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**TRIBUNA TÎNĂRULUI CERCETĂTOR  
THE TRIBUNE OF YOUNG SCIENTISTS  
ТРИБУНА МОЛОДЫХ УЧЕНЫХ**

**THE SLOVAK STATE 1939-1945 AND THE PERSECUTION  
OF THE ROMA MINORITY**

**STATUL SLOVAC 1939-1945 ȘI PERSECUȚIA MINORITĂȚII ROME**

**СЛОВАЦКОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВО 1939-1945 ГГ. И ПРЕСЛЕДОВАНИЕ  
ЦЫГАНСКОГО МЕНЬШИНСТВА**

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ABSTRACT:

**THE SLOVAK STATE 1939-1945 AND THE PERSECUTION  
OF THE ROMA MINORITY**

*The article analyzes the persecutions during the Slovak Republic 1939-1945 directed against the Roma minority. Through the analysis, the author of the article will argue for the approximation and characterization of the persecutory legislative instruments faced by the Roma during the given period.*

*In terms of content, the article is divided into: Introduction, the emergence of the Slovak state and the issue of the Roma, stages of persecution policies towards the Roma, persecution policies from 1939-1945 in the Slovak state, conclusion.*

**Keywords:** analysis, persecution, Roma, minority, Slovak Republic 1939-1945

**JEL Classification:** F51, Z18, K37, K23

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REZUMAT:

**STATUL SLOVAC 1939-1945 ȘI PERSECUȚIA MINORITĂȚII ROME**

*Articolul analizează persecuțiile din timpul Republicii Slovace 1939-1945 îndreptate împotriva minorității rome. Prin analiză, autorul articolului va argumenta pentru apropierea și caracterizarea instrumentelor legislative persecutorii cu care se confruntă romii în perioada dată.*

*Din punct de vedere al conținutului, articolul se împarte în: Introducere, apariția statului slovac și problematica romilor, etape ale politicilor de persecuție față de romi, politici de persecuție din 1939-1945 în statul slovac, concluzie.*

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*Cuvinte cheie: analiză, persecuție, romi, minoritate, Republica Slovacă 1939-1945*

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РЕЗЮМЕ:

## СЛОВАЦКОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВО 1939-1945 ГГ. И ПРЕСЛЕДОВАНИЕ ЦЫГАНСКОГО МЕНЬШИНСТВА

*В статье анализируются преследования в Словацкой Республике 1939-1945 гг., направленные против цыганского меньшинства. Посредством анализа автор статьи будет аргументировать необходимость сближения и характеристики преследующих законодательных инструментов, с которыми столкнулись цыгане в данный период.*

*По содержанию статья разделена на: Введение, возникновение словацкого государства и проблема ромов, этапы политики преследования цыган, политика преследования 1939-1945 годов в словацком государстве, заключение.*

**Ключевые слова:** анализ, преследование, цыгане, меньшинство, Словацкая Республика, 1939-1945 гг.

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### Introduction

Persecution itself is as old as civilization itself. Throughout history, they have applied to various ethnic, religious and other groups. Whether it was the natives in modern America or the religious persecution of opponents of the church, all persecutions had in common that they restricted the life and customs of a certain group of people. Due to the fact that they have an exclusively negative dimension, they have affected various groups throughout history, including the Roma.

Persecutions during the Slovak state mainly concerned Jews. However, it should not be forgotten that significant persecutions also affected the Roma, who formed the so-called asocial group within the state. They acquired this status in their way of life, or by nomadism. However, it is necessary to clarify that there were also Roma in the Slovak state who lived according to the model of the majority society and they were not the target of such persecution as nomadic Roma who made a living by selling horses, textiles and many other commodities.

Compared to the persecutions in Nazi Germany, these measures were milder for various reasons that will be mentioned in the given article. In short, the period of the Slovak state left certain grievances and unhealed wounds for the Roma, as well as for every opponent of the regime at that time. Individual persecution policies will be explained in detail in the article in question.

The article aims to analyze the persecutory measures against the Roma during the wartime Slovak state. We will explain what measures were directed against them and which were the most important from an objective point of view. As already mentioned, the Roma were one of the groups that paid extra for their way of life, or nomadism and the Slovak Republic sought to disrupt the traditional Roma way of life. Based on this, the mentioned measures were taken.

### 1. The emergence of the Slovak state and the Roma issue

From a historical point of view, the Roma started moving to the territory of today's Slovakia in the 16-17th century.<sup>1</sup> The establishment of the Slovak state was announced on

<sup>1</sup> Mann, B. A. 2007. Od stereotypov ku genocíde. In. Nepřiznaný holocaust: Rómovia v rokoch 1939-1945. Bratislava: Občianske združenie In minorita. 2007. ISBN 978-80-969798-8-2. St. 27-32.

