

# LÁSZLÓ KARSAI

## JEWISH DEPORTATIONS IN CARPATHO-RUTHENIA IN 1944

Today we know a great deal, although certainly not enough, of what happened in 1944 to the Jews who lived in Carpatho-Ruthenia\*. As both György Ránki and Randolph L. Braham, following Jenő Lévai's work, have concluded, at the time immediately after 19 March 1944, neither the Germans nor the government of Döme Sztójay had a detailed plan for the fate of Hungary's Jewry.

In this respect, three circumstances deserve special attention: 1. Unlike in Western European countries, for example, Hungary at this time had a relatively large number of Jews compared to the total population.

2. Their fate was gravely influenced by the unfolding military situation.

3. Closely related to this was the fact that the Germans could not afford to release significant forces for this task, as is shown by the relatively small size of the Adolf Eichmann Sonderkommando.

In these circumstances, a lot depended on the attitude of the Hungarian authorities toward the „Jewish question.” Miklós Horthy decided to withdraw, giving free hand to the Sztójay government in this matter as well. The Parliament was suspended, the government ruled by decree, thus Miklós Horthy was spared even signing the orders for the systematic robbing, internment in ghettos or collection camps, and the eventual deportation of several hundred thousand Hungarian citizens.<sup>1</sup>

How ill-prepared this operation was, how it lacked a coordinated central command is born out by the papers of the Government's Commissioner's Office in Carpatho-Ruthenia for the year 1944. To date, researchers have made little use of these documents. We have known that barely a week after the occupation of Hungary the German authorities declared all Hungarian territories east of the river Tisza to be military zones under German jurisdiction, effective immediately.<sup>2</sup> At first the occupiers treated the Hungarian army with distrust, companies were surrounded and confined to their barracks; furthermore, the Tisza served as a military demarcation. On 26 March, Miklós Horthy had already asked for the

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\* [Carpatho-Ruthenia (Kárpátalja), NE Hungary at the time, now in Ukraine.]

<sup>1</sup> GYÖRGY RÁNKI: *1944. március 19.* Budapest 1968., pp. 157–159

<sup>2</sup> Veessenmayer's report of 25 March 1944 to the German Foreign Ministry. (In: *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933–1944.* (*Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German Diplomatic papers from Hungary, 1933–1944.*)— hereinafter: *Wilhelmstrasse* — Eds.: GY. RÁNKI, E. PAMLÉNYI, L. TILKOVSKY, and GY. JUHÁSZ. Budapest 1968, p. 800.)

lifting of the cordon, claiming that all communications with the eastern half of the country had been disrupted.<sup>3</sup>

The old regent had both the opportunity and the power to shunt aside the Germans' original candidate, Béla Imrédy, and appoint his own man (or so he thought), Hungary's former ambassador to Berlin, Sztójay, as Prime Minister. The Third Reich's plenipotentiary in Hungary received his instructions directly from Adolf Hitler:

„...see to it that the country's administration — including the time during which German troops are stationed there — is carried out by a government under his direction, with the purpose of maximum utilization of the country's resources, first of all its economic capabilities, for our mutual strategic goals.”

Further, Hitler informed his Hungarian deputy:

„For the purpose of carrying out the tasks in Hungary by the SS and the Police with the help of German forces — PRIMARILY POLICE MATTERS RELEVANT TO THE JEWISH QUESTION (my emphasis—L.K.) — a Higher SS and Police Leader will be assigned to the staff of the Reich's plenipotentiary, who WILL CARRY OUT THE POLITICAL INSTRUCTIONS OF THE PLENIPOTENTIAR.” (my emphasis — L.K.)<sup>4</sup>

The final solution of the Hungarian Jewish problem is very significant, as German Foreign Minister Joachim Ribbentrop informed all his subordinates who served abroad, preparing them for possible official protests by representatives of neutral countries. According to Ribbentrop, the Western powers in Hungary, relying on influential Jewish and certain other circles, were trying to create a „defeatist anti-Axis attitude.” „It is well known that a certain portion of the Hungarian press etc., has already fallen victim to this influence”, Joachim Ribbentrop remarked.<sup>5</sup>

The concern of the German authorities proved to be groundless. On 31 March, Edmund Veesenmayer wrote in his report, some what surprised, that the Hungarian government with its latest regulations, „...has proved that it has taken seriously the solution of this question (i.e. the Jewish question — L.K.) ACCORDING TO OUR INTERPRETATION (my emphasis — L.K.). Considering local conditions, this development may be called unusually rapid.”<sup>6</sup>

The hierarchical order seemed to work: Edmund Veesenmayer directed the government of Hungary and Döme Sztójay was accommodating; his enthusiasm was surpassed only by that of László Baký and László Endre, the two newly-appointed under-secretaries of the Ministry of the Interior who „turn night into day” as they „labor” — according to their own admission, too — on the solution of the Jewish question.

