

FRAGMENTS OF JUDAISM IN THE MEMOIR LITERATURE OF EASTERN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract: The study focuses on mapping the Jewish issues in eastern Slovakia. It specifies the Zemplín region and area definition of this region. Through works of art - literature it will focus on the phenomenon of antiquity of Jewish culture. The topic of the Holocaust is captured in the publication *Fragments of Judaism* (Fragmenty Židovstva), in the book of interview with Jaroslava Marcinekóvá *The Last Jew from the Uličská Valley* (Posledná Židovka z Uličskej doliny), in the book by Juraj Šeb *Escape from Hell* (Útek z pekla) or in the novel by Andrey Coddington *The Jewess* (Židovka). Works are inspired by authentic testimonies, and that is why every effort in the field of history has its merits and is the center of attention in the elaboration of contribution, depicting a period of fascist-like totalitarianism that should never be forgotten.

Keywords: Escape from hell, Fragments of Judaism, Jewish culture., The Jewess, The last Jew from Uličská valley, Zemplín region

1 Introduction

Slovakia's position in Central Europe, with its geographical character, has always formed a connection between different cultures, ethnicities and nationalities. It excels in rich cultural heritage and historical tradition. The crossroads of the influences of different cultures and religions is also reflected in the individual regions of Slovakia. Jewish history is also a history of culture and spirit. *Central Europe is often assessed through the ethnic principle and participation of all these ethnicities in the final looks of this spiritual space. In such way the historic experience projects into the conception of Central Europe and the fellowship of the Jews with the Central European region is accentuated despite of the otherness*" (Vargová, 2011, p. 95). The otherness of the Jews created negative stereotypes. And it was towards the Jewish minority that led to the hateful, xenophobic manifestations that culminated during the Holocaust (Gallik, 2018, p. 84). Recently, we have seen an increased interest in works with the issue of Judaism. Manifestations of extremism are the reasons why we are currently commemorating those historical events that had a negative impact on society (Adamická, 2019, p. 7). There are historical mentions of Jewish communities in the Slovak regions. The Zemplín region is no exception. Zemplín is known for any multi-ethnic composition of the population and confessional mixing. The study describes the Jewish destinies of people who were born, lived or worked in this easternmost region of Slovakia for a period of time. The tragic fate of the Jews, the horrors of the Holocaust or the story of their stay in the camp became the inspiration for various types of art. Especially for literature and film. These works are a special documentary about the trauma that afflicted the Jews. Nevertheless, the artists' efforts have signed an authentic depiction of the "bloodshed" and "nihilization of the human nature" of the extent of events and suffering that cannot be mediated, depicted or expressed (Vargová, 2011, p. 59). However, the study further deals with the characteristics of the territory and at the same time goes through literary works with the given topic, trying to better penetrate into the destinies of people who either have their personal or mediated experience with the horrors of the Holocaust. The topic of Jewish issues is still relevant and should not be missing in the consciousness of society but also of each of us.

2 Materials and Methods

The study analyses and interprets the knowledge on the basis of scientific literature and available information on Jewish issues in the Zemplín region. It brings a mapping of events, destinies, holidays, traditions, but also religions in an ethnically mixed area such as Zemplín. The contribution is based on selected

works that deal with Jewish issues, the fates of people who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust personally or mediate.

The article is focused on recognising, clarifying and deepening knowledge of Jewish issues. With the description and characteristics of a specific one part - the Zemplín region, a more precise focus on the given locality and the peculiarities of the region. With the help of general knowledge, we proceed to the specific one in the given subpages.

The analysis of works and documentation of Jewish destinies and Jewish issues, which is still relevant, is important. Through the interpretation of selected specific works of memoir literature, it takes place on a given issue. Due to the unavailability of translation literature, the author of the article is also the author of translations of cited texts.

In the introduction, we will focus on the definition of the Zemplín region and its geographical characteristics. We focus on selected Jewish representatives who come from the easternmost region of Slovakia. We will describe the life of the Jewish physician Armin Hoffmann - the first discoverer of penicillin, Arnošt Rosin, who managed to escape from Auschwitz, the fate of the last Jew from Uličská valley and Edita Grosmanová - the wife of the author of the short story and screenplay for the film *The Shop on Main Street* (Obchod na korze) by Ladislav Grosman. Through the interpretation of the autobiographical book *The Jewess* (Židovka), we will point out the story of the Slovak Jewish family in the times of communism and the journey of the courageous woman Sofia Maniševičová for political and religious freedom.

3 Definition of the territory of the Zemplín region

The term region has its representation in various scientific disciplines. According to regionalists, the starting point for defining a region is its geographical significance. The region can thus be understood in the narrower sense as a certain territorial unit connected with a given space. "A region represents a spatial unit with specific characteristics, it is characterized by internal similarity and external difference from other neighboring territorial units" (Ivaničková, 1998, p. 62).

The easternmost region of Slovakia is Zemplín. Eastern Slovakia is geographically highly fragmented and diverse in terms of ethnicity. It forms a liaison area of several cultural currents, thus playing an important role as a mediator of many phenomena and values of folk, material and spiritual culture (Podolák et al., 1985, p. 5).

