National Archive, SNA) in Bratislava,¹⁰ proving that entreaties were not uniformly discarded. Though Horn's entreaty was unsuccessful, which makes it more typical, the contents of his file indicate that the government devoted time and resources toward processing his application.

Resisting Persecution: Jews and their Petitions during the Holocaust, edited by Wolf Gruner and Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, is the only book published to date on Jewish Holocaust-era petitions. It features entreaties from Jews in Germany, Austria, an-

6 Slovak National Archive (SNA), Commission for Industry and Commerce – Department VII, Restitution Division, (PPO), b. 174, unnumbered file "Bratia Horn".

7 Wolf Gruner and Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, eds, *Resisting Persecution: Jews and their Petitions during the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020), 287n1.

8 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 663–664, as cited in Gruner and Kaplan, *Resisting Persecution*, 14.

9 Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, "Reinterpreting Jewish Petitioning Practices during the Shoah: Contestation, Transnational Space, and Survival", *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35, no. 4 (November 2021): 307.

10 Ivan Kamenec, *Tragédia Politika, Kňaza a Človeka: Dr. Jozef Tiso* [Tragedy as a Politician, Priest and Person: Dr. Jozef Tiso] (Bratislava: Premedia, 2021), 128.

nexed Bohemia-Moravia, and occupied France, Poland, Hungary, and Romania. Scholars in other countries have also contributed to this growing body of literature. Nevenko Bartulin explains that Jews who demonstrated that they possessed the moral characteristics of the Aryan community could receive honorary status in the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna država Hrvatska*, NDH). Filip Erdeljac has also written about petitions addressed to Croatia's Ministry of the Interior in which Jews "expressed their Croat national self-understandings, hoping to be deemed acceptable to the new state".¹¹ Rory Yeomans describes Serbian petitions for mercy in wartime Croatia, mainly asking to be permitted to leave the country.¹² László Csösz and Veronika Szeghy-Gayer studied 253 applications for Jewish housing submitted to the city of Košice¹³ by gentiles.¹⁴ In many cases, the rhetorical strategies described in these publications are similar. Petitioners co-opted perpetrator language, expressed patriotism, made emotional appeals, and highlighted their past military service, among other approaches. In Slovakia, one key difference was that some converts to Christianity incorporated religious overtones in their petitions, extolling their love for their new religion. Some also denigrated their Jewish origins in order to convince Tiso that their conversions were genuine, most likely because he was a Roman Catholic priest. One key difference between petitions from Jews in Slovakia and those of other countries is the lack of Jewish communal advocacy institutions in Slovakia, since those were banned.¹⁵

Requests from Jews in Slovakia for relief from persecution, submitted throughout the existence of the regime, are located in several ministerial fonds since there were eighteen different types of exemptions.¹⁶ However, the vast majority await systematic study and there is little literature overall about Jewish petitioning practices in the Slovak state. For example, Ivan Kamenec discusses letters from anguished Jewish parents begging for their children to be allowed to pursue their studies after the state expelled Jews from the country's schools in 1940.¹⁷ Tamara Janecová describes nine Jewish petitions written to the minister of national defence, Ferdinand Čatloš, requesting mercy from antisemitic legislation based on past military service.¹⁸ Hana Kubatová describes petitions from non-Jews in Slovakia who were pressing for advantages from the regime when it came to Jewish persecution.¹⁹ Approaching the

11 Filip Erdeljac, "Also a Mother to Us Jews: Jewish Croats in the Ustasha State", in *Collaboration in Eastern Europe during the Second World War and the Holocaust*, eds. Peter Black, Béla Rásky, and Marianne Windsperger (Vienna and Hamburg: New Academic Press, 2019), 230–238.

12 Rory Yeomans, "Between Terror and Self-Transformation: Petition Writing, Subjectivity and Survival under Ustasha Rule, 1941–1942" (Sofia: CAS Working Paper Series, 2016). See also Rory Yeomans, "In Search of Myself: Autobiography, Imposture, and Survival in Wartime Croatia", *S.I.M.O.N.* 4 (2017): 21–40.

13 Košice, now located in Slovakia, became part of Hungary after the First Vienna Award in 1938.

14 László Csösz and Veronika Szeghy Gayer, "Petitioners of Jewish Property in Košice: A Case Study of the Holocaust and Local Society in a Slovak-Hungarian Border Region", *The City and History* 10, no. 1 (2021): 75–101.

15 Issued on 30 September 1940, Government Decree 234/1940 banned all Jewish communal organisations with the exception of *Ústredňa Židov* [Jewish Council], which was established under the *Ústredný hospodársky úrad* [Central Economic Office, ÚHÚ] to serve as a *Judenrat*. See Katarina Hradská, *Holokaust na Slovensku 8. Ústredňa Židov 1940–1944, Dokumenty* [The Holocaust in Slovakia 8, The Jewish Center, 1940–1944, Documents] (Bratislava: Dokumentačné stredisko holokaustu, 2008).

16 James Mace Ward, "People Who Deserve It: Jozef Tiso and the Presidential Exemption", *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 4 (2002): 578.

17 In the fall of 1940, the Slovak government issued Decree 208/1940, which mandated that Jewish children could only attend Jewish elementary schools.

18 See Tamara Janecová, "Ludia píšú Čatlošovi (Prosbopisy Židov adresované Ministerstvu národnej obrany v rokoch 1939–1942)" [People Write to Čatloš: Petition Files from Jews Addressed to the Ministry of National Defense from 1939–1942], *Historický časopis* 69, no. 2 (February 2021): 345–369.

19 See Hana Kubatová, "Accusing and Demanding: Denunciations in Wartime Slovakia", *Lessons and Legacies XIII, New Approaches to an Integrated History of the Holocaust: Social History, Representation, Theory*, eds. Alexandra Garbarini and Paul Jaskot (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 92–111.

nation's highest authority was a route that some Jews selected most likely because it was perceived to afford the greatest amount of protection from persecution or deportation.

Though historians knew of the petitions to Tiso, the trove of entreaties in the KPR held in the SNA has not been examined previously on a stand-alone basis as a collection of rhetorical instruments that exemplify Jewish victimisation. Nina Paulovičová states that “the focal point in Slovakia’s historiography of the wartime era was the *image* of the Jew rather than the *agency*, i.e. voice, experiences and responses of the victims”.²⁰ This article, with its victim-centric focus on entreaties to Tiso for presidential exemptions, brings real-time Jewish lived experience into the literature and adds the Slovak case into emerging scholarship, both inside and outside of Slovakia.