It seemed, however, that the first Jewish decrees did not satisfy all expectations that sooner or later all Jews would indeed be removed from Hungary. In the National

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<sup>3</sup> Veesenmayer's telegram of 26 March 1944 to Ribbentrop, German Foreign Minister. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, pp. 803—804.)

<sup>4</sup> Veesenmayer's certificate of appointment, 20 March 1944. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, p. 789.)

<sup>5</sup> Ribbentrop's conference-telegram of 22 March 1944 to all German foreign missions. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, p. 793.)

<sup>6</sup> Veesenmayer's report of 31 March 1944 to Ribbentrop. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, p. 907.)

Archives I have found traces of hitherto unknown plans for operations against the Jews worked out by lower levels of the German and Hungarian authorities. It is possible that we are dealing only with the private actions of an overenthusiastic clerk.

On 1 April 1944, the commander of the German SS in Kassa sent the following request to the local commander of the gendarmerie:

„In light of the special situation in the territory of Kárpát-Ukrajna, we request that Jews from the villages in this territory be resettled in the cities of Munkács, Ungvár and Beregszász, already secured by the police and the Gendarmerie. Within the next five to six days Huszt will also be secured, and at that time it, too, will be ready for the same purpose.”<sup>7</sup>

The SS Major's request was received with sympathy. The very next day, at 11 o'clock in the morning of 2 April, Gend. Col. Győző Tölgyesy, commander of the VIIIth Gendarmerie District (most of the Felvidék™ and Carpatho-Ruthenia belonged to this district) contacted Géza Halász, advisor to the Ministry of the Interior and assistant head of the Government's commission in Carpatho-Ruthenia. Not only did Győző Tölgyesy enthusiastically endorse the SS Major's request, he also added one of his own suggestions: In addition to the cities mentioned above, „Huszt and Nagyszőlős could also be used for the purpose of resettlement.” Gend. Col. Győző Tölgyesy was obviously aware that nearly 200.000 people were about to be transferred and/or taken away to ghettos or collection camps, and so he made further proposals. He set the deadline for gathering the Jews for 6 April and suggested a rather simple mode of accomplishing it: he raised the possibility of „administratively” asking the Jews to „resettle.” In other words: the Jews should place themselves into ghettos...<sup>8</sup> More precisely, the Colonel meant to resettle only those who may have been left behind after the expiration of the deadline.

The most interesting fact in this whole matter is the reaction of the highest officials in the Ministry of the Interior. Halász telephoned Gend. Col. Gyula Király, head of the VII. Public Security Department of the Ministry of the Interior who returned the call on the same day, at noon on 2 April and told Halász that at the instruction of the Minister of the Interior „the request is to be granted.”<sup>9</sup>

Neither the Minister of the Interior, Andor Jaross, nor Géza Halász or Győző Tölgyesy bothered about the fact that at this time no law or decree prescribed the segregation or confinement of Jews in ghettos or internment camps. One SS major snapped his finger and within twenty-four hours Hungary's Minister of the Interior agreed to the forced removal of nearly 200.000 Hungarian citizens.

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<sup>7</sup> Országos Levéltár (National Archives) — hereinafter: OL Kárpátaljai Kormányzói Biztos Hivatalának iratai (Papers of the Office of the Kárpátalja Government Commissioner) — hereinafter: KKBH.i. — K 774—1944, p. 3. Statement of the SS and SD company commander on duty in Kassa, dated 1 April 1944, to 1st.Lt. Kökendy, District Commissioner of the Gendarmerie.

<sup>8</sup> (Upper Province, i.e. today's Slovakia)

<sup>8</sup> OL, ibid. Protocol, Ungvár, 2 April 1944, signed by Géza Halász.