In terms of cultural history, the Zemplín region represents an important area where, since the end of the 14th century, colonization, which historians call "Wallachian colonization" or "colonization on Wallachian law",¹ has passed from the Ukrainian and Romanian Carpathian regions to the mountainous regions of Slovakia. Later in the 15th - 17th century, this colonization affected the character of settlements in eastern and northern Slovakia. It also affected the ethnic structure of eastern Slovakia and left significant traces in economic, social, cultural and linguistic development (Podolák et al., 1985, p. 10).

¹Wallachian colonization was the result of the efforts of landowners of today's northeastern Slovakia, which at the beginning of the 15th century formed part of the Zemplín capital, to economically raise uninhabited, mostly forested areas, providing certain concessions and benefits to recruited settlers in establishing new settlements and villages. These settlers, or immigrants whose job was to "colonize" the Zemplín area, were, like other villagers in Wallachian law, characterized in two respects: employment dominated by sheep pastoralism and logging, and religion, as they professed Eastern Orthodox. - a form of Christianity. It is assumed that the first waves of immigrants on Wallachian law came to the territory of today's northeastern Slovakia from the Wallachian region in northern Romania (from which the name of the settlement process is derived), later in other waves of immigration probably prevailed population from today's Ukraine. To Wallachian colonization. Compare: ULIČNÝ, F. : History of the settlement of Zemplín County. Michalovce. 2000, p. 700-707.

3.1 Geographical characteristics

The Zemplín region is divided into two self-governing regions - Horný and Dolný Zemplín. Horný Zemplín is a part of the Prešov self-governing region, located in the north-eastern part of Slovakia. These include today's administrative areas of the districts: Humenné, Medzilaborce, Snina, Stropkov, Vranov nad Topľou. Horný Zemplín borders Poland with the north, Šariš from the west, the eastern side forms the border with Ukraine and in the south it leads to the Dolný Zemplín region.²

The territory of Horný Zemplín is surrounded by Bukovské vrchy and Laborecká vrchovina. Bukovské vrchy is the most attractive part of the region, where the Poloniny National Park is located. Poloniny is the easternmost Slovak national park, reaching as far as the Ukrainian and Polish borders. The highest peak of the national park – Kremeneč (1,210 m above sea level) connects all three borders. In addition to the fact that Kremeneč is the highest point of the protected area and the elevation on which the borders of the three countries (Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine) stretch, it is also the easternmost place where every Slovak day begins (Buraľová, 2015, p. 4).

The most important landmark in the Humenné district, which forms part of Horný Zemplín, is the chateau, which houses the Vihorlat Museum. It is a regional museum of patriotic character. The art-historical exhibition focuses on the culture of the nobility from the Renaissance to the 20th century. The natural science exposition focuses on the natural conditions of the Humenné district and the permanent exhibition "From the History of the Roma in Slovakia" presents a cross-section of the history of the Roma ethnic group in Slovakia.³

There is also an exhibition of folk architecture and housing. In the years 1974-1982, the Humenský open-air museum was built, which was opened to the public in 1984. The relatively typical buildings from the region of northeastern Slovakia - 14 objects of folk architecture and one sacral building - were concentrated here in a relatively small area. These buildings bear the characteristics of architecture from the Eastern Carpathian region.⁴

Another important tourist center of the Horný Zemplín region is the Domaša dam. Horný Zemplín is also known for the Andy Warhol Museum of Modern Art, which was established on September 1, 1991 as the first in the world and still the only one in Europe. In addition to exhibition activities, the museum is dominated by presentation, educational, consulting and scientific research activities in the field of fine arts.⁵

Artist Andy Warhol claims to come from nowhere. However, his parents had to come from somewhere. It was the village Miková in the district of Stropkov. The inhabitants of the village are united by one and it is that they are of Ruthenian origin. And so the origins of Andy Warhol are more than clear. Parents Júlia Varcholová, born Zavacká and Andrej Varchola, emigrated from a small village in northeastern Slovakia to the USA. Andy Warhol became famous in the world as a revolutionary of a new approach to the philosophy of art and its perception.⁶

Dolný Zemplín consists of the districts of Sobrance, Trebišov and Michalovce. It is bordered on the north by Horný Zemplín and on the west by the Košice region. In the east it forms the border with Ukraine and the southern side represents the border with the Republic of Hungary. It spreads in the East Slovakian lowlands, surrounded by the Western Carpathians, Vihorlatské vrchy with a lookout Sninský kameň.⁷

Zemplínska Šírava is considered to be the tourist center of Dolný Zemplín, which is also called the Slovak Sea due to its size. In

the district of Trebišov in the south of Dolný Zemplín, there is the Tokaj wine-growing region, where the world-famous Tokaj wine is produced.⁸

There are also many museums in this area – Zemplín Museum in Michalovce, P. Horov Literary Museum in Bánovce nad Ondavou, Homeland Studies Museum in Trebišov, Municipal Museum in Veľké Kapušany, Guitar Museum in Sobrance (the only one in Europe), Homeland Studies Museum in Kráľovský Chlmec and the Salt House in Veľké Trakany.⁹

Horný and Dolný Zemplín are decorated, among other things, by a number of wooden churches, which are part of the cultural tradition of the Eastern Church ceremony with high artistic and historical value.¹⁰

4 Fragments of Judaism in the memoir literature of eastern Slovakia

Armin Hoffmann. Arnost Rosin. Gizela Lipovská – real heroes of Judaism.

