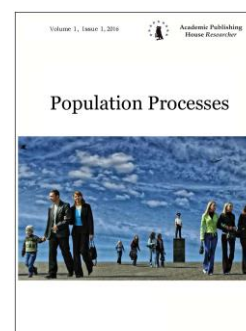


Copyright © 2017 by Academic Publishing House Researcher s.r.o.



Published in the Slovak Republic
Population Processes
Has been issued since 2016.
E-ISSN: 2500-1051
2017, 2(1): 35-47

DOI: 10.13187/popul.2017.2.35
www.ejournal44.com



Anti-Semitism in Slovakia in Post-War Years 1945 – 1948: A Period of “Common People’s Anti-Semitism”

Michal Šmigel^{a,*}

^a Matej Bel University, Slovakia

Abstract

The liberation of Czechoslovakia and the end of World War II did not mean the end of Jewish suffering in Slovakia, although several members of the Slovak Jewish minority virtually (and naively) expected it. On the contrary, a number of problems began, and the negative impacting of the post-war reality through their re-emergence in society was immediately activated. The post-war period as a period of social, political and moral crises was reflected in full, and the Jews faced hostility once again. Anti-Semitic unrest in Slovakia that broke out in the first days and months after World War II and was one of characteristic features of post-war development in Czechoslovakia, fit into the overall situation as existed on European territory.

The heuristic basis of the study includes archival materials from central Slovak National Archives in Bratislava and regional archives of the Slovak Republic. Besides these sources, Slovak and foreign scientific publications dedicated to given issues published in recent years have been used.

Methodologic base of the research involves principles of objectivism and historicism that enable objective and factual approach towards analysis of researched issues, critical evaluation of sources (through analytic, progressive and comparative method, direct and indirect method) and summarisation of knowledge as a result of analysis of the summary of facts. It also allows depiction of facts in the course and context of historical situation.

Finally, the author notes, post-war anti-Semitism undoubtedly emerged or grew out of Holocaust and several years of anti-Jewish propaganda in Slovakia (1939 - 1945), immediate war as well as post-war experiences, although it is impossible to neglect also the older “traditional” anti-Jewish attitudes of Slovak population (already present in the time of the interwar Czechoslovakia and Hungarian period of History). As the main reasons of the growing anti-Semitism in Slovakia (1939 – 1945) we can consider the Jewish efforts to their reintegration into civil society and issues of rehabilitation and of property rights – concerning former Jewish property, which was still in the hands of the former “arizators”, citizens (of lower social classes as well) or under national administration (paradoxically, often as a reward for participating in the resistance) – closely related to them and delays in the issue of its restitution. After all, the inaction of state administration representatives, “benevolent” penalties and mostly vague attitude and inconsistent approach of political leaders of the Republic on the issue (support of Jewish organizations and Jewish refugees versus the issue of restitution, contradictory statements and expressions) did not contribute to the normalization of relations. An unmistakable feature of the tensions between Jewish and non-Jewish population was also the condition of the post-war society in Slovakia itself,

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: michal.smigel@umb.sk (M. Šmigel)

not excluding the Jews. Anti-Semitic motives, which eventually resulted in many cases in racially motivated attacks were primarily purely personal or, rather, primarily economically and socially conditioned. Postwar common people's antisemitism was also one of important factors influencing the decision of the major part of Slovak Jewish citizens to emigrate from the country. Under the influence of at that time still positive international situation and hidden (but active) support of Czechoslovak offices, the major part of the Jews left (mainly in 1948 and at the beginning of 1949) Slovakia, emigrating mainly to Israel and western countries, i.e. overseas.

Keywords: anti-Semitism, common people's anti-Semitism in Slovakia, anti-Jewish moods, performances and pogroms, anti-Jewish riots in Bratislava, post-war period (1945–1948), Slovakia, Czechoslovakia.

1. Introduction

The liberation of Czechoslovakia and the end of World War II did not mean the end of Jewish suffering in Slovakia, although several members of the Slovak Jewish minority virtually (and naively) expected it. On the contrary, a number of problems began, and the negative impacting of the post-war reality through their re-emergence in society were immediately activated. The post-war period as a period of social, political and moral crises was reflected in full, and the Jews faced hostility once again. Anti-Semitic unrest in Slovakia that broke out in the first days and months after World War II and was one of characteristic features of post-war development in Czechoslovakia, fit into the overall situation as existed on European territory. The wave of post-war anti-Semitism significantly impacted all the neighbouring states, much more than in Czechoslovakia or in Slovakia – here, in comparison with the Czech lands, its physical manifestations were stronger, more unrestrained, due to differences in the causes themselves. The authorities and the general public were not happy about the presence of refugees (from Poland, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine), and in general, the Jews had difficulty adapting to the post-war society, which was characterized by post-war psychosis, administrative chaos and various problems related to the rebirth of the republic. Efforts to remove legislative and administrative barriers imposed on Jewish citizens preventing their full inclusion into society were compounded by manifestations “from the bottom”, motivated by the subjective incentives of the civilian population, taking “justice” into their own hands. The so-called “common people's anti-Semitism” was manifested.

2. Materials and methods

The heuristic basis of the study includes archival materials from central Slovak National Archives in Bratislava and regional archives of the Slovak Republic. Besides these sources, Slovak and foreign scientific publications dedicated to given issues published in recent years have been used.

Methodologic base of the research involves principles of objectivism and historicism that enable objective and factual approach towards analysis of researched issues, critical evaluation of sources (through analytic, progressive and comparative method, direct and indirect method) and summarisation of knowledge as a result of analysis of the summary of facts. It also allows depiction of facts in the course and context of historical situation.

