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Ghettos and Collection Camps in Northern Transylvania

An Attempt to Reappraise the Use of Certain Terms¹

Abstract

The goal of this study is to classify the Hungarian-controlled ghettos and collection camps of Northern Transylvania according to their topographical and infrastructural characteristics. It is an effort to determine the extent to which their features correspond to Hungarian and international typologies, and the degree to which they differed from camps elsewhere.

These themes are by no means unfamiliar to Hungarian scholars, several of whom have in recent decades studied Holocaust-era ghettos and the living conditions that prevailed there. None of their analyses, however, have addressed the situation in Northern Transylvania, and thus my objective in this article is to fill in the resulting gap.

The Ghettoisation of Northern Transylvania

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2 As used in this article, "Northern Transylvania" denotes all the territories (whether in Máramaros/Maramureș, the Partium, Central Transylvania, or Székelyföld) which belonged to interwar Romania and were returned to Hungary as a result of the Second Vienna Award of 1940.

3 There were three types of collection sites in Northern Transylvania: 1. temporary collection sites (synagogues, community buildings, schools, police headquarters, factories, brickyards) where Jews were rounded up for a few days before being transported to a ghetto or collection camp; 2. ghettos and collection camps (Bárdfalva/Berberști, Dragomérfalva/Dragomirești, and Szamosújvár/Gherla) which were in operation for more than two weeks, but whose inhabitants were not deported until they were transferred to other ghettos or collection camps that served as deportation sites; 3. ghettos and collection camps which served as deportation sites (see Table 1 at the end of this study). Zoltán Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania", in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, eds. Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (Budapest and New York: CEU Jewish Studies Program and CEU Press, 2016), 177, 184.

4 This literature is discussed by Regina Fritz, "Mindennapi élet a magyar gettókban," in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról VII.*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2016), 183. See also László Csósz, "Keresztény

ation in Northern Transylvania,⁵ and thus my objective here is to fill in the resulting gap.

Interwar Transylvania was home to 193,000 individuals of the Jewish faith.⁶ As a result of the Second Vienna Award, Hungary reassumed control of Northern Transylvania in 1940 and, according to the 1941 census, 151,125 of that territory's residents declared themselves to be Jewish.⁷ Antisemitic measures were also imposed on Christian inhabitants who were considered to be "racially" Jewish.⁸ Thus the Northern Transylvanian Holocaust affected more than 164,000 individuals, or 6.4 per cent of the region's inhabitants.⁹ In the late spring and early summer of 1944, Hungarian authorities rounded up and deported roughly 131,000 to 135,000 of them to Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹⁰

The preparations for ghettoisations and deportations in Hungary – including Northern Transylvania – began in early April in 1944, in accordance with the Confidential Decree no. 6163/1944 of the Ministry of the Interior.¹¹ The legal framework was created by the so-called "ghetto decree" (Prime Minister's Decree no. 1610/1944), which was published on 28 April 1944 and went into effect that same day. The first section of this document discusses the "requisitioning" (that is, expropriation) of Jews' homes; from the eighth paragraph onward, it deals with the subject of "designating Jews' places of residence". In effect, paragraphs 8 and 9 laid out the legal conditions for rounding up the Jewish populations of smaller communities (many of whom were initially moved to temporary collection sites) and "resettling" them in larger centres (ghettos, collection camps), where their "accommodations" were to be arranged by the chief constable (*főszolgabíró*) or the mayor. In larger communities, Jews were assigned to particular neighborhoods, streets, or in some cases houses.¹² In Northern Transylvania (in contrast to the practice later established in the rest of Hungary), ghettos and collection camps served simultaneously as transit centres –

polgári érdekek sérelme nélkül ...' Gettósítás Szolnokon 1944-ben," in *Tanulmányok a holokausztról II.*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2002), 203–255; László Csósz, *Konfliktusok és kölcsönhatások. Zsidók Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye történetében* (Szolnok: MNL Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár, 2014), 177–189, 230–233; and Gyula Kosztyó, "Az ungvári zsidóság a vészorszakban. Gettósítás, deportálás és a zsidó vagyon sorsa 1944-ben," *Betekintő* 10, no. 4 (2016): 12–15.

5 Information about life in the ghettos and collection camps of Northern Transylvania can be found in Randolph L. Braham and Tibori Szabó's *Geographical Encyclopedia of the Holocaust in Northern Transylvania*, as well as in various *yizkor* (memorial) books. See also Randolph L. Braham, *A népiirtás politikája. A holokauszt Magyarországon*. vol. 1. (Budapest: Park Könyvkiadó, 2015), 708–728, as well as Guy Miron, ed., *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, vols. 1–2 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009).

6 *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. 2 (București: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1938).

7 Árpád Varga E., *Népszámlálások a jelenkori Erdély területén* (Budapest: Regio and MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1992), 141–149.