Knowing the history is important, but knowing the fates of individual Jewish heroes is important in order to understand the unwavering will to survive under certain circumstances.

The book *Fragments of Judaism* (Fragmenty židovstva) not only refers to the history of Snina and its surroundings, but above all offers us testimony about specific human - more precise Jewish destinies. It tells of the tragedy and heroism of individuals, as well as of the entire local Jewish community. The sad fact is that today the region, where a large Jewish community lived, is practically a "Judenfriei" (free of Jews). Historical data gives us a different picture. In the recent past, the town had about 400 Jewish inhabitants and another about 1,100 lived in nearby villages. "The resulting number of 1,500 Jews is only slightly lower than the number of people currently professed to be Jewish in Slovakia." While this figure may serve to better understand the extent and subsequent tragedy that struck the Jewish community during the Holocaust. Thanks to this, many may realize what the Holocaust is preparing not only for Snina and its surroundings, but also for the rest of Slovakia and other states in Nazi-occupied Europe (Marcinekóvá, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.3).

4.1 Armin Hoffmann - the real discoverer of penicillin?

Armin was born on March 26, 1874, the fifth of eight children of Gabriel Hoffmann and his wife Júlia, born Strauss. Parents were involved in the timber trade, which was the usual way of doing business for many Jews in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in times of construction and industrial boom (Marcinekóvá, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.6).

Armin grew up in the liberal atmosphere of the local Jewish community, which a few years before his birth leaned towards the reformed so-called neologist (a congress of representatives of all Hungarian Jewish communities took place in Budapest in 1868-1869. "The main conclusion of the congress was the division of Jewish communities into three main directions: orthodox, neological and status quo ante"). (ibid., p.7). He studied at the grammar school in Žilina and decided to continue his medical studies at the University of Budapest. At the beginning of his career, he worked as a general practitioner in today's Hungarian village of Forov, located in the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County in the Encs district. From 1908 Hoffmann worked as a secondary doctor in the local hospital of St. Elizabeth. Exactly in the same year in Great Britain Alexander Fleming (Scottish biologist, pharmacologist and discoverer, his most famous success was the discovery of the enzyme lysozyme in 1922 and the isolation of the antibiotic penicillin from the fungus *Penicillium notatum*, for which he won the Nobel Prize) passed final medical examinations (ibid., p.10).

²<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

³<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

⁴<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

⁵<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

⁶<https://www.muzeumaw.sk/clanok/rodokmen-andyho-warhola>

⁷<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

⁸<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

⁹<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

¹⁰<http://www.regionzemplin.sk/o-regione-zemplin/>

Hoffmann was the only doctor in the district, which brought to him enormous professional workload and physical exertion. He was a surgeon, internist, dentist and pharmacist in one person. In the treatment of diseases, he applied mostly traditional, often even medieval methods. He thus became a key pioneer of modern treatment and health education in the entire district (ibid., p.11).

Around 1916, Hoffmann accidentally developed a groundbreaking knowledge that, according to preserved records, saved hundreds of lives. It was common practice in the treatment of fever conditions at that time to inject intravenous glucose solution. Glucose was expensive at the time and had to be ordered in large quantities from Budapest at once in order to save costs. Hoffmann prepared the injections himself. It is not known what led him to change standard procedures and to apply glucose to the subcutaneous tissue. The fact, however, remains that he noticed that glucose ampoules have different effects. *"With newly opened, the effect of glucose in some bacterial diseases did not appear. The opposite occurred when he gave a subcutaneous injection of glucose solution from ampoules, which he had open 10 or more days ago"* (ibid., p.12). After their use, there was an unexpected reversal of the disease. The fever subsided and the patients recovered from a condition that was normally hopeless. When examining the vials, Hoffmann noticed that open vials exposed to air for several days contained less recognizable fibers in the naked eye, which multiplied over time and identified as molds. He wrote the result of the observation in his notes: *"Fungi, which multiply in dilute glucose solution, excrete into their environment a substance that is able to kill various bacteria both in test tubes and in the living body ..."* (Medved', 1996, p.3).

Margita Hoffmann, Armin's wife, dies in 1917. It was not saved by glucose injection either. She is buried in a separate grave in the local Jewish cemetery. The space reserved for her husband's grave remained empty forever. But then no one could have guessed at that time (Marcinekova, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.12).

Even personal tragedy did not deter Hoffmann from further efforts to investigate the causes of his injection. He was aware of the primitives of making *"miracle injections,"* and that they were only a coincidence. He knew their effect was unstable. However, fungal cultures in ampoules have been instrumental in the secondary complications of influenza, including pneumonia, which usually results in death. This also led him to the fact that later in the years 1919 - 1920, in the period of the so-called Spanish flu, he used his injections en masse. From the records of the registry in the Snina district for the years 1918 - 1920, it is known that out of 256 deaths, the cause of death in only 13 cases is the mentioned Spanish influenza (Konček, 1985, p.3).