March 14, 1939 in the current capital of the Slovak Republic. It was primarily the result of a deep political and moral crisis within Europe. German aggression also had a significant impact on the establishment of a unified state (in addition to the disintegration of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia). With regard to the political system, it was true that in theory it was characterized by the division of power into legislative, executive and judicial, but in practice the real power was in the hands of the state party – the Hlinková Slovak People's Party, which was also the only legal political party.<sup>1</sup>

The Slovak state was created primarily on the basis of Hitler's order, which meant the creation of a specific state entity.<sup>2</sup> From a legislative point of view, the political representation at that time began with the elimination of democratic and continued with the establishment of totalitarian-fascist signs.<sup>3</sup> Legislative measures were preceded by the inspiration of Nazi ideology from the position of the Slovak state. Nazism influenced the local Slovak nationalism of various political, social and economic elites.<sup>4</sup> It was fully manifested in the topic of race - racial inferiority or hereditary genetic disease. Ideological starting points resulted in the fact that the definition of the term "Gypsy" in the legislation of the Slovak state was closely linked to an antisocial model of behavior.<sup>5</sup> Based on this, the Slovak state (in many cases) in practice imitated or copied the discriminatory racial laws of Nazi Germany.<sup>6</sup>

The Constitutional Act on the Constitution, adopted on July 21, 1939, changed the name of the state to the Slovak Republic. The constitution of this republic was also based on the imperial constitution. Even the Citizenship Act was a copy of the German Reich Citizenship Act.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the definition of the leading state party - HSĽS, the newly adopted constitution also enshrined the so-called civil inequality.<sup>8</sup> In practice, however, it granted extensive privileges to national minorities - it recognized the freedom of national consciousness and explicitly prohibited denationalization.<sup>9</sup> Within this state, Slovak minorities were divided into three categories: privileged (German and Hungarian), disadvantaged (Ukrainian, Polish and Czech) and finally oppressed (Jewish and Roma). In general, Roma representatives had the lowest social status among all social classes.<sup>10</sup>

The number of Roma in this state represented more than 100,000 members, which was less than 4% of the total Slovak population. With the treatment of the Roma minority, the Slovak people's government gradually approached that of Nazi Germany, depriving the Roma of political, economic, civil and human rights. The Roma minority was said to represent a social burden for the state and their participation in work units was expected.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kamenec, I. 2011. The Slovak state, 1939-1945. In: Slovakia in History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2011. ISBN 978-0-521-80253-6. Pages 175-192.

<sup>2</sup> Nečas, C. 1994. Českoslovenští Romové v letech 1938-1945. Brno: Masarykova univerzita. 1994. 220 stran. ISBN 8021009454.

<sup>3</sup> Nečas, C. 2004. SLOVENŠTÍ ROMOVÉ V LETECH 1939-1945. In: Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity. C, Řada historická. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2004. ISBN 80-210-3725-3. St. 153-178.

<sup>4</sup> Jelínek, Y. 1976. Slovakia and its minorities 1939-1945: People with and without national protection. In Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity. ISSN 1465-3923, volume 4, issue. 1. Pages 1-15.

<sup>5</sup> Pekár, M. 2006. Výber dokumentov k rómskej otázke na východnom Slovensku v rokoch 1942 – 1945. In ANNALES HISTORICI PRESOVIENSES VOL. 6/2006. Prešov: UNIVERSUM, 2006. ISBN 80-89046-40-1. s 309-332.

<sup>6</sup> Mann, B. A. 2011. RÓMOVIA V ČESKÝCH ZEMIACH A NA SLOVENSKU. In ÚVOD DO ANTROPOLOGIE ETNICKÝCH MENŠIN: Vybrané texty přednášek magisterského kurzu Fakulty humanitních studií Univerzity Karlovy v Praze. Praha: UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE, Fakulta humanitních studií, 2011. ISBN 978-80-87398-17-3. St. 21-52.

<sup>7</sup> Lužica, R. 2005. Vylúčenie Cigánov1)/Rómov v Slovenskej republike (1939 – 1945). In Pamäť národa, ISSN 1336-6297, roč. 2. 2005. st. 6-12.

<sup>8</sup> Nečas, 2004

<sup>9</sup> Vojak, D. 2016. FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ROMA SUFFERING IN SOME CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SHORTLY BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR II (HUNGARY, CROATIA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, POLAND). In: Pannoniana : Časopis za humanističke znanosti. ISSN 2459-7465, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2016. Pages 175-188.

