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Being "Local" in Eastern Slovakia:

Belonging in a Multiethnic Periphery

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Focusing on coexistence in towns and villages of the former Šariš Zemplín County during World War II, our article exposes the shifting meanings assigned to belonging in what was a multiethnic borderland region and an economic periphery. Informed by works on community construction and meaning, we understand "locals" as being formed by diverse and at times conflicting social experiences that are nevertheless rooted in the same physical environment. We draw on late witness testimonies by Jewish survivors and Gentile neighbors to investigate the roles of public and private spaces in how a sense of community was revoked. Since the redrawing of boundaries was made into a public concern in the 1930s, the redefining of "locals" along ethnoreligious lines had a deep situational dimension, with local norms and experiences shaping the ousting of the Jews from what was historically a shared space. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and methodological implications of our research for writing integrated histories of the Holocaust, mindful of relationships between people, objects, but also places.

Keywords: *Belonging; the Holocaust; eastern Slovakia; topographies*

Reflecting on his experiences as a Jew from a small eastern Slovak town during World War II, Michal Poriez was determined to have all the facts right.[1] For most of his two-hour interview for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Poriez remained composed, providing biographical data and carefully selecting words to describe events in the past. While downplaying his childhood experiences, noting "I am definitely not one of those who suffered the most, that is why I am here after all," Poriez's biography has all the elements of how the war transformed lives in the contested Slovak–Hungarian–Subcarpathian borderlands.

Michal Poriez was born 1937 in the small town of Sečovce (in Hungarian: Gálszécs) in eastern Slovakia, then part of Czechoslovakia.[2] Not long after his birth, Slovakia and later Subcarpathian Rus received autonomy from Czechoslovakia (October–November 1938). Sečovce remained part of autonomous Slovakia. As a result of the First Vienna Award (2 November 1938) and the subsequent Hungarian occupation of southern Slovakia and southern parts of Subcarpathian Rus, the border

with Hungary shifted, catching Poriez, together with his mother and father, visiting his grandparents in (Veľký) Sevluš (in Ukrainian: Виноградів, in Hungarian: Nagyszőlős).[3] Since the town came under Hungarian occupation, Michal Poriez's family changed his name to Miklos Voloshtyuk.[4] Living with false papers issued on a Ukrainian-sounding name, memorizing data about his made-up family members, crossing himself every time the church bells rang, "learning to pee publicly so that I would not reveal my identity,"[5] Poriez survived the war first in (Veľký) Sevluš, later in Budapest, and eventually by hiding in the Hungarian countryside. The situation on the old and new borders between Slovakia and Hungary appears in Poriez's testimony, in which he frequently crossed from one side to the other to capture the entire story of his family in the Holocaust.

What seemed natural to Poriez—addressing his family story while being mindful of the shattering space—is still largely absent from historiography of the Holocaust in Slovakia.[6] The same goes for biographical accounts, including oral and written testimonies, but also diaries and personal correspondence that allow scholars to capture not only the topography of a place, the physical environment, but also the "topology, meaning the spatial relationships among objects, people, and places."[7] Biographical accounts offer rare insights into the local dynamics of the Holocaust, helping us unwind social ties and relationships at the community level. Given the absence of a diary tradition in Slovakia because of high illiteracy rates, especially in eastern Slovakia,[8] oral witness testimonies utilized here present a subjective, culturally coded, yet insightful source on spatial coexistence. With that said, how did Jewish and Gentile witnesses remember individual and group coexistence in eastern Slovakia in the context of World War II? And how did Jewish and Gentile witnesses narrate how orders given from above were processed and experienced on the ground?

Posing these research questions, our article strives for a twofold contribution. It expands on the role that public places, such as the main square, streets, markets, churches, and the border, and private places, especially homes, played in the Holocaust. Doing so, it gives further evidence as to why scholars of the Holocaust need to be cautious of physical place and social space. Whereas the recent social historical and geographical turns in Holocaust studies—as this special issue also demonstrates—have given rise to works that address, directly or indirectly, the territoriality of the Holocaust, a number of spatial dimensions behind the plans and practices of Nazi perpetrators and their collaborators continue to be overlooked. By turning to community belonging as one that involves relations not only among individuals and groups but also places, this article suggests that much can be learned from "microgeographies of memory and emotions related to the complicated presence, in place, of a traumatic past."[9]

Our article also makes a case for an integrated history of the Holocaust in general and in Slovakia in particular.[10] Scholars of eastern Europe, including Omer Bartov, Natalia Aleksiun, and others, have demonstrated the communal, intimate character of the Holocaust in the East.[11] Neighbors observed round-ups, heard shots from nearby

forests, and were present when Jews were robbed, beaten, and even murdered. The Holocaust in the East, wrote Bartov, took on a form of a "communal genocide," while Aleksiun introduced the notion of "intimate violence," when describing "hostile encounters between former neighbors in which Jews were threatened, humiliated, robbed, betrayed, and murdered."[12] Whereas the war and genocide played out differently in East Central Europe, including in Slovakia, the lives of Jews and Gentiles were similarly intertwined. While a number of works have scrutinized the Slovak role in the Holocaust, the continued privileging of institutional materials divorces many of these considerations from paying closer attention to the communal context of this genocide. Turning to the often overlooked towns of eastern Slovakia, representing a geographical and economical periphery, our work underlines "that the Holocaust was not a monolithic, unitary phenomenon, but that the ways in which it unfolded on the ground in different locations varied considerably from place to place."[13] As the witness testimonies examined here indicate, the Holocaust in eastern Slovakia had its deep situational dimension, with local norms, experiences, and intergroup relations shaping the ousting of Jews from what was historically a shared space.

As becomes clear, our examination of community belonging in eastern Slovakia during the Holocaust is built on the assumption that place plays a vital role in identity formation and socialization. Drawing on scholarship that argues that "the word *neighbourhood* has two general connotations: physical proximity to a given object of attention, and intimacy of association among people living in close proximity to one another,"[14] we see community as produced in interactions and encounters with others, objects, and places. Experiences stemming from living in the same environment—even if dramatically different and narrated through an ethnic or religious lens—play an essential role in the community's formation.[15] Indeed, as classic and new works of humanistic geographers, psychologists, and sociologists suggest, "people's bonding with meaningful spaces represents a universal connection that fulfills fundamental human needs."[16] This being said, a sense of commonality must be learned, developed, and reaffirmed through social practice. Indeed, our rootedness in place is rarely conscious; it is during ruptures and changes, "when one's sense of place is threatened that he or she becomes aware of it."[17]

Taking the state of the art as a point of departure, we situate witness testimonies, such as that of Michal Poriez, at the center of our investigation into communal belonging in Slovakia during World War II. Our investigation is limited to the period of Slovakian "self-rule," however conditional the term is, given the regime's close ties to Nazi Germany. Focusing on the period between 1938/1939 and late summer of 1944, our analysis does not cover the 1944–1945 German occupation of Slovakia. We are particularly interested in group coexistence amid institutionalized anti-Jewish persecution in towns and villages that once formed Šariš Zemplín County.[18] This was the most ethnically diverse county in wartime Slovakia, counting approximately 440,000 people in 1940, including majority Slovaks and minority Hungarians, Poles,

Czechs, and Ruthenians, and the largest Jewish (29,000 people or 6.5 percent of the population) and Roma population (12,000 people or 2.8 percent) in Slovakia.[19]

Our essay includes five parts. First, we expand on the source base of our article, consisting heavily of late witness oral testimonies, and specify our approach to oral history that links individual experiences to the shifting of social norms. Second, we elaborate on the state of the art with respect to the Holocaust in Slovakia. If this special issue centers on the biographical turn in Holocaust studies, we explore why Slovak history writing continues to privilege institutional written sources and why this also means that it continues to rely on fixed identities. Third, providing historical context for our arguments, we outline the political turns that shaped eastern Slovakia during World War II. Fourth, leaning on oral history research and pointing to late witness testimonies, we expand on the concept of an emplaced sense of belonging and demonstrate how a physical place becomes a social space. We conclude by discussing the implications of our arguments for the study of coexistence in multiethnic communities in Slovakia and elsewhere.