The Presidential Exemption

On 9 September 1941, the Slovak government issued Decree 198/1941 on “The Legal Standing of Jews”, which became known as the “Jewish Code”. Paragraphs 255 and 256 of this harsh, 270-paragraph decree gave Tiso the power to bestow exemptions.²¹ The decree consolidated and strengthened earlier antisemitic legal norms and jettisoned the Jews’ few remaining civil and human rights. “Jewishness” was defined on the basis of racial criteria. Jews over the age of six were forced to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing. Among numerous other provisions, freedom of assembly and freedom of movement were forbidden for Jews, as was access to restaurants, parks, movie theatres, and other public spaces such as sporting events. Contact with “Aryans” and intermarriage were forbidden. Jews could not own drivers’ licenses, safe deposit boxes, typewriters, radios, telephones, photographic equipment, bicycles, antiques, or hunting and fishing gear. They were subject to searches in their homes and on the street, making them vulnerable to harassment without legal recourse.²²

Jews asked Tiso for permission to keep their small business, marry someone they loved, remain employed, or avoid wearing the yellow Star of David on their clothing, among other types of requests. Non-Jews also wrote to him about Jewish-related matters. Some requested redress when they were refused Jewish properties. Others wanted to support or oppose specific Jews. Public servants in mixed marriages also wrote to request permission to keep their positions.²³

James Mace Ward and Ivan Kamenec have assessed the presidential exemptions as part of their explorations into Tiso’s culpability for Slovakia’s role in the Holocaust. Ward concluded that Tiso issued 922 direct presidential exemptions that also benefited family members, bringing the number of beneficiaries, in his estimation,

20 Nina Paulovičová, “Mapping the Historiography of the Holocaust in Slovakia in the Past Decade (2008–2018): Focus on the Analytical Category of Victims”, *Judaica et Holocaustica* 2019 10, no. 1 (February 2020), 46–71.

21 For an English translation of the “Jewish Code”, see *Decree on the Legal Status of Jews (Documents)* (Bratislava: Museum of Jewish Culture, 2023).

22 See, for example, Michal Malatinský, “Ludské práva židovskej populácie Slovenska podľa Židovského kódexu a predkódexovej úpravy” [The Human Rights of the Jewish Population According to the Jewish Code and Pre-Code Measures], in *Protižidovské zákonodarstvo na Slovensku a v Európe*, ed. Martina Fiamová (Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2014), 221–239; Ivan Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie* [On the Trail of Tragedy] (Bratislava, Premedia, 2020), 125–131; Katarína Zavacká, “Viera alebo rasa. Dilemy tvorby prvých protizidovských noriem na Slovensku” [Faith or Race: Dilemmas in the Creation of Antisemitic Norms in Slovakia], *Historický časopis* 69, no. 4 (2021): 579–600; and Ladislav Lipscher, *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939–1945* [Jews in the Slovak State: 1939–1945] (Bratislava: Print-Servis, 1992), 91–98.

23 Paragraph 15 of the “Jewish Code” required the dismissal of public servants with Jewish spouses. This provision was later rescinded in the Evacuation Law of Jews, no. 68/1942, of 15 May 1942.

to 1,000 to 1,500.²⁴ Kamenec estimates that 5,000 to 6,000 Jews received exemptions, including family members.²⁵ Exemptions were usually granted because the Jewish applicant was irreplaceable in the state economy, not for humanitarian reasons. Recipients tended to be men near forty years of age at the height of their professional lives and with financial means. The majority lived in the western part of the country, as opposed to the more impoverished east. Ward estimated that 90 per cent of beneficiaries were converts²⁶ from Bratislava or northern Slovakia²⁷ and concluded that “Tiso saw the exemption as an honour to be earned, mainly through assimilation.”²⁸

Both scholars have written biographies of Tiso to trace his career and investigate the origins of his antisemitic leanings. Tiso had been exposed to anti-Jewish attitudes throughout his youth and, later, to Hungarian political Catholicism and antisemitism. Ward explains that “Tiso had paid little attention to Jews before 1918 and 1919, when he underwent a transformation that was startling, profound, and enduring.”²⁹ Kamenec also describes this time as a critical point in Tiso’s career as a priest and politician who saw the opportunity for self-realisation, possibly envisioning an avenue for introducing Catholicism into politics and public life.³⁰ Tiso mobilised antisemitism for political ends at a time when there were border instabilities and conflicts as various powers attempted to assert themselves in the wake of World War I. According to Ward:

The issue of Jews did not re-emerge for Tiso until 1938. Antisemitism strengthened Tiso’s claim to Slovak identity, which was constructed in opposition to Jews. There were three non-opportunistic motives for Tiso’s antisemitic attitudes: First, Tiso considered the Jewish Question to be embedded in the social question. Second, he associated Jews with liberalism, socialism, and radicalism. Finally, during the revolutionary period in 1918 and 1919, he felt the need to purge Jews from the body politic.³¹

Tiso’s hardened attitudes toward Jews did not bode well for those seeking his mercy in the Slovak state. However, the Jews in Slovakia saw in the exemption a potential path to leniency, which prompted an avalanche of desperate entreaties. The government needed a process for handling these incoming requests.

How KPR Processed Jewish Exemption Applications

Three outcomes were possible when Jews requested a presidential exemption from the “Jewish Code”: 1) outright rejection; 2) forwarding the petition to another government agency for processing; or 3) launching an investigation into the Jewish applicant to determine their suitability for the exemption. The KPR devised a ten-part questionnaire for these investigations, requesting the following information from the district office where the Jewish applicant resided: 1) if the applicant was being

24 Tiso’s apologists suggest a much higher range of 20,000 to 40,000 Jewish beneficiaries. The issue remains polarising in modern-day Slovakia. For information on those who inflate the number of beneficiaries. See Ward, “People Who Deserve It”, 593n1.

25 Kamenec, *Tragédia politika, knaza a človeka*, 128.

26 Ward, “People Who Deserve It”, 583.

27 Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 232.

28 Ward, “People Who Deserve It”, 586.

29 Ward, *Priest Politician, Collaborator*, 63.

30 See Ivan Kamenec, *Tragédia politika, knaza a človeka*, 34–35.

31 Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, 62–63.

truthful; 2) if the person and their family members were politically reliable; 3) the applicant's organisational affiliations; 4) whether the applicant led a proper life; 5) if the applicant had a proper marriage/family situation; 6) the language spoken at home; 7) the applicant's ethnicity; 8) whether the applicant was raising their children properly and which schools they attended, if applicable; 9) the applicant's income, assets, and real estate holdings; and 10) the sum the applicant should pay for the exemption if awarded. District offices then tasked the local police with obtaining the responses to the questionnaire.

A closer reading of the KPR questionnaire raises salient questions about its genuine nature and purpose. What did it mean when the government asked if the applicant was morally upright? Though not explicitly stated, one hypothesis might be that it referred to gambling or alcoholism, or whether the applicant attended church regularly. Questions about the language spoken at home and ethnicity can also be considered measures of an applicant's supposed reliability. If a language other than Slovak was spoken in the home, it might confirm the "otherness" that Jews were accused of in propaganda. The option for Jews to identify ethnically as Slovaks had been eliminated in the 1940 census, which rendered Jewishness and self-identification as a Slovak mutually incompatible.³² The question about organisational affiliations might also have referred to political loyalty. The questionnaire essentially gauged three basic characteristics about applicants and their families: moral character, loyalty, and financial standing. These queries positioned the regime as a moral and political authority with the requisite power to bestow admittance to the new order. They projected that the state valued apolitical individuals with a "proper" family situation, with no worrisome affiliations or troublesome relatives, and who were linguistically and ethnically compatible with the new regime. The process the government used for evaluating Jewish applications entailed a series of information-gathering activities involving local actors, which displays the intersection of Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants on the local level.