<sup>10</sup> Lužica, 2005

<sup>11</sup> Nečas, 2004

Although the Slovak Republic was a satellite state of Nazi Germany, it did not fulfill all the demands of A. Hitler. One of the areas under direct competence and decision-making was the Roma issue. The Slovak representatives were not as radical in relation to the Roma as it was in the case of Nazi Germany. The literature gives two reasons why the Roma were not under a harsh regime in the Slovak Republic. The first is the formal independence of Slovakia, the second is the integration of a large part of the Slovak Roma into the Slovak agricultural estate society.<sup>1</sup>

### **Stages of persecutory policies against the Roma**

Several relevant authors clarify that the persecution measures in the Slovak Republic 1939-1945 had several stages or phases. The first phase, according to Ctibor Nečas, a prominent historian, was the application of racial discrimination, while the relevant legislation "accidentally" coincided with the legislation of the Third Reich. In the second phase, the Slovak ministerial regulations on the forced concentration of Roma only came close to the Reich regulations. Only finally, the third stage indicated that the regime in the Slovak Republic, which described itself as clerical-fascist, began to take over the Reich experience offered by the German side and used them to create the first partial initiatives. He applied them radically and in a similar spirit to the Nazi regime.<sup>2</sup>

In the first phase from 1939 to 1942, the Roma issue was not a priority area of public interest. The regime tried to solve the Jewish question. In this period, individual measures first applied to nomadic Roma and their means of livelihood, and gradually developed into comprehensive measures against all Roma. In practice, this meant: restrictions, precisely defined places of movement, restrictions on trades and businesses, police supervision, forced sale of property, their exclusion from the armed forces and forced camp concentration in labor units. The second stage took place in the years 1942-1944. During it, interest in solving the Roma issue grew. It was related to Nazi Germany's preparations for the liquidation of Roma on a pan-European level. Emphasis began to be placed on compliance with all standards that had been adopted in the previous period. Restrictions on freedom of movement and many other freedoms have also increased. A detention camp was also introduced as a tool to isolate all Roma and use them as labor. Ctibor Nečas speaks of the period of reprisals at the turn of 1944-1945 as an extraordinary third stage. It was the most cruel period for the Roma. It was characterized by the destruction of Roma settlements and the murder of Roma.<sup>3</sup>

Karol Janas, another important historian, states different facts regarding the course of Roma persecutions. The first stage was the period 1939-1944, which was characterized by persecutory policies aimed at eliminating nomadism. In the same period, there were persecutions in the army and the establishment of the first work units. The second and final period began in 1944 and ended in 1945. This was already the period after the failed SNP and the subsequent radicalization of policies from the German side.<sup>4</sup> Other key historians include Ivan Kamenec, who states that in the case of anti-Roma policies, progress was made sporadically and they were replaced by policies of a regional type. The mentioned policies were partly based on the legislation of the first Czechoslovakia, as well as Austria-Hungary and the implementation, or members of the gendarmerie were in charge of monitoring compliance with such measures. Based on these policies, Roma citizens were unofficially divided into two categories - nomadic and settled. General measures applied across the board

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<sup>1</sup> Hübschmannová, M. 2005. Po Židoch Cigáni I. díl (1939 - srpen 1944): Svědectví Romů ze Slovenska 1939-1945. Bratislava: Triáda, 2005. 900 s. ISBN 8086138143.

<sup>2</sup> Nečas, C. 1992. Osudy československých Cikánů za německé okupace a nadvlády. In STŘEDNÍ EVROPA: Revue pro středoevropskou kulturu a politiku. ISSN 0862-091 X, 1992, roč. 7, č.23, strany 117-129.

<sup>3</sup> Pekár, 2006

<sup>4</sup> Janas, K. 2010. Perzekúcie Rómov v Slovenskej republike (1939-1945). Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2010. 112 strán. ISBN 978-80-89335-30-5.



to all Roma (exclusion from armed military attendance service), while regional measures (economic restrictions, work obligation in work units) concerned only nomadic Roma.<sup>1</sup>

The literature also mentions other stages of persecution - The first stage was characterized by the military law and the regulation on work duty, as well as by decrees of the Ministry of the Interior and a number of orders at the national and local level. The second circle should be described as the concentration of Roma men in work units. The third phase was characterized by considerations about the establishment of concentration camps for Roma families. Finally, the fourth, supplementary circuit was marked by murders and the dragging of the population from Roma settlements to the gallows.<sup>2</sup>

### **3. Persecution policies from 1939-1945 in the Slovak state**

The prologue to the persecution measures was the elaboration of the law on itinerant Roma and anti-social persons, which represented a model for other persecution measures. This law brought the status of antisocial persons to the Roma living on the territory of the Slovak state, which resulted in the restriction of civil rights and laid the foundations for the adoption of other persecutory policies.<sup>3</sup> On March 24, 1939, a government regulation was adopted, according to which the labor departments were to concentrate and detain for work all persons detained in detention in the Ilava detention camp. These prisoners were obliged to work for the public good.<sup>4</sup>

On June 23, 1939, a regulation of the Regional Office in Bratislava was adopted on the reporting of the Roma population to their home municipalities and on the prohibition of horse trading.<sup>5</sup> The intention of this regulation was to eliminate nomadism, order to sell horses to Roma and place Roma under police surveillance. The regulation also established that in villages with more than three families, Gypsy wardens, or gypsy vajda.<sup>6</sup> Fulfillment of the ban was also to be ensured by withdrawing nomadic permits from all Roma, but primarily by withdrawing trade licenses - from both nomadic and non-nomadic Roma. This regulation radically affected the traditional life of part of the Roma society.<sup>7</sup> This regulation was contained in the so-called the circular of the office in question and it also ordered that the district and notary offices carry out revisions of the domicile of all members of this community and subsequently submit proposals for their expulsion (if they lived in villages without domicile). According to the circular, they had to leave such villages within a month. If this did not happen, they should have been expelled.<sup>8</sup>