Before we continue, a word about how we understand key concepts. Referring to a "place," we understand a geographically defined locality that includes private and public arenas. A "space," on the other hand, means a social category defined through the interactions of its inhabitants in a particular locality. That being said, "community" lies at the intersection of a geographical "place" and a social "space." We understand "locals" as formed by spatial and social correlates and by diverse, and at times conflicting, social experiences that are rooted in the same physical environment.[20] As we show, these correlates form but also disrupt the category of "locals," especially in times of profound social change. Last but not least, and again drawing on the introduction to this special issue, we define "peripheries" along both economic and geographical lines, arguing together with historians Jan T. Gross and Irina Grudzińska Gross that "this periphery is situated at a focal point of Jewish fate during the war, because the only way the Jews could have survived was with the assistance of the local population."[21] Eastern Slovakia, as we also expand on later, offers a particularly pertinent example of the dialectical relationship between the "policies of the centre and the initiatives of the periphery" that was crucial to the unleashing of the Holocaust.[22]

Sources and Approaches: Individual Experiences Amid Shifting Social Norms

The bulk of our source base are testimonies, or late witness testimonies to be exact, given some fifty to sixty years after the Holocaust by Jewish survivors and their Gentile neighbors. Most of these accounts were collected in the 1990s by the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, the already mentioned Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, and as part of other large-scale oral

history projects, including the ongoing United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History Documentation Project Crimes Against Civilian Populations during WWII: Victims, Witnesses, Collaborators, and Perpetrators. Most of the testimonies we examined came from Jews and Gentiles whose hometowns remained on the Slovak side of the border after November 1938. While attempts to collect recollections were carried out by the Documentation Center for the Central Union of Jewish Communities in Bratislava (in Slovak: Židovská ústredná úradovňa pre Krajinu Slovenska) shortly after the liberation of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1945, most of what is left of the materials pertains to official documentation of the wartime Jewish Center (in Slovak: Ústredňa Židov). This being said, where available and useful, we point the reader to relevant early witness testimonies but also situational reports and other documentation.[23]

To fully capture the complexities of belonging in previously multiethnic settings, we also include accounts from those who found themselves, voluntarily or less so, on the Hungarian side. Whereas the new Slovak–Hungarian border in the east was clearly demarcated by the beginning of World War II, identifying testimonies of witnesses from the former Šariš Zemplín County was not always easy. The mental world of the people of eastern Slovakia often exceeded the county's boundaries (and Slovakia, Hungary, or Subcarpathian Rus, for that matter). Changing borders, but also migration, especially to North America,[24] created ties across regions, countries, and continents. This essay does not allow us to dwell on the sense of belonging for those who left the region prior to 1939.

We treat biographical accounts, including testimonies, as qualitative, empirical information from the perspective of the witness. A number of authors, including Annette Wieviorka, Henry Greenspan, Stacey Zembrzycki, and Thomas Trezise, have demonstrated that by addressing his or her life story, witnesses reconstruct the social reality of a particular historical period or event.[25] In their written or oral accounts, witnesses interpret the past for the interviewer, and eventual readers or listeners, while presenting themselves as social beings. What constitutes a source is thus also a construct. As oral historian Lynn Abrahams wrote concerning trauma, identity, and memory in oral history, "the interview itself is a means by which subjectivity or the sense of self is constructed and reconstructed through the active process of telling of memory stories."[26]

Understanding oral history as "a creative, interactive methodology," that involves the practice of doing, the practice of communicating with witnessing, and the deriving of the content,[27] we work with the different layers of meanings captured in the testimonies. Drawing on available cultural constructions in public discourse and building on the knowledge that social norms affect intergroup relations,[28] we expose how witnesses reflected on their experiences and link these with what we know of the broader structural changes in the country.[29] Hence, which should be also made clear, our aim is not to reconstruct the events of World War II. Rather, we strive to "identify certain key patterns, strategies, and modes of behavior,"[30] when it comes to

how individuals and groups defined themselves, defined others and the community they belonged to, and how they did so against the backdrop of the political turns of the 1930s. Considered a model ally of Nazi Germany, Slovakia's leadership took an active role in inciting anti-Jewish sentiment, which resulted in the murder of two-thirds of its prewar Jewish population. We investigate the communal redrawing of "locals" as a category in eastern Slovakia against the backdrop of authoritarian rule, as enabled by Nazi Germany but carried out by local elites, authorized by religious authorities, and as shown in our earlier works, largely backed by popular opinion.

State of the Art: Reinforcing Fixed Identities and Privileging Institutional Written Sources

There are many reasons why both biographies and topographies have yet to find their way into the official narrative of the Holocaust in Slovakia. With a few notable exemptions, the standard accounts still rely on "large" political events and "high-profile" men as protagonists.[31] In contrast to history-writing centered on macrolevel causes, events, and actors, testimonies challenge the way scholars apply categories of analysis to social reality, including the key category in this article: locals. Most books on the Holocaust in Slovakia, which are written in Slovak, include a set of linguistic disclosures. Authors typically start by explaining whether they understand Jewish inhabitants of Slovakia as a religious group (they will spell "jew" using lowercase; in Slovak: židia) or as an ethnic group (they will capitalize the first letter; Židia). Scholars often specify whether they use the expression "Jews of Slovakia" (which underlines the diverse ethnic affiliation of Jews in the country) or "Slovak Jews" (emphasizing civic principles) in their writing.[32] Despite what could be read as a culturally sensitive approach, methodological nationalism prevails in history-writing. By privileging written institutional materials authored by central authorities, scholars not only overlook Jewish voices but often also inadvertently replicate ethnic categorizations of the period. As a result, most works on the Holocaust confine what occurred inside the 1938–1939 Slovak–Hungarian border to the "Slovak" story of the Holocaust and relegate what took place beyond it to "Hungarian" accounts of events. What is more, until recently, the "Subcarpathian" story has been almost completely overlooked in the literature.[33]

Where is then the place for multiethnic regions of southern and eastern Slovakia? Where do contested territories, including the Slovak-Hungarian borderland, fit? Returning to Poriez's testimony, the question also is to which narrative his life story belongs. Perhaps, to the "Slovak" one, because he strongly identified with the country. "Where I was born, here in Slovakia, the country I love, here in Slovakia, the country I did not leave, even though I had multiple opportunities and very good opportunities to do so," said Poriez.[34] Or, to the "Hungarian" account of events, given that he survived the war in occupied Sevluš and later in Budapest? Or, should

his life be integrated into the "Subcarpathian" story, since he shared his early wartime experiences, living as Miklos Voloshtyuk, with his relatives in what is now Ukraine?

The way social historian Tim Cole problematizes the category of "the Jew" is useful also for our work here. What Cole suggests, drawing on social science literature, is that rather than approaching the study of the Holocaust "with a set of assumptions as to what 'Jew' meant (and means), there is a need to recognize that the definition is both historically and geographically situated."[35] The same applies to other categories, including what it meant to be a "Slovak," "Hungarian," or "Subcarpathian." Indeed, when approached from this perspective, testimonies, and Poriez's account, for example, complicate the seemingly static understanding of groups but also borders and places in general.