Minority-Majority Relations

Eduard Nižňanský states that earlier paradigms simplified the complex developments that characterised majority-minority relations in Slovakia. The prevalent view in much of the historiography was that "the Jews of Slovakia were the object of wrongdoing by a handful of domestic traitors".³³ He states that most authors have analysed this history by looking at three main groups: victims (Jews), murderers across the broader spectrum of the dominant political party, the *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana* (Hlinka Slovak People's Party, HSLŠ) ruling elite, and the silent majority of the Slovak population portrayed as a kind of background element, for example, as a "difficult-to-describe silent majority".³⁴ Nižňanský discovered an array of docu-

32 Branislav Šprocha and Pavol Tišliar, *Demografický obraz Slovenska v rokoch 1938–1945* [Demographic Picture of Slovakia, 1938–1945] (Bratislava: Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2016), 59.

33 Eduard Nižňanský, *Holokaust na Slovensku 7. Vzťah slovenskej majority a židovskej minority (náčrt problému). Dokumenty* [The Holocaust in Slovakia 7. The Relationship of the Slovak Majority and the Jewish Minority (Outline of the Problem), Documents] (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, Katedra všeobecných dejín FF UK, 2005), 89.

34 Eduard Nižňanský, "Arizácie v priesečníku vzťahov slovenskej majoritnej komunity a židovskej minority počas vojny" [Aryanisation at the Crossroads of the Relations between the Slovak Majority Community and the Jewish Minority during the War], in *Arizácie v regiónoch Slovenska*, eds. Eduard Nižňanský and Ján Hlavinka (Bratislava: Filozofická fakulta University Komenského v Bratislave, Katedra všeobecných dejín, Dokumentačné stredisko, Stimul, 2010), 151.

ments that display the complicity of officials in lower governmental positions, using the town of Topolčany as an example.³⁵ He quantified those willing to serve as temporary administrators and “Aryanisers” of Jewish property there and discusses the redistribution of radios confiscated from Jews, demonstrating the presence of local perpetrators.³⁶

This article builds on Nižňanský’s work by drilling down even more granularly. Instead of identifying antisemitic policies and their implementation, it focuses on the victim and identifies elements of the majority population, including local aggressors, in the victim’s entourage. It reinforces Nižňanský’s misgivings about oversimplification and responds to his call for analysing the social environment of the Holocaust on the level of the Jewish urban and rural communities. He stresses that analysing the Holocaust in Slovakia requires studying those individuals who participated in the changes in social stratification and the redistribution of economic resources to the majority population.³⁷

Research Method

Petition files involving “Aryanisation”,³⁸ the transfer of Jewish property to non-Jewish hands, reflect the dynamics Nižňanský describes. Studying them can help answer the question posed by Alexandra Garbarini and Paul B. Jaskot: “Where have perpetrators, victims, and bystanders come together in history?”³⁹ Entreaty files display such a nexus. Garbarini and Jaskot were describing the historiographical shift toward an integrated history of the Holocaust as exemplified by the work of Saul Friedländer.⁴⁰ Thomas Pegelow Kaplan makes a similar reference, positing that “Shoah-era petitions with their cacophony of voices epitomize key sources for the ongoing rewriting of histories of the Shoah along the lines of what Saul Friedländer conceptualized as ‘integrated history’”, and adds that “more precisely, it is the interaction between European Jews, officials of Nazi Germany, and collaborating regimes, as well as the broader Gentile populations that need to be studied at a micro level”.⁴¹ Placing Horn and his family in an imaginary circle on the centre of a page and drawing lines to other circles consisting of the local aggressors, onlookers, and supporters in Horn’s life illustrates how individual lives are socially constructed.

The first step in preparing this article was to seek and assemble all known archives containing information about Horn: 1) Andrej Horn’s presidential exemption application file;⁴² 2) his file in the Bytča Branch of the Žilina State Archive;⁴³ 3) the “Aryanisation” file for Horn Brothers;⁴⁴ 4) the file regarding the restitution of Horn’s

35 Nižňanský, “Arizácie v priesečníku vzťahov slovenskej majoritnej komunity a židovskej minority počas vojny”, 89.

36 Nižňanský, *Holokaust na Slovensku* 7, 94–96.

37 *Ibid.*, 89.

38 Please note that Slovaks were still considered Slavs, not “Aryans”, so terms related to “Aryanisation” are placed in quotation marks, even though this word entered Slovak parlance as a neologism.

39 Garbarini and Jaskot, *Lessons and Legacies XIII*, 4.

40 Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol 2: The Years of Extermination, 1939 to 1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

41 Pegelow Kaplan, “Reinterpreting Jewish Petitioning Practices during the Shoah”, 309.

42 SNA, KPR, b. 145, f. 2552/42.

43 Bytča Branch of the Žilina State Archive, ŠA ŽA, b. Okresný úrad Veľká Bytča, f. 448/1942, investigation for the application of Andrej Horn, former owner of a leather factory in Veľká Bytča, regarding an exemption from Government Decree 198/1941, Paragraph 255.

44 SNA, PPO, b. 174, unnumbered file “Bratia Horn”.

home to his widow in 1948;⁴⁵ 5) a memorandum about Horn in the Ministry of the Interior;⁴⁶ 6) a district police command file for Andrej Horn in the Bytča Branch of the Žilina State Archive;⁴⁷ 7) the entry for Horn Brothers in the Bytča business register;⁴⁸ and 8) two files at the National Memory Institute archive relating to Horn's confinement at the Ilava detention centre in 1938.⁴⁹

The next step was to place the communications in the files in chronological order to trace Horn's experiences. Horn himself was unaware of most of these communications, but the idea here was to analyse whether this documentation could potentially reveal a larger picture concerning pre-deportation antisemitic persecution in Slovakia, something which is at times overlooked in the historiography because of more violent subsequent events which garner greater attention. I also sought to observe the interconnection between Horn and his co-citizens that petition files make possible, since the study of perpetrators, observers, and helpers sometimes occurs in abstraction or in isolation from each other. Furthermore, I aimed to see what might emerge from such an analysis that builds on extant knowledge about the period.

The third step for this study was to integrate Horn's individual experiences into their historical context. It is not the purpose of this article to provide a comprehensive history of the Holocaust in Slovakia and describe every manner in which Horn experienced persecution. However, creating an integrated framework for the communications about Horn displays how the actions and prerogatives of the state manifested themselves on the ground, something which required complicity on the social level.

