

Research of Persecution Measures Against Roma in Slovakia in 1939-1945 and their Impact on Educational Process

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Abstract — The period of the Slovak State, which existed between 1939 and 1945, is today quite well mapped by the Slovak science. Although until 1989 the research of this issue was taboo and almost did not exist, in recent years emerged a great number of quality monographs and studies. We already know relatively well the political, military, social, economic, and cultural realities of the time. Nevertheless, there are still a number of “white spots”. This is due, in particular, to the lack of a social order that prevents from investigation of some events associated with the period of existence of the Slovak Republic in the years 1939-1945. The research of this issue is in particular difficult to process also due to the great sensitivity that is associated with this topic. Every researcher has to approach this issue very carefully and responsibly, as the period of the Slovak Republic between 1939 and 1945 and especially the persecution measures of this period are under strong social scrutiny. One of these still insufficiently proceeded problems is the status of the Roma community and the impact of the persecution measures of the state on this community. What was then the regime of the Slovak State in relation to the Roma community? What state did it take on the Roma population during various stages of his existence? And how the measures of the same state changed after the occupation by the German army? What is the impact on education in this field? Is this important issue sufficiently addressed?

Keywords—Roma, persecution, Slovak State, impact, education

I. INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to find much about persecutions of the Roma in 1939-1945 in the Slovak historical or political literature. Apart from the two monographs of the author of this paper, the position of the Slovak Roma in the years 1939-1945 in Slovakia has not been explored in depth. This fact is also very revealing. The only exception was the Czech historian Ctibor Nečas. He is a recognized expert in Slovak history, publishing especially in the second half of the twentieth century. He examined, in particular, all of the archive sources at that time. His monographs, studies, and presented conclusions are still being overcome [1] thanks to the objective view, even though his most major works were written during the totalitarian period before 1989 or shortly afterwards [2]. The last major work devoted to the Slovak Roma was published in 1994 [3]. His work is all the more important that he had done his research mainly before

1989, when most of the archive resources available today had not been processed and available for historical research. After Ctibor Nečas, a great vacuum has taken place in the historical and political science. Interesting for the research of the given issue is that Ctibor Nečas did not publish his monographs in Slovakia but in Bohemia. This fact is also very revealing. Although objectively it has to be acknowledged that even in Slovakia there have been attempts in the past to follow up the work of Ctibor Nečas and complement it by the newly discovered archival sources. However, these ambitions were not achieved [4]. Despite the fact that Ctibor Nečas himself encouraged the authors - beginners and never refused to give an advice or help, all historians or political scientists have finally left the research of this challenging matter. They have been replaced by ethnologists, sociologists or journalists, who have lacked elementary knowledge of archival sources. Unfortunately, the less they have knowledge, the more aggressively they promote their own historical view on this issue. Their often very inaccurate and professionally incompetent opinions have filled the public debate. Every year new archive sources are made available, complementing our previous knowledge. The result of a long-standing study is a presented analysis that follows previous monographs [5] and scientific studies [6].

When evaluating research devoted to the persecution of Roma and the reflection of this research in the educational process, it is necessary to mention older works of ethnologists [7] or legal historians [8]. The works of other authors focusing on regional history create an important part of the research as their works also offer an interesting view of the solution of the Roma issue in the conditions of a totalitarian state [9]. Alternatively, the works that are broadly conceived are also very useful. They are focused on a longer period, but always at least in part dealing with Roma issues [10]. Very significant for the understanding of the status of the Roma in the Slovak State are works based on oral historiography [11]. However, the most important works are those of Ctibor Nečas, which are the natural basis of every research. In particular, the results of his research on the situation of Roma in Eastern Slovakia were never bridged. However, some of his claims based on the latest research, can be corrected or supplemented and new research offers a different view of this issue. Many newly-discovered sources and the work of some colleagues today

give us a completely different view of persecution measures and their impact on the Roma community. They also allow for a new interpretation of the decree or regulation of that period. Indeed, it would be a mistake to remain of the old ideas when their research is matched. I believe that I can afford it after almost twenty years of honest archival research and a number of published studies in Slovakia and abroad. I believe that this study also opens in Slovak and foreign historiography the necessary discussion about the interpretation of the events that took place between the years 1939-1945 or the comparison of the persecution measures of all the regimes that have solved Roma issues in Slovakia since 1918 [12].

II. RESEARCH

In research relating to Roma persecution in 1939-1945 was also questioned the issue of correct naming of Roma ethnicity. In published works is strictly used the term Roma. Exceptions are only official names, or citations from the period decrees, regulations and circulars, where the original name Gypsy is left. A similar problem appeared also in the case of the majority population. If the name "White" or Non - Roma appear in the decrees, regulations and circulars, the original text is retained. Otherwise, I have followed the term Non - Gypsy (Non-Roma) and in the contemporary context I also use the term Arian, even though I realize a certain terminological inaccuracy. The problem was also to distinguish the terms camp and crew or nomadism and vagrancy [13]. The period decrees do not make a difference between these terms. That's why they are used equally. When framing the research of Roma population persecution, it was also necessary to clarify the division of the issue, either temporal or thematic. There are two ways to breakdown persecution measures. The first one is offered by Ctibor Nečas and is divided into four thematic areas.

