

THE SLOVAK STATE DURING WWII
AND THE HOLOCAUST
IN THE SLOVAK COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Research Report

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Pode Bal: from the series Flagelants, 2006

(You do not have to suffer any longer that we were the fascist state. I will suffer for you.)

Could you please tell me in relation to each pair of the statements whether you totally agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement B or totally agree with the statement B. (in %)

5.2.

A. We should talk more about the ways a totalitarian regime

can use the propaganda to manipulate “common people” into participation on human rights abuses or mass killings.

B. Recalling it is of no use, nothing similar to the persecutions and mass

killings of a part of the population could happen in our society again

		I agree with the statement A	I agree with the statement B	I do not know
Gender	The population in general	60	28	12
	Male	58,9	29,7	11,4
	Female	61,9	26,1	12,0
Age	15 – 17 years	48,9	27,7	23,4
	18 – 24 years	51,1	30,5	18,3
	25 – 34 years	51,6	33,0	15,3
	35 – 44 years	62,8	27,7	9,6
	45 – 54 years	60,4	26,9	12,6
	55 – 64 years	66,3	27,1	6,6
	65 or more years	73,9	20,6	5,5
Education	Primary	61,0	25,2	13,8
	Secondary (no A-levels)	53,6	32,4	14,1
	Secondary	61,4	28,2	10,4
	Higher	68,6	23,2	8,1
Region	Bratislava	43,3	46,5	10,2
	Trnava	64,6	24,8	10,6
	Trenčín	64,8	30,3	4,9
	Nitra	62,0	30,7	7,3
	Žilina	67,1	21,4	11,4
	Banská Bystrica	66,7	21,5	11,9
	Prešov	60,5	24,7	14,8
	Košice	54,7	25,2	20,1
Supporters of parliamentary parties	KDH	71,1	19,7	9,2
	Most-Híd	71,1	18,4	10,5
	OLaNO	57,8	29,7	12,5
	SaS	54,9	31,4	13,7
	SDKÚ-DS	65,0	28,3	6,7
	Smer-SD	64,5	27,4	8,1

THE SLOVAK STATE DURING WORLD WAR II AND THE HOLOCAUST IN THE SLOVAK COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Following a suggestion of the project initiators, a research study was realized in January 2013. The study was focused on exploration of public opinion on the period of the Slovak State during World War II – aryanization, deportation and Holocaust – and of various aspects of remembering of these events.

The data was collected by the FOCUS agency via a network of people trained to administer questionnaires, on a representative sample of 1.094 Slovak citizens who were 15 years of age and older, using the method of personal interviews. Direct financial costs of the research, amounting to € 2.400 (invoiced by the FOCUS agency), were covered by the Žilina-based Truc Sphérique NGO, with contributions from the Holocaust Documentation Centre and individual private donations.

Data from other available research studies of similar focus have been used when interpreting the research entries.

The project was carried out as an independent civic initiative by:

- Fedor Blaščák – M-E-M-O-R-Y K-O-N-T-R-O-L / Truc sphérique, Žilina
- Oľga Gyárfášová – Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava
- Ján Hlavinka – Institute of History of Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava
- Monika Vrzgulová – Holocaust Documentation Centre, Bratislava



Religious gathering in Skalité (with the President J. Tiso), 1941

Could you please tell me in relation to each pair of the statements whether you totally agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement B or totally agree with the statement B. (in %)

5.1.

- A. Almost 70 years after the end of the World War II, it is time to stop recalling the deportations and mass killings of the Jews.**
- B. These memories should be consistently preserved.**

		I agree with the statement A	I agree with the statement B	I do not know
Gender	The population in general	29	61	10
	Male	29,8	60,1	10,1
	Female	28,2	62,7	9,2
Age	15 – 17 years	36,2	44,7	19,1
	18 – 24 years	32,1	51,9	16,0
	25 – 34 years	33,5	51,6	14,9
	35 – 44 years	29,1	61,9	9,0
	45 – 54 years	24,7	67,6	7,7
	55 – 64 years	27,1	68,1	4,8
	65 or more years	25,0	73,2	1,8
Education	Primary	30,0	57,6	12,4
	Secondary (no A-levels)	32,0	57,2	10,8
	Secondary	29,3	62,6	8,1
	Higher	22,2	70,8	7,0
Region	Bratislava	44,1	45,7	10,2
	Trnava	18,6	73,5	8,0
	Trenčín	33,6	55,7	10,7
	Nitra	27,5	65,2	7,2
	Žilina	25,2	64,7	10,1
	Banská Bystrica	32,8	61,9	5,2
	Prešov	24,7	65,4	9,9
Supporters of parliamentary parties	Košice	26,3	59,4	14,4
	KDH	25,0	67,1	7,9
	Most-Híd	21,6	73,0	5,4
	OLaNO	31,3	57,8	10,9
	SaS	29,4	52,9	17,6
	SDKÚ-DS	23,3	70,0	6,7
	Smer-SD	26,4	68,6	5,0

4.3.

Some citizens of the Slovak State made financial or material profit from the persecution and discrimination of the Jews in Slovakia (during aryanizations, by buying movable assets of deported Jews in public auctions, etc.)

		I totally or somewhat agree	I totally or somewhat disagree	I do not know
Gender	The population in general	73	7	20
	Male	73,6	8,3	18,0
	Female	72,5	6,2	21,3
Age	15 – 17 years	56,5	8,7	34,8
	18 – 24 years	61,1	6,9	32,1
	25 – 34 years	67,1	6,0	26,9
	35 – 44 years	77,7	4,3	18,1
	45 – 54 years	75,7	9,9	14,4
	55 – 64 years	78,3	9,6	12,0
	65 or more years	82,4	6,7	10,9
Education	Primary	67,6	7,6	24,8
	Secondary (no A-levels)	70,9	9,2	19,9
	Secondary	74,4	5,8	19,8
	Higher	80,5	6,5	13,0
Region	Bratislava	74,0	11,0	15,0
	Trnava	74,1	7,1	18,8
	Trenčín	76,2	6,6	17,2
	Nitra	82,5	5,8	11,7
	Žilina	74,8	2,9	22,3
	Banská Bystrica	72,4	7,5	20,1
	Prešov	66,0	8,6	25,3
	Košice	67,9	7,5	24,5
	KDH	86,8	–	13,2
Supporters of parliamentary parties	Most-Híd	83,8	8,1	8,1
	OĽaNO	79,4	3,2	17,5
	SaS	71,2	5,8	23,1
	SDKÚ-DS	76,7	10,0	13,3
	Smer-SD	74,1	8,9	17,0

I.