I selected Horn's case because his business was "Aryanised". It was primarily academic research into the Slovak appropriation of Jewish property that presented scholars with more pressing concerns about the Holocaust regarding the involvement of the majority society.⁵⁰ There was a multiplicity of responses to "Aryanisation".⁵¹ In the 1990s, Monika Vrzgulová interviewed non-Jewish eyewitnesses who testified about it in ambivalent terms. Some admitted that family members applied for Jewish businesses, emphasising that it was legal at the time.⁵² Nižňanský explains that majority-minority relations were diverse regarding "Aryanisation". He states that "there were positive examples where Slovaks stood up against 'Aryanisation,' instances where family members or simply decent Slovaks opted for fictitious 'Aryanisations,'⁵³ and that there were also 'Aryanisers' who themselves initiated the deportations of the previous Jewish business owners".⁵⁴

There were three main challenges in writing this article. The first is that there may be other files concerning Horn that remain undiscovered. The second is that some relevant police files were destroyed, making them unavailable for research. Third, we are reliant solely on archival documentation for the reconstruction of events. How-

45 SNA, PPO, b. 599, f. 7374.

46 SNA, Ministry of the Interior, MV, b. 561, f. 406-557-45/7663/42.

47 ŠA ŽA, Okresné četnícke veliteľstvo v Bytči, 1929–1944, b. 1, unnumbered file.

48 SA ŽA, Krajský súd v Trenčine 1872–1949, Obchodný register, f. B XVIII.

49 Ústav pamäti národa, ÚPN, Ústredňa štátnej bezpečnosti, ÚŠB, f. 209-872-1 and 29-744-4.

50 See Hana Kubátová and Ján Láničiek, *The Jew in the Czech and Slovak Imagination, 1938–1989* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 76.

51 See Hana Kubátová, *Nepokradeš! Náklady a postoje slovenské spoločnosti k židovské otázce, 1938–1945* [Thou Shalt Not Steal! Moods and Attitudes toward the Jewish Question in Slovak Society, 1939–1945] (Prague: Academia, 2013), and Kubátová and Láničiek, *The Jew in the Czech and Slovak Imagination*, 76–77.

52 Monika Vrzgulová, "Memories of the Holocaust, Slovak Bystanders", *Holocaust Studies* 23, no. 1–2 (August 2016): 7.

53 For example, non-Jewish friends, spouses, and other relatives who attempted to aid the Jewish business owner.

54 See Nižňanský, "Arizácie v priesečníku vzťahov", 150–171.

ever, there remains a sufficient corpus of material for this microhistorical analysis thanks to the inclusion of Horn's police report in the KPR file.

This article draws on methodological literature about the value that this type of research can bring to Holocaust historiography. Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szigartó explain that "microhistory consists of scale, a focus on smaller objects, and the conferment of agency on those who lived in the past as active individuals and conscious actors".⁵⁵ They quote Carlo Ginzburg, considered the "founding father of microhistory", who researched the social dynamics among millers and peasants in seventeenth-century Italy, and stated that this type of research is "the intensive historical investigation of a relatively well defined smaller object, most often a single event or a village community, a group of families, even an individual person".⁵⁶ Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman describe the use of microhistory in the study of the Holocaust as a "tectonic shift, though there is no single agreed-upon definition of this strand of historiographical research".⁵⁷ This article asks how this approach illuminates the unfolding of the Holocaust in Slovakia. How does Horn's case exemplify antisemitic persecution during the pre-deportation period of persecution in Slovakia? How did local dynamics affect his fate and what can we extrapolate from that knowledge?

Interestingly, the study of petitions cuts across differing definitions and categorisations, which offers rich possibilities for future research. Gruner and Pegelow Kaplan both contend that petitions are not ego documents because of the hybrid nature of the files, since they combine both Jewish and non-Jewish perspectives. The Dutch historian Jacques Presser was the first to speak of "ego documents" in 1958, and he eventually defined the term as "those documents in which an ego intentionally or unintentionally discloses, or hides itself". In the 1990s, the German historian Winfried Schulze, a specialist on the Early Modern period, expanded the category of "ego documents" to include all forms of voluntary, involuntary, and even forced self-the-matisation, as in, for example, court records, tax evaluations, or petitions for mercy.⁵⁸ This latter definition validates the use of the term "ego-documents" for petitions, with the exception of official memoranda and reports. Entreaties are also a form of testimony. They can comprise something akin to a legal brief, where Jewish petitioners in Slovakia presented their case to Tiso as one would appear before a judge, complete with supporting documents. They witness, in Horn's case, the range of reactions among Horn's co-citizens and to Jewish suffering in real time.

It is logical to conclude that the country's persecutory legal norms applied to Horn as they would have for anyone deemed Jewish by the regime. Having spent most of his formative and adult years living in a democracy, Horn's actions were likely governed by his being accustomed to the smooth functioning of a civil society. However, his life would become enmeshed with the rapid events that unfolded for Jews in Slovakia in the late 1930s.

55 Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szigartó, *What Is Microhistory: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 4–5.

56 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), as cited by Magnússon and Szigartó, *What Is Microhistory*, 4.

57 Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman, eds., *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 16.

58 Volker Depkat, "2.8 Ego-documents", *The Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, ed. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 262.

Historical Background

Despite the continued existence of latent antisemitism, there were no systematic legal measures aimed at Jews during the interwar period that encompassed Horn's youth. Though most political parties expressed antisemitic views in their political platforms to some degree, the Hlinka Slovak People's Party (HSLS) was the most adept at leveraging popular antisemitism.⁵⁹ The HSLS was founded in 1905 as the *Slovenská ľudová strana* (Slovak People's Party). In 1925, it changed its name to the *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana* (Hlinka Slovak People's Party) in honor of Andrej Hlinka, the Roman Catholic priest who had led the party until his death in 1938.⁶⁰

On 6 October 1938, Slovakia became part of a federalised Czecho-Slovakia, launching what is known as the Autonomy Period.⁶¹ As early as 1937, Hitler had revealed his plan to dismember Czechoslovakia when he met with the Hungarian foreign minister Kálmán Kánya.⁶² Without waiting for the final breakup of the country, the Germans encouraged the formation of an autonomous government in Bratislava.⁶³

Of a population of some 2,500,000, approximately 89,000 were Jews.⁶⁴ The new totalitarian regime discarded press freedoms and pluralism. For example, political prisoners, including communists, Czechs, and members of banned political parties, were taken during this period to Ilava to a hastily adapted prison. On 11 February 1939, *Gardista* (Guardman), the newspaper issued by the radical-fascist wing of the HSLS, emphasised that "radical, internationalist elements, Communists, and Jews should go to the Ilava camp since their ability to adapt to the new order cannot be guaranteed".⁶⁵

During the Autonomy Period, the open expression of antisemitism became socially acceptable.⁶⁶ Jews, their religious and educational institutions and property, became subject to open aggression. Anti-Jewish prejudice was not a new phenomenon in Slovakia and can be traced back to the Middle Ages and beyond.⁶⁷ After the

59 Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie* [On the Trail of Tragedy] (Bratislava: Archa, 1991), 16.