3. Discussion

Despite the relatively positive light abroad, the actual position of the Jewish population in Czechoslovakia or, more precisely, in Slovakia during the first post-war years 1945–1948, cannot be characterized as smooth and safe. The status of Jews was directly influenced by an internal political development and by an overall social situation in the country passing through a period of social, political, moral as well as post-war crisis, while the first post-war years marked a period when the consequences of the Nazi occupation in the Czech lands and fascist influence in Slovakia were fading away. The Jews who returned from concentration camps and emigration, or survived the cruelties of the Holocaust in hiding in Slovakia, were not welcomed everywhere (sometimes rather unwelcome). Their nationality and national reliability were questioned, as well as property claims, as they demanded back the confiscated movable and immovable property, which was once theirs (see also: [Svobodová, 1999: 194](#)). In many cases, they persistently and tenaciously demanded restitution and restoration of their former property rights, but on the other side also some sort of compensation and certain (special) benefits arising from the survival of suffering. This is what

caused the gradual tension in relations with the majority population of Slovakia and led to several anti-Semitic manifestations.

The post-war period opened a new chapter of Slovak-Jewish relations in the country, which can be described as "the Jewish question in Slovakia" (1945-1953). It had several phases: repatriation period (1945 – 1946), a so called common people's anti-Semitism (1945 – 1948), emigration (1948 – 1949) and, finally, a so called political anti-Semitism (1949 – 1953). This study, however, aims to further clarify the impact of post-war common people's anti-Semitism on the status of the Jewish population in Slovakia, while narrowing its focus on anti-Semitic manifestations among resistance forces in society and examining their implications and impacts on the Jewish question in the post-war years of 1945 – 1948.

4. Results

The post-war manifestations of anti-Semitism in Slovakia between 1945 and 1948 (the period of "common people's anti-Semitism") are obviously continuous, but at the same time, waves of their increased occurrence can also be profiled:

- the first major wave (*the period of increasing anti-Semitism*) took place in the first months after the end of the war (July-September/December 1945),
- the second (*the peak period of the anti-Jewish appearances in Slovakia*) – in the summer months of 1946,
- the third (*the period of lingering anti-Semitism*) in the first half of 1947 (connected with the ongoing trial with Jozef Tiso and his subsequent execution) and again in August 1948 in Bratislava (as the last appearance of a common people's character in Slovakia).

Appearing anti-Semitically tuned manifestations were essentially aimed at intimidating the people of Jewish origin and religion or attempting to cause confusion, uncertainty in their ranks, possibly to force them to leave or move out of a certain location, or to emigrate. In form – they were mostly leaflet operations, distribution of alarming hoaxes, minor incidents, although Slovakia was not spared from the public manifestations of anti-Jewish actions of mass character during this period.

4.1. The period of increasing anti-Semitism

As it turned out, the regrets of non-Jewish population of Slovakia about the Jewish hardships during wartime clearly passed quickly and difficulties of early post-war months, the returns of the Jews to the towns of their original residence and the subsequent effort to return the lost properties into Jewish ownership, or the fear of losing the property in the eyes of the majority, became one of the main reasons of sprouting anti-Jewish moods in certain segments of society and regions, as reflected in the number of reporting period. Due to turbulent post-war situation, persistent "revolutionary" moods and, perhaps, also some frustrations with unfulfilled expectations, the wave of anti-Semitism gradually infiltrated the resistance organizations as well. These cases were not isolated and many inadapted people, mainly former guerrilla members, incidentally still armed, were during first post-war years a menace not only to Slovak Jews, but also to other inhabitants of the country. They committed riots that worried the competent authorities, at several places in Slovakia. "*The anti-Jewish moods that are caused by both fascist elements and some acts of Jews spread across the population. It is clear that this movement finds a fertile soil within a population affected by fascism and threatens to grow into large sizes,*" – the head of the 2nd division of the Main Headquarters of National Security (HVNB) warned already in the report of the beginning of July 1945 (SNA-1) and was not far from the truth.

A situation in eastern Slovakia had a particularly difficult development in first post-war years. For example, a worsening of relations and series of conflicts between Jewish and non-Jewish population of the city occurred in Bardejov in the beginning of June 1945. The relations were additionally complicated by "confident" manifestations of former resistance fighters from Bardejov (members of a guerrilla group "Lipa"). There also occurred one of the first post-war anti-Semitic events of mass character – in a form of manifestations of the Bardejov region partisans (led by Capt. Andrej Palša, an official of partisan association in Košice), joined by the local population (number of manifesting people is estimated to 1000). The crowd shouted slogans like "Jews out!", "Jews go work on bridges!" and other anti-Semitic statements and the partisans carried out some

house searches at the local Jews' in order to find out whether they own weapons and scarce goods. *"During all this time, individuals – partisans committed several missteps"* – stated the regional commander of NB in Bardejov (ŠAP-B; SNA-2).

The anti-Jewish demonstration in Prešov immediately after the one in Bardejov had a similar nature. Regional press reported on the events that took place in the town on the 26th and 28th of July 1945 mainly as "hooliganism carried out in typically fascist manner". A crowd joined the morning demonstration of women in Prešov – demanding increase in rationing and pointing out the better supplying of local Jews – and riots began to occur on the streets. Crowd attacked, plundered and demolished the kitchen of the Repatriation office where the Jews of Prešov ate. The Prešov synagogue was also robbed and the Jews in it were insulted. At the same time, insults on Jewish citizens occurred on the streets of the town as well as an attack on a station of National Security (NB) in the city. Evening manifestation (about 2, 000 people) turned into an anti-state demonstration and the crowd was shouting anti-state and anti-Jewish slogans (Hlas ľudu, 1945: 1). Further investigation of the riots in Prešov showed that a similar anti-Jewish demonstration had been planned in Košice as well (SNA-3). Similar moods among the population were recorded in other eastern towns (Levoča, Michalovce) and other regions of Slovakia in the following period (SNA-4).

Events occurring in eastern Slovakia during summer months of 1945 clearly pointed out the reality of escalating post-war anti-Semitism, but the attention of the whole country was attracted to this issue and the urgent need of dealing with it was strongly emphasized among the highest government circles only after the case of anti-Jewish riots in Topoľčianky – sometimes called a pogrom – of 24th September 1945. It was a specific mass anti-Jewish demonstration in Slovakia regarding its extent and nature, greatly unsettling the Jewish population of the country and reflecting on their emigration tendencies (Kamenec, 2000; Šišjaková, 2007). Anti-Jewish demonstration in Topoľčianky showed the clear limits of anti-Semitic manifestations among the population in Slovakia, including the burning question of restitution of Jewish property and persistent anti-Jewish tendencies among the military, security and resistance forces. At the same time, the statements of Slovak politicians fully covered the entire range of views, from the statements that the whole situation is *"a fight of response, which indirectly attacks the central government"* to the statement that *"they are thus the sins of the past"*. Talks about the existence of anti-Jewish underground movement spreading discontent among people were starting (SNA-5). While the murder cases of communists and Jews in the villages of Snina region – Nová Sedlica, Ulič and Kolbasov (in the late November to December 1945; 16 Jews were murdered) went almost unnoticed in the eyes of the public. These events were attributed to illegal armed groups from the Polish borders, or rather members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army operating in south-eastern Poland (Šmigel, 2007).