8 For a discussion of these Jewish laws and the groups of individuals who were exempted from them, see László Karsai, "A magyarországi zsidótörvények és -rendeletek, 1920–1944", *Századok* 138, no. 6 (2004): 1285–1304; Attila Gidó, "Mentesítések Észak-Erdélyben 1941-ben", *Regio* 25, no. 1 (2017): 109–146. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17355/rkkpt.v25i1.152>.

9 Braham, *A népiirtás politikája*, 190.

10 Randolph L. Braham and Zoltán Tibori Szabó, eds., *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája* (Budapest and Kolozsvár: Park Könyvkiadó and Koinónia, 2008), 33; Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania," 170.

11 Ilona Benoschofsky and Elek Karsai, eds., *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselete Kiadása, 1958), 124–127; Zoltán Vági and László Csósz and Gábor Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary: Evolution of a Genocide* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013), 76–79.

12 "A m. kir. minisztérium 1610/1944. M. E. sz. rendelete a zsidók lakásával és lakóhelyének kijelölésével kapcsolatos egyes kérdések szabályozása tárgyában" [Decree no. 1610/1944. M. E. of the Royal Hungarian Ministry, on the subject of the regulation of certain issues concerning the designation of Jews' homes and residences], in the *Budapesti Közlöny*, 28 April 1944, 2–3.

that is, deportation sites.¹³ The only exceptions were Bárdfalva (Berbești), Dragomérfalva (Dragomirești), and Szamosújvár (Gherla), where collection sites were liquidated by the Hungarian authorities shortly before the deportations began. The inhabitants of the Bárdfalva ghetto were ultimately deported from Máramarossziget (Sighetu Marmăției); those detained in Dragomérfalva would depart from Felsővisó (Vișeu de Sus), and the individuals held at the collection camp in Szamosújvár would leave from Kolozsvár (Cluj).¹⁴

Hungary was divided into ten gendarmerie districts, two of which – the Ninth, headquartered in Kolozsvár, and the Tenth, headquartered in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș) – covered the entire territory of Northern Transylvania. The parts of southern Máramaros which were reattached to Hungary (along with Northern Transylvania) in 1940 were incorporated into the Eighth Gendarmerie District, headquartered in Kassa (now Košice, Slovakia). These gendarmerie districts served as the framework for Hungary's six deportation zones, and thus the Eighth Gendarmerie District was in Deportation Zone I, while the Ninth and Tenth gendarmerie districts were in Deportation Zone II.¹⁵

The plans to round up the Jews of Deportation Zone I were discussed at a meeting in Munkács (now Mukachevo, Ukraine) on 12 April 1944. And these were thus the first of Northern Transylvania's Jews to be ghettoised (on 16 April 1944) and deported (on 16 May 1944).¹⁶ As a result of the Second Vienna Award, several communities in Northern Máramaros, which had belonged to Czechoslovakia in the interwar period, were incorporated into the Northern Transylvanian county of Máramaros, and thus historians sometimes discuss the deportation sites that operated in these areas – such as Ökörmező (now Mizhhirya, Ukraine) and Aknaszlatina (now Solotvyno, Ukraine) – in the context of Northern Transylvania. Meanwhile, in 1940, Hungarian authorities took settlements which had belonged to the interwar Romanian county of Satu Mare (Szatmár) and incorporated them into Ugocsa County. Thus, the Jews who lived there were not taken to the ghettos of Northern Transylvania in 1944, but to those of Subcarpathia.¹⁷ These administrative-territorial rearrangements are among the factors that make it difficult to determine the precise number of Jews deported from Northern Transylvania, which has resulted in several slightly different estimates.¹⁸ The operations to be conducted in Zone II were finalised during talks in Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare) on 26 April and in Marosvásárhely on 28 April 1944.¹⁹ State Secretary László Endre of the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior, one of the principal organisers of the deportation of the country's rural Jews, presided over these discussions, having arrived from northeastern Hungary, where he had been inspecting the ghettos established there.²⁰

In Szatmárnémeti, authorities chose sites for the ghettos and collection camps of the Ninth Gendarmerie District – Nagyvárad (Oradea), Szilágysomlyó (Șimleu Silvaniei), Szatmárnémeti, Kolozsvár, Szamosújvár, Dés (Dej), and Nagybánya (Baia

13 Vági, Csósz, and Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, 82–83.

14 Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, 183, 193–194, 424.

15 Braham, *A népirtás politikája*, 487, 756–759.

16 Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania", 169–170.

17 Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, 468; Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania", 178–182.

18 According to Braham and Tibori Szabó, 131,639 Jews were deported from the region (Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, 33), while Tibori Szabó has more recently asserted that the number was at least 135,000 (Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania", 170).

19 Braham, *A népirtás politikája*, 703–705. The minutes of the meeting of 26 April were published in László Karsai and Judit Molnár, *Az Endre – Baky – Jaross per* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1994), 527–529.