60 To learn more about HSLS, see, for example, Róbert Letz, Peter Mulík, and Alena Bartlová, eds., *Slovenská ľudová strana v dejinách 1905–1945* [The Slovak People's Party in History: 1905–1945] (Bratislava: Matica slovenská, 2006); James Ramon Felak, *At the Price of the Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1929–1938* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994); Yesayahu Jelínek, *The Parish Republic: The Hlinka Slovak People's Party 1939–1945* (New York: East European Quarterly, 1976).

61 See, for example, James Mace Ward, "The 1938 First Vienna Award and the Holocaust in Slovakia", *The Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 76–108, and Madeline Vadkerty, "Aspects of the Holocaust during the Slovak Autonomy Period (6 October 1938 to 14 March 1939)", *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 42, no. 1 (February 2022): 1–20.

62 Ward, "The 1938 First Vienna Award and the Holocaust in Slovakia", 78.

63 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2:766.

64 *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, 21 (2 June 1941), 244, from the census of 15 December 1940 which states 88,951 Jews, as cited by Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 2:769.

65 Ivan Kamenec, "Koncentračné, pracovné a zajatecké tábory na Slovensku 1938–1945" [Detainment, Work and Prisoner Camps in Slovakia, 1939–1945] *Tereziánske listy* 6 (1976), 17.

66 See Monika Vrzgulová, "Sociálna zmena v biografických naratívach obyvateľov dnešného Slovenska: Od Mníchova po 14. Marec, 1939" [Social Change in the Biographical Narratives of Inhabitants of Modern Day Slovakia: From Munich to March 1939], *Forum Historiae* 13, no. 1 (2019): 131–143.

67 See, among others, Miloslav Szabó, *Od slov k činom, Slovenské národné hnutie a antisemitizmus, 1875–1922* [From Words to Deeds, The Slovak National Movement and Anti-Semitism, 1875–1922] (Bratislava, Kalligram, 2014); Eduard Nižňanský and Milan Hrabovský, "Razizmus, antisemitizmus, holokaust (anticiganizmus)" [Racism, Antisemitism, Holocaust (Anti-Romanism)], vol. 22, *Acta historica Posoniensia* (Bratislava, Stimul, 2013); Miloslav Szabó, "Návrh teórie výskumu moderného antisemitizmu v historiografii a spoločenských vedách" [A Theoretical Outline of Research into Modern Antisemitism in the Historiography and Social Sciences], *Podoby antisemitizmu v Čechách a na Slovensku ve 20. a 21. storočí* [Forms of Antisemitism in the Czech Lands and Slovakia in the 20th and 21st Centuries], eds. Monika Vrzgulová and Hana Kubatová (Prague: Karolinum, 2017), 11–27; Martin Šmok, "Konstrukce židovského nepřítel – nic nového" [The Con-

Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867, Jews became equal citizens in the eyes of the state. The Hungarian parliament passed an Act of Emancipation for Jews that same year, mainly for the purpose of economic development, which turned out to be beneficial for the Jewish population. A year later, Hungary's Nationality Act was issued as part of an active policy of Magyarisation. However, it did not affect Jews, who were considered a religious group and not a national group. Jews thrived under these new conditions, but ethnic and national groups – such as the Slovaks – who were subjected to the new legislation possessed only limited linguistic and cultural rights, which engendered resentment toward Jews. Jews were portrayed in discourse as anti-Slovak Hungarian agents, usurers and exploiters, leftists, a corruptive influence on society, and Christ-killers.⁶⁸

As a result of the First Vienna Award, on 2 November 1938, Germany and Hungary forced Czecho-Slovakia to cede territory along Slovakia's southern border as well as South Carpathian Ruthenia to Hungary. Poland annexed land in the Špis and Orava regions of Slovakia on 1 December 1938.⁶⁹ Hungary annexed land that it had lost as a result of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. During the negotiations, Slovak politician Ferdinand Ďurčanský promised Hermann Göring, in the hope of minimising territorial attrition, that an independent Slovak nation would model its Jewish policies on the Nuremberg Laws.⁷⁰ However, his entreaty was fruitless. For Slovak nationalists, the loss of territory to Hungary represented a humiliating setback. A scapegoat was needed to deflect their discomfiture before their followers and the Jews were to shoulder the blame.

Harsh public rhetoric and propaganda vilified Jews.⁷¹ The transfer of Jewish wealth to non-Jewish hands became a rallying cry. The developments that took place during the Autonomy Period were to set the stage for the Holocaust in Slovakia. The first attempts to create anti-Jewish legislation, define who was a Jew, and establish a "Committee for the Solution of the Jewish Question", all took place precisely within this brief pre-state span.⁷² In addition, from 4 to 5 November 1938, thousands of Jews were transported to the no man's land in the newly drawn Slovak-Hungarian border. The expulsion was a fiasco and, over the coming weeks, the expelled Jews returned to Slovakia.

On 13 March 1939, Adolf Hitler met with Tiso in Berlin and told him to separate Slovakia from Czecho-Slovakia or the Slovak lands would be divided up among Hungary, Poland, and the rest of Czecho-Slovakia. On 14 March 1939, Slovakia established the nominally independent Slovak Republic. The following day, Germany invaded the Czech lands in violation of the Munich Agreement. It established the

struction of the Jewish Enemy – Nothing New], in *Podoby antisemitizmu*, eds. Monika Vrzgulová and Hana Kubatová, 197–207; Ivan Kamenec, "Fenomén antisemitizmu – nikdy nekončiace hľadanie príčin, odpovedí a následkov" [The Phenomenon of Antisemitism – The Never-Ending Search for Reasons, Answers, and Consequences], in *Podoby antisemitizmu*, eds. Vrzgulová and Kubatová, 208–218; Petra Rybářová, *Antisemitizmus v Uhorsku v 80. rokoch 19. storočia* [Antisemitism in the Kingdom of Hungary in the 1880s] (Bratislava, Pro Historia, 2010).

68 Nižňanský, *Holokaust na Slovensku* 7, 90–92.

69 Slovakia regained this territory in October 1939.

70 See Jerome S. Legge, "Collaboration, Intelligence, and the Holocaust: Ferdinand Ďurčanský, Slovak Nationalism, and the Gehlen Organization", *The Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 224–248.

71 See Michala Lönčíková, "Was the Antisemitic Propaganda a Catalyst for Tensions in the Slovak-Jewish Relations?" *Holocaust Studies* 23, nos. 1–2 (July 2017): 76–98.

72 See, among others, "Perzekúcia Židov v období autonómie Slovenska (6. Oktober 1938–14. Marec 1939)" [The Persecution of Jews during the Autonomy Period: 6 October 1938–14 March 1939], in *Kapitoly z dejín holokaustu na Slovensku*, eds. Martina Fiamová and Ján Hlavinka (Bratislava, Prodama, 2015), 11–17, and Lönčíková, "Was the Antisemitic Propaganda a Catalyst", 78–80.

Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia on 16 March 1939 and dismembered Czechoslovakia.

The new Slovak regime implemented legal measures to consolidate its hold on power and eliminate those it perceived of as political threats. On 23 March 1939, it issued Government Decree 32/1939 on the Custody of Prisoners who are Enemies of the Slovak State, which gave the Ministry of the Interior the power to incarcerate at its discretion any individual who raised “serious concerns that they could impair the development of the Slovak state”.⁷³ Suspicion was therefore sufficient to place individuals into custody without trial for unspecified amounts of time. The prospect of internment for spurious reasons and with no legal recourse frightened the general population, a key tactic used in authoritarian systems to ensure submission. Shortly after the enactment of this decree, Andrej Horn had his first encounter with the new regime.

In July of 1939, Horn was interned in the Ilava detainment camp. Police reports stated that a search of his home revealed correspondence with a “Lily T.” from Krakow who wrote to Horn that there was talk in Poland about splitting up Slovak territory.⁷⁴ He was then accused of “spreading propaganda”.⁷⁵ The letter had been intercepted at a sensitive time, when Slovakia was vying for the return of territory which Poland had annexed in 1938. In addition, the letter was delivered by a friend of his, Alexander H., who was a member of the Communist Party, as was the author of the letter, Lily T. Horn’s cousin Ernest, who had emigrated, had allegedly been a member of a secret Communist youth group, the Revolutionary Slovak Youth. Horn’s political orientation is unknown. He may have had Communist leanings or he may have been considered suspicious by association, but antisemitism also played a part. In the investigative report about Horn, the district office stated that “the thinking and wish of Jewry is actually to divide Slovakia up, and this whispered propaganda is cultivated in secret and only among Jews”.⁷⁶

Horn was released in October 1939, because Horn Brothers was of strategic importance for the state. He was found innocent of wrongdoing and was not accused of any further political offences after his release. However, the head of the district office wrote about him and two other Jewish detainees in a report, stating that “[t]hey will never be reliable, and it is difficult to imagine that they will participate in the building of the new Slovakia”.⁷⁷ Horn’s next encounter with antisemitic policy would be the “Aryanisation” of Horn Brothers.

“Aryanisation” was Slovakia’s first sweeping set of major antisemitic reforms. The regime’s objective was to end Jewish “influence” and create a Slovak entrepreneurial class.⁷⁸ It was devised to cultivate regime loyalists and engender public solidarity in addition to eliminating a layer of competition for Slovak entrepreneurs. The notion that placing Jewish wealth into non-Jewish hands would solve Slovakia’s social inequities resonated for many Slovaks. The initial stages of “Aryanisation” allowed for Jewish co-ownership of a minority stake in a company. However, after the summer of 1940, the government accelerated the “Aryanisation” process, eliminating that option.

73 Kamenec, “Koncentračné, pracovné a zajatecké tábory”, 17.

74 ÚPN, ÚŠB, f. 209-744-4, intercepted letter from Lily T. to Horn, 19 June 1938.

75 ŠA ŽA, fond Okresné žandárske veliteľstvo, b. 1, memorandum about Horn’s detainment, 8 April 1938.

76 ÚPN, ÚŠB, f. 209-744-4, memorandum written by the district office chief, 8 July 1939.

77 ÚPN, ÚŠB, f. 209-872-1, memorandum from the district office chief, 16 May 1939.

78 Ján Hlavinka, “Korupcia v procese arizácie podnikového majetku” [Corruption in the Aryanisation Process of Business Property] *Forum Historiae* 5, no. 2 (2011): 116.

On 28 July 1940, Tiso met with Germany's foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop at the Salzburg Conference, who informed Tiso that Germany considered Slovakia part of its *Lebensraum*⁷⁹ before proceeding to replace politicians it did not favour with those holding more radical views. Until that point, most Jews believed they would somehow "weather the storm". However, they realised the gravity of their situation by the autumn of 1940.⁸⁰ Ladislav Lipscher adroitly states that "when we leaf through the Slovak law register and *Úradne noviny* [Official News] from the period which came about after the changes in the Slovak government in 1940, we have the impression that there was no more important task at the time than thinking up anti-Jewish measures".⁸¹

Horn was surely aware that his business was increasingly at risk and began withdrawing funds out of the company bank account. On 10 June 1941, the district office addressed a memorandum to the State Security Office. It stated that the head of the local Tatra Banka had suggested that "the owners (of Horn Brothers – MV) – Jews – are disobeying the provision that they can only take 4,000 crowns out of the company for private use by their families ... the owners said that they slowed down production so that they have just enough for themselves and not more, and for this reason they are believed to be committing sabotage!" The author of the complaint suggested "a surprise audit to expose business and managerial irregularities".⁸²

Three months later, three competitors came forward hoping to "Aryanise" Horn Brothers: two brothers named Michal and Mikuláš Fundárek from Veľká Bytča, a tanner from Žilina, and a doctor from Bratislava. On 27 August 1941, the Fundáreks submitted their "Aryanisation" application for Horn's business, stating that "[w]e are long-standing party members, and we also are experts in the field and well capitalised".⁸³ The "Aryanisers'" brother, Štefan Fundárek, was the local Roman Catholic priest and head of the local branch of the HSLŠ. Being local and having party and religious connections most likely impacted the "Aryanisation" decision, especially since local and district commanders of the Hlinka Guard (the paramilitary organisation that implemented anti-Jewish directives) and local and district party chairmen were tasked with recommending "Aryanisation" candidates.⁸⁴ Since the local priest and party head in this case were one and the same person, and he was the "Aryanisers'" brother, the Fundárek family wielded a considerable advantage. The Fundáreks were awarded the factory on 20 December 1941. ÚHÚ⁸⁵ gave them 60 per cent of the shares in the Horns' business, but the remaining 40 per cent continued to belong to the two Horns.⁸⁶ This may be because the company had debts that the bank did not wish to assume, though this cannot be confirmed. On 8 January 1942, the "Aryanisers" pressed ÚHÚ to expedite the official transfer of the business, stating that "the application to 'Aryanise' the aforementioned company was not submitted for speculative reasons, but because of encouragement from top officials and President Tiso himself".⁸⁷ This cannot be confirmed.

79 Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, 211.

80 Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, 132.

81 Lipscher, *Židia v slovenskom štáte, 1939–1945* [Jews in the Slovak State: 1939–1945] (Bratislava: Print-Servis, 1992), 91.

82 ŠA ŽA, f. 448/42. Fond Okresný úrad Veľká Bytča, f. 448/1942, investigation for the application of Andrej Horn, 10 June 1941.

83 SNA, PPO, b. 174, unnumbered file "Bratia Horn".

84 Yeshayahu Jelínek, *Star of David under Tatra Mountains* (Bratislava: Slovak National Museum and the Museum of Jewish Culture, 2020), 385.