4.2. The peak period of the anti-Jewish appearances in Slovakia

Anti-Semitism among the former resistance forces, its escalation, and particularly its climax in the summer of 1946 is a specific episode of the issue. The persistent resentment of Jews in the ranks of former partisans was confirmed in August 1945 by Major GS Ján Stanek (before the pogrom in Topoľčianky), who stated in a report to the Deputy Chairman of the Slovak National Council (SNR) Karol Šmidke that: *"It is necessary to resolve the ratio of Israelites to stabilize today's peace [...] Jews in Slovakia are enriching themselves at the expense of the poor classes of the Slovak people, who, at the time of Slovak National Uprising and underground activities, brought the biggest sacrifices [...] The blood in veins of the nation boil against the Jews. They are not the echoes of fascism or, perhaps, Hitlerism, but of the patriots who fought against the Germans and for the destruction of Hitlerism and fascism. [...] It is therefore a danger that nation will have had enough, converting to pogroms against Jews"* (Šutaj, 2002: 128-129). Stanek thus indirectly warned about the "tension" in the ranks of Slovak resistance members.

Similarly, other reports of security authorities warned: *"... an anti-Jewish mood can be spotted among partisans, whose origin is that most Jews, although with less merit than partisans of Czechoslovakia or mostly without any merit for the state, have better position in both offices, as well as in trade and industry. Due to this dissatisfaction more and more voices can be heard from the ranks of partisans that they will have to clean up this mess their own way."* While it was stated that: *"Among the population of Slovakia, the rise of anti-Semitism is generally noticeable, which is mainly distributed by reactive elements, but, as previously mentioned, by partisans as well, and the cause of this is also a too self-confident behaviour of the citizens of Jewish faith, a*

disproportionate enrichment in short period of time, while not getting involved in constructional and beneficial work, their disproportionate placement in public life, as well as their disproportionate possession of companies and businesses” (SNA-6).

In this sense, a series of attacks on Jews had been occurring from the beginning of 1946 in Bytča. They were attacks on Jewish homes and businesses, which – as it turned out – were performed by two former partisans Jozef Gallo and František Hanuš (SNA-7). They were uncovered and convicted of these activities in July 1946. They justified their action during investigation by arguing that Jews “*did not participate in any constructional work, do not do anything but business, getting richer and thus directly provoke us*” (Šišjaková, 2006: 153). Incidents between Jews and former partisans from Veľká Lomnica (Kežmarok district) with similar content were reported to the NB (ŠAL).

As the above mentioned cases (not rare) testify, the property aspect became the fundamental cause of the increase in anti-Semitism in post-war Slovak society as the aryanised Jewish property had still been owned by former aryanizers, or had been under national trusteeship (often former partisans and other members of the resistance), and at the same time was the subject of interest of the returned original owners or their relatives. Therefore, in this respect, quite logically, there occurred very frequent clashes and conflicts. It was particularly reflected by the adoption of restitution law no. 128/1946 Coll. of Laws and Regulations (of 16th May 1946), which became one of the main causes of the riots in the summer of 1946 in Slovakia, when, in the beginning of August 1946, despite some security measures (as well as reports on the upcoming anti-Jewish operation and strong anti-Jewish campaign through seditious pamphlets), riots and anti-Jewish manifestations of ordinary members of resistance branches occurred in Bratislava and other places of Slovakia.

The situation is very clearly described in the report of the Regional Headquarters of National Security (OVNB) in Trnava: “*Recently, we can see an indignation at the issued Restitution Act among population, especially among working people. Population had not adopted this law with enthusiasm, because many poor people will lose different furniture equipment that had, at a time, been bought by under the Act on public auctions. This is increased by the fact that the people of Jewish religion do not wait until a transfer regulation is attached to this Act, but are already personally seeking a repayment of the purchased things without giving any compensation for them. [...] After finishing the Restitution Law and its transfer regulation are made in effect, anti-Jewish reprisals can be expected at various locations...*” (SNA-8). Despite the clear signals and also multiplying conflicts in various regions, the ruling power left the situation as it was, in a slope.

Since June 1946, anti-Jewish moods intensified on the whole territory of Slovakia. Anti-Semitic leaflets calling for the eviction of the Jews from the country were scattered in Trnava. Leaflets with similar themes had also appeared in Kežmarok, Prešov and Piešťany. An incident between Jews and a group of partisans took place in Humenné in July 1946. Leaflets “*Jews out!*” were distributed in Nové Zámky and a group of brawlers tried to provoke anti-Jewish riots in Trenčianske Teplice at the end of July. Leaflets titled “*We, the Slovak partisans, are calling!*” were distributed in Zlaté Moravce, Levice and Zvolen in the beginning of August containing ten anti-Semitic oriented articles and ending with a greeting “*Death to the fascists! Honour the partisans! Kill him!*”. At the same time, leaflets “*Now or never, away with Jews!*” appeared in Žilina. There was a reasonable suspicion the mentioned activities were coordinated, since leaflets with similar nature appeared on various location in Slovakia. An increased anti-Jewish mood among the population was detected throughout the country (Šmigel, 2011: 258-259).

It did not miss Bratislava, where small riots, incitement and spreading anti-Jewish moods were happening almost on a daily basis from mid-July 1946. Small groups raided Jews in the city especially in the evening. Leaflets with an appeal “*Beat the Jews!*” appeared lying on the streets. These misdeeds were marked by an Association of racially persecuted by fascist regime (SRP) as “*...riots, which are already detectably organized in Bratislava systematically and may soon be the root of other anti-Jewish public demonstrations, even pogroms*” (SNA-9), and again, it was not far from the truth.