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS AS PREMISES OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

The first group of three open-ended questions (i.e. where the response is spontaneous, without a list of suggested answers) was focused on finding out:

- familiarity of the public with the main political representatives of the Slovak State during World War II;
- ability of the respondents to correctly define the meaning of the word “aryanization”;
- the public knowledge with regard to specifying the number of Jews that were deported.

Question no. 1 (Open-ended question, several responses possible):

Would you be able to name the key political representatives of the Slovak State between 1939 and 1945?

Table no. 1

	%
Jozef Tiso	59,9
Andrej Hlinka	13,0
Vojtech Tuka	7,6
Alexander Mach	7,4
Eduard Beneš	3,7
T. G. Masaryk	3,0
Ferdinand Ďurčanský	2,6
Gustáv Husák	2,2
M. R. Štefánik	1,3
Klement Gottwald	1,3
I DO NOT KNOW	33,8

Note: The total exceeds 100% as the respondents were allowed to give several replies (a maximum of 4).

The table includes only the names mentioned by at least 1% of respondents.

JOZEF TISO AS A SYMBOL OF HIS TIME

Within the historical awareness of the Slovak public, the Slovak State during World War II is linked particularly (and almost exclusively) to the person of president Jozef Tiso. His name was mentioned by nearly 60% of the respondents.

The second most common response was “I do not know” (I do not know any, I do not know the history, No one in particular, etc.). The rate of “I do not know” responses was 34% and was decreasing with increasing age of the respondents: In the age group of 15 – to 17-year-olds, the rate reached 63%, in the age group of 25 – to 34-year-olds it amounted to 46%, and then decreased more significantly in the older age groups (see Table 4).

We can say that a third of the Slovak population is not able to associate the period with any political representative or – in other words – the said part of the Slovak history in the collective memory of the society in Slovakia has been considerably “anonymized”.

THE CASE OF ANDREJ HLINKA

For a marginal part of the population, the Slovak State during World War II is – apart from the person of President Jozef Tiso – also linked to other historical personalities. Only some of these are nevertheless historically relevant.

The second most often mentioned person was Andrej Hlinka (mentioned by 14% of the respondents). Yet, he died in 1938, before the actual rise of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party to power which happened on 6th October 1938. His name left a firm mark in the collective memory of the period due to the name of the main political force – the Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party.

Around 7% of the respondents mentioned the names of Vojtech Tuka (prime minister in 1939-1944 and representative of the radical pro-Nazi wing of Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party who was sentenced to death over war crimes) and Alexander Mach, the main commander of the Hlinka Guard, Minister of Interior (1940 – 1945) and deputy prime minister (1940 – 1944) of the Slovak State during World War II.

Ferdinand Ďurčanský – another of the leading political representatives who was recently discussed in the media due to the unveiling of his bust in his hometown – was mentioned by less than 3%.

4.2.

President Tiso saved the lives of many Jews.

		I totally or somewhat agree	I totally or somewhat disagree	I do not know
Gender	The population in general	29	40	31
	Male	29,2	42,7	28,1
	Female	28,2	37,7	34,0
Age	15 – 17 years	17,0	31,9	51,1
	18 – 24 years	22,9	29,8	47,3
	25 – 34 years	20,5	41,4	38,1
	35 – 44 years	31,4	41,5	27,1
	45 – 54 years	31,5	39,8	28,7
	55 – 64 years	33,7	43,4	22,9
	65 or more years	36,6	44,5	18,9
Education	Primary	26,7	37,1	36,2
	Secondary (no A-levels)	30,7	36,3	33,0
	Secondary	29,8	40,2	30,0
	Higher	25,4	49,7	24,9
Region	Bratislava	44,5	28,1	27,3
	Trnava	33,9	34,8	31,3
	Trenčín	41,0	30,3	28,7
	Nitra	13,1	62,0	24,8
	Žilina	27,3	41,7	30,9
	Banská Bystrica	33,6	35,8	30,6
	Prešov	25,3	40,1	34,6
	Košice	17,0	44,0	39,0
	KDH	40,8	28,9	30,3
Supporters of parliamentary parties	Most-Híd	28,9	44,7	26,3
	OLaNO	15,6	51,6	32,8
	SaS	33,3	29,4	37,3
	SDKÚ-DS	34,4	50,8	14,8
	Smer-SD	31,3	42,9	25,9

THE QUESTIONS SORTED BY THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following opinions? (in %)

4.1.

The political representatives of the Slovak State from 1939-1945

share responsibility for deportations and mass killings of the Jews.

		I totally or somewhat agree	I totally or somewhat disagree	I do not know
Gender	The population in general	67	14	19
	Male	67,7	14,4	17,9
	Female	65,3	14,5	20,3
Age	15 – 17 years	42,6	14,9	42,6
	18 – 24 years	58,0	11,5	30,5
	25 – 34 years	63,9	11,1	25,0
	35 – 44 years	66,5	16,5	17,0
	45 – 54 years	72,0	12,6	15,4
	55 – 64 years	71,7	18,7	9,6
	65 or more years	72,1	17,0	10,9
Education	Primary	57,9	13,9	28,2
	Secondary (no A-levels)	67,9	14,1	18,0
	Secondary	66,4	14,8	18,8
	Higher	73,7	15,1	11,3
Region	Bratislava	67,2	14,8	18,0
	Trnava	63,4	18,8	17,9
	Trenčín	52,5	30,3	17,2
	Nitra	78,1	6,6	15,3
	Žilina	68,3	8,6	23,0
	Banská Bystrica	66,4	14,9	18,7
	Prešov	68,1	14,1	17,8
	Košice	65,4	10,7	23,9
	KDH	70,7	13,3	16,0
Supporters of parliamentary parties	Most-Híd	78,4	13,5	8,1
	OĽaNO	73,4	10,9	15,6
	SaS	66,7	9,8	23,5
	SDKÚ-DS	71,7	13,3	15,0
	Smer-SD	68,2	17,8	14,0

A POOR MEMORY FOR NAMES

The respondents mentioned about forty names in total (see Appendix). They nevertheless often included politicians who are not linked to the period in any way, ones who formed part of the resistance or represent completely different historical periods and regimes (e.g. Klement Gottwald, Antonín Zápotocký, Vasil Biľak).