The first regulation, which was directed against the nomadic Roma, was contained in the regional office's circular of June 23. This circular was followed by other persecutory policies in the army, on the basis of which the term "Gypsy" was characterized. Efforts to limit the migration of Roma as much as possible resulted in the development of the outline of the government draft law, which will be presented below.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of the ban on horse

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<sup>1</sup> Kamenec, I. 2006. Holokaust na Slovensku – porovnanie osudov rómskych a židovských obyvateľov. In. *Rómovia a druhá svetová vojna: čítanka*. Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku. 2006. ISBN 80-89008-20-8. St. 96-101.

<sup>2</sup> Kráľovič, T. 2019. Roma Persecution in the Slovak state 1939 – 1945: Labour Camp Issues in Regional, County and Police office Funds in Nitra. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2019, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 456-474, ISSN 1338-7219.

<sup>3</sup> Janas, K. 2006. Pokusy vlády slovenského štátu o likvidáciu obchodu s koňmi v rokoch 1939-1941. In. *Rómovia a druhá svetová vojna: čítanka*. Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku. 2006. ISBN 80-89008-20-8. St. 86-89.

<sup>4</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>5</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>6</sup> Janas, K. 2007. Perzekúcia rómskeho obyvateľstva na Slovensku v slovenskej historiografii (Súčasný stav a perspektívy). In. *Nepriznaný holocaust: Rómovia v rokoch 1939-1945*. Bratislava: Občianske združenie In minorita. 2007. ISBN 978-80-969798-8-2. St. 15-20.

<sup>7</sup> Janas, 2006

<sup>8</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>9</sup> Kráľovič, 2019

trading, the Roma were not only to have their nomadic licenses officially taken away, but also to have their business licenses revoked.<sup>1</sup>

The decree of the Regional Office in Bratislava of June 23 also significantly affected the trade in waste, although, as stated, it was primarily directed against the trade in horses. The regulation was followed in practice, but it was accepted with embarrassment.<sup>2</sup> After the application of this regulation, the number of unemployed residents increased, and for that reason the district authorities asked the Ministry of Economy to solve this problem.<sup>3</sup>

An important landmark was also the adoption of the constitutional law on state citizenship.<sup>4</sup> The Act on State Citizenship, or the constitutional law, which entered into force on September 25, 1939, divided the population into two groups. The first was represented by civil servants/citizens, the second by foreign elements. From the position of the Roma, it was possible to obtain full citizenship of the Slovak state only on the condition that they have a permanent residence, a permanent occupation, as well as education, or they lived an ordered civil life. Even if they only worked on a case-by-case basis, it was not possible to consider them as members of the Slovak nationality.<sup>5</sup> The mentioned law also divided the Slovak Roma into the Slovak Roma community and the others, or settled and nomadic. Settled Roma had permanent residence and some stable work, and therefore it was possible for them to become citizens of this state. Nomadic Roma could not become citizens of the Slovak state mainly because of many differences and inability to lead a social life according to the model of the majority society.<sup>7</sup>

A key role in the creation of regulations that were directed against nomadic Roma was also played by the outline of the government draft law on wandering Gypsies.<sup>8</sup> Although it was not adopted by the Slovak Parliament, it served as the basis for many other departmental and government decrees or regulations.<sup>9</sup> The Slovak state began to fully implement its anti-Roma policy at the end of 1940. However, already at the beginning of 1940, several legislative measures were gradually adopted, e.g. military law or government regulations with the force of law, etc.<sup>10</sup>

On January 18, 1940, the Military Law was issued, which determined that Roma and Jews may not be members of the armed forces (military personnel). Instead, they were supposed to work in special groups.<sup>11</sup> This law also determined that only Aryans could be members of the armed forces. For that reason, the Roma soldiers serving in the army were to be released by the end of January (as of January 31 and transferred from military service to labor service by mid-April (April 15)).<sup>12</sup> Immediately after the martial law was passed, the Ministry of National Defense issued an order on February 29, according to which Roma of all military status were

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<sup>1</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>2</sup> Janas, K. 2006. Pokusy vlády slovenského štátu o likvidáciu obchodovania s odpadkami v rokoch 1939-1944. Rómovia a druhá svetová vojna: čítanka. Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku. 2006. ISBN 80-89008-20-8. St. 82-85.

<sup>3</sup> Janas 2006

<sup>4</sup> Janas, 2006

<sup>5</sup> Macsó, K. 2018. The 'Roma Question' in Slovakia. In. European and Regional Studies. ISSN 2066-639X, vol. 14, 2018. pages 71-83.