Given information in possession of Slovak NB clearly indicated that something larger is about to happen and its epicentre might just be the 1st Nationwide Congress of Partisans in Slovakia arranged on the occasion of the 2nd anniversary of Slovak National Uprising (SNP), summoned in Bratislava during the first days of August 1946. In addition, in sufficient time before the

convention, competent government posts were sufficiently well informed about the upcoming anti-Jewish events in Bratislava as well (Bumová, 2007: 18). Union of Slovak partisans (ZSP), which urged its district branches and ordinary members to remain disciplined during the Congress and to prevent the activities of “reactionary elements” regarding the Jews through internal circulars, had also information about the upcoming anti-Jewish incidents in the city (SNA-10). At the same, the partisan central office reported on the situation of the SRP while assuring that it had earmarked thousand reliable partisan members who would ensure order and security to the Jewish population in the city. However, as stated in article Journal of Jewish Religious Communities (ŽNO) called “What happened in Slovakia”, which captures the overall condition before the Congress, that “... in the connection with the upcoming congress of partisans, there will be anti-Jewish demonstrations and disturbances as every child in Slovakia already knew. Uncovered agitation was happening on trains, at stations and in pubs. [...] Slovak security authorities and the organizers of the Congress were made aware of the danger and pointed it themselves out in warning. Of course, the management of the partisans not only did not have anything to do with these wrongful incidents, but on the contrary, it worked against them. But everything [...] was half-hearted” (Československo a Izrael, 1993: 45).

Slovak security authorities undoubtedly committed a strategic error when they planned the strictest measures for the period from the evening of August the 3rd 1946 till August the 5th 1946 morning, when the mass arrival of partisans was expected (on 2nd and 3rd August 1946 only the General Assembly of delegates of the ZSP branches was held, numbering about 250 to 300 people, and the public manifestation was planned on August the 4th 1946). “Surprisingly” however, 2 000 – 3 000 resistance members already arrived in Bratislava on 2nd August (their overall number on the Congress is estimated at about 15 thousand). The NB’s regional headquarters in Bratislava therefore ordered NB stations an enhanced alert, the emergency squad of NB from Lučenec was called, a school of NB and member of HVNB were available, patrols in the Jewish quarter were reinforced and the local military garrison was in alert as well. SRP has set up a permanent telephone and observational service in Jewish quarter, which immediately informed the NB in the case of any incident occurrence. The waiting was not long and reports on incidents aimed against Jews as well as ordinary fights and riots under the influence of alcohol had been received from different parts of Bratislava (SNA-11).

As early as the night from 1st to 2nd a burglary in the Jewish street was reported, an ambush in a Jewish apartment happened at Kupeckého Street and the owner was insulted and robbed. The next night hand grenades were thrown on Jewish homes; there had been several attempts by partisans and local civilians to break into the Jewish quarter and to provoke incidents, especially near the soup kitchen. They were, however, prevented by the members of the NB and the gathered crowd managed to be dispersed.

On 3rd August 1946 a number of incidents and constant insults of Jewish pedestrians had been reported. A soup kitchen on Zámocká Street had been invaded and vandalized. In the afternoon, the clusters of drunken and armed partisans and civilians (crowd reportedly increased up to a thousand people) tried to break into the Jewish Street while shouting anti-Jewish slogans. In the evening, however, smaller groups raided Jewish citizens and their homes (while also looting) at more places in Bratislava.

On August the 4th 1946, anti-Semitic slogans were being shouted again during a manifestation assembly and celebratory march of partisans in front of the tribune for government officials and guests. Partisans from the ZSP branches in Topoľčany, Žilina, Spišská Nová Ves and Zlaté Moravce acted most actively in this regard. In the morning there were also some disturbances in front of the Slovak National Theatre, mainly by the partisans from eastern Slovakia. In addition to raiding and looting of Jewish flats and torturing their owners on 5th August 1946, an attack on a Jewish girls’ boarding school was even ventured on Šrajberova Street and a Jewish soup kitchen was demolished again (on Zámocká Street) while several people were (some also heavily) injured. In addition to the above mentioned events, other minor incidents, which the affected Jews did not report to NB, happened elsewhere in Bratislava (Šmigel, 2011: 259-263).

The situation in Bratislava considering the safety aspects was clearly managed poorly. In case of larger interventions, the NB members feared more violence. According to information the President of SRP Vojtech Winterstein had: “The police arrives rather late, arresting people, but setting them free in a short time and these people then return to assault, again. This is not a

pogrom, no noise is heard, no large masses there. Ambush is executed by small groups.” The overall statistics of the disturbances were probably much greater than the declared 19 seriously injured citizens of Bratislava (4 of the injured heavily). The number of slightly harmed had not been found (Československo a Izrael, 1993: 43). 31 rioters had been detained (most of them remained unpunished and several cases were later brushed off).

Anti-Jewish riots (in connection with the departure of partisans from Bratislava to the places of their residence) were subsequently extended to almost the whole of Slovakia. Incidents and turmoil took place in Nové Zámky, Žilina, Rajecké Teplice, Zbehy, Leopoldov, Nitra, Šurany, Levice, Čadca, Topoľčany, Banská Bystrica, Trnava, Komárno and Želiezovce. Anti-Semitic leaflets appeared again in several places in Slovakia. The total statistics of these riots were again not quantified (NB declared only a few detainees) (Šmigel, 2011: 263-264).