- Roma discrimination indicates the letter of the defence act and the work regulations, the two Decrees of the Ministry of Interior "on influencing conditions of Gypsies" and the series of orders with national or local competencies aimed at getting rid of Romani dwellings located near the municipalities and public roads, removing the horse trading, collection of waste materials and other kinds of nomadic trades and exclusion of the Roma passengers from transport, etc.

- Camp concentration of Romani men in labour crews for so-called "asocials" that were gradually established in Očová, Most na Ostrove, Bystré, Hanušovce nad Topľou, near Petiče, Nižný Hrabovec, Jarabá, Dubnica nad Váňom, Revúca, Ilava and Ústínad Oravou,

- Considerations and suggestions for the establishment of concentration camps for Romani families and the establishment of the Detention Camp in Dubnica nad Váňom, which was identical to the Gypsy camps spread in Germany and occupied European countries,

- Mass murder of Roma in Valašská Belá, Sv. Kríž, Čierny Balog and Tisovec and the deportation of the inhabitants of the Roma settlements from Lutíla, Dolná Bzová Krupina, Šarová Ilija, Tisovec and Dúbravy to the infamously known execution sites in Kremnička, Nemecká, Zvolen and elsewhere [14].

In my monograph published in the past I have offered other research approach [15]. Here, the persecution measures have been divided into two separate parts, which may have been further subdivided. Both parts map the dominant periods and the persecution lines. The first period can be limited to the years 1939-1944 (autumn). There are three basic lines:

1. Efforts to eliminate the nomadism.
2. Labour crews for the Roma and so- called "asocial" persons.
3. Persecution in the Army of the Slovak State.

The second period of the persecution measures can be limited to the years 1944 - 1945. These are the months in which Slovakia was occupied by the German army. Persecution measures were much stricter and brutality was incomparably higher. The initiator was mostly German occupying power and partly also the Slovakian radicals. In the second period, two basic lines are visible:

1. Gypsy Detention Camp in Dubnica nad Váňom.
2. Murders of the Roma [16].

Both approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses. Based on the results of the latest research, both concepts can be combined while preserving timeframe and also issue approach. Therefore examined issue can be divided into three separate sections. I am not saying that this is an ideal solution, but at the moment I think it best reflects the current research results. The work is divided into three parts.

1. Persecutions Affecting the Life of Roma
2. Labour Crews for the Roma and so-called "asocial" persons
3. Persecution Measures after the Occupation of Slovakia by the German Army

The fundamental problem was also the proper scientific name for the persecution of the Roma ethnic group during the Second World War. The expression of the Romani Holocaust was not used and, moreover, neither the Roma themselves nor the majority population pay attention to the persecutions of the Romani people [17]. It has been also significant that the concept of the Holocaust has been associated with the extermination of the Jews. After 1989, the concept of Porrajmos began to be used. However, this notion was perceived with confused reactions. In addition, the term Porrajmos was completely unknown to most Roma, potentially perceived as vulgar or pejorative. Finally, in Slovakia prevailed the term *Ma bisteren* for persecution

of the Roma, which means “Do not forget” [18]; eventually, “Baro Mariben” in the sense of a great war.

III. CONCLUSION

Persecution measures directed against the Slovak Roma in the Slovak Republic in the years 1939-1945 are still insufficiently processed. Despite the fact that the Roma are the second the most persecuted group of the population in Slovak history (following the Jewish population), the current research has only marginally addressed this important issue. There is no deeper research that still suffers from terminological ambiguity. This is also reflected in the absolute lack of reflection in the educational literature and the educational process. The textbooks and also scientific monographs that could bring information about this serious issue to students and teachers are missing. In the published textbooks that deal with the period of the Second World War or the period of existence of the Slovak Republic in 1939-1945, authors deal with the issue of persecution of the Roma on a range of several lines. It is very surprising as the Roma community in Slovakia comprises today almost 10% of Slovak population. The Roma history is being circumvented and especially the period of persecution in World War II is ignored in the educational process. The change may occur due to the efforts of the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising, which has been organizing Holocaust education in Slovakia in cooperation with Slovak universities for several years. It is primarily focused on the Holocaust of the Jewish population but much space is devoted also to the persecution of the Roma. There is much interest in this education and it is assumed that one of the last white spots of the Slovak history will be removed from the educational process after the appropriate literature is completed.

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