The high percentage of wrong responses indicates that the respondents made an effort to mention at least one name – any name related to the history of Slovakia. Next to completely irrelevant names, the personalities mentioned at least once also include: Martin Rázus, Pavol Čarnogurský, János Eszterházy or the bishop Ján Vojtaššák.

Question no. 2:

**Would you be able to say, at least approximately,
what does the word “aryanization“ mean?**

Table no. 2

	%
CORRECT RESPONSE	22,3
A response related to the Holocaust, mass killings of the Jews, partially correct response	11,4
A mention of some concepts but in a wrong or only partially correct context	9,0
A different context or a wrong response	3,7
I DO NOT KNOW, I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF IT	53,6

The next open-ended question targeted the knowledge of the concept of aryanization, which is closely linked to the period of the Slovak State. The rate of “I do not know” replies was again very high – 54% of respondents were not able to mention any, even a remote or approximate meaning.

On the other hand, 22% of the respondents gave correct replies, that is to say they mentioned the correct phrases or key words describing or directly defining the concept in a correct way.

A quarter of the respondents gave wrong or not fully correct replies. About one half of them associated the concept with the Holocaust, mass killings of the Jews but did not mention the property aspect in particular.

A SEMANTIC MAP OF MEMORY

The set of free responses of the respondents to the question offers an interesting material for further research of the semantic and contextual grounding of the concept of “aryanization” in the Slovak public consciousness, particularly on two levels: WHAT was the aryanization and WHO were the actors.

The semantic “map” of responses can be divided into three fundamental “regions”:

1. For some, it means a neutral *transition, transfer, redistribution, nationalization* or, alternatively *handing over* of the property;
2. The second group of responses includes more precise key words such as *forfeiture, forcible removal, seizure of property*, etc.;
3. The third group consists of responses that include “harsher” and more expressive words such as *theft or plunder*.

The specific formulations of responses usually also indicate the values and attitudes of respondents in relation to the question. A detailed critical analysis of this set of responses can therefore offer interesting observations and deductions related to various strategies of memory “deformation” or “falsification” in relation to the issue of aryanizations.

We argue that the actions of the Slovak citizens during the period of the Slovak State can hardly be understood – and consequently create a possibility to critically come to terms with this particular chapter of our history – without a correct understanding of the processes of aryanization.

6.

What was your source of information and knowledge about the persecutions and mass killings of the Jews during the period of the Slovak State, and about the Holocaust? Please pick two sources that most contributed to your knowledge and awareness from the following list.

	%
Family	21
Friends and acquaintances	13
Meetings with witnesses – with people who survived the times	11
School	44
Public media in Slovakia (STV, Slovenský rozhlas or RTVS)	28
Private TV channels in Slovakia – Markíza, JOJ, TA3	10
A Czech public TV channel	3
Other foreign TV channels	2
Magazines and newspapers	12
Internet, social networks, blogs	6
Art: fiction, films, exhibitions, theatre performances	7
Academic and non-fiction literature	9
Activities of civic associations, NGOs etc.	1
Other Sources	1
I am not interested in that/ No source	12

Notes: The respondents were able to give two responses and the total is therefore higher than 100%.

Could you please tell me in relation to each pair of the statements whether you totally agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement B or totally agree with the statement B.

5.1.

- A. Almost 70 years after the end of the World War II, it is time to stop recalling the deportations and mass killings of the Jews.**
- B. These memories should be consistently preserved.**

	%	
I totally agree with the statement A	10,9	29
I somewhat agree with the statement A	18,1	
I somewhat agree with the statement B	30,6	61
I totally agree with the statement B	30,8	
I do not know	9,5	10

5.2.

- A. We should talk more about the ways a totalitarian regime can use the propaganda to manipulate “common people” into participation on human rights abuses or mass killings.**
- B. Recalling it is of no use, nothing similar to the persecutions and mass killings of a part of the population could happen in our society again.**

	%	
I totally agree with the statement A	26,1	60
I somewhat agree with the statement A	34,3	
I somewhat agree with the statement B	19,7	28
I totally agree with the statement B	8,2	
I do not know	11,7	12

VICTIMS WITHOUT TRANSGRESSORS

In relation to the actors of aryanizations, the respondents often used the impersonal form¹ (something was happening / something took place), but some also used various direct attributes – *the state, the government*, the Germans took Jewish property or also *the “clever” aryanizers got their slice, too*. Formulations less commonly heard ranged from *the Slovaks took Jewish property* to the utterly personal: *“I know, here in our village property was taken from the Jews, too”*.

These responses indicate that even in case of respondents who are able to define the term correctly, the narrative used is not an unambiguous one, where the presence of a victim would also inevitably suggest the existence of responsible transgressors.

This finding hints at the way the historical process and the social and economical context of aryanizations is taught or communicated (through education in schools, and in public discussion) and, consequently, how the knowledge of them is passed onto the younger generations. Yet, anti-Jewish policies formed a significant part of the domestic and foreign politics of the then Slovak State. The results indicate that the proprietary element, which represented the focus of these anti-Jewish policies, has – in most cases – not been communicated clearly enough.

CONCEALMENT

What are the circumstances and potential reasons for such “concealment”?