Two official communiqués on the events came out on the 6th August 1946. Slovak News Agency (SAS) denied the information on the anti-Jewish riots in Slovakia (which were also received abroad) in its report: *“In some of our and foreign newspapers there appeared reports that the participants of the partisan congress in Bratislava were guilty of rioting and demonstrations. Commission of the Interior officially announces that these reports are not based on truth but on misconceptions and incorrect information. Participants of the Congress had not committed any riots or demonstrations and the attempts of reactionary fascist elements to disturb the seriousness and dignity of the course of celebration were destroyed on the spot and a dignified progress of the festivities had been preserved.”* The official version of the Czech News Agency, however, admitted that the riots occurred in Slovakia, but did not consider partisans to be responsible for them, but *“bad elements and provocateurs from the ranks of former members of the Hlinka Guard and the Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party”* who *“tried to [...] tear down some of the participants of the Congress to act violently against people of Jewish origin”*, while it was not supposed to remain in Bratislava, but the riots were supposed to be caused in some other smaller towns on the occasion of the return of partisans home. Apparently after the publication of the above mentioned, SAS had released a new report the following day, according to which the Commission of the Interior had information that seditious leaflets of anti-Jewish and anti-state nature had been handed out before the Congress at different places of Slovakia, and, especially, on trains by which partisans had been arriving to Bratislava. It was happening through illegal groups allegedly linked with foreign countries and influential groups (?), which *“have occupied high positions in our public life”* (Československo a Izrael, 1993: 40-41). As suggested by the mentioned statements, an attempt to hide the participation of resistance members on these anti-Jewish acts was apparent.

At the initiative of Jewish organizations, the issue of anti-Jewish riots in Slovakia started to be dealt with by the central authorities in Prague (Bumová, 2007: 18-22). On August 7th 1946, an official commission had gone from Bratislava to Prague to discuss the situation in Slovakia with the Ministry of Interior. Words of condemnation were raised against some of Slovak newspapers which shaped *“anti-Jewish public opinion”* in Slovakia, accusations fell on security forces, but the criticism also fell on Slovak authorities who did not condemn anti-Jewish moods clearly and did not punish the perpetrators enough. In addition, the government authorities took the situation reluctantly and tried to somehow get rid of the responsibility that was exaggeratedly and calculatingly attributed to *“domestic response”* or to an influence from abroad, mainly Poland and Hungary (see also: Československo a Izrael, 1993: 43; Mlynárik, 2005; Kmeť – Ottmárová, 2010).

Anti-Semitic riots in Bratislava and manifestations in other locations in Slovakia related to them, however, raised concerns at state authorities with regard to the upcoming celebrations of the second anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising on the 29th August 1946 and to reports on upcoming nationwide pogroms against Jews in Slovakia, that resulted in the increased security measures and transfers of several hundred State Security members from the Czech lands to Slovakia (Pešek, 1999: 19).

At the same time, HVNB in Bratislava informed through its circular its subordinated security structures of the Regulation by Commission of the Interior of 19th August 1946, which imposed maintaining public order and preventing anti-Jewish manifestations in Slovakia. *“Recently, there have been some unfortunate anti-Jewish riots in Slovakia. After conducting an investigation of individual cases, it has been found that they were always provoked by reactionary elements, which tried to bring a wave of anti-Semitism into the resistance organizations as well. Individuals*

deceived to believe in the seditious tactics and, in their blindness, not realizing the impact of their actions when committing anti-Jewish riots, have also been found in these organizations" (SNA-12).

Subsequently, a strict attention had been ordered to the heads of the district national committees and district administrative committees and chairmen of these offices to prevent similar infringements of order and public security in their districts. NB members and regional security officers were literally warned that the most stringent sanctions will be drawn if they do not intervene decisively and energetically against any anti-Jewish, anti-state or other riots with all seriousness. The Commission of the Interior ordered all the officials of the resistance organization branches in Slovakia to make an effort to suppress any spread of anti-Semitism among its own membership base at an early stage (SNA-12).

The Commission of the Interior issued a special "security" circular to celebrate the SNP on the 21st August 1946. It strongly appealed to the local government components (ONV and MNV), the structures of NB and the regional security departments and, ultimately, the resistance organizations and trade unions to maintain the celebrations of the SNP dignified (ŠABB-Z). Celebrations of the second anniversary of the SNP in Slovakia ultimately bypassed without major incidents (anti-Jewish moods were expressed mainly in the form of leaflets).

Anti-Semitic manifestations in Bratislava, which subsequently spread to several cities in Slovakia, can be considered a culminating point of the issue. The significance of these events lay in the fact that the overall political direction of the Slovak national representation had begun to take different direction while dealing with the issue of "the Jewish problem". While after the events in Topoľčany (September 1945), the Government considered the accelerated passing of Restitution Law, it now announced that the law would not be carried out in Slovakia until instructions would be issued to its design. The anti-Jewish act of resistance members thus achieved its effect and, clearly, there was a concession, just not in favour of Jews (see also: Krejčová, 1993: 169). The effort to maintain the status quo, however, rightly mobilized the leaders of Jewish organizations in Slovakia and in the Czech lands. On 11th September 1946, the representatives of the SRP and the Central Union of the ŽNO handed a "Memorandum on the Jewish Question", which declared the problem of the Jewish minority in Slovakia, over to the Office of the President of the Republic. It mainly focused on the issues of the safety of the community and the restitution of Jewish property (SNA-13). However, no shift in the solution of the Jewish question occurred in fact or, better, the waiting game of the governmental authorities brought "fruits" in a form of changing Jewish names of the Jewish citizens to Slovak, a mass internal migration of Jews (from villages to urban environment, from Slovakia to the Czech Lands) and their emigration from Czechoslovakia (to eastern Europe, overseas, Palestine, or Israel).

4.3. The period of lingering anti-Semitism

By the end of year 1946 and during 1947 anti-Semitic manifestations reached another level related to process taking place at the National Court in Bratislava with former Slovak State president Jozef Tiso. It was obvious that course of proceedings together with handing down a death sentence were politically motivated and, of course, the „real“ culprit was a thorn in the side of supporters and followers of the former regime and J. Tiso personality, seeing him anywhere and in anybody. Often uncritically and regarding previous facts (i.e. solution of the Jewish question during the existence of the Slovak State 1939 – 1945) he was found in many cases in the Jews, alternatively in cooperation of the Jews with the Czechs or the communists (Šišjaková – Šmigel', 2008: 216).