20 Karsai and Molnár, *Az Endre – Baky – Jaross per*, 488; Braham, *A népirtás politikája*, 729.

Mare). They also clarified the process by which Jews would be rounded up, as well as the fate of the personal property and real estate the deportees would leave behind.²¹ The affairs of the Tenth Gendarmerie District were discussed at the meeting in Marosvásárhely, which involved the participation of roughly 200 officials from Székelyföld (the Szekler lands), including prefects (*főispánok*) and subprefects (*alispánok*), the mayors of cities, district chief constables, and the commanders of police forces and the gendarmerie.²² They decided that the Jews of Székelyföld would be concentrated into three collection camps: the Jewish residents of Udvarhely County and the western part of Maros-Torda County were to be taken to Marosvásárhely; the Jews of the eastern part of Maros-Torda County and the northern part of Csík County were to be transferred to Szászrégen (Reghin); and the Jewish inhabitants of Háromszék County and the southern part of Csík County were to be moved to a third camp which was to be established in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe).²³ The collection camp set up in Sepsiszentgyörgy was ultimately liquidated after only a week, at which point the people there were transferred to Szászrégen.²⁴

At these two meetings, László Endre gave detailed orders concerning the process of ghettoisation, procedures for rounding up Jews, the organisation and operation of ghettos, and the administration of “Jewish wealth” (such as real estate and personal possessions). After participating in these discussions, leading public officials, officers of police forces and the gendarmerie, and subprefects returned home, where they negotiated additional local arrangements for the process of ghettoisation and the location(s) of the ghetto(s) in a given community.

After his tour of Székelyföld, Endre traveled to Kolozsvár, then to Nagyvárad, where discussions of this sort continued.²⁵ On 30 April, he gave Nagyvárad’s mayor László Gyapay verbal orders concerning ghettoisation and the associated administrative issues (e.g. the handling of Jewish real estate and personal property). Gyapay then referred to this authorisation when issuing a decree concerning Jews’ agricultural land and equipment.²⁶ In accordance with the orders Endre gave at the meetings in Szatmár and Marosvásárhely, ghettoisation in the Ninth and Tenth Gendarmerie Districts (which belonged to Deportation Zone II) commenced at five a.m. on 3 May 1944. The first of the trains that carried deportees away left the territory of these gendarmerie districts on 16 and 19 May.²⁷

The details of the deportations were discussed on 8 May in Munkács and on 18 to 20 May in Kolozsvár at meetings chaired by Gendarme Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy.²⁸ The deportations were completed in the Northern Transylvanian portion of Zone I on 25 May and in Zone II on 27 June 1944.²⁹

21 Karsai and Molnár, *Az Endre – Baky – Jaross per*, 527–529.

22 The testimony of Ferenc Májay, the mayor of Marosvásárhely, before the People’s Tribunal. Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Cluj (the Cluj County Office of the Romanian National Archives, hereafter: SJAN Cluj), Fond no. 1295 (Tribunalul Poporului/Népbíróság), dossier 11/1946, 1.

23 *Ibid.*, 3.

24 Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, 128.

25 In the course of his travels, Endre inspected the process of ghettoisation and the circumstances that prevailed in the ghettos not only of Northern Transylvania, but of the entirety of rural Hungary. Braham, *A népirtás politikája*, 729–730.

26 Resolution no. 13392/1944. II, issued by László Gyapay on 12 May 1944. Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem (hereafter: YVA), TR. Fond 16 (Legal Documentation Romania), dossier 28, 18–22.

27 Tibori Szabó, “The Holocaust in Transylvania”, 179–180.

28 Randolph L. Braham, *Genocide and Retribution: The Holocaust in Hungarian-Ruled Northern Transylvania* (Boston: Kluwer, Nijhoff Publishing, 1983), 190–191.

29 The deportation action in Zone II was largely complete by 9 June 1944. Beyond that date, only one more train left Nagyvárad for Auschwitz-Birkenau; it passed through Kassa (now Košice, Slovakia) on 27 June. Tibori Szabó, “The Holocaust in Transylvania”, 176–179.

The Notion of a Ghetto

The definition and function of the concept *ghetto* underwent a tragic transformation in the early decades of the twentieth century. Ghettos began to develop throughout Europe in the Middle Ages; as home to a given community's Jewish population, some of these settlements survived into the early twentieth century.³⁰ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European cities tried to liquidate their ghettos. In doing so, they appealed above all to the notions of urban planning and modernisation. A few decades later, in the Holocaust era, Jews were frequently gathered together in locations that had relatively recently been the site of a ghetto. The leaders of the city of Prague, for example, as part of a decade-long process, liquidated the ghetto of Josefov in 1913. Then in 1941, in an entirely different context, this neighbourhood was transformed back into a ghetto with an entirely different purpose.³¹ Unlike the majority of their historical precursors, the Jewish ghettos of the twentieth century were established entirely as a result of external compulsion, organised by government bureaucracies and overseen by state-security forces.