We do not want to say that testimonies, in general, and those that challenge ethnic history-writing, are completely absent from the literature on the Holocaust in Slovakia. On the contrary, since the mid-1990s, a number of oral history projects have collected Jewish and Roma survivors' testimonies. Recently, documentation projects have also sought to gather Gentile recollections. On the basis of these initiatives, a number of important editions of Holocaust testimonies have been published in the last three decades.[36] Recently, Nadácia Milana Šimečku, the nongovernmental institution that had conducted, in cooperation with the Fortunoff Video Archive, the first (1995–1997) oral history project with Holocaust survivors in Slovakia, opened its archive to the public.[37] In short, testimonies such as those scrutinized here have been made accessible in Slovakia both to scholars and larger audiences. Despite these developments, and in contrast to neighboring Poland, where historians eventually "proved open to the possibility of a radical broadening of the sources to include Jewish testimonies,"[38] no similar biographical turn has occurred in Slovakia.

Ethnologists and sociologists have made use of testimonies, but historians remain reluctant to fully incorporate them as sources.[39] The continued focus on political history that often comes with a positivist attack on witness accounts does not help either. Eduard Nižňanský, a prominent historian of the Holocaust in Slovakia, captured the usual objections, positioning the work of historians against that of cultural anthropologists in a collection of documents on Jewish–Gentile relations.[40] According to Nižňanský, historians should rely on hard evidence in the form of organizational documents, not on subjective recollections of witnesses. As a result, the collection completely overlooks Jewish voices. Skepticism toward testimonies is shared by some of the younger generation of Holocaust scholars in Slovakia. Ján Hlavinka's excellent book on the Jews of Medzilaborce, a district with a Ruthenian majority in Šariš Zemplín County, rests on archival materials and the testimonies of Jewish witnesses. In the introduction, Hlavinka, perhaps unconsciously, takes a shot at the very sources he uses. Given the unreliability of memory and the role of the psyche, writes Hlavinka, "testimonies need be approached with some critical distance, a disproportionately larger one than when examining written sources."[41] Of course, there are

reasons to be cautious when working with testimonies, and even more so with late witness testimonies.[42] But there are also reasons to be cautious when working with any source, we would add.

Eastern Slovakia as a Multiethnic Space

A part of the Hungarian Kingdom until the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, eastern Slovakia was a melting pot of languages, religious affiliations, and traditions. Surrounded by Galicia in the North, Carpathian mountains in the East, and Hungary in the south, the territory was long inhabited by Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenians, who were often mistaken for Russians or Ukrainians, Czechs, Roma, and Jews.[43] In the markets and streets, a mixture of Slovak, Hungarian, Czech, Ruthenian, Yiddish, and German could be heard, and inhabitants often switched between multiple languages. Regional dialects, such as the Šariš dialect or the Zemplín dialect, in which words from Hungarian and Polish are identifiable, also served as markers of identity.[44] Leon Elmann, a Jewish witness from Sečovce, captured this multilingual reality when asked about what language locals spoke in his hometown: "It was called *hutorácký* dialect, a mixture originating from being close to the border; there was a little of Hungarian, little of Polish, a little of Ruthenian in it. It was a garbled Slovak, so to speak."[45] Similarly, Yiddish was enriched by elements from other languages of the region, and this linguistic influence was particularly noticeable with respect to geographical names.[46]

Eastern Slovakia's multiethnic character went hand in hand with religious pluralism, reflected in the proximity—usually a short walking distance—between Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Protestant churches and Jewish synagogues. Newcomers from Galicia and the Carpathians brought with them not only different languages—Yiddish, Polish, and Ruthenian—but also new religious affiliations.[47] For instance, Hasidic settlements in eastern Slovakia resulted from the migration of Jews from Galicia, Podolia, and Volhynia during World War I.[48] As a result, the world of Hassidic Jews "had not been separated by state borders. Places like Rymanów, Krosno and Korczyna, in present-day Poland, were as familiar to them as Stropkov [in Šariš Zemplín County], which was the home of the famous *Stropkover Rebbe* Menachem Mendl Halberstam in the first half of the twentieth century."[49] Religious and social connections transcended the borders drawn after World War I.

It is not only eastern Slovakia's heterogeneous population that makes it an interesting place for investigating the continuities and transformations of group coexistence. For a long time, eastern Slovakia and Šariš Zemplín County, in particular, was a social and economic periphery. Prior to 1945, eastern Slovakia was "characterized by chronic poverty, poor educational provision, agricultural dependence and emigration to North America."[50] Poor living conditions were exacerbated by high unemployment, almost zero industry, unstable weather conditions, and inadequate soil

fertility, leaving the region and its people virtually dependent on assistance from the center, be it Budapest, Prague, Bratislava, or elsewhere.[51] In 1918–1939 Czechoslovakia, there was more migration to North America from Subcarpathian Rus than anywhere, and next was Šariš Zemplín County.[52] Despite official warnings about the rise of unemployment in the United States, articles about the purportedly harsh lives of émigrés, and policies that outlawed any activities in favor of migration, large population movement continued until the early 1930s.[53] This was especially the case with the majority community, which tended to leave the region in higher numbers. Emigration resulted in "multilayered family ties between people in Slovakia and those living in America."[54]

By the interwar years, eastern Slovakia's multiethnic character and poor living conditions were treated as mutually reinforcing. The Hlinka Slovak People's Party (in Slovak: Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana),[55] a state party since 1939, became fixated on the "discrepancy" between "natural" (as if ethnic) and "political" (as if state) borders in eastern Slovakia.[56] Jews and Hungarians were the first and most obvious suspects, given that both were charged with Magyarization efforts. The alleged "insufficiently developed national awareness of the Ruthenians" became problematized as well.[57] Markers of ethnicity and religious affiliation were seen as intertwined; thus, Greek Catholics also started to be treated as not Slovak enough.[58] Soon, anyone who did not identify with the Roman Catholic Church had their loyalty questioned. While nationalist politics was certainly strong in interwar Czechoslovakia also, creating a homogenous (eastern) Slovakia became a political project for the 1939–1945 authoritarian regime. Increasingly, for Slovakia's new leaders, being Slovak meant being Aryan Christian, or better yet, Aryan Roman Catholic.

Even before the outbreak of World War II, propaganda addressed "many complaints that the east of Slovakia thinks of itself as an orphan, neglected because of its distance from the capital." Rather than wasting time with self-pity, as the party's mouthpiece *Slovák* put it, youngsters in eastern Slovakia were urged to join the "national work," and to be "the extended hands of our mother Bratislava."[59] Eastern Slovakia's status as the least developed region was reluctantly yet officially acknowledged. A consequence of Prague's and later Bratislava's policies,[60] the Hlinka Party quickly found a scapegoat in "the Jew," who was said to "maintain a malign influence on the environment in which he lives."[61] The country's political and religious leaders, personified in the figure of President-Priest Tiso, used every opportunity to exaggerate the Jewish role in the economy and alleged that Jewish wealth came at the expense of the humble masses. Yet by every measure, the Jews of eastern Slovakia were among the region's poorest.[62]

What needs to be stressed, however, is that in the peripheries of Slovakia, the central authorities were not the only actors with authority and power, as both testimonies and situational reports underline.[63] As also the official propaganda admitted, in the many villages and small towns, "the most influential individual was the priest, especially the Roman Catholic Priest," and then the doctor, notary or official, and the

teacher.[64] There are a number of things to take into account when speaking of the role of local elites in the Holocaust in Slovakia, and we will limit ourselves to making a point of the blending of authority and power at the communal level. Importantly, and as recent scholarship has demonstrated, with the exception of the higher executive positions, "there was no fundamental discontinuity when it comes to both ruling and non-ruling (societal) elites" in wartime Slovakia.[65] The fact that many of the prewar elites stayed in place may explain their dependence on the regime.