85 SNA, PPO, b. 174, unnumbered file "Bratia Horn", 20 December 1941.

86 Hlavinka, "Korupcie v procese arizácie", 113–134.

87 ŠA ŽA, Okresný úrad Veľká Bytča, f. 448/1942, investigation for the application of Andrej Horn, 8 January 1942.

For Andrej Horn, what followed next was a rapid sequence of developments that indicate the presence of several local aggressors, a considerable pool of bystanders, and a small group of supporters in his entourage, though which it is possible to view:

- 1) how Andrej Horn actively attempted to stabilise his deteriorating circumstances by petitioning Tiso for a presidential exemption, cooperating with the “Aryanisers” of his company, getting married, and submitting all government required paperwork;
- 2) the disingenuous tactics used by the “Aryanisers” to garner Horn’s signatures and technological expertise by supporting his entreaty to Tiso to his face, while at the same time planning to dismiss him once he was no longer needed;
- 3) making official complaints about Horn’s wife and mother to the district office chief while at the same time pursuing economic exemptions for them: the rationale behind this remains unclear;
- 4) the presence of local perpetrators, including the district office chief, the head of the local bank, the “Aryanisers” of Horn Brothers, their brother, and the policeman who investigated Horn;
- 5) the existence of a sizable group of people who were unwilling to speak well or ill of Horn; and
- 6) three women, former employees of his, who supported Horn on the record, but who were in no position to help him.

Timeline

On 1 February 1942, the Aryanisers of his company put Horn on a monthly salary (1,500 crowns monthly). This change likely refers to the fact that, prior to that point, Horn was still receiving profits from the company as a part owner.⁸⁸ Later that month, Horn submitted his entry in the 1942 Jewish census, as was required of all Jews.⁸⁹ The Ministry of the Interior had mandated the census in preparation for the impending deportations. As difficult as this may have been for Horn personally, Horn needed to keep his job as his financial prospects dwindled. More and more of his property had fallen into state or other hands, including his company, the factory buildings, and his home and yard. His net worth had decreased by 85 per cent in 18 months, from 761,451 crowns on 2 September 1940 (including 500 shares in the factory valued at 1,000 crowns apiece) down to 116,073 crowns by 24 March 1942.⁹⁰

On 21 February 1942, Horn wrote the first of two letters to Tiso requesting an exemption from the “Jewish Code”, emphasising that he was essential for the company. The “Aryanisers”, wanting to incentivise Horn to cooperate with their takeover of his company, wrote letters of support for him on company letterhead, claiming that they needed Horn’s expertise. A handwritten note from Štefan Fundárek, dated 23 February 1942, confirmed that Horn’s political behaviour was flawless. Horn most likely believed that the support of these powerful individuals would help him obtain the presidential exemption.

⁸⁸ The Aryanisers would have had the power to revoke Horn’s profit-taking, even though 40 per cent of the firm’s ownership remained on paper in Horn’s hands, since Horn had no legal recourse and he may have believed that he had no leverage in this situation.

⁸⁹ SNA, KPR, b. 145, f. 2552/42, 1 February 1942, confirmation that Horn had submitted his entry into the Jewish census, 1 February 1942.

⁹⁰ The Ministry of the Economy issued a decree (Vlad. Nar. Sl. z. č. 203/1940 Sl. z.) on 20 August 1940, stipulating that Jews provide an inventory of all of their property by 16 September 1940. See Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, 87–88.

On 3 March 1942, Horn married Zuzana Kardošová. At this point, rumours were circulating that young, unmarried Jews were to be sent away to work. It is not possible to determine whether or not Horn and his wife were reacting to that threat, hoping to avoid being transported.

On 23 March 1942, Horn sent a second letter to Tiso, enclosing a memorandum from the Military Administration for Factories Group No. 1 which stated that the business was important for national defence and that it was under military supervision. It recommended that “leaving Andrej Horn in his current position and freeing him from Jewish obligations was in the interest of the military and necessary for the sake of continuity”.⁹¹

By now, Horn would have received a government notice to report for a work transport.

As was required, Horn submitted a list of his financial holdings, stating that his funds were tied up in assets, on 24 March 1942.⁹²

The next day, three significant events occurred. First, Horn was transported to the Žilina transit camp roughly twenty kilometres away from Velká Bytča.⁹³ Rumours circulated that the Jews were being sent away for temporary work assignments. Horn had every reason to believe that he would return to his home and family. Second, the “Aryanisers” submitted paperwork requesting the transfer of all outstanding Jewish shares in Horn’s business to their names and changed the official name of the company to the Velká Bytča Leather Factory.⁹⁴ Third, Horn signed a gift contract forfeiting all of his property to the state, a final step which was usually taken prior to deportation. Unfortunately, there are no additional clues in the available archival documentation that provide authoritative information about Horn’s subsequent deportation, but Horn did not survive the Holocaust.

Unaware that Horn had been transported to Žilina, the KPR sent its questionnaire to the district office which in turn asked the local police to launch an investigation on 27 March 1942.⁹⁵

The policeman’s first report, dated 2 April 1942, indicated an awareness that Horn had been transported, but this did not deter the investigation, most likely because the Slovak public was not aware at that early point that the deportations were intended to be permanent. The report confirmed that Horn was a member of the Jewish community, that he spoke Slovak and some German at home with his mother, and that he was ethnically Jewish. He added that the only cash Horn had available to pay for an exemption would need to come from his mother’s bank account, which contained 26,263 crowns. The policeman noted that her funds would need to be freed up especially for this purpose since Jews had limited access to their bank accounts. He concluded that “Horn and his wife lead apolitical, respectable lives”.⁹⁶

On 4 April 1942, the district office chief asked the policeman to expand the investigation “on a confidential basis in order to ascertain public opinion about Andrej Horn, whether he had ever demoralised Christian women and whether people

91 SNA, KPR, b. 145, f. 2552/42, memorandum from the Military Administration for Factories Group No. 1, 23 March 1942.

92 Immediately prior to deportation, the Jews in Slovakia were required by the Central Economic Office to submit an inventory of all their property. See Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, 87–88.

93 SNA, KPR, b. 145, f. 2552/42, police report, 2 April 1942.

94 SNA, PPO, b 174 unnumbered file “Bratia Horn”, 25 March 1942.

95 SNA, KPR, b. 145, f. 2552/42, KPR letter requesting an investigation of Horn, 27 March 1942.

96 SNA, KPR, b.145, f. 2552/42, police report 2 April 1942. Jews were only permitted to withdraw a maximum of 150 crowns per week from their bank accounts, starting on 23 September 1941 (Ordinance No. 419, *Úradné noviny*).

would react with pleasure or satisfaction if Horn were to receive a presidential exemption”.⁹⁷ The policeman reported back on 8 April 1942 that there were “no legal findings against the Jew Andrej Horn” or evidence that he had “defiled Christian women” or maintained “scandalous relations” with Aryan women. Horn had been in a long-term relationship with a certain teacher from Velké Rovné and, later on, probably from 1938 to 1940, with a certain M.H. from Velká Bytča, who he apparently wanted to marry. However, for some unknown reason, their relationship had ended. His last romantic relationship prior to his marriage was with the cashier at the Velká Bytča railway station.