<sup>6</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>7</sup> Tritt, R. 1992. STRUGGLING FOR ETHNIC IDENTITY: Czechoslovakia's Endangered Gypsies. New York: Human Rights Watch. 1992. ISBN 1-56432-078-2.

<sup>8</sup> Janas, 2010

<sup>9</sup> Letz, R. 2012. Slovenské dejiny V. (1938-1945) Bratislava: Literárne informačné centrum, 2012. 367 s. ISBN 978-80-8119-135-0.

<sup>10</sup> Lehoczka, L. 2020. NARIAĐUJEME, VYHLASUJEME...! VÝBER DISKRIMINAČNÝCH OPATRENÍ VOČI CIGÁNOM/ RÓMOM NA SLOVENSKU V ROKOCH TOTALITY 1939 - 1945 SPRACOVANÝ Z FONDOV MV SR, ŠTÁTNEHO ARCHÍVU V NITRE. In. HISTORICKÝ ČASOPIS. ISSN 0018-2575, roč. 68, č.4, strany 723-734.

<sup>11</sup> Mann, B. A. 2015. Tragické osudy Rómov v Podpoľaní počas druhej svetovej vojny. In Nové poznatky o holocauste Rómov na Slovensku. Bratislava: Občianske združenie In minorita. 2015. ISBN 978-80-970598-3-5. St. 5-22.

<sup>12</sup> Nečas, 2004

dismissed from the army. Based on that, they were transferred to additional district headquarters or reassigned to the records of the already mentioned infantry regiments No. 1-9. Together with other non-Aryans, they were incorporated into infantry regiments by order and law. In these regiments, they were "used" to complete and strengthen military buildings, but also to help the public and civil sectors, respectively. they did various unskilled and auxiliary jobs.<sup>1</sup>

The Military Law was supplemented by two government regulations with the force of law - on the work obligation and on the temporary adjustment of the work obligation of Jews and Gypsies. The first regulation from May 29, 1940 laid down the possibility for military administrations to enlist unemployed persons aged 18-60, or still avoiding work.<sup>2</sup> According to the second regulation with the force of law (also dated May 29, 1940), all Roma who did not have a stable job - nomads and settlers - had to perform various activities for the benefit of the state for two months instead of military training. This work duty was performed in specific facilities of the forced concentration camp.<sup>3</sup>

For the purpose of a closer definition of the term "Gypsy", a special decree was issued on June 18, 1940, which more accurately characterized this term. The decisive criterion for conceptual definition was the way of life.<sup>4</sup> The decree of the Ministry of the Interior of June 18, 1940 defined the term "Gypsy" in the following way: "Gypsy is to be understood according to § 9 of the regulation with the force of Act no. 130/1940 Sl. from. only that member of the gypsy race, descended from it through both parents, who lives a nomadic or settled life, but avoids work."<sup>5</sup> The term "Gypsy" was defined only when the Ministry of National Defense investigated the racial affiliation of individual military personnel and asked the government for more detailed terminological information on this matter. At the same time, people without a permanent residence were considered to be Roma members of the Roma community, and mainly nomadic and non-working Roma were included under this decree. It was on the basis of this request that the Ministry of the Interior issued the aforementioned special decree of June 18, 1940.<sup>6</sup>

The need for new anti-Roma legal norms was first pointed out by the main police headquarters, whose transcription became the impetus for the development of the outline of the government's draft law on itinerant Roma and vagabonds. It was based on a law during the first Czechoslovakia, namely from 1927, as well as a government regulation in 1928. The law being prepared was supposed to effectively include economically active Roma in the labor process.<sup>7</sup>

The decree of the Ministry of the Interior from April 2, 1941 was also significant. According to this decree, the work obligation was to take the form of work centers or units. Thus, two types of forced concentration camps were established. While the first category was intended for Jews, the second for all anti-socials, which included Roma without employment.<sup>8</sup> On April 20, a decree was issued, which was the first of the official decisions that discriminated against settled Roma.<sup>9</sup> The decree definitively canceled the nomadic permits introduced during the first Czechoslovakia.<sup>10</sup> Holders of nomadic permits were ordered to return to their villages of permanent or temporary residence within 8 days, and their nomadic wagons had to be sold. If this did not happen, their property was seized and auctioned for the

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<sup>1</sup> Janas, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Mann, 2015

<sup>3</sup> Nečas, 2004

<sup>4</sup> Nečas, C. 2006. Pronásledovaní Cikánů v období slovenského státu. In. Rómovia a druhá svetová vojna: čítanka. Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku. 2006. ISBN 80-89008-20-8. St. 39-48.

<sup>5</sup> Pekár, M. 2015. Komentované pramene k dejinám Slovenska 1939-1945. Košice: Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach. 2015. 112 strán. ISBN 978-80-8152-268-0.