A look at the local churches and local religious authorities would demonstrate our point here. Teachers and the clergy were communal authorities, looked up to for guidance even on societal attitudes toward the officially sanctioned "Jewish question." "Looking for an explanation, people came to the rectory asking, 'Why is this happening, Father?' or 'Pastor, what is going on, what does this mean?' And he explained it to them," recalled Alžbeta Agáta Giloamová, describing the crucial role played by her father, Greek Catholic Priest Eduard Giloam, in rationalizing the 1942 deportations of Jews from Slovakia.[66] On the one hand, as an institution represented in Slovakia by the President-Priest Tiso, the church played its part in authorizing the ousting of Jews. On the other hand—and this is the case especially for the period of the Nazi occupation of Slovakia (August 1944–May 1945)—the hunted Jews survived the end of the war in attics, shelters, hay sheds, as well as "rectories, hidden behind the walls of convents and church orphanages whose sanctuary was at least partially respected by the occupying troops."[67]

This being said, local elites enjoyed not only societal authority but often also actual political power. Agents of the national administration were responsible for carrying out the orders from above, maintaining significant control over discriminatory policies in their districts and towns. Understanding the important role of the local elites, official places also reminded the local intelligence, including members of the local administration, of their responsibility vis-à-vis their communities and the regime as such.[68]

Public propaganda took various forms, from anti-Jewish signs hung on houses and shops owned by Jews to the publication of the journal *Ľudové noviny*, which was printed in the format of a poster for display on busy streets. Historian Marian Kaplan invoked the term "social death" to describe the "subjection, their excommunication from the 'legitimate social or moral community,' and their relegation to a perpetual state of dishonor," in her work on German Jews in the 1930s.[69] In wartime Slovakia, the "social death" of Jews was carried out by advertising that presented anti-Jewish persecution as a social opportunity for the majority society. Various Aryanization policies, including confiscations, taking over Jewish business, valuables, and land, and auctions of Jewish belongings, all took place while neighbors watched or actively participated in this robbery.[70] The simultaneous processes of deportations and robbery were illustrated at auctions that were held immediately after Jews were deported to avoid riots *and* satisfy popular lust for Jewish property.[71] Jews, already loaded into carriages, often watched their non-Jewish neighbors quarrel over the price of a household item that was in

their possession just minutes earlier. Aryanization laws and other discriminatory measures, alongside anti-Jewish propaganda fostered by secular and religious leaders, turned Jews into second-class citizens. In contrast to how propaganda portrayed Aryanization, the robbery of Jewish belongings did not elevate the standing of the majority society. On the contrary, as has been established, given the highly corrupt process which favored family and party connections over skills and qualifications, not in one case was the full liquidation price of the newly acquired Jewish business paid in full. By the end of the war, most Jewish business, many of which employed locals and paid taxes prior to Aryanization, were now bankrupt.[72] The ousting of Jews from Slovak social and economic life culminated in the promulgation of the Jewish Code (in Slovak: Židovský kódex) in September 1941, a series of laws that reinforced the already effective discrimination measures while newly defining Jews according to racial criteria.

Amid these crimes, the majority of the Slovaks living in the towns and villages of eastern Slovakia were thriving. Like the rest of the country, the economy was booming and the region's persistent problem, unemployment, diminished.[73] In the summer of 1939, Sečovce, for example, opened its first swimming pool, and held annual harvest celebrations that turned the little town into a county center.[74] By early 1942, the town introduced public pavements, remodeled its main square and a nearby park, completed the construction of a new post office, and had enough funds to settle the town's entire debts.[75] Liquidated Jewish businesses created an economic advantage for their Gentile counterparts, and various discrimination measures enabled many majority Slovaks to climb the social ladder at a previously unimaginable pace. Their success was closely linked with the persecution of Jews. Even as the *Gardista*, a mouthpiece of the paramilitary Hlinka Guard (in Slovak: Hlinkova garda) praised "our enthusiastic people" for starting their own businesses, the Jews of eastern Slovakia were being deported.[76] The first train carrying Jews was dispatched from Slovakia on 25 March 1942 and crossed the border with occupied Poland the day after. Thousands of young Jewish women and girls from Šariš Zemplín County were crowded onto the cattle cars. Between March and October 1942, in the first wave of deportations, 57,628 Jews from Slovakia were sent to their deaths at Auschwitz or to camps in the Lublin District.[77]

An Emplaced Sense of Belonging in Eastern Slovakia

Describing interactions between Jews and Gentiles in the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1939), witnesses, most of whom were children at the time, remembered an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusion in their testimonies. Anna Baarová, who was a young Gentile girl when World War II broke out, recalled friendly encounters with Jews in (Veľká) Poľana, Subcarpathian Rus. In an interview conducted in 2014, Baarová mentioned that as a five-year-old, the only thing that distinguished Jews in Poľana was the Jewish star they were later forced to wear: "We

knew but did not make anything of the fact that they were Jews. We were Hungarians, they were Jews, so."[78] Jews were forced to wear identifying badges that represented official efforts to separate and oust them from the community, but Baarová, responding to the interviewer in Slovak while defining herself as Hungarian, recalled interacting as children, not as members of antagonistic groups. When asked about the Jews in her hometown, Baarová immediately spoke about "one little boy and a girl" in her neighborhood, mentioning also their names. It was only when interrupted, and asked whether there were no other Jews living in her neighborhood, did she mention the larger Jewish community in the town's center.[79] Magda Hašíková, a Gentile female witness from Rokytov, in northern Šariš Zemplín County, claimed that Jews and Gentiles were all "yes, like Rokytcans. No, no, there were no disputes."[80] Masha Brasch, whose two grandfathers were orthodox rabbis, used the analogy of a family to capture relations in her native Trebišov, a town in the vicinity of Sečovce: "You felt like one family. Everybody knew you by the first name. Everybody said 'hi' to you."[81] In multiple interviews, Jewish and Gentile witnesses recalled how they played together, and at times quarreled and fought, on streets, parks, and in schools prior to 1939.[82] Rarely did witnesses mention that they frequented Jewish (or Gentile) homes, and they all showed an awareness of the religious traditions that divided them. Whether altruistic or pragmatic, communal ties existed, and some continued for the duration of the war. Gentile witness testimonies included expressions of sorrow when recalling how Jews were deported by "locals," or when they left the region for good after the war. In her interview, Hašíková, for example, remembered how a Jewish neighbor came to say goodbye to her father as he was deported, and Alžbeta Agáta Giloamová, a native of Jakubany, recalled a sole survivor from a neighboring Jewish family returning to their village after the war so that he could say his farewells before leaving for Palestine (Israel).[83]

These idealistic portrayals of prewar Jewish–Gentile relations can be explained in several ways. In small towns and villages, "members of a social group, an age group, or residents knew one another," and when conflicts arose, they were "rather short episodes in the busy social life of the town. Everyday life, as well as special occasions reflected the diversity of population."[84] Similar to historian Natalia Aleksiun's summary of the situation in Borysław, eastern Galicia before the war,[85] class rather than ethnicity or religious affiliation divided groups in eastern Slovakia in peacetime. Groups were predominately, if not exclusively, socio-economic clusters. Of course, social standing influenced how witnesses experienced and remembered Jewish–Gentile coexistence, and witness narratives are to a large extent also ethnically determined.[86] Yet there seemed to have been a shared understanding of community, as formed by individuals and groups with different (socio-economic, linguistic, religious, ethnic, or a combination of these) identification markers. While we acknowledge that there is some degree of simplification in our observation, "otherness" was not perceived as an obstacle to being "a local," even if integration was not fully achieved or desired. This rather inclusive approach to "community," we argue, was fostered by the democratic character of the Czechoslovak Republic, which for the

most part impeded radical nationalism in the country. Many interviewees, including Simon Regenburg, a Jewish witness from Sečovce, acknowledged the role that liberal democracy had played in shaping relations in his hometown: "It was a nice community, we had nice relations [with the Gentiles]. And we always played together, we used to go to the movies. . . . It was a beautiful life in Czechoslovakia, it was a beautiful democratic country—and we had a very nice life there."[87]