<sup>9</sup> OL, ibid.

This operation failed in the end. Brigadier General Zoltán Algya Papp discussed the German major's request with leaders of the 1st Hungarian Army assigned to the Carpatho-Ruthenia district, and on the same day, at four in the afternoon, conveyed the following to Halász:

„...the transfer of Jews would seriously impede the army's deployment, now in progress, especially in counties along the border; further, in Munkács our headquarters and attached units are in need of every available accommodation, therefore the resettled Jews could not be directed there.”<sup>10</sup>

Officials of the Ministry of Defense in Budapest must also have protested, because two days later on 4 April, Gend. Col. Király repeatedly telephoned Halász (it is remarkable that in these fateful days and weeks, the same bureaucrats, usually such sticklers for formalities, issuing and demanding written documents complete with stamps and signatures, so easily and enthusiastically switched to informal transactions), and said:

„...according to German authorities in Budapest, Jews in the border region of Kárpátalja may be removed only with the agreement of the army command there, while the removal of all the Jews of Kárpátalja, i.e. for a larger scale resettlement (sic!) the consent of the German Central Command in Budapest is necessary.”<sup>11</sup>

The „rounding up” of the Jews, to use a contemporary terminology, began at dawn on 15 April 1944. The mere facts were summarized the following way in the above-mentioned document:

„The Jews gathered together, approximately 195.000 persons, were placed in the collection camps set up in Munkács, Ungvár, Varjúláros, and Beregszász, and in the designated ghettos of Huszt, Máramarossziget, Kassa, Mátészalka, Nyíregyháza, Nagyszőlős, Sátoraljaújhely, Kisvárd, and Beregszász. The amount of the money collected and the worth of jewelry and other valuables are unknown.”<sup>12</sup>

With brutal frankness, the summary mentions that „during the round-up a few suicides occurred, but compared to the large number of the assembled Jews, these were negligible.” They were not talking about people, but rather about negligible, alien, and hostile beings who had to be removed.

On 10 April, even in the most remote mountain villages, cut off from radio and newspapers, the Jews of Kárpátalja learned that they were to establish „Jewish committees.” On this day, Tölgyesy once again gave verbal instructions to the administrative authorities, and this time in accordance with the Jewish decrees that had been piling down like rain since 29 March, that they are to make public the following:

„1. No Jew may receive cooking-fat coupons. In case these have already been issued for a long period, they are to be revoked. 2. All trade licenses for Jews are to be revoked, with the exception of localities where the same trade is not practiced by a Christian. 3. Works by Jewish authors must be weed (sic!) out of every library. 4. Stores

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<sup>10</sup> OL, *ibid.*, Géza Halász's notes, 2 April 1944.

<sup>11</sup> OL, *ibid.*, Géza Halász's notes, 4 April 1944.

<sup>12</sup> OL, BM (Ministry of the Interior, — hereinafter: BM) res. K 148. 1200 cs. Summary report of the Gendarmerie, 30 May 1944, 8929/B. kt. p. 325.

owned by Jews must be marked by a yellow star, or by the conspicuously displayed and easily legible words „Jewish store.” 5. In every town where Jews reside, Jewish committees are to be formed, and these committees will be responsible for the behavior of the Jewish population. 6. All persons above the age of six who are classified as Jews must display the badge of the yellow star on their outer garments at all times. Failure to comply with this order will result in immediate arrest by the Gendarmerie!”<sup>13</sup>

On 5 April, Baky, with a „strictly confidential” order, had dispatched the Head and entire personnel of the State Security Center’s (Államvédelmi Központ = AVK) Investigation Department to the VIIIth Gendarmerie District, „to prevent possible accusations and abuses that may arise later during the solution of the Jewish question.” At the same time he ordered the AVK Investigation Department’s Head to „...personally supervise, with the help of the Investigation Department’s staff, the execution of police regulations put in effect against Jews.”<sup>14</sup>

I would like to make clear that the investigators of the AVK were not called out to threaten the Jews. Their main worry was the ownerless, abandoned property that had been „left behind.” Within too short a time too many Jews were torn from their homes, and there were not enough trained people available, neither was there enough time, to officially receive the Jews’ valuables or to seal all the empty apartments. It was not only the poor, and often the not-so-poor of the cities and villages, who covetously eyed the abandoned possessions. Baky sent out the AVK detectives to restrain public officials, policemen and the Gendarmerie.