Hoffmann constantly sought to obtain an independent evaluation of the effect of his injection. Despite repeated urgencies, no answer. It was not until 1922 that he received a shocking statement from Prague: *"... the fibers that form in the glucose solution are contaminants!"* This statement did not deter Hoffmann, and he further investigated the *"contaminants"*. He also tested the injections on himself and *"said that after each such injection he felt healthier, fresher, stronger and younger"* (Marcinekova, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.13).

After the establishment of the fascist Slovak state, there was no time or space for legalization of injection treatment. From January 1, 1940, the practice of Jewish doctors in the whole territory of Slovakia was banned. At that time, 66-year-old Hoffmann worked as a retired doctor in the village of Stakčín. On March 31, 1941, an ordinance was issued for all Jews to wear a yellow ribbon on their sleeves. In this context, a decree was issued on the designation of the practice of Jewish doctors. According to it, all Jewish doctors with retained practice had to mark their medical practice exclusively with a wooden board measuring 20x30 cm yellow with black letters. *"On the table, the word 'JEW' had to be in the header between two six-pointed*

stars and only then could the name, type of practice, place and office hours be given" (ibid., p. 13).

In September 1941, Regulation no. 198, also known as the Jewish Codex, which deprived Jews of their civil rights, entered into validity. In 1942, Hoffmann also had to resign from his post in Stakčín. On March 25, 1942, the first deportation train of Slovak Jews to extermination camps was sent in Poprad. At that time, more than 85% of the Jewish population was deported from Snina. Baptism appeared to be the only salvation from the persecution and deportation for Hoffmann, but he did not know that in the first wave of deportations, full conversions were not taken into account. Among those deported in 1942 there were many freshly converted Jewish doctors. Hoffmann left the Israeli Church on February 25, 1942 and joined the Roman Catholic Church. Armin Hoffmann became Hermann Jozef Hoffmann (ibid., p. 17).

A partly symbolic and sad parallel is that in the same year that Hoffmann found himself on the fringes of society, in England Fleming began with the first applications of penicillin on members of the American and English armies (ibid., p. 17).

Later in September 1944, Armin Hoffmann died. He did not live to be recognized for his accidental discovery. His wooden coffin was marked with a simple Christian cross and was transported to the local Catholic cemetery. The sons of Armin, who managed to survive the hardships of war, sought to complete their father's discovery. The breakthrough did not occur until 1964, when the Research Institute of Antibiotics in Roztoky near Prague received the result of the analysis of an injection sample with the words: *"...Contamination was found in all 25 vials ... close to Penicillium frequentans, Penicillium implicatum, etc."* (ibid., p.17).

4.2 Arnošt Rosin – Escape from Hell

Arnošt was born on March 20, 1913 in the family of a Jewish merchant in Snina in eastern Slovakia. Arnošt Rosin - one of the million prisoners of the concentration camp and one of the few lucky ones who managed to escape from this cursed place (Šebo, 2017, p. 8).

He lived in Auschwitz for two years, dying in 2000 in Germany at an old age as a free man. Arnošt's parents Herman and Eva, born Weizen, had six children together. They lived in Snina on today's street of May 1 until the fatal year of 1942. The house in which the family once lived was demolished and today there are blocks of flats where several families live and no one has an idea that there used to live a family which fate was cruelly marked by Jewish origin (Marcinekova, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.27).

The youngest son, Arnošt, was taken to a concentration camp in Žilina on March 25, 1942, then deported to Auschwitz and the Brzezinka (Birkenau) concentration camp, from where he escaped on May 27, 1944 and became free (ibid., p.29).

When Arnošt came home to Snina to his parents for the Easter holidays in 1942, he would never think to himself that this visit would be fatal for him. His natives came to him in the uniforms of Hlinka's guard and licking boots, to whom he tried to explain that it must be a mistake and that he was only on a visit. It was not a mistake. His name appeared on the list of Jews located in the Slovak state. This list was created by the Ministry of the Interior on February 12, 1942, where employable Jews were specifically recorded. *"Please, God, make it just a nightmare. Let me wake up."* It was not a dream, he was taken along with twenty other Jewish men to Humenné, from there to a Jewish concentration camp in Žilina, and later to an extermination camp in Poland. Although he spent only fourteen days in the concentration camp in Žilina, he has already come into contact with humiliation and painful situations, as he himself says: *"Guardsmen in black uniforms and high boots, they gave us the first concentration lesson. For no reason they cursed us, beat us,*

kicked us and robbed us of personal property” (Šebo, 2017, p. 21).

From Žilina, transports went directly to Auschwitz. Arnošt also found himself in one of them. The transports usually consisted of twenty-five freight wagons used to transport cattle. It was written on the wall of the wagon that the space was for eight horses or forty-five soldiers. In fact, there were about a hundred of them there. They knew nothing about the destinations of the transports, no one knew where they were going and what awaited them. He described his departure to the deportation train as follows: “When they closed the sliding door, locked it with heavy padlocks, and put a strong guards on the train, we began to suspect that it was wrong. Two small windows in the wagon were barred with barbed wire that could not be removed with bare hands. Escape was impossible. They took us at night towards Čadca, the train stopped only in the morning at the Polish border station Zwardoň. At the command, we got out of the wagons, the guards recalculated us and handed us over to the German soldiers, who drove us back into the wagons and accompanied us on the next journey. On April 10, 1942, we arrived at the station marked Auschwitz. Soldiers were already waiting at the station in SS uniforms and took us to a concentration camp” (Šebo, 2017, p. 24).