For Jews, inclusion in the community meant different things after the 1938–1939 turn, and commonality was addressed in different ways in individual testimonies. For Felix Bergman, a Jew from Sečovce, inclusion was a subjective feeling of being "liked" by the people of his hometown: "I always had a good feeling because I was liked in Sečovce."[88] For others, being "one of the locals" was linked to being treated as such, and this involved action, however insignificant, done on behalf of Jewish inhabitants. Patrícia Rosenow, a Jewish witness from the town of Veškovce, today Veľké Kapušany, was sixteen years old when her hometown was annexed by Hungary in response to the 1938 First Vienna Award. The diplomatic dispute there went hand in hand with aggression against the Jews, and this was the case on both the Slovak and Hungarian sides of the border. Rosenow linked border changes to the transformation of interethnic relations in her oral testimony. Since her town had a Hungarian majority, the news that Veškovce would be annexed to Hungary was received enthusiastically by her Gentile neighbors. The festive gathering provided an opportunity for expressing popular attitudes:

> When it was decided that the territory will belong to Hungary, [a group of] men from the village organized a march. A simple march like that. And of course, someone shouted in Hungarian, "Away with the Jews!" (Le a zsidókal!) but then another voice could be heard, saying, "That is not needed, that is not necessary!" In other words, be quiet with that.[89]

Collectively blamed for the loss of territories, somewhere between 3,500 and 7,500 Jews were deported from Slovakia to the territory between the old and new Slovaki-Hungarian border in the winter of 1938.[90] Zigmund Blau from Humenné was one of these deportees. Blau was only ten years old when transported, together with his family, to no-man's land. Not long after their forcible ouster from their hometown, Blau's family was able to return to Humenné, which remained part of Slovakia even after border shifts. Describing his return, Blau captured changes in interethnic relations that seemed to exceed his short absence:

> In the fall of 1938, all Jews who came from Hungary or Poland, who did not have [Czechoslovak] citizenship, were taken away. We were right in the first batch and they moved us to the Hungarian border. . . . I remember my older brother had a duvet or two and we lived in a stack of straw. We lived for about ten or fourteen days basically on the border. There were many families, dozens and dozens there. Then a political agreement was reached, and we returned home. We returned to our house but there was nothing. A spoon only. The neighbors took everything.[91]

This testimony illustrates how the multiethnic villages and towns of eastern Slovakia became divided, physically and mentally. The looting of Blau's home by his neighbors shows how public and private space overlapped, as well as the reciprocal links between political turns and the actions of individuals on the ground.

In the minds of many Jews, the border was a source of both anxiety and hope. Jews from borderland regions such as Šariš Zemplín County followed the political situation very closely. Attempting to make rational decisions in an irrational situation, Jews often crossed the border to Hungary (or Slovakia) to enhance their chance of survival. This was the case for Michal Poriez from Sečovce, whose testimony opened this essay. Poriez's aunt and uncle migrated to Hungary not only to be close to family but also because they perceived the conditions in 1942 Slovakia as more life-threatening compared to Hungary at the time.[92]

While institutional written materials perceive the border as something static, within the testimonies, the new border is often depicted as a space of rather live, though of course secret, movement. What is more, to cross the border, Jews often had to rely on the help of local officials, including those working in customs, as was the case for Valér Fábry:

> And in the evening, we were loaded [by the Hungarian gendarmes] on a truck. . . . And we came to the fields behind Uzhorod at night and there they took us out of those trucks, fired a few times in the air and [told us to go] in that direction. And that is how the first anabasis ended. We crossed the border illegally, of course, and not only us, there were a lot of people crossing, it was difficult, at night, in the winter, in the cold. And we arrived in the village of Vyšné Nemecké. Coincidentally, there were the financiers who served in the village where my mother worked. So, they allowed us to sleep there and advised us, they gave us some Czechoslovak money, we had something of our own, and so we got to Michalovce. We had relatives there.[93]

Marsha Brash, the youngest of eight children, had her oldest sister in Galanta, southern Slovakia, a region later occupied by Hungary, while a second sister, in Brno, in the Czech lands, escaped to the illusory safety of Slovakia following the German occupation and establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.[94] Gentile witnesses on the Slovak side often recalled their Jewish neighbors making the difficult decision whether to send their children to stay with relatives in Hungary.[95] In short, it makes more sense to examine the Holocaust in Šariš Zemplín County than to consider the "Slovak" or "Hungarian" course of events.

Escaping the little towns and villages examined here, where residents knew one another, to the anonymity of larger cities on the Hungarian side, most often Budapest, Jews feared the unfamiliar. Since survival increasingly depended on assistance from the majority society, Jewish witnesses often asked a similar question as Brasch did in her interview: "'God, how I will make it here?' I know no one."[96] Jews relied on connections made in their hometowns, and in Brasch's case, this meant even trusting those she was warned about by friends and relatives: "I was lucky that I met a boy in Budapest who was my neighbor in Trebišov. And everybody said, 'Don't talk to him.

He's an informer.' But to me, he gave me a place where I could stay and paid for the room. Gave me a little money, and that was it."[97]

In their testimonies, Jewish survivors reflect on the changing relationships with their local neighbors, classmates, many of them friends. Elsa Dýmová, a twenty-year-old Jewish woman, managed to avoid deportations from her native Prešov on 25 March 1942. She decided to change places and go to the nearby town of Bardejov to visit her grandmother. Elsa Dýmová made a mistake, as she called it retrospectively, when she visited her old friend and her husband while in Bardejov:

> So, I went to visit her, and I knew, of course, her husband, he was also a Prešov citizen. In the meantime, he became the commander of the Hlinka Guard, he also boasted to me that he was Greek Catholic, and the guards did not like Greek Catholics, but he managed to get in . . . then he went to escort me . . . to my grandmother's door. . . . About nine o'clock, half past nine [in the evening], the gendarmes were banging on the door, open, open, . . . you have a Prešov woman here. . . . I ran through the back door into the garden . . . and I did not believe that he sent the gendarmes for me. . . . And in that tavern they got drunk and boasted that we were looking for . . . a Jew from Prešov who is hiding here. And the commander of the guard sent us there. So, it was confirmed that the commander of the guard sent them to look for me.[98]

The political turns of the 1930s and 1940s, including the rise of Adolf Hitler, the decline of democracy in Europe, the emergence of an authoritarian regime in Slovakia that merged fascism with Catholic principles, and the outbreak of World War II questioned the grounds for imperiled coexistence in the country. The intersection of public and private places was where the implications of state sponsored and religiously sanctioned persecution of Jews became visible. While anti-Jewish policies were introduced from the top-down, their execution had a deep communal dimension. To fully grasp the character of anti-Jewish exclusion in Šariš Zemplín County, we must keep in mind not only Aryanization policies that were propagated on behalf of the majority society but also the geographical layout of towns and villages in eastern Slovakia, where houses were typically built along one major road, with a square in the middle containing shops and churches. References to neighbors interacting "on the street," but also topography in descriptions of looting and deportations, underline the emplaced nature of excluding the Jews.[99] This also applies to accounts of publicly awaited auctions of Jewish possessions.