In contrast to much of the rest of Europe, no ghettos were established in the territory of Northern Transylvania in the Middle Ages or in the course of the modern era. However, in several cases, the Hungarian authorities of the Holocaust era did segregate Jews in neighbourhoods with significant Jewish populations (in Nagyvárad, Máramarossziget, Felsővisó, and Szatmárnémeti).

On 21 September 1939, after the Nazis had overrun Poland, the director of the Reich Security Main Office, Reinhard Heydrich, spoke to a gathering of SS officers and *Einsatzgruppen* commanders on the subject of the concentration of Jews. He declared that within four weeks, Jews from villages and smaller cities would have to be resettled into larger cities and isolated in ghettos. He was not, however, suggesting the creation of new ghettos, but rather the concentration of these individuals in communities which already had dense populations of Jews. While Heydrich's orders were not carried out, the plan itself demonstrates that radical concepts involving the violent transfer of Jewish populations had already developed by the fall of 1939. Even so, quite some time would elapse before the implementation of a concrete, unified plan to limit the movement of occupied Poland's Jewish residents by forcibly resettling them in designated locations.³² It is also important to clarify that the Nazis did not establish ghettos in all the territories they occupied or controlled. There were none at all in Western Europe, and only a few in the Central European and Balkan countries and territories that the Nazis invaded. The overwhelming majority – more than a thousand – were set up in the territories of Eastern Europe, where the populations of Jews were densest.³³

Starting in late October 1939, the Nazis created their first ghettos in some smaller Polish settlements, while the first of their larger sites – with roughly 200,000 inhabitants – was established in the city of Łódź in early February 1940.³⁴ The Łódź ghetto

30 Miron, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos*, vol. 1, XV.

31 Cathleen M. Giustino, *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Ethnic Politics around 1900*, East European Monographs (Boulder, CO, and New York: East European Monographs, 2003), 307–310.

32 Dan Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and Cambridge University Press, 2011), 65–69.

33 Yad Vashem's encyclopedia contains descriptions of 1,100 ghettos; see Miron, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos*, vols. 1–2.

34 Geoffrey P. Megargee, ed., *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945: Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration Camps and Subcamps under the SS-Business Administration Main Office*, vol. 1 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 76–77.

would serve as the model for the ghettos they would later establish in Poland and Lithuania.³⁵ The connection between ghettos and Jews' being dragged away to death camps and systematically annihilated was made manifest in early 1942 and, again, this took place only in East-Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. By the time the Jews of Northern Transylvania were rounded up in 1944, ghettos and collection camps were being set up as "waiting rooms" that led directly to the gas chambers.

Until recently, international historians of the Holocaust had developed an image of the ghettos that was – like the narrative of the Holocaust as a whole – based on the so-called Polish model. That is, historians tended to use primarily Polish (and occasionally Lithuanian) examples in describing the general methodology of establishing and operating ghettos.³⁶ Thematic encyclopedias recently published by the Holocaust Museum in Washington and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem suggest a certain shift away from this phenomenon, but even these works exhibit the influence of the Polish model, insofar as the majority of their text is dedicated to the frequently discussed ghettos of Warsaw, Łódź, Białystok, Vilnius, etc.³⁷

In the introduction to Yad Vashem's encyclopedia of ghettos, Guy Miron and Shlomit Shulhani define "ghettos" as "any part of a pre-existing settlement" (a residential district, set of neighbouring streets, or zone within a settlement) where Jewish inhabitants were forcibly concentrated for a period of at least a few weeks. They describe "camps", on the other hand, as collection sites outside – or on the peripheries of – established settlements. In any case, it should be noted that these authors use the word "camp" primarily to mean *concentration camp* or *labor camp*, not to refer to the collection camps (*gyűjtőtáborok*) that were widespread in Hungary.³⁸ According to this characterisation, Jewish social organisations and structures (such as medical and educational institutions, Jewish Councils that provided communities with leadership, cultural associations, and economic networks) survived in the ghettos, or were reestablished there in short order, whereas in the camps, which were inhabited primarily by "unproductive" individuals (the elderly and the sick, women and children), Jewish society was atomised.³⁹ Miron and Shulhani's analysis does make mention of regional differences, and while they do touch on the idiosyncrasies of conditions in Hungary, they nevertheless define all its collection sites as ghettos.⁴⁰

The differences between the features that characterised the Hungarian territories and those of Poland and Lithuania are obvious. In the latter, the Jews who were rounded up generally had time to organise their affairs and create a kind of order, a peculiar but nonetheless functional "ghetto society", the everyday life of which encompassed regular labour, economic activity, and the operations of a variety of institutions. In contrast, there was no time – and thus it was impossible – to develop a functional order in the ghettos and collection camps of Northern Transylvania. Characteristics of the Polish, Lithuanian, and Belorussian ghettos (which existed for long periods, sometimes years) were completely absent from those of Northern Transylvania. In the longest-surviving ghetto of Łódź, for instance, the Jewish community went essentially untouched from early 1940 to January of 1942. It was then

35 Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos*, 82.