The policeman writes:

Regarding this matter, I also spoke with the head of the local HSES and other trustworthy citizens who stated that, as far as this matter is concerned, Horn had done nothing improper. As to how people would respond if Andrej Horn’s exemption application were granted, it was impossible to learn anything because every citizen I talked to was reserved. I also spoke with Horn’s workers including P.D., R.K., and J.K., who stated that he was a good employer who treated his workers well and did not tolerate his employees discussing politics. When I asked the “Aryanisers” of Horn’s business how they would react if Horn were to return to Velká Bytča, they replied that it made no difference to them.⁹⁸

Why did so many remain silent when questioned about Horn by the policeman? Nižňanský pointedly asks: “Did the regime buy the ‘silent majority’? Did the person benefit in the ‘crime’ through their silence?”⁹⁹ There are other potential explanations for the reticence the policeman described, including a desire to assuage one’s conscience, settle an old score, eliminate business competition, antisemitism, indifference, fear of repercussions for openly supporting a Jew, or the fact that the policeman was an arm of the state. Some may have believed at that early point that Horn might return and learn what was being said about him.

The district office finalised Horn’s investigation on 17 April 1942, enclosing a statement from the “Aryanisers” of Horn’s business. It stated:

We, the “Aryanisers” of the above-mentioned firm, have taken over the operation of the business as experts and are capable of managing the business without Andrej Horn’s technical cooperation. We had requested that he be allowed to remain on a temporary basis while legal arrangements were finalised because he was the only authorised signatory from the former company.¹⁰⁰

On 11 May 1942, the KPR sent a form letter rejection to Horn.¹⁰¹

On 15 May 1942, Michal Fundárek complained to the district office that the company’s “former owners or their relatives are trying every way possible to be designated as essential to the company or try to gain our firm’s protection. But we don’t need them. Specifically, Horn’s wife Zuzana Hornová is trying to do this without our consent by using connections. I am hereby informing the district office to request that this be stopped in an appropriate manner.”¹⁰² The “appropriate manner” is not described.

97 ŠA ŽA, fond Okresný úrad, file 448/1942, request from District Office Chief to the policeman, 4 April 1942.

98 ŠA ŽA, fond Okresný úrad, f. 448/1942, police report submitted to district office chief, 8 April 1942.

99 Nižňanský, *Holokaust na Slovensku* 7, 22.

100 SNA, KPR, b.145, f. 2552/4217, memorandum submitted by the district office chief to KPR, 17 April 1942.

101 SNA, KPR, b. 145, f. 2552/1942, exemption rejection notice from KPR addressed to Andrej Horn, 11 May 1942.

102 ŠA ŽA, fond Okresný úrad, f. 448/42, statement from the “Aryanisers” of Horn’s business, 15 May 1942.

However, on 6 June and 15 July 1942, respectively, Horn's mother and wife received exemptions as "economically important Jews".¹⁰³ This would have been impossible without the active involvement of the "Aryanisers". Less difficult to obtain than the presidential exemption, this document gave the two women a temporary reprieve from deportation. It is not known why the "Aryanisers" aided these two women in this manner, especially since the "Aryanisers" had submitted a complaint about them to the district office chief in close temporal proximity.

In a memorandum addressed to ÚHÚ on 22 May 1942, the "Aryanisers" complained that they had still not received Horn's company shares. As a result, the firm looked Jewish on paper, making it ineligible for a loan.¹⁰⁴ Bank were often unwilling to give loans to "Aryanisers".¹⁰⁵

On 29 May 1942, Hlinka Guard Headquarters sent a notice to Department 14 of the Ministry of the Interior,¹⁰⁶ stating that they knew of Horn's deportation but had heard rumours that he might return. They urged against such a move, stating that the "Aryanisers" did not need the services of the "aforementioned Jew".¹⁰⁷ This is the lone document in the file.

After this point, archival documentation about Andrej Horn becomes sparse. In 1946, Horn's cousin, Ladislav Horn, who had survived the war, was appointed to serve as the national caretaker of the Veľká Bytča Leather Factory.¹⁰⁸ Regional court documents trace the history of the company from its "Aryanisation" in 1942 until 1949, by which time the company was nationalised by the post-war Communist regime.¹⁰⁹ On 17 February 1948, Horn's widow, who had survived the war, received Andrej Horn's house through restitution. The documents in the file euphemistically describe him as being "displaced".¹¹⁰ This is the final trace of Andrej Horn in the files. Today, there is a parking lot where Horn Brothers once stood.

Conclusion

The multi-file, victim-centric approach used for this microhistorical study demonstrates that Horn made active decisions about his behaviour. He was unaware that his request for aid from the very government that was persecuting him would make any aspect of his life fair game, including his romantic relationships. The complex social dynamics on the ground sealed Horn's fate. Horn was unaware of the array of actors who were in positions of power who participated in his persecution, the large number of individuals who had known him all his life or whom he had known all of his life and who were unwilling to come to his aid, or the few individuals who would stand up for him.

These factors open up the possibility that all Jews in Slovakia were to varying extents surrounded by complex social constellations. Some may have had more local aggressors in their entourage, others may have had more persons who were willing to

103 SNA, MV, b. 571, f. "Supis Židov 1944" [1944 Jewish Census].

104 SNA, PPO, b. 174, unnumbered file "Bratia Horn", 22 May 1942.

105 See Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, 94–99.

106 MV Department 14 was responsible for implementing anti-Jewish measures including the deportations of Jews.

107 SNA, MV, b. 561, f. 406-557-45/7663/42, Hlinka Guard memorandum about Horn, 29 May 1942.

108 SNA, PPO, b. 174, unnumbered file "Bratia Horn", PPO memorandum about Ladislav Horn's appointment as national caretaker, 18 February 1946.

109 ŠA ŽA, fond Krajský súd, Trenčín BXVIII 1132, Business Register.

110 SNA, PPO, b. 559, "Horn, unnumbered file", 17 February 1948.

help. It would seem that the proportions among these societal delineations would affect a Jewish person's ability to survive the Holocaust. How many times did these interpersonal dramas play themselves out as the deportations approached? Had more people been unwilling to be silent, or openly supported Horn, would his fate have been different? More research is needed to confirm the answer to these questions.

On 26 March 1942, Horn, having been displaced from his home and his family, surely wondered what was to be his fate. That same day, Augustín Morávek, the head of ÚHÚ, stood before the State Council to submit a progress report on "Aryanisation". He stated: "The Jewish question here will only be solved when every member of our people knows for a certainty ... that the last Jew has crossed the border out of our state."¹¹¹

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¹¹¹ SNA, MV, box 172, file 457943, "Aryanisation" status report, 26 March 1942.

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