During years 1946 – 1947, antisemitism became one of the quite important points within power-political struggle between the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) and the Democratic Party (DS). Although both political parties have officially condemned any form of antisemitism, they have accused each other of direct responsibility for it. This was not rare in the press as well, it gradually published clear anti-Semitic statements of representatives of these parties. Involving of this question in power-political conflict between KSS and DS (as one of demagogic means of gradual discrediting of DS in years 1946 – 1947 in internal politics sphere) has even deepened the crisis between Jewishness and majority society and shifted it from lower class to position of political perception. At the same time, a phenomenon of so-called Jewish Bolshevism came alive due to which political orientation shifted „to the left“. These tendencies appeared particularly in the major part of the Jewish citizens who acted in this way not only under the influence of resistance activities during the former regime but they also regarded orientation on the Communist Party as

guarantee against possible repeating of fascist practice and „progressive“ internacionalism (sobering up from these illusions came soon) (compare: [Salner, 2008: 58-62](#)). As historian Ivica Bumová stated: „*Jews with their effort to reach civil rehabilitation have become captives of internal-political conflicts and struggle for power*“ ([Bumová, 2007: 16](#)).

Generally speaking, the Czechoslovak government and other authorities at a higher state level formally condemned any anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish citizens and advocated for their severe punishment (as indicated by a number of contemporary regulations and circulars) ([SNA-14](#)). Despite the increased security measures in this issue, the mere situation had been soothing too slowly, as illustrated by other anti-Semitic acts even with the participation of military members (for example in Michalovce in mid-September 1946) ([Východoslovenská pravda, 1946: 1](#)) and resistance components (in Bytča (see also: [Šišjaková, 2006: 154-155](#)) and Bardejov ([SNA-15](#)) during the second half of 1946 and in 1947). After all, other anti-Jewish riots in Bratislava in August 1948 – though not so extensive as in August 1946 – are the clear testimony of that.

These had roots in rather banal reason, however, they indicated persisting anti-Semitic tendencies in the country even after the change of the regime, including Bratislava. The case had started on a marketplace in the early morning on 20th August 1948 where two women had an argument – Jewess and pregnant Slovak. The conflict allegedly started due to jumping the queue of Jewess Alica Franková in stand with apples, where pregnant Slovak woman accused a clerk that „*she gives goods more promptly to stinky Jewesses*“. Franková answered Prášilová „*You guard, SS, we are not in year 1942 anymore, these times when the Jews were treated this way are gone!*“. Women laced into each other and other standing Bratislava women shouted „Beat that stinky Jewess up, beat her“ and „Jewess is beating pregnant woman!“ ([SNA-16](#)). Although this clash was quickly suppressed after market watchman intervention (later with members of Security) it had caught attention of curious people from the whole market and people had spread news that Jewess beat Christian woman who immediately had a miscarriage and fought for her life in a hospital.

Angry mob (cca 600 persons) supposed that the Sbor národní bezpečnosti (SNB) protects guilty Jewess and blocked activity of SNB members, shouting anti-Semitic mottos. Attacked and injured were also other Jewesses from the market who had to be protected by order services. Then the mass of protesters moved in front of Bratislava City Hall and near the streets (the number of persons increased to 1300) that could not have been prevented by a few SNB guards. Demonstrators tempestuously shouted „Down with Jews“, „Kill Jews“, „We had not fight for Jews“, „Jews to Palestine“ etc. Agitators spread entirely mindless news about the pregnant Slovak woman which had caused even bigger antisemitism and increased number of demonstrators. Only when more Security members with LtCol Sedmík arrived about 1 p.m., it was possible to push demonstrators out of Primate’s Square into sideways streets (rocks, apples and tomatoes had been throwing from the crowd shouting mottos „Ugh, SNB protects Jews“, Shame on SNB“ etc.) and gradually separated them (22 persons were placed in detention by Security) ([SNA-17](#)).

Morning anti-Semitic demonstration had a strong response in ranks of Bratislava citizens. After 4 p.m., groups of citizens discussing previous events began assemble, about 100 persons, mostly women shouting anti-Semitic mottos, assembled near the marketplace. Although these manifestations had also been pacified and a strict emergency of SNB divisions was ordered, incidents intensified and continued until late night hours. After 8 p.m. the Security had been pacifying about 600 demonstrators at the Stalin Square, however, at that time other groups on Kapucínska, Židovská, Zámocká, Šulekova and Panenská Street and on Palisády were formed, shouting anti-Semitic mottos, breaking windows (estimated at hundreds of windows) in Jewish houses and buildings. Persons of Jewish religion had been attacked in some places. There happened a demolition of Jewish canteen on Zámocká Street, throwing bricks into windows of Jewish hospital on Šulekova Street, demolition of offices and show windows of Jewish trade company in Suché Mýto and breaking windows in some Jewish institutions – Jewish old people’s house and a building of Jewish society of girls’ orphans on Markovičova and Podjavorinská Street. According to information by the Security, it was mostly young people, students, workers and a lot of women that participated in night riots (another 15 persons were arrested) ([SNA-18](#); [SNA-19](#)).

Attempt to provoke anti-Semitic demonstration took place the following day, on 21st August 1948 when several hundreds of citizens spreading anti-Semitic appeals assembled in morning

hours in front of marketplace on the Stalin Square. This manifestation was (contrary to previous day) quickly eliminated by strict intervention of the Security (SNA-20).

Slovak Jewish organisations characterized Bratislava events during 20th – 21st August 1948 as an „act of fascism“ which „is absolutely not suppressed in Slovakia and supposed to be strong enough to develop into an attack against people’s democratic order in a suitable moment“ (SNA-20). Political elites and government adopted similar rhetoric and the incident was evaluated as a political attack against themselves (i.e. anti-state character), not as an act followed from antisemitism in society (Šisjaková, 2010: 44-47; see also: Baláž, 2010: 44-47). In contrary to stated announcements, the Country Headquarter SNB in Bratislava declared that the cause of riots is persisting anti-Semitic atmosphere in the city. More specifically, the issue was characteristic negatives reproached the Jews in first post-war years in other places in Slovakia as well, i.e. inadequately huge percentage of representation of Jews in offices, national companies and well paid posts; demonstration of material sufficiency (the way of dressing, wearing jewellery, sitting in cafes, using of recreation etc.); demanding priority rights in several spheres (as it was in Bratislava marketplace); absence from honest working, black marketeer affairs etc. „And what is the most important, even today they speak Hungarian or languages of other western nations and generally symphatize with the West, where a lot of them goes. Learning English is a common thing for them. [...] Thus it may be said that the incident which happened on 20th August 1948 on marketplace in Bratislava had not began from some violent racial hatred to citizens of Jewish origin. Its roots are in some presumption and feeling of exploitation of majority of citizens with adequate living standard of the working, minority of citizens with higher living standard and those who does not work, at least not physically.“ Finally, the Country Headquarter SNB in Bratislava also warned of other incidents (SNA-21).