36 Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vols. 1–2 (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 592–599.

37 Megargee, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, vols. 1–2; Miron, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos*, vols. 1–2.

38 Miron, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos*, vol. 1, XL.

39 *Ibid.*, XLIV.

40 *Ibid.*, LIX–LXI.

that the deportations began and, by the fall of 1942, only Jews who were fit to work were allowed to remain in the ghetto. From that point onward, until its liquidation in 1944, the Łódź ghetto would function as a labour camp.⁴¹

Of course, during their few weeks of existence, the collection sites of Northern Transylvania did witness the creation of certain elements of social self-organisation (such as Jewish councils, ghetto police forces, improvised common kitchens, hospitals, or separate quarters for nursing the sick), and there were examples of labour groups leaving ghettos to work in adjacent cities. Nevertheless, these forms of self-organisation were minimal in comparison to the aforementioned Eastern European examples. The two regions' demographic structures differed as well; as a consequence of the fact that a significant proportion of Northern Transylvania's Jewish men were conscripted for military labour service, a large part of the inhabitants of the collection sites there were what Miron and Shulhani categorised as "unproductive elements" – women, children, and the elderly.

Typologically, the ghettos of Northern Transylvania and the rest of Hungary (with the exception of Budapest) were comparable to the three ghettos that were set up in Thessaloniki, Greece. In fact, the Greek process of ghettoisation might be viewed as a kind of forerunner of the methods used in Hungary. Jews who lived in the Greek territories under German control were taken to Thessaloniki in February and March of 1943 and the majority were deported by 9 May. A few subsequent convoys would carry off the several thousand individuals who had been left behind, and thus the Greek territories under German control were declared *Judenfrei* on 10 August 1943.⁴²

As was the case in Thessaloniki, the objective in rural Hungary – including Northern Transylvania – was clear: the ghettos and collection camps there were established as third-class waiting rooms for detainees about to board the death trains. There was thus no need to separate able-bodied Jews from those unable to work, as they were all to be deported simultaneously.

The choices of sites in Hungary also differed significantly from those in Poland, where the larger ghettos were established within existing settlements, on streets or in neighbourhoods which were already densely populated by Jews. The primary consideration in Northern Transylvania and the rest of rural Hungary was proximity to infrastructure that would facilitate transportation, for which reason the majority of the ghettos and collection camps there – with a few notable exceptions, such as Nagyvárad, where the ghetto was located within the city – were established at brick factories or other industrial or agricultural facilities near railroads.

In the literature on Hungary, László Csósz has done groundbreaking work in attempting to clarify the meaning of the concepts "ghetto" and "collection camp". According to the framework he devised, there were four types of segregation in Holocaust-era Hungary and Northern Transylvania:

1. In opposition to Guy Miron and Shlomit Shulhani's definition, Csósz identifies certain collection sites in Subcarpathia and Northern Transylvania (Beszterce/Bistrița, Décs, and Kolozsvár) not as ghettos, but rather as camp-like accommodations.
2. The only sites of segregation he classifies as ghettos are those which were established within municipalities, often in districts that had previously been inhabited by Jews. This category encompasses most of the sites in Hungary, including those in the Northern Transylvanian towns of Felsővisó and Máramarossziget.

⁴¹ Megargee, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, vol. 2, 80–81.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1846–1847.

3. His third type is a combination of the previous two, that is, an intermediate form between camp-like accommodations and a ghetto. (Csósz places Nagyvárad in this category, presumably referring to Nagyvárad's "little ghetto", which was indeed set up in an urban environment, but which involved almost no inhabited buildings. The "main ghetto", which was established in the city's Jewish quarter and surrounded by a wooden fence, does not belong here at all.)
4. The fourth method of concentrating Hungarian Jews was isolating them in particular buildings or apartment blocks. This approach was not characteristic of Northern Transylvanian communities, only of Budapest (with its yellow-star houses) and the by-then functionally independent cities of Kispeszt and Székesfehérvár.⁴³

In clarifying the use of this terminology, it is also worth examining contemporaneous documentation. In official paperwork, Hungarian authorities generally avoided the words "ghetto" and "ghettoisation." In their place, they made use of much more bureaucratic, somewhat milder-sounding expressions like "collection camp" and "transportation to a camp". Of course, there were exceptions. For example, on 3 May 1944, the first day of the ghettoisation of Northern Transylvania, László Gyapay, the mayor of Nagyvárad, issued an order in which he consistently used the word "ghetto" to refer to the designated location to which Nagyvárad's Jews would be forcibly relocated (that is, "the main ghetto").⁴⁴ Ghettoisation was also discussed using expressions like "cleansing campaign",⁴⁵ "transportation to a closed location",⁴⁶ and "Jewish action".⁴⁷