The rounding up of Jews in the VIIIth Gendarmerie District was also begun on Baky’s confidential order 6163/1944, bearing his signature, and issued on 7 April.<sup>15</sup> But local administrative, police and gendarmerie authorities were unable to comply with certain points of the order. Therefore, within his own jurisdiction, and without any hesitation, Halász sent off his own instructions, modifying those of the Ministry of the Interior, to all the commanders of the Carpatho-Ruthenia Gendarmerie. He claimed that since „Kárpátalja is a military zone in which the deployed army may need every available accommodation, the above-quoted order from the Ministry of the Interior, concerning the locking and sealing of Jewish apartments, cannot be carried out, especially in the light of our experience of resettling Jews in 1941, when the population, despite the seals, broke into and robbed the abandoned houses...”<sup>16</sup>

Géza Halász referred to the Jewish deportation of August 1941. Mostly from Carpatho-Ruthenia, but also from some larger towns, they collected all the Jews whose

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<sup>13</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 15. Report of the Chief Administrative Officer of Nagyberezná, dated 10 April 1944, to the head of the Local Administrative Office of Ung, no. 1880/1944.

<sup>14</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 26. For the complete text of the Ministry of the Interior’s order BM 6137/1944. VII. res, dated 5 April see: *Vádirat a nácizmus ellen (Indicting Nazism)* — hereinafter: *Vádirat* — Vol. I, pp. 106—107. Budapest 1958. Eds.: I. BENOSCHOFSKY and E. KARSAI.

<sup>15</sup> For the complete text, see: *Vádirat*, Vol. I. pp. 124—127.

<sup>16</sup> OL, KKBH.i. k 774—1944, p. 38. The Government Commissioner’s directive, no. 162/1944. biz. sz., dated 13 April, to the wing-commanders of the Gendarmerie.

„citizenship was not in order.” Altogether about 18.000 people were deported from the country. Most of them were butchered by the Nazis and their Ukrainian collaborators in Kamenyec-Podolszk.

On 15 April 1944 the Police Chief of Ungvár held a conference in his office on „the subject of executing the Jewish laws.” In the record of this conference, called an „Official Memorandum”, the Chief summed up the essence of Halász’s modifying instruction: The various valuables confiscated from the Jews are not to be sent the Munkács branch of the National Bank, but to the Police Headquarters of Munkács. The Ungvár section of the VIIIth Gendarmerie District in Kassa was also informed to whom to address the shipments: Dr. Lajos Meggyesy, AVK, Attorney, Delivery Committee. Valuables meant: money, silver, gold and all other precious metals, gems, savings accounts, bonds, securities, typewriters, cameras, and watches. Military materials (meant) skis, ski boots, bicycles, binoculars, leather, rubber goods, cars and car equipment. All these are to be stored at the station of the Gendarmerie, summed up the head of the Ungvár Section of the Gendarmerie. He also noted that valuable textile goods, bolts of fabric and linen, quality paintings and rugs (Persian, oriental) are to be handed over to the town’s council for „storage and safekeeping.”<sup>17</sup>

If the gendarmes and police would let them, then theoretically, according to the already quoted order no. 6163/1944 of the Ministry of the Interior, the Jews would have been able to take only the clothes on their backs, one overcoat, at most two sets of underwear, food for no more than fourteen days per person, baggage of no more than fifty kilograms that would have to include everything, even bedding, blankets, mattresses, etc.<sup>18</sup>

In many places however, those in charge would not allow enough time for the Jews to pack even their most essential belongings. A lot was left in the abandoned Jewish houses which the local population began to plunder. Already on 1 May 1944, quoting his order no: 162/1944, Halász sent new instructions to the authorities of Carpatho-Ruthenia. He stated that in spite of this order „there have been many instances where possessions have been removed from abandoned Jewish houses and apartments, and therefore he directed the authorities to carefully gather and guard Jewish possessions.”<sup>19</sup>

Following the advice and instructions of German SS officers with long experience all over Europe, the rounding up of Jews and confining them in ghettos was carried out by Hungarian officials. An interesting episode of this harmonious cooperation tells a great deal about the atmosphere in which events took place in the spring of 1944 in Carpatho-

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<sup>17</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 14. Official Memorandum at the Ungvár police headquarters of the conference held on 15 April; also: the strictly confidential report of the VIIIth (Kassa) Gendarmerie District’s Ungvár section, no. 244/kt. 1944, dated 15 April, to the sub-prefect of Ung. county. OL, Miniszterelnöki Levéltár (Archives of the Prime Minister), Északkeleti Hadműveleti Terület Polgári Kormánybiztossága (The Civilian Government Commission of the Northeastern Theater of Military Operations) 1944. sz.n., pp. 5—6.