<sup>6</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>7</sup> Nečas, 2004

<sup>8</sup> Mann, 2015

<sup>9</sup> Nečas, 1992

<sup>10</sup> Lužica, 2005

benefit of the state treasury. Based on this decree, nomadic Roma were placed under police surveillance and could only leave their homes with written permission from the police.<sup>1</sup> It established the obligation for settled Roma to remove their dwellings from the vicinity of public roads and to build them separately from other residents. In villages with more than three settled gypsy families, district offices of gypsy vajdas were established, who answered to the municipal mayors and ensured order in these settlements.<sup>2</sup>

The decree was issued twice, which means that in the first case it was not applied very much, or was not observed. On the contrary, with the second decree, the displacement of Roma settlements has already taken place.<sup>3</sup> In other words, in practice the settlement of Roma was not very effective (municipalities that were supposed to accept them rejected them), and therefore a decree was issued with the same intention on 21 July 1943, in which Minister of the Interior Alexander Mach announced the opening of a concentration camp specifically for Roma. However, in 1942, the Ministry announced its intention to create such a camp in advance.<sup>4</sup> For the second time, this decree abolished nomadic letters and also applied to the horse trade. The ministry left the distinction between a nomad or a merchant to the district or notary offices. Violation of the decree was punishable by high fines and even imprisonment.<sup>5</sup>

As already stated, in order for settled Roma not to be very "in sight", they were obliged to remove their dwellings, if they were located near railway lines, state and other public roads, and move them from there to more remote and specially designated places. However, the mentioned measures were not implemented in full, or in all places.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the original state was left due to a lack of funds. While many municipalities demolished such settlements, other municipalities did not have enough funds for this purpose.<sup>7</sup>

There are also two decrees of the Ministry of the Interior on the organizational and working rules of these facilities dated May 28 and September 19, 1941. While according to the first decree, the departments were established by the central labor office of the Ministry of the Interior, the second decree allowed the establishment of departments not only by the central labor office, but also at the request of county authorities or employer companies. There were 11 such work units in the territory of the Slovak Republic (West Slovakia – Dubnica nad Váhom, Ilava, Most na Ostrove; Central Slovakia – Jarabá, Očová, Revúca, Ústie nad Oravou; East Slovakia – Bystré, Hanušovce nad Topľou, Nižný Hrabovec, Petič. At the central labor office it was considered that a work unit for Roma people would be opened in Krupina, but this project did not take place.<sup>8</sup>

Based on the decree of the Ministry of the Interior on organizational and camp regulations from May 28, it was possible to define camps and units as places of forced camp concentration, the intention of which was to use the labor force of enlisted persons. Practical experience from the operation of these units was the starting point for issuing a new decree of the Ministry of the Interior dated September 19, 1942 on the organizational rules of work units. This provision entered into force on November 1, 1942 and greatly expanded or changed the previous regulations. Pursuant to the decree of September 19, labor departments were established by the central labor office of the Ministry of the Interior. The antisocial element was included in these units - the selection of antisocials was in charge of notary offices, police stations and municipal administration. In 1942, the outline of the government draft law on the so-called antisocial persons. According to this law, even an antisocial person over the age of 18 could be considered a Roma, regardless of gender. Although the draft went

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<sup>1</sup> Nečas, 1992

<sup>2</sup> Nečas, 2006

<sup>3</sup> Hübschmannová, 2005

<sup>4</sup> Letz, 2012

<sup>5</sup> Janas, 2006

<sup>6</sup> Nečas, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Mann, 2007

<sup>8</sup> Nečas, 2004



through a comment procedure, the adoption process was lengthy and it was not submitted to the parliament for approval.<sup>1</sup>

In 1942, the Ministry of the Interior changed the concept of solving the Roma issue. It started with the building and opening of the first work units for Gypsies and antisocials. On September 2, the Ministry of the Interior came into conflict with the Ministry of Transport over the regulation governing the settlement of Roma in municipalities. It interfered with his competence. The regulation against Roma nomadism was also tightened in 1943. On April 5, the presidium of the Ministry of the Interior tightened the previous interpretation of Roma asociality. According to the new system, it was sufficient only if a Roma worked and was not a burden on his surroundings. This also applied to settled Roma. The ministry specified who can be considered antisocial - he was also someone who works but commits an offense against property. If the victim did not ask for compensation, he could be included in the employment relationship. The pressure to eliminate Roma nomadism increased in 1943.<sup>2</sup>

A directive from April 1943 defined almost all members of the Roma community as antisocial. The exception was only employed and Roma adapted to society. The recruits for the work units were selected on the basis of the lists of municipal notary offices, they were secured by gendarmerie stations with the help of the Hlinka Guard's emergency units. Work units were used to perform heavy work in the state or public interest, usually for 30 days.<sup>34</sup>