Our sense of what the perpetrators of the era actually understood by the words "ghetto" and "collection camp" comes from State Secretary László Endre himself. On 17 December 1945, when Endre testified at the trial of László Gyapay, László Csóka, and László Vásárhelyi (the former mayors of Nagyvárad, Szatmárnémeti, and Kolozsvár, respectively), he declared before the People's Courts in Budapest that a ghetto was regarded as "the method of moving [people] in together, wherein Jews were packed into lodgings built for the purposes of human habitation, whereas a camp [was] a collection of industrial or agricultural buildings with greater holding capacity, or wooden barracks built specifically for this purpose".⁴⁸ The Gendarme Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy used these same definitions in the status reports which he sent to Minister of the Interior Andor Jaross.⁴⁹ The press of the era was much more inconsistent and often failed to differentiate between types of collection sites.⁵⁰

43 Vági, Csósz, and Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, 83.

44 This document was published in Csósz, *Konfliktusok és kölcsönhatások*, 249–251.

45 SJAN Cluj, Fond 151 (Administrația Militară Maghiară din Nordul Transilvaniei/Észak-erdélyi magyar közigazgatás), inventory no. 219, box 3, dossier 37/1944, 1.

46 *Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára* (State Archives of the Hungarian National Archives, hereafter: MNL OL), K498–1944–b–IX–539, 1–5 f.

47 The Gendarme Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy demonstrated a preference for this expression in the status reports he submitted about the ghettoisation of Northern Transylvania. However, he would later describe the rounding up and deportation of Jews as a "cleansing campaign". Judit Molnár, ed., *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban. Ferenczy László alezredes a népbíróóság előtt* (Budapest: Scolar. ÁBTL, 2014), 280–316; Vági, Csósz, and Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, 110.

48 Braham, *Genocide and Retribution*, 241.

49 See, for example, the status report Ferenczy filed from Kolozsvár on 3 May 1944, in which he differentiated between collection camps and ghettos: "There was no suitable location for the establishment of a collection camp in Nagyvárad, for which reason the Jews there are being accommodated in ghettos." Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban*, 280.

50 "Miskolcon 13000 zsidót költöztetnek gettóba" (In Miskolc, 13,000 Jews are being moved into a ghetto), in *Ellenzék* [Opposition], 3 May 1944, 3; "Kolozsváron kényszerlakhelyet jelöltek ki a zsidók számára. A téglagyárban és környékén létesítik a kolozsvári gettót" (In Kolozsvár, Jews are being assigned compulsory

On the basis of Endre and Ferenczy's characterisation of the deportation sites located in the Ninth and Tenth Gendarmerie Districts (and the parts of the Eight Gendarmerie District that were located in Northern Transylvania), the following could be considered ghettos: Felsővisó (Jewish quarter), Máramarossziget (Jewish quarter), Máramarossziget (the so-called poor Jewish quarter), Nagyvárad (Jewish quarter), and Szatmárnémeti (Jewish quarter).⁵¹ The following sites, on the other hand, could be described as collection camps: Nagyvárad (the city farm, and the Mezey lumberyard and its surroundings), Kolozsvár (brick factory), Beszterce (the Stamboli farm), Marosvásárhely (brick factory), Marosvásárhely (livestock market), Szászrégen (brick factory), Nagybánya (the Bernáth foundry), Nagybánya (the Molcsány farm), and Szilágysomlyó/Somlyócsehi (brick factory). And if we are strict in applying Endre and Ferenczy's criteria, then the Bungur forest camp in Dés does not belong in either category, insofar as this site was not equipped with any infrastructure whatsoever.⁵²

In referring to these sites, participants in the post-war trials at the People's Courts in Kolozsvár in 1945 and 1946 and the journalists who reported on them used the word "ghetto" almost exclusively.⁵³ Perhaps partly as a result of this practice, this usage dominates in the literature on the Holocaust in Northern Transylvania, and thus authors of scholarly studies use the term "collection camp" exclusively to refer to temporary collection sites which were in operation for only a few days.⁵⁴

A Recommendation for Applying these Concepts to Northern Transylvania

Among the elements that Northern Transylvanian collection sites shared were isolation behind fencing, boards, and barbed wire, crowding, poor hygienic conditions, insufficient provisions of food, and an almost complete absence of the sort of organisational institutions that allow a society to function.⁵⁵ At the same time, the conditions at these sites were determined largely by local urban authorities, along with the attitudes of the Hungarian gendarmes and police units tasked with guarding them.