Whereas Gentile witnesses understood that it was "our people" who took part in the robbery, only reluctantly did they vocalize personal involvement.[100] When an interviewer asked Juraj Bukovský about his family's personal involvement in robbing the Jews: "Did you see anyone take things out of these Jewish homes?" He replied, "We did as well," implying his family's complicity.[101] Actual fighting for Jewish belongings took place on the main street and square. Ján Kíriš, a Gentile witness from Sečovce, summarized how this was typically played out: "And then the auctions started, they opened the [Jewish] houses, they sold everything that was there . . . auction."[102]

Apart from the 1938 deportations, border changes, and widespread looting, another example of this interconnectedness were the 1942 deportations. Non-Jewish witnesses observed these while standing at the public space very close by or they watched such a situation secretly from their homes or yards. Bukovský discussed the layout of his hometown Sečovce, locating himself in the scene when recalling the deportations: "Down there, as I told you, we went out of . . . out of . . . out of, from where we worked, we went down the main street, the main street going to Michalovce, well, and there you could see it. It . . . the wagons."[103] Still, some Gentile witnesses seemed conflicted about the highly public nature of the physical removal of Jews. Kíriš, for instance, responded affirmatively when asked whether he saw the deportations firsthand: "Yes, we saw it, we saw. Of course. Because there were rumors that . . . that something is going to happen." As part of the same interview, only a few minutes later, Kíriš removed himself from the scene: "No, no, no, no. No, I don't know if someone went [to watch the Jews being deported], or at least I am not aware of it because no one felt responsibility, you know? That you need . . . or what can be done. It is not that it is born in the head, what begins . . . I say, we went away, no one wanted to watch it."[104] Like most Gentile witnesses, Hana Burosová from Raslavice reiterated the public and publicized removal of "local" Jews: "They put them all in the synagogue. I saw how they took . . . to the station. Each one of them had a small piece of luggage, they had to leave the rest of their belongings behind. I saw this from our house as the third building from ours was the prayer house—the synagogue."[105] Peter Pustený's recollections from Bardejov, a famous spa town known beyond the county, bring us back to the street that witnesses identified as a place of interaction in the prewar period. Playing with a Jewish child on the street, not minding the ongoing deportations, Pustený recalled: "someone shouted that there is a Jew here."[106] The Jewish boy was grabbed and put on a transport leaving Bardejov that very day.

Conclusion

At the Slovak–Hungarian–Subcarpathian borderland and at the crossroads of migration patterns was Šariš Zemplín County. This was where individuals, groups, identities, and traditions intersected. The county was not only Slovakia's most ethnically diverse region but also its most impoverished by any measure. With the establishment of the authoritarian Slovak Republic in March 1939, political and religious elites around the nationalist Hlinka Slovak People's Party made a political program of overturning the multiethnic character of the east, like elsewhere in the country. Tying multiethnicity with harsh economic conditions and arguing that the removal of the Jews would benefit majority Slovaks, socially and economically, Slovakia's leaders could rely on popular support.

Building on relatively recent late witness testimonies of Jews and Gentiles, we highlighted the communal character of the removal of Jews from the redrawn

category of an ethnoreligious Slovak "community." Whereas the exclusion of Jews from the landscape was orchestrated from above with the assistance of local elites, the "social death" of Jews was achieved in public displays, molded by local norms and experiences, with broad popular involvement. Streets, schools, the main square, the rectory, the border, and the home were public and private spaces where social bonds were fostered and broken. The life stories examined here show that being "local" in eastern Slovakia during World War II had a political dimension in the 1930s, a geographical dimension amid border disputes and changes, and a societal dimension in which the life and death of Jews was entangled with the choices and actions of their Gentile neighbors.

We are convinced that placing biographical accounts at the center of analysis has at least three important theoretical and methodological implications. First, it allows historians to shift from fixed identities based on exclusionary religious and ethnic principles. Rather than defining Jews as *either–or*, either an ethnic (Židia) or religious (židia) group—as is typically done in Slovak scholarship—listening to witness testimonies enables us to approach the ways that individuals defined themselves and others, and how they perceived the dynamics between groups. Witness testimonies show that in multiethnic Šariš Zemplín County, like elsewhere in the borderland regions, group ties transcended political boundaries, and that these links should be acknowledged and integrated. Second, it enables us to avoid the urban bias prevalent in scholarship on the Holocaust in Slovakia, which typically focuses on elites and men as the protagonists of events. Tiso's role and responsibility, like those of other political and religious leaders of the nondemocratic wartime regime, are not reduced here. Rather, life stories of individuals from multiethnic economic peripheries offer important sources to examine how dependent provinces such as Šariš Zemplín County imported ideas and values from the center. Third, biographical accounts complicate the often-reproduced division between "a Slovak" and "a Jewish" story of the war. Examining how coexistence played itself out, while taking into account political, territorial, and social turns on the ground, shows that the life stories of Michal Poriez and others are indeed "ours," which helps us refine our understanding of *how* the Holocaust happened in eastern Slovakia.

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Notes

1. M.P., HVT 4112, Orbis 4838786, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. Following the request of interviewees who explicitly forbade their testimony to be made available in Slovakia, we have decided to use pseudonyms for all witnesses, Jewish and Gentile, cited in our essay.

2. Michal Poriez's year of birth suggests that his testimony reflects not only what he remembers but also what Poriez was made aware of by his family, especially his mother.

3. The seizure of southern Slovakia and southern parts of Subcarpathian Rus by Hungarians translated into Czechoslovakia losing 29 percent of its territory and 34 percent of its population. Slovakia had 3,329,793 inhabitants according to the 1930 census, and this number dropped to 2,655,953 in 1940. This drop also reflected further territorial losses resulting from the Hungarian–Slovak "Little War" in March 1939.

4. Poriez, his mother, and father obtained false Ukrainian papers from their Christian neighbors.

5. M.P., HVT 4112, Orbis 4838786, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies.

6. For the role that a conflict between individual and collective memory plays in this, see, e.g., Kaja Kaźmierska, "Biographical and Collective Memory: Mutual Influences in Central and Eastern European Context," in *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives*, ed. Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 96–112.

7. Tim Cole and Anne Kelly Knowles, "Thinking Spatially about the Holocaust," in *Places, Spaces and Voids in the Holocaust*, ed. Natalia Aleksiun and Hana Kubátová, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Wallstein, in print). See also, e.g., Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, eds., *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

8. Michal Roupa and Dagmar Kusendová, "Historická podmienenosť regionálnych demografických rozdielov na slovensku," *Historický časopis* 61, no. 2 (2013): 363–64.

9. Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, "Hitler's Geographies, Nazi Spatialities," in Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 12.

10. See Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano, "Geographies of the Holocaust," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, ed. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 1–17.

11. See, e.g., Omer Bartov, "Communal Genocide: Personal Accounts of the Destruction of Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, 1941-44," in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 399–420; Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018); Natalia Aleksiun, "Intimate Violence: Jewish Testimonies on Victims and Perpetrators in Eastern Galicia," *Holocaust Studies* 23, no. 1–2 (2017): 17–33.

12. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*; Bartov, "Communal Genocide"; Omer Bartov, "Interethnic Relations in the Holocaust as Seen through Postwar Testimonies: Buczacz, East Galicia, 1941-44," in *Lessons and Legacies: From Generation to Generation*, ed. Doris L. Bergen VII (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 102–24; Omer Bartov, "Wartime Lies and Other Testimonies: Jewish-Christian Relations in Buczacz, 1939-1944," *East European Politics and Societies* 25, no. 3 (2011): 486–511; Aleksiun, "Intimate Violence," 18.

13. Dan Stone, "Holocaust Spaces," in Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 50.

14. Amos H. Hawley, *Human Ecology: A Theoretical Essay* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), 73.

15. Naoíse Mac Sweeney, *Community Identity and Archaeology: Dynamic Communities at Aphrodisias and Beycesultan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

16. Nikolay Mihaylov and Douglas D. Perkins, "Commnunity Place Attachment and Its Role in Social Capital Development," in *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*, ed. Lynne C. Manzo and Patrick Devine-Wright (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 61. See also, e.g., Edward Relph, ed., *Place and Placelessness* (London: SAGE, 1976).

17. Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff, "Place-Identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3, no. 1 (1983): 61.

18. The territory of Slovakia was officially divided into six administrative territories called County (in Slovak: župa). The seat of Šariš-Zemplín County was in Prešov, and the county was superior to District Offices of altogether nine (ten after 1942) districts: Bardejov, Giraltovce, Humenné, Medzilaborce, Sabinov, Stropkov, Trebišov, Vranov nad Topľou, and Vyšný Svidník (established 1942).