During riots in Bratislava and shortly after them (in the process of investigation), there were about 130 persons in detention and 40 out of them sentenced and sent to work camps in Ilava and Tichá Dolina – Ružomberok district (others got smaller punishments) (SNA-22; SNA-23). There also came to purge among members of Bratislava Regional and District Headquarter of SNB and some city stations (accused of inconsequent doing official duties). Some of commanding staff was suspended, part of the members of the Security punished by redeployment and some of them (according to documents – twenty six) were brought a charge (SNA-24; SNA-25).

5. Conclusion

The post-war anti-Semitism undoubtedly emerged or grew out of Holocaust and several years of anti-Jewish propaganda in Slovakia (1939 – 1945), immediate war as well as post-war experiences, although it is impossible to neglect also the older “traditional” anti-Jewish attitudes of Slovak population (already present in the time of the interwar Czechoslovakia and Hungarian period of History). As the main reasons of the growing anti-Semitism in Slovakia (1939 – 1945) we can consider the Jewish efforts to their reintegration into civil society and issues of rehabilitation and of property rights – concerning former Jewish property, which was still in the hands of the former “arizators”, citizens (of lower social classes as well) or under national administration (paradoxically, often as a reward for participating in the resistance) (Jelínek, 2009: 377) – closely related to them and delays in the issue of its restitution. It subsequently unwound questioning of Jewish participation in the SNP, the state-national reliability and verification of participation in the Germanization and Magyarization as well as fear of inflow of Jews from abroad and so on. After all, the inaction of state administration representatives, “benevolent” penalties and mostly vague attitude and inconsistent approach of political leaders of the Republic on the issue (support of Jewish organizations and Jewish refugees versus the issue of restitution, contradictory statements and expressions) did not contribute to the normalization of relations. An unmistakable feature of the tensions between Jewish and non-Jewish population was also the condition of the post-war society in Slovakia itself, not excluding the Jews. Anti-Semitic motives, which eventually resulted in many cases in racially motivated attacks were primarily purely personal or, rather, primarily economically and socially conditioned. So a “culprit” and “problem” often became a person who was somehow different, which in some cases was true on both sides, and it was no longer only about the individuals, but the community as a whole.

Growing anti-Semitism in Slovak society, including the resistance forces, during the first years after World War II, was a reflection of social climate and the actual social situation in the

country, experiencing moral crisis and the effects of post-war psychosis. Compared to other population strata, the resistance forces in Slovakia were a relevant factor and had “stronger voice”, which, so to speak, was not possible to overhear or ignore. Although anti-Jewish attitudes of Slovak resistance members are not possible to generalize (certainly there were many who rejected anti-Semitism and did not identify with it), they were still eloquent enough and had strong political undertone. They broadcasted a clear message retroactively demonstrating the social environment in Slovakia during the period of “common people’s anti-Semitism” (1945 – 1948), which was subsequently – in late 40s and 50s – replaced by a period of “political anti-Semitism” (1949 – 1953). In other words – antisemitism in Slovakia did not disappear after the change of regime in February 1948, however, its form has been altered to some extent. Many cases were withheld, became „open secret“ or exemplary presented in political processes in the 50’s („Czechoslovak Rajko“ chasing, process with Rudolf Slánský and „bourgeois nationalists“). As a result, antisemitism has been transformed into the form of “condemnation of Zionism, Cosmopolitanism” and its supporters (see also: Šromovský, 2015).

Postwar common people’s antisemitism was also one of important factors influencing the decision of the major part of Slovak Jewish citizens to emigrate from the country. Under the influence of at that time still positive international situation and hidden (but active) support of Czechoslovak offices, the major part of the Jews left (mainly in 1948 and at the beginning of 1949) Slovakia, emigrating mainly to Israel and western countries, i.e. overseas (see also: Jankech, 2015). Gradual assimilation, fear of own identity and not very happy future in totalitarian state waited for those who decided to stay from any reasons.

6. Acknowledgements

The paper was delivered as part of the project Small Nations under Extreme Conditions of War and Peace: A Historical and Comparative Investigation. Delivery time 2016-2018. Code: 100.01.

References

- Baláž, 2010 – *Baláž A.* Transporty nádeje. Bratislava 2010.
- Bumová, 2007 – *Bumová I.* Protižidovské výtržnosti v Bratislave v historickom kontexte (august 1946) / *Pamäť národa.* 2007. Vol. III. No. 3.
- Československo a Izrael, 1993 – *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945 – 1956. Dokumenty* // Eds.: K. Kaplan et al. Praha 1993.
- Hlas ľudu, 1945 – „Hlas ľudu“, 3. 10. 1945, p. 1.
- Jankech, 2015 – *Jankech J.* Československo a Izrael v druhej polovici štyridsiatych rokov: emigrácia priateľstva? / *Promýšlet Evropu dvacátého století : konflikty beze zbraní.* Brno 2015. Pp. 113-126.
- Jelínek, 2009 – *Jelínek J. A.* Dávidova hviezda pod Tatrami. Praha 2009.
- Kamenec, 2000 – *Kamenec I.* Protižidovský pogrom v Topoľčanoch v septembri 1945 / *Studia historica Nitriensia* 8. Nitra 2000. Pp. 85-99.
- Kmeť-Ottmárová, 2010 – *Kmeť M. – Ottmárová B.* K histórii prejavov antisemitizmu v Maďarsku v povojnovom období (1945–1948) / *Acta historica Neosoliensia*, 13/2010, Banská Bystrica 2010. Pp. 111-129.
- Krejčová, 1993 – *Krejčová H.* Český a slovenský antisemitizmus 1945 – 1948 / *Stránkami soudobých dějin. Sborník statí k pětasedesátinám historika Karla Kaplana.* Praha 1993.
- Mlynárik, 2005 – *Mlynárik J.* Dějiny Židů na Slovensku. Praha 2005.
- Pešek, 1999 – *Pešek J.* Štátna bezpečnosť na Slovensku 1948 – 1953. Bratislava 1999.
- Salner, 2008 – *Salner P.* Premeny židovskej Bratislavy. Bratislava 2008.
- SNA-1 – Slovak National Archives (SNA) Bratislava, f. Commision of the Interior (PV) – bezp., box 442, no. 7510/1945, ONV and MNV – deficiencies, report.
- SNA-2 – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 1, Situation Report for 1945.
- SNA-3 – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 483, Anti-Jewish demonstrations of partisans in Prešov.
- SNA-4 – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 2, Situation Report for 1946 – May.
- SNA-5 – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 1, no. 383/1945, Situation report on the territory of the whole Slovakia (15.9. – 15.10.1945).
- SNA-6 – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 2, Situation report for 1946 – May.