For instance, we know that the occupants of the ghetto established in the Jewish quarter of Máramarossziget attempted to maintain aspects of their religious and cul-

accommodations. The Kolozsvár ghetto is being established in the brick factory and its vicinity.", in *Ellenzék*, 3 May 1944, 6; "Nagyváradon 30000 zsidót helyeznek el az ortodox zsinagóga környéki gettóban" (In Nagyvárad, 30,000 Jews are being placed in a ghetto near the Orthodox synagogue), in *Ellenzék*, 4 May 1944, 3.

51 The initial plan was to establish a collection camp in Szatmárnémeti. However, in the status report he filed on 3 May 1944, Ferenczy expressed a certain confusion; contrary to the intentions that had been verbalised at the meeting in Szatmárnémeti on 26 April, the Jewish population of the city and its environs had been moved into a ghetto. Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban*, 281.

52 The essential data concerning these deportation sites was published in Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania", 176–182.

53 The sentences handed down at the so-called "ghetto trial" before the People's Court in Kolozsvár are discussed in Braham, *Genocide and Retribution*, 53–224. See also Zoltán Tibori Szabó, *Árnyékos oldal. Zsidó identitástudat Erdélyben a holokauszt után* (Kolozsvár: Koinónia Könyvkiadó, 2007), 82–84; Szabolcs Kovács, *Csoportos perek a kolozsvári Népbíróság előtt* (1946), *Clio Műhelytanulmányok* 1 (Budapest: Clio Intézet, 2018), 51–62.

54 See, for example, Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*. Cf. the framework devised by László Csósz in Vági, Csósz, and Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, 83.

55 Local Jewish Councils compiled reports on conditions in the ghettos and collection camps and sent them to the Central Jewish Council in Budapest. See Kinga Frojimovics and Judit Molnár, eds., *Gettómagyarország 1944. A Központi Zsidó Tanács iratai*, Magyar Zsidó Levéltári Füzetek, no. 5 (Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Levéltár, 2002), 50–148.

tural life, though they were among the exceptions in this respect.⁵⁶ In some cases, such as that of Szilágycseh, camp commanders confiscated devotional objects and forbade prayers.⁵⁷ Every site featured a “mint” where wealthy individuals (or those believed to be wealthy) were tortured using various choice methods. Beyond that, beatings and other manifestations of sadism were regular occurrences.

Alongside the common elements, there were also substantial differences. Among the most significant were these sites’ topographical characteristics. A sharp dividing line could be drawn between the collection sites established in Jewish quarters (that is, neighbouring streets or residences) and the camps that were set up on the edges of cities, or just outside city limits, mostly in complexes of industrial, agricultural, or other buildings unequipped for human habitation. And again, the collection site outside of Dés, which had no infrastructure of any kind, belongs to a category of its own.

Jewish quarters were located in urban environments where people could be placed in habitable buildings. However difficult these living conditions may have been, some part of these houses was equipped with running water, electricity, and a sewer service (or at least a lavatory).⁵⁸ These collection sites made it possible to treat the sick in buildings that were converted into hospitals. For instance, in the “main ghetto” of Nagyvárad, the prayer house of the rabbi of Wisznice and the Orthodox Jewish boys’ gymnasium were transformed into hospitals.⁵⁹ Of course, the medical care available in these facilities was fairly limited.

Meanwhile, no such opportunities presented themselves to the Jewish populations who were concentrated outside inhabited environments, in brick factories or on farms. The overwhelming majority of the individuals who were crowded into sites like these were settled into buildings without walls or out in the open, in improvised tents. At best, electricity was supplied to the living quarters of the guards who oversaw the camp.⁶⁰ There was generally no running water,⁶¹ and the occupants of certain camps (such as Szászrégen and Szilágysomlyó) received only dirty water.⁶² There were no sewer lines or lavatories, so occupants dug latrines in order to attend to their bodily functions. A section of a building or barracks was generally designated for caring for the sick. In Marosvásárhely and Nagybánya, for example, detainees who needed medical attention were transferred from the camps to off-site synagogues which had been converted into hospitals.⁶³

The most wretched of these sites was almost certainly the Bungur forest near Dés. In the weeks preceding the ghettoisation, Crimean and Ukrainian refugees fleeing to the northwest in advance of the Soviet offensive stopped to rest in the part of the forest near the railroad.⁶⁴ The used, lice-infested straw that they left behind was the only

56 Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, 229.

57 *Ibid.*, 393.

58 These services did not function regularly. In Nagyvárad, city leaders often limited the supply of water and electricity. Dániel Löwy, *Az úri város zsidó lakosai. A nagyváradai zsidóság története* (Budapest: Magyar Unitárius Egyház Magyarországi Egyházkerülete, 2015), 232.

59 *Ibid.*, 234–235.

60 There were former worker homes at the brick factory in Kolozsvár which were supplied with electricity. SJAN Cluj, Fond 1 (Primăria Cluj/Kolozsvár város iratai), box 201–7325/1944, dossier 23559/1944, 14.