According to these guidelines, all those who did not work and were a burden to their environment were considered antisocial. They were e.g. Roma without a job, and they could be placed in labor camps. Based on the reports from the gendarmerie stations, we know that the measures have proven themselves very well in practice, because since then there has not been an offense committed by the Roma. The threat of being transferred to work units forced the Roma to follow the established rules. Despite its effectiveness, the Minister of the Interior was not satisfied with the given directives and imposed an obligation on the district chiefs to submit a list of Roma who had to be evicted from the villages by July 31, 1943. It was already the second decree, which meant an order for the resettlement of Roma from gypsy settlements from villages to remote places. After all, this also happened in the larger one. This situation lasted approximately from the second half of 1943 until the outbreak of the SNP in August 1944.<sup>5</sup>

On March 26, 1943, the second military law was issued, which brought significant changes to the status of the Roma. As a result of this law, the distinction between asocial and orderly Roma ceased to exist. From June 1943, the Ministry of National Defense ordered the reassignment of all Roma to the labor force, regardless of their asociality. They were in the labor camp until 1945.<sup>6</sup> The regulation of June 23, 1943 again strongly ordered the removal of Roma dwellings from busy roads and restricted freedom of travel and avoiding work. At the same time, the provisions of this regulation forwarded that a concentration camp for Roma would be opened, and therefore the Ministry of the Interior requested to submit a list of all persons who had to be interned in this projected facility.<sup>7</sup>

The Roma population outside the labor camps was limited by ever wider and sharper discriminatory policies. The basis of one of them was the decree/decreed of the Ministry of the Interior from July 21, 1943. According to this decision, municipalities moved to relocate gypsy settlements to reserved places located in remote parts of municipal cadastres. By means of involuntary eviction, ongoing mechanisms of social adaptation and assimilation were stopped or the positive social and ethical norms of the Roma population were lost. Roma members were once again socially isolated and cut off contacts with the majority, but also

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<sup>1</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>2</sup> Janas, 2010

<sup>3</sup> Mann, 2015

<sup>4</sup> Nečas, 1992

<sup>5</sup> Královič, 2019

<sup>6</sup> Janas, 2007

<sup>7</sup> Nečas, 1992

with each other - they fell into the abyss of social distance. The ministerial decree allowed the use of several other measures that restricted freedom of movement.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with this decree, the authorities obliged the municipal boards to establish special settlements, in which those Roma whose dwellings were until then located near busy roads were to be forcibly placed. In municipalities with a smaller number of Roma, this regulation was implemented more easily than in those where more Roma lived. On July 21, 1943, the Ministry of the Interior strongly warned the chiefs of the district and state police offices to comply with all orders regarding the migration, residence, and work duties of Roma and to submit a detailed report on this by August 15. The circular also informed that a concentration camp would be opened in the near future and subordinate authorities were to draw up lists of Roma families that had to be concentrated there.<sup>23</sup>

On October 7, the Ministry of the Interior, in agreement with the Ministry of Economy, issued a decree that determined the conditions for issuing identification cards for garbage collection. The decree significantly tightened the previous practice. Private companies interested in issuing identification cards had to be approved or confirmed by the district or state police office. It entered into force on November 1, 1943, and its implementation was controlled by the police and security authorities. In case of violation of the conditions, they were obliged to withdraw the given identification cards.<sup>4</sup>

Due to health conditions, the Ministry of the Interior in the east of Slovakia banned those Roma who did not present a medical certificate of health from traveling by trains, buses and other means of public transport. The ban lasted until the end of January 1944, while in April of the same year the scope of the decree was extended from the eastern part to the entire territory of Slovakia.<sup>5</sup>

On June 13, 1944, a circular of the Ministry of the Interior established a ban on public transport for Roma for health reasons, which was a measure to prevent or restrict movement. He also ordered that each district office report the occurrence of typhus in the given district to all doctors as well as to the police and railway stations. They were subsequently to be entrusted with checking whether, in addition to a doctor's statement, the Roma passengers also had a travel permit from the relevant local authority. With this method, the Roma lost the possibility to use trains and buses and other means of public transport. Roma were also targeted by local ordinances that prohibited them from entering parks, public rooms, and shops; they also had a set time for entering villages and towns. Failure to comply with these regulations was punished by imprisonment and other methods.<sup>6</sup>

On July 7, 1944, the Ministry of Transport and Public Works issued a decree banning Roma from traveling by rail. The reason was a large epidemic in eastern Slovakia. It targeted all Roma without distinction.<sup>7</sup>

Also in July, the Minister of the Interior returned to the decree "On the adjustment of certain conditions of the Gypsies" and he supplemented his previous circular issued on July 21, 1943. From complaints and submissions, he learned the fact that some municipalities incorrectly applied his decree in practice. It was in the circular that he once again explained how the authorities should proceed when relocating Roma. At the end of the circular, the minister canceled the directives of September 2, 1942, which resulted in a competence dispute with the MDVP. A day later, another circular was issued, which returned to the decree "On the adjustment of certain conditions of the Gypsies". The Minister of the Interior emphatically called on the subordinate authorities to strictly observe the already issued regulations that

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<sup>1</sup> Nečas, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Nečas, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>4</sup> Janas, 2010