- SNA-7** – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 2, Situation report of OVNB Žilina (30.07.1946).
- SNA-8** – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 2, Report of OVNB Trnava (3.9.1946).
- SNA-9** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 77, no. 587/1946, Report on riots in Bratislava (26.7.1946).
- SNA-10** – SNA, f. PV – prez., box 37, no. 7413/1946, Report on misconducts on the occasion of the Congress of Slovak partisans in Bratislava.
- SNA-11** – SNA, f. PV – prez., box 37, no. 7413/1946, Report on misconducts on the occasion of the Congress of Slovak partisans in Bratislava.
- SNA-12** – SNA, f. PV – bezp., box 498, no. 3/1947, Public order and public security – fulfillment.
- SNA-13** – SNA, f. PV – všeob., box 245, no. 30000/1947, Memorandum on the Jewish question.
- SNA-14** – SNA, f. PV – prez., box 37, Suppression of anti-Semitic manifestations.
- SNA-15** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 79, Bardejov – Anti-Jewish riots.
- SNA-16** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Commemorative file SRP and ÚŠŽNO (24.08.1948).
- SNA-17** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Anti-Jewish demonstrations in Bratislava – report (20.08.1948).
- SNA-18** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Anti-Jewish demonstrations in Bratislava – report (I. appendix) on 20.08.1948.
- SNA-19** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Report of Central secretariat SRP (25.08.1948).
- SNA-20** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Commemorative file SRP and ÚŠŽNO (24.08.1948).
- SNA-21** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Riots in Bratislava – report (30.08.1948).
- SNA-22** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Anti-Jewish riots in Bratislava – result of investigation (14.09.1948);
- SNA-23** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. List of persons sent to work department who actively participated in demonstrations in Bratislava on 20.08.1948.
- SNA-24** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Report of the Country Headquarter SNB Bratislava (15.09.1948);
- SNA-25** – SNA, f. PV – sekr., box 97, no. 2096/1948. Anti-Jewish riots in Bratislava – protest of the Country Headquarter SNB (15.10.1948).
- Svobodová, 1999** – *Svobodová J.* Projevy antisemitizmu v českých zemích v letech 1948 – 1992 / Emancipácia Židov – antisemitizmus – prenasledovanie v Nemecku, Rakúsko-Uhorsku, v českých zemiach a na Slovensku // Eds.: J. Hoensch, S. Biman, L. Lipták. Bratislava 1999.
- ŠABB-Z** – ŠA Banská Bystrica branch office Zvolen, f. ONV Zvolen 1945 – 1949, box – not stated, no. 475/1946 prez., Celebrations of the SNP – security measures.
- ŠAL** – ŠA Levoča, f. The prosecutor's office in Levoča 1900 – 1949, box 283, no. 1362/1945, Public sedition.
- ŠAP-B** – State Archives (ŠA) Prešov branch office Bardejov, f. District National Committee (ONV) Bardejov 1945 – 1948 (f. no. 127), no. 739/1945 prez., Security conditions in the district – report OVNB in Bardejov of 23. 7. 1945.
- Šišjaková, 2006** – *Šišjaková J.* Protižidovské prejavy na Slovensku po druhej svetovej vojne (1945-1948) a ich podoba v oblasti severozápadného Slovenska / Acta historica Neosoliensia, 9/2006. Banská Bystrica 2006.
- Šišjaková, 2007** – *Šišjaková J.* „Prípady Topoľčany“ – Protižidovský pogrom (nielen) z pohľadu dobových dokumentov / Acta historica Neosoliensia 10/2007. Banská Bystrica 2007.
- Šišjaková, 2010** – *Šišjaková J.* Prejavy antisemitizmu na Slovensku v rokoch 1945 – 1948 (Dissertation thesis). Banská Bystrica 2009.
- Šišjaková–Šmigel', 2008** – *Šišjaková J. – Šmigel' M.* Protižidovské prejavy na východnom Slovensku v prvých povojnových rokoch (1945 – 1947) / Annales historici Presoviensis 8/2008. Prešov 2009.
- Šmigel', 2007** – *Šmigel' M.* Vraždy židov a komunistov na severovýchodnom Slovensku v roku 1945: Kolbasovská tragédia / Acta historica Neosoliensia, 10/2007. Banská Bystrica, 2007.

[Šmigel', 2011](#) – *Šmigel' M.* Protižidovské výtržnosti v Bratislave v rokoch 1946 a 1948 (v kontexte povojnových prejavov antisemitizmu na Slovensku) / Fenomén Bratislava // Ed. M. Medvecký. Bratislava 2011.

[Šromovský, 2015](#) – *Šromovský M.* Židovská otázka na Slovensku (1945 – 1953). Kniha II. Antisemitizmus a antisionizmus v Československu (1948 – 1953). Banská Bystrica 2015.

[Šutaj, 2002](#) – *Šutaj Š.* Slovenské občianske politické strany v dokumentoch (1944 – 1948). Košice 2002.

[Východoslovenská pravda, 1946](#) – „Východoslovenská pravda“, 18. 9. 1946, p. 1.