All observers of the public and expert discussion on these issues in Slovakia must have noticed the state of conflict, a kind of a “cultural cold war” dividing the discussion actors as well as their public into two – often irreconcilable – camps, whereby the difference is organized either directly in an ideological way or implicitly through their distinct value systems, or, alternatively, through the different emphasis placed by the individual actors within a common value system.

If we consider the Slovak State in the context of a particular “existential experience” with its moral content consisting also of “tragedy” and “turpitude”, such a point of view – based also on other observations, for example a two-years long qualitative research² – makes us believe that the Slovak population suffer from a collective trauma in relation to the said period of their own history.

¹ Translator’s note: The impersonal form is far less common in Slovak language than it is in English.

² An international oral history research lead by the USHMM in Washington under the name Crimes against Civilian Populations during WW2: Victims, Witnesses, Collaborators and Perpetrators focused on the majority Holocaust witnesses – so called “bystanders” – realized by Monika Vrzgulová from the Holocaust Documentation Centre.

Indeed, the Slovak State was far from a “loving mother“ for all its non-Jewish citizens, and even less so for the Jewish ones. This fact resonates in the recollections of the majority, as well.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE PROCESS OF ARYANIZATION

The aryanization of the Jewish property had been discussed by the populist Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party already before the establishment of the Slovak State. These discussions, and the drafting of the legal regulations that would enable expropriation and transfer of the Jewish property as well as restrictions to the property rights of the Jews, were taking place amongst the populist politicians already during the period of the Autonomy (6th October 1938 – 14th March 1939).

The aryanization eventually developed into a complicated process that took place between 1940 – 1942, and took its toll on all forms of the Slovak Jews’ property. At the time, the property was divided into:

- business property;
- home property;
- deposits and valuables;
- other property.

As for the total value of the aryanized property, we only have the data provided by the main organizers of the aryanization. Their summary indicates that the total value of the aryanized property (with liabilities) was about 4.3 billions Slovak Crowns (Ks). Yet, the historians were until now unable to carry out a critical analysis of the data.

If, in relation to this, we would be asked to express the value of the aryanized property at current prices (in €), we could use the convention used by the historians where Ks 1 from that time is calculated as € 0.25. A rough mechanical calculation would then put the contemporary value of the aryanized property at about € 1 billion. A more precise idea of the contemporary value of the aryanized property can be provided by a comparison of the value with a chosen “consumer basket“ or, alternatively, by a recalculation based on a wages comparison. An average gross wage of a civil servant (e.g. a lower officer at

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following opinions?

4.1.

The political representatives of the Slovak State from 1939–1945 share responsibility for the deportations and mass killings of the Jews.

	%	
I totally agree	27,6	67
I somewhat agree	38,9	
I somewhat disagree	11,3	14
I totally disagree	3,1	
I do not know	19,1	19

4.2.

President Tiso saved the lives of many Jews.

	%	
I totally agree	5,6	29
I somewhat agree	23,1	
I somewhat disagree	23,5	40
I totally disagree	16,6	
I do not know	31,2	31

4.3.

Some citizens of the Slovak State made financial or material profit from the persecution and discrimination of the Jews in Slovakia (during aryanizations, by buying movable assets of deported Jews in public auctions, etc.)

	%	
I totally agree	33,5	73
I somewhat agree	39,6	
I somewhat disagree	6,3	7
I totally disagree	0,8	
I do not know	19,7	20

2.

Would you be able to say, at least approximately, what does the word “aryanization“ mean?

	%
Correct response	22,3
A response related to the Holocaust, mass killings of the Jews, partially correct response	11,4
A mention of some concepts but in a wrong or only partially correct context	9,0
A different context or a wrong response	3,7
I do not know, I have never heard it	53,6

3.

Would you be able to say – at least approximately – what was the number of Jews deported from the territory of the then Slovak State into concentration camps during the World War II?

	%
Correct response (50-80 thousand)	15,3
Wrong response (less than 50 thousand)	17,5
Wrong response (more than 80 thousand)	14,9
Indeterminate response (many, thousands, millions)	3,5
I do not know, I have never heard it	48,9

a ministry or a teacher) in 1939 – 1945 was about Ks 800 – 1.000, which correlates with current wages of the same employment category almost at a 1:1 ratio.

The so-called business property of the Jews, that is to say companies (of commercial as well as industrial character) was aryanized by both natural persons and legal entities. The total number of aryanized (i.e. transferred into the ownership of non-Jews) companies of various kind and economic importance (ranging from small one-man enterprises with an annual turnover of less than Ks 50.000 to large businesses with a turnover higher than Ks 10 million a year) was about 2.200. Other more than 10.000 businesses were wound up in the aryanization process. When winding up a company, movable assets and the produced goods were sold out, the authorization of the original owner was withdrawn and the company was dissolved.

Recent studies show that next to the Slovaks and the Germans, the Rusyns took part in the aryanization, too. The research has also shown that some of the aryanizers took part in the process of aryanization of the business property due to requests of the original Jewish owners and based on an agreement with them. In the post-war documents, these cases were often called “sham aryanizations“. We do not know their total number.

The category of the „sham aryanizations“ brings about a general suggestion that one cannot use a simple black-and-white scheme of „bad aryanizers“ when considering the aryanization process – individual cases reveal a much wider range of characters and behavior patterns.

The so-called home property was expropriated by the state as a whole in the autumn of 1941. In the autumn of 1940, the state also blocked the bank deposits of the Jews and significant financial resources were drained from their accounts in the form of various allowances and fees.

Movable assets of the Jews who were deported or had fled from Slovakia were expropriated by the state in 1942 and were consequently sold out in public auctions by the authorities. The auctions were announced in public and in advance. They were organized by the employees of the tax authorities who could be assisted by other civil servants, mostly local notaries in the municipalities. The aryanization touched also the so-called agricultural property of the Jews. According to contemporary data, more than 100.000 hectares of land and inventories of many farms were involved.

As a result of the aryanization of all forms of property, the Jewish community was completely pauperized by the end of 1941. From the total population of around 90.000 Jews, some 65.000 were not able to provide for themselves from their own profits. The Jewish community thus became a serious social problem and a strain on the public

budget of the populist regime. At the beginning of 1942, the populist politicians found a solution for the situation in deportations of the Jews to the area of what is now Poland, which was then occupied by the Germans. It is a common knowledge that the Slovak State paid the Nazi Third Reich 500 Reichsmarks for each Jew taken.