<sup>5</sup> Nečas, 2006

<sup>6</sup> Mann, 2015

<sup>7</sup> Janas, 2010

dealt with the collection of garbage by the Roma. Competent authorities were approached to radically prevent roaming and other indecencies of Gypsies.<sup>1</sup>

On July 20, 1944, the Ministry of the Interior issued another ban - the removal of any ID card from Roma for garbage collection; implement a strict review of all occupations for the collection of raw materials and withdraw these permits from unreliable persons; to arrest begging and wandering Roma; organize anti-Roma raids. At the end, the decree strictly stated that in case of disrespect and improper obedience, there will be a consistent and strict control of the responsible official bodies. Under the impression of this threat, the district police station organized large-scale raids in the first week of August, during which all Roma who showed identification cards for the collection of raw materials were detained.<sup>2</sup> However, the decree was no longer applied because the central authorities of the Slovak Republic lost their power in the summer months.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of August 1944, German military forces entered Slovak territory. This happened with the approval of the Bratislava government and they started the occupation against which the Slovak army and partisan units rebelled. The insurgents controlled most of western and all of central Slovakia. Subsequently, however, they were forced to retreat to the mountains and switch to a partisan way of fighting. German forces then completed the occupation of the Slovak Republic. The German forces were assisted by units of the Hlinka Guard.<sup>4</sup>

After the invasion of the Slovak Republic, the Nazis did not differentiate between social and asocial Roma, and in that period there was a cancellation of work units for Roma. Only two camps were active – in Dubnica nad Váhom and Ústí nad Oravou. The last one was concluded on December 31, 1944 in Ústí nad Oravou. After the SNP and at the end of the Second World War, discrimination turned into brutal persecution. In practice, it was mainly implemented in the detention camp in Dubnica nad Váhom.<sup>56</sup>

A joint initiative of the Ministry of the Interior and the Economy was a response to the occurrence of nomadism under the pretext of collecting iron and textile waste. On October 7, 1944, they issued a special circular canceling all previous permits authorizing the collection of waste materials. On November 2, 1944, by order of the Ministry of National Defense, a detention camp for Roma was opened in Dubnice nad Váhom on the site of the former labor unit. The camp served for the forced concentration of Roma families, or members of the Roma minority regardless of age or gender. The first prisoners were the Roma members of the original unit, to whom the Roma and their families, detained in Trenčianská and in other counties, including the distant Šarišsko-Zemplínská county, were added relatively quickly. The period from the fall of 1944 to the spring of 1945 was characterized by the suppression of the SNP, the seizure of power by the Nazi army, and the murder of the Roma community throughout the territory of the Slovak Republic. It was mainly for three reasons - active participation in the uprising, support for resistance units, an increasingly open object of racial hatred. Many Roma actively participated in the SNP. However, after its suppression and the occupation of Slovakia by the German army, mass extermination of Roma occurred in several places, especially in central Slovakia.<sup>7</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The article in question aimed to analyze the persecution measures aimed at the Roma minority in the Slovak state, or in the Slovak Republic of the totalitarian state in the years

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<sup>1</sup> Kráľovič, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Nečas, 1994

<sup>3</sup> Janas, 2006

<sup>4</sup> Nečas, 2004

<sup>5</sup> Nečas, 2007

<sup>6</sup> Janas, K. 2008. Organizačná štruktúra pracovných útvarov v rokoch 1941-1944. In. Perzekúcie na Slovensku v rokoch 1938 – 1945: Slovenská republika 1939 – 1945 očami mladých historikov VII. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa. 2008. ISBN 978-80-89335-05-4. St 329-341.

<sup>7</sup> Nečas, 1994

1939-1945. Based on the findings, it is appropriate to state that the persecution of the Roma community began already in the first year of the existence of the Slovak state. For this purpose, we have listed the most important persecution policies. An important tool during the persecution was the Regional Office in Bratislava, which played an important role in the process of persecution. In the same way, the adoption of the constitutional law on state citizenship was a fundamental element in the persecution of the Roma population, because it divided the Roma into foreign elements and citizens of the Slovak Republic. At the same time, the Roma had to fulfill certain requirements in order to acquire the citizenship of this state. The military law, which prohibited Roma from serving in the army, also played a key role. Instead, they were supposed to figure in working groups for different purposes. The martial law was followed by two government regulations, which also represented an adequate tool for persecuting the Roma. Other persecutory policies were: the decree of June 18, 1940, the decree of April 2, 1941, as well as of April 20, 1941. The decrees of May 28 and September 19, 1941, then of September 19, 1942, were also related to persecution. 21 July 1943, 13 June 1944, 7 July 1944, 20 July 1944, 7 October 1944.

The author believes that the persecution of the Roma was one of the chapters that this community had to endure. However, the Roma were not only persecuted during the wartime Slovak state, but also during the entire history when they were active in Europe. A certain relaxation occurred in the 19th century. The regime that came after the clerical-fascist Slovak state also carried out certain persecutions of the Roma not only in the territory of Slovakia. This chapter may be the subject of further research.

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