In this moment, the SS men already divided the prisoners and showed who should go where. Arnošt survived the selection, he was sent to the right and became an Auschwitz prisoner. Those who went to the left were unlucky. Their path led directly to the gas. The others went through disinfection, cut them, gave them clothing and hard clogs on their feet. This was followed by a tattoo that took away people from the last pinch of human dignity. People became numbers (Šebo, 2017, p. 26).

Arnošt was in one block from which the infamous Sonderkommando was formed to bury the dead people. Later, at lunch, he found a gold chain in a loaf of bread that Arnošt had received from a friend from Sonderkommando (who had stolen it from the murdered Jews), which he had given to the block scribe. He helped him go to block 14 and get another job. The others were locked in one block and only went to work and back. After his departure from Sonderkommando, a certain Schmulleck tried to escape collectively, but it was discovered. And since no one wanted to divulge anything, they sent the whole commando into the gas. Even then, Rosin was very lucky and thanks to that he later became one of the crown witnesses of what he experienced here (Šebo, 2017, p. 32).

At the beginning of 1944, Arnošt moved to the so-called block Canada, where the confiscated property of prisoners and the slain was collected and sorted. Canada was a privileged place. Valuables for a more bearable life in the camp could be obtained here. However, the most important commodity was food (Šebo, 2017, p. 41).

On April 7, 1944, Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba managed to escape from the death camp. Everyone knew Wetzler was Rosin's friend. And so, he was questioned by two camp investigators on suspicion of aiding an escape. The two dreaded SS men, Perry Broad and Wilhelm Boger, interrogated him cruelly. There wasn't much missing and they would shoot him. But according to him, he was saved by saying: “If I had known about something, I would have run away with them, because I know that nothing but death awaits me here” (Marcineková, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.34). This cheeky response seems to have saved his life. As a punishment, he was transferred to forced labor on a gravel pit, where he met the Polish Jew Czeslaw Mordowicz - Rosin's partner on the run.

They planned the escape on Saturday, May 27, 1944. It was at that time that a large Hungarian transport arrived, which Arnošt used, and told blocker Gotze, who was on duty at the time, that his relatives from Hungary had come to the neighboring camp and would like to go see them for a while. Thanks to his exclusive position in the Auschwitz prison hierarchy – the blocker could move more freely and many SS men knew him

from sight. Gotze wrote the number 29858 on a piece of paper and promised to let him go later. When he later wanted to get to the gate, Danisch stopped him and put him back. On another attempt, he was stopped by the camp commander Schwarzhuber and had to return. “I told myself that it was an unlucky day, but Mordowicz and I had already agreed, so I went to try my luck until the third” (Šebo, 2017, p. 52). Gotze was still sitting at the gate, and when he noticed Arnošt, he reminded him to return as soon as possible.

Two people helped them escape, supervisor Adam from the block from Mordowicz and one Polish professor. They had a bunker dug in the gravel pit where they had previously worked. This place was to serve as their starting point. They knew that every time they ran, the guards would sound the alarm. Auschwitz had two guard circuits. One was still active and the other was several kilometers away. It wasn't activated until it was discovered that someone had disappeared from the camp. They activated this system for three days. The only way to escape was to hide outside the camp behind the first guard circuit and wait three days for a suitable opportunity until the second circuit is switched off (Šebo, 2017, p. 53).

Their hiding place was a pit 1.2 m wide and 1 m high. A wooden stick was placed in the middle of the pit to hold the board to cover the entire hole. First one went in, then the other. Around the bunker, it was necessary to pour strongly aromatic Russian tobacco, soaked in gasoline, so that the dogs would not sniff them out. They had the necessary supplies with them - water, salami, a flashlight, two cans, a lighter, bread and some money (Marcineková, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.35).

After an hour of hiding, sirens began to sound, and in the evening, when a mass census of prisoners took place, they found that two were missing. More than three hundred men with dogs searched the entire camp and the surrounding area. Rosin and Mordowicz, meanwhile, had a hard time in the bunker. Mordowicz recalled: “Suddenly we heard the scratching of dog paws, it felt as if someone was scratching your head. Fortunately, the combination of tobacco with gasoline worked. However, another problem arose. We began to feel a lack of air. The bunker was small, there was little air in it, the air supply apparently didn't work. We started choking. We felt that we would be buried alive here and the bunker would be our grave” (Šebo, 2017, p. 56).

The onslaught gradually subsided. They knew there had to be three days to hide, but it was hard to endure. Another problem was that later they could not get out of hiding. Their bodies were exhausted and weakened by a long stay still in the same position and motionless. Until their third attempt on Monday night, they managed to lift the board. They crawled between the two watchtowers, slid over the outer less guarded part of the camp, and defeated the uncharged barbed wire. After a kilometer, they noticed the river and the bridge they wanted to cross first, but they changed their minds. They finally crossed the river. During the wading, Mordowicz lost his shoes and began to shout that he could not go on like this. He wanted to return for the shoes, which would be extremely dangerous, so Arnošt gave him his. Thirty years later, when he reminded him of this incident, Mordowicz stated - you were always a cavalier. Well, thank you very much for such a gallantness, when he had to go for two days without shoes (Marcineková, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.36).