MEMORIES OF NON-JEWISH WITNESSES – THE ORAL HISTORY CONTEXT OF THE ARYANIZATION PROCESS

In the following text, we will paraphrase and generalize the testimonies captured by the oral history research within the above mentioned project *Crimes against Civilian Populations during WW2* – it consists of a collection of 35 structured and repeated interviews with non-Jewish witnesses of the aryanizations.

The testimonies are formed by the memories of (non-)Catholics. Although we have not been looking for them on purpose, the religious affiliation surfaced as an important factor in the interviews. Eventually, from the total number of 35 respondents, the majority was non-Catholic.

First of all, we were asking about the experience of the witnesses with local authorities, i.e. the Catholic clergy, government representatives and the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party on a local level. These were followed by questions about and memories of their Jewish neighbors who were deported, and the circumstances preceding or following their departure.

The memories of the aryanizations are predominantly formulated by vague "actorless" statements like – *it was the "others" (not the ones from our village) who would do the aryanizations, the Guardsmen, the exponents of the regime*. If, during the interview, it was brought out that someone in the family acquired a business too, the formulation was: *"We" were buying the businesses*. The descriptions of the post-deportation processes follow in a similar manner: each locality was left with movable and immovable Jewish assets. The witnesses talk about auctions taking place in public, on the streets directly in front of the individual homes. Like that the people saw who took part and who bought what. Our respondents formulated memories in the sense of: *"we" would not buy things at the public auctions, the socially "weaker" people would; they were not from our village/town, they came from the surrounding ones; the sealed Jewish houses would be plundered by the Guardsmen themselves, who knew about the wealth hidden in there, etc.*

When describing the deportations, the respondents used sentences such as: *We did not stand up for the Jews because we (protestants, Greek-Catholics, Communists, etc.) too were threatened*

Supplement

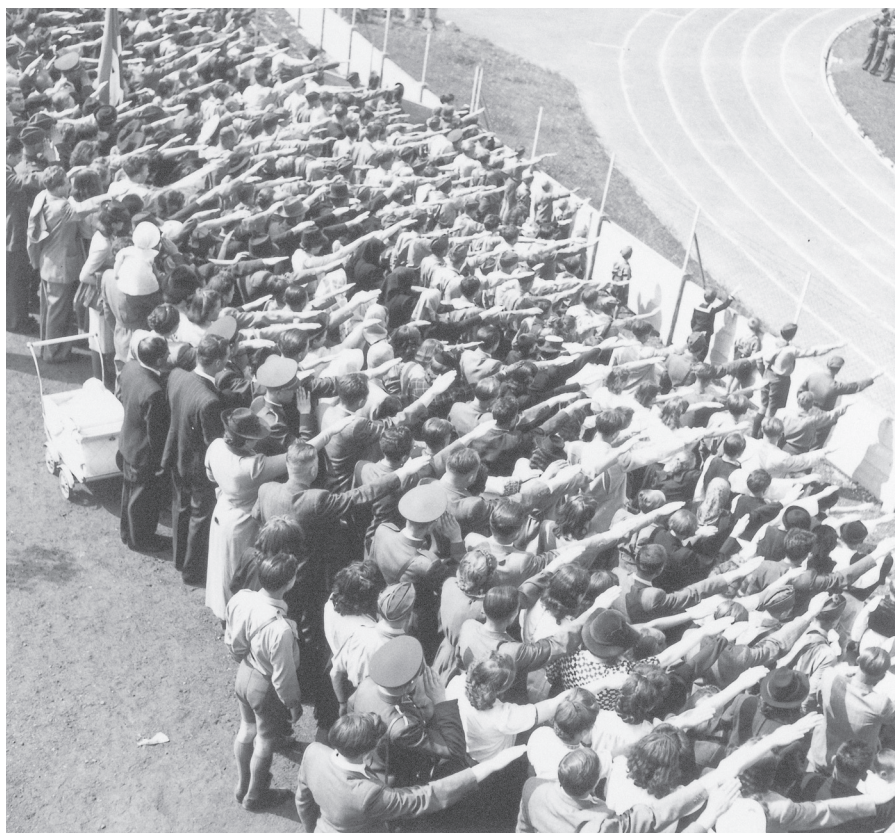
SUMMARY RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

1.

Would you be able to name the key political representatives of the Slovak State between 1939 and 1945? (Open-ended question, several responses possible).

	%		%
Jozef Tiso	59,9	Milan Hodža	0,4
Vojtech Tuka	7,6	Vasil' Biľak	0,3
Alexander Mach	7,4	Alexander Dubček	0,6
Andrej Hlinka	13,0	Laco Novomeský	0,2
Ferdinand Ďurčanský	2,6	Hudec (Ladislav?)	0,2
Karol Sidor	0,7	Kováč (Michal?)	0,1
Edvard Beneš	3,7	Karol Šmidke	0,1
T. G. Masaryk	3,0	vláda, ministri	0,2
J. V. Stalin	0,1	Vavro Šrobár	0,8
Adolf Hitler	0,6	gen. Golián	0,2
M. R. Štefánik	1,3	Pavol Čarnogurský	0,2
adm. Horthy	0,1	Emil Hácha	0,3
gen. Čatloš	0,9	other names	
Gustáv Husák	2,2	(Štrougal, Weiss, Šalgovič, Rašla, Černák, Čepička, Metternich)	0,9
Antonín Zápotocký	0,3		
gen. Svoboda	0,6	János Eszterházy	0,4
Klement Gottwald	1,3	Biskup Vojtaššák	0,2
Martin Rázus	0,3	I DO NOT KNOW	33,8

Note: The total exceeds 100% as the respondents were allowed to give several replies (a maximum of 4).



by following them. The local Guardsmen were publicly known, their image and reputation in the memories of the witnesses appears as very ambivalent – from *bestial unscrupulous opportunists and gold diggers to people who were helping, warning of deportations and raids.*

Same as with the above mentioned case of the objectively existing category of the “sham aryanizations“, it is true that when following the individual cases of aryanization reflected on in a subjective manner, the process of aryanization cannot be judged through a simple black-and-white scheme of “bad aryanizers“ – the individual cases reveal a much wider range of characters and behavior patterns.