61 There was running water in Kolozsvár, but even here there were only fifteen taps to serve 18,000 people. Dániel Löwy, *A Kálváriától a tragédiáig. Kolozsvár zsidó lakosságának története* (Kolozsvár: Koinónia, 2005), 185–187.

62 Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, 298, 392.

63 *Ibid.*, 286, 330.

64 Between early April and mid-June 1944, roughly 15,000 refugees – Ukrainians, ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*), and members of various Crimean and Caucasian ethnic groups – passed through the territory under the control of Kolozsvár’s Ninth Army Corps. Likewise, the remnants of retreating German units and their commanders, accompanied by large numbers of Soviet prisoners of war, began arriving in this region in April

thing awaiting the Jewish population that was rounded up there.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, 7,800 individuals from Dés and the more northerly settlements of Szolnok-Doboka County were sentenced to deportation and herded together at this site.⁶⁶ This area had no roofed structures and no running water. Two days after the ghettoisation had begun, an opportunity arose to transfer this camp's occupants to the collection camp in Szamosújvár, but the county's prefect Béla Bethlen ultimately chose instead to send building materials to the Bungur forest, and thus the idea of a resettlement was rejected.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the situation became increasingly exasperating. The available lumber allowed the detainees to cobble together a few barracks, but most of the people there had to make themselves "tents" out of branches and leaves.⁶⁸

The topographical and infrastructural differences between Northern Transylvania's ghettos and collection camps would have significant consequences. That is, a significant proportion of the individuals deported from the ghettos arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau in better physical condition – and thus their chances of staying alive were greater – than those of the deportees who had spent a month in a collection camp, particularly the camp in the Bungur forest. For instance, the lack of food and water in the collection camp at Szilágycseh degraded the physical condition of the Jews there such that when they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, a much higher proportion of them were immediately sent to the gas chambers.⁶⁹

Guy Miron and Shlomit Shulhani have stressed that it is no longer necessary to utilise the definitions employed by the perpetrators of these crimes, but rather to establish typologies based on the results of historical research.⁷⁰ And thus the case of Northern Transylvania also warrants a redefinition of the terms we use for its collection sites.

Unsurprisingly, the Northern Transylvanian spectrum is largely consistent with the typology of rural Hungary, though not identical with it. As we have seen, in dealing with the solution to the Jewish question, the Hungarian administration of 1944 differentiated two types of sites: ghettos and collection camps. And historians of the Holocaust continue to make use of both these categorisations, sometimes treating them as if they were synonymous.

Of the four classifications devised by László Csősz, three are applicable to Northern Transylvania. Taking into account the operational and topographical characteristics described above, and having evaluated the two aforementioned typologies, I would recommend the following triadic classification (which reproduces the terminology of the Hungarian administration of 1944, but has been revised on the basis of the results of Holocaust research): ghettos; collection camps with access to infrastructure; and collection camps without infrastructure.

1944. József Nagy, *Békeévek Mars árnyékában. A Székely Határvédelmi Erők története (1940–1944)* (Kolozsvár: Kriterion, 2021).

65 Zoltán Singer, ed., *Volt egyszer egy Dés ... Bethlen, Magyarláros, Retteg, Nagyilonda és környéke* (Tel Aviv: Dész és Vidékéről Elszármazottak Landsmannschaftja, 1970), 427.

66 Tibori Szabó, "The Holocaust in Transylvania", 181.

67 László Ferenczy's status reports for 5 and 6 May 1944. Molnár, *Csendőrtiszt a Markóban*, 283, 286.

68 Braham and Tibori Szabó, *Az észak-erdélyi holokauszt földrajzi enciklopédiája*, 411.

69 Braham, *A népi társas politikája*, 716.

70 Miron, *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos*, vol. 1, XL.

Table 1:
Recommended Classification of Deportation Sites in Northern Transylvania

	Southeastern portion of Deportation Zone I (Southeastern portion of Gendarmerie District VIII)	Deportation Zone II (Gendarmerie Districts IX and X)
Ghetto	Felsővisó (Jewish quarter) Máramarossziget (Jewish quarter) Máramarossziget (poor Jewish quarter)	Nagyvárad ("main ghetto": Jewish quarter) Szatmárnémeti (Jewish quarter)
Collection Camp (with infrastruc- ture)	—	Nagyvárad ("little ghetto": barracks, agricultural and industrial buildings) Kolozsvár (brick factory) Szászrégen (brick factory) Szilágysomlyó (Somlyócséh brick factory) Marosvásárhely (brick factory) Marosvásárhely (livestock market) Beszterce (Stamboli farm) Nagybánya (Bernáth foundry) Nagybánya (Molcsány farm)
Collection Camp (without infrastruc- ture)	—	Dés (Bungur forest)

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