They successfully completed the first stage of the escape. When they were about 60 kilometers from Zakopane, they got on the train and just before Zakopane they got out and continued walking. They only moved at night and tried to avoid busy places and therefore wandered through the woods. They had to be wary of the Gestapo, the criminal police, the border guard and other elements of the Nazi power apparatus. Finally, on June 6, 1944, they managed to cross the Polish border and reach Slovakia (Šebo, 2017, p. 62).

Refugees from Auschwitz Vrba and Wetzler provided Rosin and Mordowicz with fake papers and ID cards. Rosin's name was Štefan Roháč and Mordowicz was Peter Matúš. With a false identity, they left for Bratislava to live two streets apart. Rosin thus lived until the liberation of Bratislava, i.e., April 4, 1945. Fate was merciless for Mordowicz. The guards caught him sitting in a restaurant with Wetzler's sister-in-law. He was suspicious because he was sitting with a Jew. And so he fell victim to the second wave of deportations, which were resumed in September 1944. He was taken to a concentration camp in Sered and back to Auschwitz. Along the way, he bit his wrist so that the Nazis would not see his number, because they would know immediately that he was a refugee. He decided that when he was on the ramp in Auschwitz during the selection, he would throw himself at the first SS man, who would pull out his pistol and shoot himself with it. Fortunately, this did not happen. He was recognized by a Polish prisoner on the ramp, who helped him hide. And he found himself among sixty Jews from Slovakia who were transported to a labor camp in Silesia, where he was liberated in 1945 (Šebo, 2017, p.76).

Czeslaw Mordowicz married and settled in Slovakia, later emigrating to Israel, from where he moved to Canada in 1993, where he died in 2001 in Toronto. Arnošt Rosin and his wife wanted to emigrate to America, but eventually settled in Germany, where they worked in a Jewish religious community. Arnošt Rosin died as a single man in old age in 2000 in Germany. Just before his death, he testified for the Holocaust Memorial Museum in the United States on things he had not been able to talk about for decades. (Marcinekóvá, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p.40).

Although Czeslaw and Arnošt were different not only in nationality, character, but also in temperament. Czeslaw was six years younger, but all the more prudent. Sometimes the silent and exact opposite of Arnošt. However, their different natures did not affect mutual friendship. On the contrary, during the escape, when it went to hard, they complemented each other and helped each other. Unlike Vrba and Wetzler, whose relations were not harmonious in the post-war period, Rosin and Mordowicz continued to maintain good relations. This is evidenced by their joint trip in the early 50's, which they named *On Motorcycles in the Footsteps of Their Escape* (Šebo, 2017, p. 50).

4.3 Gizela Lipovská – the statement of the last Jew from Uličská valley

About 30 Jews returned to Snina and the surrounding villages shortly after the war, including Gizela Lipovská. There were only 5 Jewish inhabitants in Snina in 1948, and the only returning Jew lived in Uličský Kriv. In 2013, there was only one Jewish inhabitant in the entire Snina district. In 2015, at the age of 92, this last living Jew in the district - Gizela Lipovská - also died (Marcinekóvá, 2013, p. 13).

In 1941, when Slovakia entered the war with the Soviet Union, Gizela Lipovská's brother, Herman fled to Russia. The whole family was dragged to Ternopil as punishment. *"We were there for three days, investigating my father and beating him hard. They beat him because my brother joined the Bolsheviks in Russia"* (ibid., p. 19). Today, Ternopil lies in western Ukraine. In the past, a high percentage of the Jewish population lived in the city. From the inhabitants who lived there in 1939 50% were Poles, 40% Jews and 10% Ukrainians. In 1941, the city was occupied by the Germans and the extermination of the population gained momentum. They set up a camp there, which included not only Jews but also Christians, Hungarians, Poles and many people. *"The Germans beat them, shot them and threw them into the pit"* (Marcinekóvá, 2013, p. 19). Of the people who were shot by Germans and Poles most of them were Jews. *"It was said that locals borrowed German army weapons at the Ternopil cemetery and killed up to 500 of us"* (ibid., p. 19).

When the transports were resumed in 1944, it meant the final end for the family. They headed to Poland. They were forcibly

dragged out of the house for the third time. Well, now they weren't as lucky as they used to be. *"Now it was no longer because of my brother, but because we were Jews"* (ibid., p. 23).

Gizela Lipovská survived the horror of the concentration camp and returned home in 1946. Another unpleasant surprise awaited her here, completely strangers living in her hometown. *"There were two families, a grandfather with a grandmother and a man with a wife and two children. I lived with them for two years. Their house burned down during the war and so they let them live in ours"* (ibid., p. 41). When they moved out, she was left alone, and then her brother Leopold came. She got to know from him that the stepmother, along with her youngest sister and other half-sisters, had been assigned to those who were to be gassed in Auschwitz. My father worked in the camp for another month and eventually died there due to hard work (ibid., p. 41).