These interviews with the witnesses were also directed towards the area of reflection on the intergenerational continuity of memory. When asked whether and how they communicated their experience of the Slovak State to their family members or their community members, they claimed to talk about it with their peers but not much with their children or grandchildren.

Another interesting information in this context was provided by reactions of the witnesses’ family members: the offsprings who are nowadays publicly active or hold a local public office have shown evident anxiety and reluctance to talk openly.

Last but not least, a part of the respondents formulated a worry and opposed the use of their recorded testimonies in Slovakia. It is our opinion that this circumstance also confirms the thesis of the collective trauma – and of (not) coming to terms with it.

PROTRACTION OF THE TRAUMA

The trauma of the Slovak State is a trauma of experiencing a totalitarian power which directly influenced and continues to influence the value systems of the Slovak populations through interventions into the individual ideas of morality by the ideological doctrine on the level of the state, and as such gets transferred through generations both verbally and in a non-verbal manner. And, as has clearly been shown, the present-day Slovak society is not at peace with it either.

Coming to terms with the trauma is complicated by the particular phenomenon of the so-called Parish Republic and the associated problem of the missing reflection on the period by the Catholic Church in Slovakia. In their case, one can witness rather opposite tendencies – efforts to rehabilitate senior Catholic officials who were the exponents of the Slovak State and shared responsibility for its actions.

What was the number of Jews deported from the territory of the then Slovak State into concentration camps during the World War II?

Table no. 3

	%
Correct response (50-80 thousand)	15,3
Wrong response (less than 50 thousand)	17,5
Wrong response (more than 80 thousand)	14,9
Indeterminate response (many, thousands, millions)	3,5
I do not know, I have never heard it	48,9

The last question in this category (awareness) was whether the respondents know – at least approximately – how many Jews were deported from the territory of the then Slovak State into concentration camps during the World War II.

The most common response was again “I do not know“, which was voiced by almost half of the respondents (48.9%).

The response classified as correct was the one within the interval of 50 – 80 thousand Jews. Such response was given only by 15% of the respondents.

18% of the respondents underestimated the numbers (less than 50 thousand) and 15% mentioned numbers higher than 80 thousand.

Table no. 10

The trend in judging the contribution of historical personalities

		A. Dubček	M. R. Štefánik	G. Husák	J. Tiso
		%			
Clearly + rather positive personality	1993	91	-	24	25
	1999	89	73	21	21
	2007	82	77	19	18
	2011	74	77	15	14
Both positive and negative personality	1993	7	-	31	18
	1999	6	7	32	19
	2007	11	11	27	29
	2011	16	13	36	28
Clearly + rather negative personality	1993	1	-	41	42
	1999	4	1	33	32
	2007	1	1	39	45
	2011	2	2	38	41

Notes: The remaining responses to form 100% consist of „I do not know“ and „I cannot say“.
– This has not been researched.

Sources: CSA 1993; IPA 1999, 2007; IVF 2011.

IV.

JOZEF TISO IN THE SLOVAK COLLECTIVE MEMORY

This chapter is comparative – it draws on earlier research of the Center for Social Analysis, the Focus Agency and the Institute for Public Affairs.

How is the controversial Jozef Tiso perceived by the Slovak public? Have we witnessed any developments in the issue within the last 20 years?

The first study of the historical awareness of the then Czechoslovak citizens after 1989 was conducted in the autumn of 1990 in the premises of the Centre for Research of Social Issues. Extended „blank“ areas of „historical unawareness“ within the Slovak public have then been identified.

While for instance almost one half of people (46%) in Czech Republic have agreed on the historical contribution of the first Czechoslovak president, T. G. Masaryk, the consensus in Slovakia was significantly more narrow – 28% of the respondents spontaneously mentioned M. R. Štefánik, 12% L. Štúr and 11% A. Hlinka.

Up to 37% of the Slovak respondents and only 19% of the Czech ones declared that they do not know any personality that they could be proud of or that such a personality indeed does not exist. The feeling of guilt was at that time most often evoked in relation to the representatives of the two totalitarian regimes of the 20th century: Gustáv Husák (16%), Vasil Bilak (14%) and the president of the Slovak State J. Tiso (12%).

The persona of Jozef Tiso nevertheless had a special status. While being the source of shame for ones, he represented the source of pride for others (in an overall view, it was not prominent – the respondents who mentioned Tiso as a positive rather than negative personality were mostly the sympathizers of the SNS and KDH parties).

Certain developments have happened with regards to the question about the contribution of particular personalities. There is still an undisputable contribution ascribed to M.R. Štefánik and A. Dubček while the dark side of history is represented by G. Husák and J. Tiso. In both categories, the proportion of people who consider their contribution as positive has decreased (with a slight exception in case of M.R. Štefánik). In case of G. Husák and J. Tiso, the number of sympathizers has decreased from 24% to 15% and from 25% to 14% respectively.

The proportion of negative judgments has remained constant. The decrease in positive judgments has been reflected in a higher rate of ambivalent judgments.

COMPARISON WITH HUNGARY

The research studies by the Hungarian sociologist Mária Vasárhelyi from 2002 and the Holocaust Documentation Centre (HDC) in Budapest from 2009 (both carried out on a sample of 1.000 respondents) allow us to compare the results of our data on the issue with the results in Hungary.

When asked the question: “Would you be able to state the exact number of the Holocaust victims in Hungary?” within the study of Mária Vasárhelyi, 12% of the participants gave the correct response. The number was underestimated by 29% and overestimated by 9% of the respondents. Similar to Slovakia, the “I do not know” response was provided by an exact half of the respondents.

Within the HDC study in 2009, the same question was correctly answered by 22% of the respondents.