19. See "Náboženstvo prítomného obyvateľstva v roku 1940," *Zprávy štátneho plánovacieho a štatistického úradu* 1, no. 1 (1946): 19; Ján Dzugas, "Postavenie židovského obyvateľstva v normotvorbe Slovenského štátu v rokoch 1939–1945," *Právnické štúdie* 15, no. 2 (1967): 349–91; Martin Pekár, "Výber dokumentov k rómskej otázke na východnom Slovensku v rokoch 1942–1945," *Annales historici Presovienses* 6 (2006): 314; Branislav Šprocha and Pavol Tišliar, *Demografický obraz Slovenska v rokoch 1938-1945* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, o.z. v spolupráci s Centrom pre historickú demografiu a populačný vývoj Slovenska, Filozofickej fakulty Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave, 2016).

20. Sweeney, *Community Identity and Archaeology*. On "geographical community," see, e.g., Sweeney, 19f; and on the different meanings assigned to the concept of "community" in anthropology, see, e.g., Vered Amit, "Reconceptualizing Community," in *Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments*, ed. Vered Amit (London: Routledge, 2003), 1–20.

21. Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 68–69.

22. Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 304. On the relationship of center and periphery in the Holocaust, see also, e.g., Wendy Lower, "'Anticipatory Obedience' and the Nazi Implementation of the Holocaust in the Ukraine: A Case Study of Central and Peripheral Forces in the Generalbezirk Zhytomyr, 1941–1944," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16, no. 1 (2002): 1–22.

23. For most materials pertaining to the Documentation Center, see Yad Vashem Archives, Record Group M.5—Documentation Center for the Central Union of Jewish Communities in Bratislava. See also Bedrich Steiner and Štefan Engel, eds., *Tragédia slovenských židov: fotografie a dokumenty* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Dokumentačná akcia pri ÚSŽNO, 1949).

24. It is estimated that 619,866 Slovaks lived and worked in the United States in 1920, but this number does not include large migration to Canada, Argentina, Brazil, and western Europe in general. See Emily Greene Balch, *Slavische Einwanderung in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Leipzig, Germany: Franz Deuticke, 1912); D. Ursíny, *Zemepisný a hospodársky prehľad Slovenska* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Nakladateľstvo slovenských profesorov, družstvo s.r.o., 1943); Anton Štefánek, *Slovenská vlastiveda III. Spoločnosť* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Slovenská akadémia vied a umení, 1944), 241–58. For a more comparative outlook on migration to North America, see, e.g., Walter Nugent, "Migration from the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires to North America," in *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, ed. Robin Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1995), 103–8.

25. Annette Wieviorka, *L'Ére du témoin* (Paris: Plon, 1998); Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); Stacey Zembrzycki, "Not Just Another Interviewee: Befriending a Holocaust Survivor," in *Oral History off the Record: Toward an*

Ethnography of Practice, ed. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 129–44; Thomas Trezise, *Witnessing Witnessing: On the Reception of Holocaust Testimony* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013).

26. Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2016), 35.

27. Ibid., 18. For the different disciplinary perspectives and hence also different oral history research focuses, see, e.g., Patricia Leavy, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

28. Dennis T. Kahn, "Norm Shifting and Bystander Intervention," in *Looking at the Onlookers and Bystanders: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Causes and Consequences of Passivity*, ed. Henrik Edgren (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia [Living history forum], 2012), 67–84; Monika Vrzgulová, "Sociálna zmena v biografických naratívoch obyvateľov dnešného Slovenska. Od Mníchova po 14. marec 1939," *Forum Historiae* 13, no. 1 (2019): 131–43.

29. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 18, 54.

30. Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival During the Holocaust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 204.

31. Whereas several essential works on Aryanization, or the Holocaust from a regional or local perspective, have turned our attention away from political history, the discussion and scholarship on the wartime states remains Tiso-centered.

32. For an illustrative case, see, e.g., Peter Salner, *Prežili holokaust* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Veda, Ústav etnológie Slovenskej akadémie vied, 1997), 7.

33. For an important contribution on the Carpathians, see Raz Segal, *Genocide in the Carpathians: War, Social Breakdown, and Mass Violence, 1914-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

34. M.P., HVT 4112, Orbis 4838786, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies.

35. Tim J. Cole, "Constructing the 'Jew,' Writing the Holocaust: Hungary 1920-45," *Patterns of Prejudice* 33, no. 3 (1999): 20. See also, e.g., Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (London: Routledge, 1993); Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging, Patterns of Prejudice," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3 (2006): 197–214.

36. The most important volumes include, e.g., Salner, *Prežili holokaust*; Monika Vrzgulová, ed., *Videli sme holokaust* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 2002); Monika Vrzgulová, ed., *We Saw the Holocaust* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Svornosť, 2005); Monika Vrzgulová, *Deti holokaustu* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Dokumentačné stredisko holokaustu, 2007); Monika Vrzgulová, *Nevyrozprávané susedské histórie: holokaust na Slovensku z dvoch perspektív* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Ústav etnológie SAV, 2016).

37. See TASR, "Nadácia Milana Šimečku sprístupní svedectvá ľudí, ktorí prežili holokaust," domov.sme.sk, https://domov.sme.sk/c/22208280/nadacia-milana-simecku-spristupni-svedectva-ludi-ktori-prezili-holokaust.html (accessed 28 October 2019).

38. Natalia Aleksiun, "Survivor Testimonies and Historical Objectivity: Polish Historiography since Neighbors," *Holocaust Studies* 20, no. 1–2 (2014): 170.

39. Typical objections being the "lower credibility and reliability of memories that naturally degrade over time, and after many decades one will forget much of the experienced." See, e.g., *Slovenská archivistika*, 2007, 115.

40. "This volume is as introduction to a topic, which may become the main avenue of research with respect to the history of the Holocaust. Until recently, this topic has been explored mostly by cultural anthropologists, including P. Salner, M. Vrzgulová and others. This brief volume can be hence read as a historian's contribution to this topic." See Eduard Nižňanský, ed., *Holokaust na Slovensku 7. Vzťah slovenskej majority a židovskej minority (náčrt problému)* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Nadácia Milana Šimečku–Katedra všeobecných dejín FF UK, 2005), 28.

41. Ján Hlavinka, *Židovská komunita v okrese Medzilaborce v rokoch 1938-1945* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Ústav pamäti národa, 2007), 15–16.

42. For a comprehensive response to the various methodological attacks on testimonies, see Aleksiun, "Survivor Testimonies and Historical Objectivity," 160–62.

43. Antonín Boháč, *Národnostní mapa republiky Československé: podrobný popis národnostních hranic, ostrovů a menšin* (Praha: Nákladem Národopisné společnosti československé, 1926), 131nn; Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 140; Paul R. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996), 430.

44. See, e.g., Jozef Mistrík, *A Grammar of Contemporary Slovak* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1988).

45. L.E., interview 19687, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation.

46. Ján Hlavinka, *The Holocaust in Slovakia: The Story of the Jews of Medzilaborce District* (Budmerice, Slovakia: Vydavatel'stvo Rak, 2011), 8.

47. Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), A600, notes to p. 539.

48. Marcin Wodziński, *Historical Atlas of Hasidism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 157. See also Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe*, 140; Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 430. If we believe statistics, 13,935 and 20,353 people from Galicia settled in eastern Slovakia based on 1990 and 1910 numbers. Julianna Puskás, *Overseas Migration from East-Central and Southeastern Europe, 1880-1940* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 82.

49. Hlavinka, *The Holocaust in Slovakia*, 9.

50. Allan Williams, Vladimír Baláž, and Bernadina Bodnárová, "Border Regions and Trans-Border Mobility: Slovakia in Economic Transition," *Regional Studies* 35, no. 9 (2001): 837.