However, the joy of returning home was replaced by fear and anxiety about the Banderas, who, a year after Gizela's return, threatened mainly the Jews who returned. *"The Banderas were organized groups that formed members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, led by Stepan Bandera. They sought to rebuild an independent Ukraine and were an armed component of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. First they fought against Germany and then joined them against the advancing Soviet army"* (Marcinekóvá, 2013, p. 44). After the defeat of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, as well as the Germans, many groups of Banderas moved to the forests on the Polish-Ukrainian border. They also began to enter the territory of eastern Slovakia, where they worked until 1947. Their main concern was to survive and obtain clothing, food, alcohol and medicines from the local population. Jews and communists became their main targets (Marcinekóvá, 2013, p. 44).

Gizela Lipovská from Uličský Krivý experienced atrocities in her own skin in the *"death factory"* in Auschwitz. She lost her parents and six siblings there. The two brothers survived, but later died as a result of torture. The medical experiments of the infamous doctor Mengele also left consequences for her health. Due to these attempts, which were committed on her by the *"angel of death"*, she lost the most valuable thing and could never have children as a result (Marcinekóvá, Stern, Šmigel', Novák, Levický, 2018, p. 58).

Memories haunted her all her life. Until recently, she was the only living Jew in Uličská dolina. She survived the horrors of World War II, returned and lived here. She could not leave this place permanently. She often thought about the horror, though she didn't like to talk about it. *"But I still know that God is good, only we are evil"* (Marcinekóvá, 2013, p. 65).

4.4 A Jewess by Audrey Coddington

Writer and journalist Andrea Coddington was born on July 20, 1975 in Radošín. She studied journalism in Bratislava. She worked as a journalist in several Slovak media. After the fall of the New York twins, her professional life changed radically. At that time, she worked at Radio Okey, formerly Radio Koliba, and went to cosmopolitan New York as a foreign policy editor. And it was this author's professional career that was overseas when she created several of her books. One of them is the novel *The Jewess*, which was published by Ikar in 2010 and became a bestseller. For this work, the author earned the Platinum Book Award. At present, there is also a Hungarian translation of the book *The Jewess* on the market, by PaedDr. Magdaléna Hrbáček, PhD. – *A zsidő nő*, employee of the Institute of Central European Languages and Cultures FCES CPU in Nitra. The book was published in 2017 by Art Danubius. Since 2018, the book has been published worldwide and in English with the changed title *Dirty Jewess*. The title of the book was preceded by a long process: *"The term Jew sounds in English as such a prima donna, princess. In Slovakia, the word Jew was an insult. It took many years, a few changes, but it is so common in life that you*

have exactly the people you need then. And so the name Dirty Jew was born."¹¹

The plot of the novel takes place in the east of Slovakia in the small village of Porubka near Sobrance. The main character is Sofia, the daughter of a Jew named Simona, who survived the horrors of Nazi rampage firsthand. In the family where Sofia grew up, great emphasis was placed on adhering to Jewish customs and traditions. Several of them are described in the work, so the reader gets acquainted with the issues of Jewish culture. Among the individual holidays, the most important ones were missing, such as Shabbat - Saturday. "*Not the Jews kept the Shabbat, but the Shabbat kept the Jews*" (Coddington, 2010, p. 8). "*During Shabbat, we free our minds from everyday worries, jobs, creditors, debts, problems, and just as they freed our ancestors from slavery in ancient Egypt. We are free. We are Jews*" (ibid., p. 12).

Another important Jewish holiday mentioned in the book is r Passover, ie Jewish Easter. The main character of the novel recalls how her father Jakov brought dishes, cutlery and a plate set used only for Passover. Even how her mother made delicacies from typical mace flour. The day before, one crumb of bread – so called chumec was burned in their family, as well as in several Jewish families. The dining was exceptional, the dishes were special for meat and dairy dishes, kosher and all nicely set on the table. The basis of the seder is for the children to learn about the importance and liberation of the Jewish nation from slavery. At the Seder dinner, it is also customary for everyone at the table to drink four glasses of wine. The tradition is linked to four statements from the story of Exodus about the liberation of the Jews:

"I'll take you out."

"I'll set you free."

"I'll save you."

"I will receive you as my nation" (ibid., p. 121).

Among the traditions and important Jewish events, there was also the Bar Mitzvah festival, which plays a big role in the lives of Jewish boys. In this ceremony, a Jewish boy becomes a religious adult man (ibid., p. 197).

Jews preserve specific customs and traditions even at weddings. The week before the wedding, the couple must not be seen. "*He just walked and pushed tickets under my door and whispered in a keyhole*" (ibid., p. 144).

Just as the Jewish calendar has its cycle, so the story told in the book did not escape the life cycle. As is the case in the natural life cycle, which is part of every single one of us, whether a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim or an atheist. Even the character of the novel on the way to the search for happiness was met by the hardships of the life cycle. Death. The death of her closest beloved person - her husband. And on this occasion, she described one of the important habits associated with this event. "*My days were filled with emptiness, which gripped my soul, took root in my heart and completely controlled my actions, being, life ... But without it, it did not make sense to me. I sat behind him shiva for a week*" (Coddington, 2010, p. 202). According to the Torah, Shiva is the closest relative of the deceased. Mirrors are covered in the houses, the family does not take a shower, does not bathe, does not cook, does not go to work. Jews are not in the habit of carrying flowers to the graves of the dead, but place stones or papers with them as they do at the Wailing Wall (ibid., p. 219).