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS – MAIN FINDINGS

The blank areas on the map of the historical knowledge and awareness of the period of the Slovak State are, in case of the Slovak public, extensive.

For a large part of the Slovak public, the period is either not associated with anyone or is focused on a single person, namely president Jozef Tiso. Other key political representatives are unknown to the vast majority of the public.

The rate of “I do not know” responses is most closely related to age (see Table on the page 16) – the younger the respondents, the less they know. This is a paradox as one would expect the high school students to have the knowledge of our history fresh in their minds thanks to their history lessons. This intuitive assumption has not been proven true, and a similar finding was presented by the American Jewish committee (AJC)¹ after a study carried out in Slovakia in 1999.

The rate of “I do not know” responses in relation to the exact number of the deported Jews in Slovakia and in Hungary is almost identical.

Education forms another important and expected factor influencing the level of awareness.

1 Between August 31st and September 8th, 1999, the American Jewish Committee carried out a research study of the collective memory of the Holocaust, attitudes of the public towards the Jews and other minorities, and the attitudes towards the tragedy of the Slovak Jews during World War II. The study was carried out on a sample of 1.057 respondents – Slovak citizens from 15 years of age. It was an international comparative research study.

Table

**The rate of “I DO NOT KNOW” responses
to open-ended questions by age groups**

	Key representatives of the Slovak State	What is the meaning of the word “aryanization“?	How many Jews were deported into concentration camps from the territories of the then Slovak State?
age		%	
15 – 17	62,5	78,3	65,2
18 – 24	55,3	66,7	56,5
25 – 34	45,8	56,9	59,7
35 – 44	29,8	55,9	48,9
45 – 54	20,3	44,8	40,1
55 – 64	22,8	47,6	41,2
65 & more	22,4	45,7	41,2

We cannot directly compare the results of our research on the international level. However, when it comes to the factographical knowledge of the Holocaust, the aforementioned research by the AJC from 1999 located Slovakia around lower average.



Jozef Cincík: German Minister of Interior Dr. W. Frick visiting Slovakia, 1941

Please state in relation to the following pair of statements whether you totally agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement B or totally agree with the statement B..

- A. We should talk more about the ways a totalitarian regime can use the propaganda to manipulate “common people” into participation on human rights abuses or mass killings.**
- B. Recalling is of no use, nothing similar to the persecutions and mass killings of a part of the population could happen in our society again.**

Table no. 9

	%	
I totally agree with the statement A	26,1	60
I somewhat agree with the statement A	34,3	
I somewhat agree with the statement B	19,7	28
I totally agree with the statement B	8,2	
I do not know	11,7	12

The final question regarding attitudes was focused on the present. 60% of respondents agree with statement A, 28% somewhat or totally agree with statement B.

The distribution of opinions in the particular environments closely follows the previous question: young people tend to be of the opinion that remembrance is useless or they do not have a clear opinion on the issue and respond by an indifferent “I do not know”.

WHY IS THE RATE OF “I DO NOT KNOW” RESPONSES SO HIGH? PROPOSED EXPLANATIONS

1.

The Slovaks are truly not interested in the events and topics of the Slovak State and they want to forget what was going on “then”. The consequent Communist regime also negatively influenced their moral attitudes and values. The reluctance to remember can – from the psychological point of view – thus appear as a rational behavioral strategy of traumatized individuals (in this case, members of the majority).

2.

The level of ignorance within the youngest age categories is particularly bewildering – the rate of over one half within the group of 18 – 24-year-olds suggests that the education about the Slovak State is poor and wrong. The fact that the said state formation was a totalitarian regime maltreating (not only) the Jewish minority is not being emphasized enough.

At the same time, it is true that such a focus and reflection on a totalitarian regime, its instruments and treatment of the people opens a complex range of (bothersome) issues connected with our common second totalitarian experience – namely the Communist regime.

The combination creates a series of reasons why the period of the Slovak State (as well as the totalitarian Communist regime) remains, as it were, a taboo for more than a half of the Slovak youth (post A-levels). The response to these findings should consist in broadening and deepening of methodological support regarding the issue to be available to teachers.

REMARKS BASED ON OBSERVATIONS OF THE REALITY IN SCHOOLS

In 1990^s, it was common for teachers to protest openly and in public against the criticism of J. Tiso, or against the criticism of what happened in Slovakia, including the treatment of the Jews during the Slovak State. They were irritated by the idea that the Slovaks could be ascribed the sense of shared responsibility for the Jewish deportations. Eventually, these and similar, even more aggressive displays stopped or – if you like – they became less visible.

Based on communication with the present-day teachers and their reactions in workshops and discussions, we know that they are also most afraid of questions related to the person

of J. Tiso and other representatives of the Slovak State, as well as their responsibility for what happened in Slovakia during their rule. However, unlike their colleagues from the 1990s, they have at their disposal a much larger range of sources as well as methodical guidelines and tools (local and regional history, focus on individual experience, etc.). In the meantime they have nevertheless noticed several – and not always trivial – efforts to exculpate the Slovak State, the related regime and its representatives in both public and expert discussion. The said trend has grown stronger and somehow also more official in the official state institutions representing the voice of experts, in professorships awarded to its advocates, etc., which naturally undermines the teachers' confidence.

Another interesting indication consists in the fact that 21% of respondents pointed to their families as their main source of information (see Table no. 4). The intergenerational relay of experience of what happened „then“ takes an important third place. It would be interesting to find out again WHAT and HOW is communicated within families when both the factual (knowledge) and opinion-focused questions in the research have been answered in the mentioned quality and quantity.

3.

The respondents know but they will not “say”. For example also because they think that there is a constant discussion about the Jews or, in some cases, that there has been „enough“ of it. At the same time, they understand that such attitudes are currently politically incorrect so they put forward the „I do not know“ reply.

4.

The respondents really do not know – these people are easily manipulated and could potentially become the new Holocaust deniers in Slovakia.