51. See also Michal Urban, "Stav priemyslu v hospodárstve východného Slovenska," *Nové Obzory* 28 (1986): 53–78.

52. Štefánek, *Slovenská vlastiveda III. Spoločnosť*, 249–50.

53. Ibid., 249–58.

54. "Vysťahovalectvo do Ameriky. Odpoveď vlády na interpeláciu poslanca Igora Hrušovského a spoločníkov," *Slovenský denník, orgán Slovenskej národnej rady*, 22 January 1921, 2.

55. The party was founded in 1905 as the Slovak People's Party (in Slovak: Slovenská ľudová strana) and led by the Roman Catholic Priest Andrej Hlinka until his death in 1938. Acknowledging his central role, the party renamed itself Hlinka Slovak People's Party in 1925. Following the liquidation of all other political parties, except that of the German and Hungarian national minority, the now Hlinka Slovak People's Party–Party of National Unity governed wartime Slovakia until its dissolution in 1945.

56. Vilém Pražák, *Národopis Slovenska* (Praha: Literárne a vedecké nakladateľstvo Vojtecha Tilkovského, 1932), 1.

57. Ibid., 1.

58. "Iné je náboženstvo a iné je národnosť. Šarišania a Zemplínčania, nezabúdajte, že ste Slováci," *Slovenská pravda*, December 7, 1940; Branislav Šprocha and Pavol Tišliar, *Štruktúry obyvateľstva Slovenska v rokoch 1919–1940* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Infostat, 2009), 134n. In the 1930 census, most Greek Catholics identified ethnically Slovak. See Peter Borza, "Gréckokatolícka cirkev a Židia na Slovensku v rokoch 1939–1945," *Historický časopis* 65, no. 3 (2017): 493.

59. M. Fitt, "Je slovenský východ zanedbávaný," *Slovák*, 3 February 1939, 4.

60. Whether as part of Czechoslovakia (1918–1938) or the Slovak state (1939–1945), eastern Slovakia remained a periphery in relation to the capital cities.

61. "Žid—pán mnohých zemí . . . ," *Gardista*, 10 July 1943, 3.

62. Ivan Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Archa, 1991), 87–88.

63. Monika Vrzgulová, "Memories of the Holocaust: Slovak Bystanders," in *Jews and Gentiles in Central and Eastern Europe during the Holocaust: History and Memory*, ed. Hana Kubátová and Jan Láníček (London: Routledge, 2018), 99–111.

64. Štefánek, Slovenská vlastiveda III. Spoločnosť, 168.

65. Peter Šoltés and László Vörös, "'Odťaté ruky'? Kontinuity a diskontinuity politických a spoločenských elít na Slovensku v 19. a 20. storočí," *Forum Historiae* 12 (2018): 3–4.

66. A.A.G., RG-50.688.01.0058, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

67. Kamenec, "Changes in the Attitude of the Slovak Population to the So-Called Jewish Question During the Period 1938-1945," 336; see also a similar argument in Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, 275; Salner, *Prežili holokaust*, 69–98. For a fascinating case of rescue behind the walls of a cloister, see the case of the two nuns Vilma Čermaňová and Imberta Šinská. Yad Vashem Archives, RG M.31.1.—Files of the Department for the Righteous Among the Nations, file number 8700 (Čermaňová Vilma, Šinská Imberta).

68. "O našich dedinkách," *Slovák*, 22 June 1939, 5.

69. Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 229. For a similar argument, see also Frances Henry, *Victims and Neighbors: A Small Town in Nazi Germany Remembered* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1984), 51–123.

70. Hana Kubátová, "Accusing and Demanding: Denunciations in Wartime Slovakia," in *Lessons and Legacies: New Approaches to an Integrated History of the Holocaust: Social History, Representation, Theory*, vol. XIII (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 92–111.

71. Hana Kubátová, "Popular Responses to the Plunder of Jewish Property in Wartime Slovakia," *Jewish Studies at the CEU* 7 (2013): 109–26.

72. Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, 99–117.

73. Václav Průcha, *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa: 1918-1992* (Brno: Nakl. Doplněk, 2009), 530; Ľudovít Hallon, Miroslav Sabol, and Anna Falisová, *Vojnové škody a rekonštrukcia Slovenska 1944-1948 (hospodárstvo, infraštruktúra, zdravotníctvo)* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Historický ústav SAV, 2011), 9–19.

74. "Túžba Sečoviec splnená: majú moderné kúpalisko," *Slovák*, 7 July 1939; "Niet rozdielu medzi naším východom a západom," *Slovák*, August 30, 1939.

75. "V Sečovciach dobre hospodária," *Gardista*, 6 March 1942.

76. "Veľkovýrobňa bielizne v Sečovciach," *Slovák*, May 19, 1942, 6; see also "Nový druh výroby na východe štátu," 19 July 1942.

77. Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, 195–96.

78. A.B., RG 50.688.01.0031, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

79. Ibid.

80. M.H., RG-50.688.01.0032, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

81. M.B., RG-50.163.0011, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

82. See, e.g., the interview with Jana Murajová from Veľké Kapušany, RG-50.688.0039.0001.001.

83. M.H., RG-50.688.01.0032, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; A.A.G., RG-50.688.01.0058, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

84. Monika Vrzgulová, "But You Aren't One of Us, Are You?," in Vrzgulová, *We Saw the Holocaust*, 115.

85. Natalia Aleksiun, "Neighbours in Borysław. Jewish Perceptions of Collaboration and Rescue in Eastern Galicia," in *The Holocaust and European Societies: Social Processes and Social Dynamics*, ed. Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 245.

86. Salner, *Prežili holokaust*; Paul Thompson, *Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Henry Greenspan, *The Awakening of Memory: Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Holocaust, and Today* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, 2001); Sheftel and Zembrzycki, *Oral History Off the Record*; Abrams, *Oral History Theory*; Vrzgulová, *Nevyrozprávané susedské histórie*; Hannah Pollin-Galay, *Ecology of Witnessing: Language, Place, and Holocaust Testimony* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

87. S.R., interview 33525, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation.

88. F.B., HVT-3936, Orbis 4528142, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies.

89. P.R., interview 17733, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation.

90. Whereas the initial order prompted the removal of impoverished Jews, hours later the target was

on foreign and stateless Jews. Perhaps also because of the chaotic manner in which the 1938 deportations were carried out, scholars disagree on the number of affected Jews. Recently, Eduard Nižňanský's estimate of 7,500 deported Jews was challenged by Michal Frankl, who calculated around 3,500 deported Jews from Slovakia. See Eduard Nižňanský, *Židovská komunita na Slovensku: obdobie autonómie porovnanie s vtedajšími udalosťami v Rakúsku* (Bratislava, Slovakia: Inštitút judaistiky Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave, 2000), 52; Michal Frankl, "Země nikoho 1938. Deportace za hranice občanství," *Forum Historiae* 13, no. 1 (2019): 92–115.

91. As quoted in Vrzgulová, *Deti holokaustu*, 53–62.

92. M.P., HVT 4112, Orbis 4838786, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies.

93. V.F., 106, Video Archive of the Milan Šimečka Foundation.

94. M.B., RG-50.163.0011, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

95. See e.g. J. K., RG-50.688.0045.01.01, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

96. M.B., RG-50.163.0011, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

97. M.B., RG-50.163.0011, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

98. E.D., 78, Video Archive of the Milan Šimečka Foundation.

99. See, e.g., A.A.G., RG-50.688.01.0058, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; J.B., RG-50.688.0042.01.01, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

100. M.Š., RG-50.688.0007, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

101. J.B., RG-50.688.0042.01.01, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

102. J.K., RG-50.688.0045.01.01, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

103. J.B., RG-50.688.0042.01.01, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

104. J.K., RG-50.688.0045.01.01, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

105. H.B., RG-50.688.0022, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

106. P.B., RG-50.688.0044, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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