The book brilliantly describes the story of a Jewish girl from eastern Slovakia who wanted to conquer the world, which she eventually succeeded in, but also draws the reader into the realities and essence of Judaism. It describes the difference between the individual Jewish branches and approaches Judaism from several point of views. "*He is not a Jew like a Jew... There*

are many branches in our religion. We are ultra-pious, liberal, orthodox, conservative, and so on" (ibid., p. 123). The protagonist described the culture shock she experienced after moving to New York. In the district in which she lived, she first met the Satmar Hasids, who are recognizable by their clothing and lifestyle. Black suits and long sideburns are typical for men. Women, on the other hand, in long skirts and the whole shrouded even in the greatest heat. Married women are characterized by a shaved head, which is covered with wigs. In Europe, the main character never encountered them, because they come from the areas most affected by the Nazi murder. "*The life philosophy of the Satmars was something I had never encountered in my life*" (ibid., p. 123).

The book is also a good guide not only to customs and traditions, but also to a varied example of Jewish culture, of which Jewish cuisine is an integral part. And it was the kitchen and the food that connected Sofia's life with her husband Harry. She met him in America at a pizzeria he and his brother Teddy owned. Broadway's Jerusalem 2 - the largest kosher fast food with unique success of its kind in the United States. "*Teddy and Harry expanded their menu with pasta salads, puff pastry dresses - borekas, typical Jewish pastries - bagels, hummus, tahini and other Middle Eastern specialties*" (ibid., p. 148).

Candles are an integral part of Jewish culture. Candles are a symbol and characteristic of the holidays. And just for one holiday - Hanukkah, candles are the most typical. "*Let's light the first candle on the menorah. The one on the far right as it should be*" (ibid., p. 229). From the middle candle called shames the first real candle on the nine-armed candlestick is lit. One discount is added to this first lit candle every night. "*It was a long time ago when a miracle happened and a candle that was supposed to burn for one day burned for eight days ... We will celebrate a miracle for eight days and eight nights*" (Coddington, 2010, p. 229). When Sofia's sons were young, they received various gifts for the holiday. When the sons grew up the gifts turned into money called Hanukkah gelt.

Jewish holidays and traditions are unique and specific, although at first glance it may seem that their only principle is eating. "*They wanted to destroy us, to starve us. They failed. Let's eat*" (ibid., p. 222). This is also one of the Jewish jokes. The origin can be traced to the fact that food is an integral part of Jewish culture.

The book is not limited to Jewish culture, but also serves as a geographical example of the traces of Judaism. Sofia leads us through communist Czechoslovakia, as well as Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, Israel and finally the United States.

Jerusalem was, is and will be the center of Judaism. The city was twice destroyed, besieged 23 times, conquered 44 times and attacked 52 times. The Wailing Wall is considered to be the holiest site of Judaism. People from all over the world put papers with wishes in the gaps between the stones, regardless of their religion. And it was Harry, Sophie's husband, who took her to his homeland for the first time - Israel. "*Harry grew up in the ancient city of Jaffa, which is considered one of the oldest ports in the world. Everything there breathed history, it is easy to believe that the city is named after Jafet, one of Noah's three sons, who allegedly built the city forty years after the biblical flood*" (ibid., p. 165). Another center that Sofia's story showed readers was Tel Aviv. "*Tel Aviv is a modern, hot Eilat in the Gulf of Aqaba is ancient. Eilat was one of the stops of the Israelites on the run from Egyptian captivity and was conquered by King David. Thanks to Herry and my father's talking at Shabbat evenings, history became a reality, tangible. We promised our children's bar mitzvah would be in Israel. In Jerusalem*" (ibid., p. 166).

The Jewess is a book full of emotions and tension. This true story brings the culture of an ethnic group professing the Jewish faith. It also maps the absurdity of the time in which Sofia was born. It asks a lot of questions, but also answers. "*After all, the Torah says that the essence of our religion is questions and*

¹¹ <https://www.kosiceonline.sk/spinava-zidovka-silvie-fishbaum-mieri-na-americky-trh>

answers" (ibid., p. 220). The book is symbolically divided into thirteen chapters. The number thirteen represents a lucky number for Jews and also a number symbolizing the bar mitzvah (ibid., p. 232). "Same, and yet different" (ibid., p. 23). In this way, too, the essence of the book *The Jewess* could be summarized in one sentence.

5 Conclusion

An important and still current is the analysis of works, documentation of Jewish destinies and Jewish issues. Even today, various memoirs, publications, brochures and articles on the subject are published in the area of eastern Slovakia. We see that the topic of the Holocaust is still relevant today. In some ways more and others less explored, but never unnoticed and forgotten. Knowing history is important, but knowing the fates of individual Jewish heroes is important in order to understand the unwavering will to survive under certain circumstances. East Slovakia offers many stories of personalities of Jewish origin. They breathe the past and a piece of history that should never be forgotten. "Anyone who saves one life will save the whole world" (Talmud).

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