The significance of this finding comes to the fore mainly in relation to the high rate of the „I do not know“ replies in the youngest respondent categories. If we take for a starting point the fact that after 1989 it became possible to educate in an objective and factual manner about this topic as well, and the fact the respondents themselves have mentioned school as the most important source of knowledge about the researched topic, it is pertinent to pose the question: WHAT and HOW do schools teach about the said historical period in Slovakia.

Question no. 8

Please state in relation to the following pair of statements whether you totally agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement A, somewhat agree with the statement B or totally agree with the statement B.

- A. Almost 70 years after the end of the World War II, it is time to stop recalling the deportations and mass killings of the Jews.**
- B. These memories should be consistently kept alive.**

Table no. 8

	%	
I totally agree with the statement A	10,9	29
I somewhat agree with the statement A	18,1	
I somewhat agree with the statement B	30,6	61
I totally agree with the statement B	30,8	
I do not know	9,5	10

Most of the Slovak population (61%) is of the opinion that the memories of the Holocaust should be consistently kept alive. On the other hand, 29% agree with the statement that almost 70 years after the end of the World War II, it is time to stop recalling the deportations and mass killings of the Jews.

Although the memory keeping is supported by a clear majority, 29% is not a negligible minority. What is interesting is also that 14 years ago, within the study by the AJC, the distribution of opinions on the issue was similar (63% against 24%), which means that no clearer progress in memory keeping has been made.

Older people, people with university education and people in regions outside the capital tend to speak for the memory keeping more often.

Some citizens of the Slovak State made financial or material profit from the persecution and discrimination of the Jews in Slovakia (during aryanizations, by buying movable assets of the deported Jews in public auctions, etc.).

Table no. 7

	%	
I totally agree	33,5	73
I somewhat agree	39,6	
I somewhat disagree	6,3	7
I totally disagree	0,8	
I do not know	19,7	20

73% of respondents expressed agreement with the following statement: „Some citizens of the Slovak State made financial or material profit from the persecution and discrimination of the Jews in Slovakia (during aryanizations, by buying movable assets of the deported Jews in public auctions, etc.)“; there were 7% of disagreeing responses and one fifth of the respondents could not take a stand. We can thus see a relatively wide consensus demonstrated in the responses to this question. This consensus nevertheless is not supported by a deeper knowledge of the historical facts and context related to the period.



Chief of the Office of the propaganda Tido J. Gašpar visiting the youth camp in Orava, 1941

II.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Question no. 4

What was your source of information and knowledge about the persecutions and mass killings of the Jews during the period of the Slovak State, and about the Holocaust?

Table no. 4

	%
School	44
Public media in Slovakia	28
Family	21
Friends and acquaintances	13
Magazines and newspapers	12
Meetings with witnesses – with people who survived the times	11
Private TV channels in Slovakia – Markíza, JOJ, TA3	10
Academic and non-fiction literature	9
Art: fiction, films, exhibitions, theatre performances	7
Internet, social networks, blogs	6
A Czech public TV channel	3
Other foreign TV channels	2
Activities of civic associations, NGOs etc.	1
Other Sources	1
I am not interested in that / No source	12

Notes: The respondents were able to give two responses and the total is therefore higher than 100%.

Question no. 6

President Tiso saved the lives of many Jews.

Table no. 6

	%	
I totally agree	5,6	29
I somewhat agree	23,1	
I somewhat disagree	23,5	40
I totally disagree	16,6	
I do not know	31,2	31

Defenders of president Tiso claim in his defense that he saved the lives of many Jews. 29% agreed with the statement, 40% disagreed and a high 31% was not able to take a stand on the issue. Here we can also see a large lack of clarity and insufficient awareness of public which again leads us to the issue of how to relay this knowledge and interest in the national history, particularly to young people.

COMPARISON WITH HUNGARY

Here again we can compare our data with the Hungarian results of the study by the sociologist Mária Vasárhelyi from 2002. The difference is that Vasárhelyi was asking about a specific share of guilt or more precisely its distribution among the German and the Hungarian side.

Question

Who bears responsibility for the Holocaust in Hungary?

	%
Only the German side	30
More the Germans but the Hungarians too	25
both	30
More the Hungarians but the Germans too	2
Only the Hungarian side	0

COMMENTS

The response „*I do not know; I am not interested in that; No source*“ was most frequent in the age group of 15-17 year olds. It was proposed by one quarter of them. In the 18-24 year olds age group the proportion of such indifferent responses decreased to 17% a their proportion kept decreasing with increasing age.

School was the most often mentioned source – it was chosen as one of the options by 44% of the respondents. It comes as no surprise that the school was more dominant in younger age categories. It was most prominent in the group of 18-24 year olds (61%).

Public media in Slovakia are the second most relevant source (28%) and about one fifth of respondents mentioned family as their source of information.

Other sources are less frequent. However, when looking at the results, especially at the relatively “poor performance” of various NGO activities, it can be assumed that they are realized through schools which could have in turn been viewed as their source.

Family is a relatively rare source not only when it comes to the younger but also the middle generation. It is most often (38%) mentioned by respondents aged 65+ years. This confirms the hypothesis that the intergenerational continuity of memory, the relay of life experience and knowledge, shortly, the relay of family memories, is not very widespread in our country. This applies not just to the relationships of the generation of grandparents (65+ years) and grandchildren (up to 24 years old) but equally to the relationships of the “neighboring” generations: the grandparents and the middle generation.



Anton Banik: Deportation of the Jews (Nitra), 1942

III.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SLOVAK STATE AND TO THE RELATED MEMORY KEEPING

The key issue in relation to the Slovak State is how the responsibility of the 1939-1945 Slovak State's political representatives for the deportations and mass killings of Jews is perceived.

Question no. 5

The political representatives of the Slovak State from 1939-1945 share responsibility for deportations and mass killings of the Jews.

Table no. 5

	%	
I totally agree	27,6	67
I somewhat agree	38,9	
I somewhat disagree	11,3	14
I totally disagree	3,1	
I do not know	19,1	19

Two thirds of the respondents within the research agreed that the Slovak political representatives are responsible. The rate of dissenting responses was 14% and 19% of the respondents were not able to comment on the issue, which is a relatively high number, higher again between the young people.