<sup>18</sup> *Vádirat*, I. p. 126.

<sup>19</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 19. Géza Halász’s directive, dated 1 May 1944, to the heads of every Local Administrative Office, and Orphans’ Court, to all Chiefs of County Administrations, District Notaries and Town Clerks of Kárpátalja.

Ruthenia. At 11 o'clock in the evening of 17 April, the Mayor of Ungvár, Dr. László Megay, telephoned the police and told them that an unknown perpetrator, or perpetrators, had fired five shots at his apartment and smashed his window. According to the police, Dr. László Megay also called Teofil Dannecke (sic!), SS Hauptsturmführer who, referring to the murder, also by unknown persons, of a German soldier earlier the same day in the city, called the Police Chief of Ungvár and instructed him to round up 100 prominent Jews by 5 a.m.; he would want to have them executed. Before complying, the Chief of Police dispatched investigators to investigate the two reports. It turned out that the murdered soldier was in fact a woman of easy virtue who was found by them in the bathroom of a German military barracks with a bullet hole in her head. She had a revolver in her left hand, but the bullet entered her right temple... As to the Mayor's window: it was smashed by stones. Vitéz<sup>\*\*\*</sup> György Thurzó, Police Chief, made his report to the proper authorities; the SS officer then told him that he did not insist on executing the 100 Jews since he was stationed there only as an „observer and advisor” anyway. Incidentally, SS Hauptsturmführer Theodor Dannecker (that was his real name) had already made that statement at a meeting held in the Mayor of Ungvár's office on the morning of 17 April... As a point of interest, Theodor Dannecker was a member of Adolf Eichmann's staff and played a significant role in the „settling” of the Bulgarian Jewish question. With his assistance 4,150 Thracian and 7,144 Macedonian Jews were deported to the Treblinka concentration camp where most of them perished.<sup>20</sup>

On 23 April Edmund Veessenmayer reported with satisfaction that: „The ghettoization in the Kárpát area began on 16 April.<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> They have already detained 150.000 Jews... Negotiations about transportation are underway, and starting on 15 May we plan the shipment of 3.000 Jews per day, mostly from Kárpátalja... Destination Auschwitz.”<sup>21</sup>

In the most important part of his report, Edmund Veessenmayer called the attention of his superior in Berlin to the following fact:

„In order to avoid endangering the execution of our operation, it would seem expedient that the 50.000 Jews in forced labor battalions, which I have requested and the government has promised, be directed somewhat farther away from the area of Budapest.”<sup>22</sup>

We must understand well what the Reich's plenipotentiary in Hungary was saying: It was much more important to deport the Jewish elderly and babies, the lame, and even

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> (Order of valor)

<sup>20</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 13. The report of Ungvár's Chief of Police, dated 18 April 1944. About Th. Dannecker, see R. L. BRAHAM's article: „A csailós államok és az antiszemitizmus” (*The Satellite Countries and Anti-Semitism*) (*Világosság*, 1990, n. 12, p. 921.)

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> According to the Gendarmerie report quoted in Note n. 12, ghettoization in the VIIIth Gendarmerie district was begun on 15 April. The lack of primary archival sources makes the settling of this contradiction in dates impossible.

<sup>21</sup> Veessenmayer's report of 23 April 1944 to the Foreign Ministry. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, p. 836.)

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

the mentally ill of Carpatho-Ruthenia than the already assembled Jewish inmates of forced labor camps who could be well used in the German war industry.

In a telegram sent on 18 April, the head of the foster home in Munkács asked the government's representative in Carpatho-Ruthenia what should happen to Jewish children placed with Jewish foster parents; whether they should be taken back into the care of the state or along with their foster parents, should they be sent to the camps? There could have been no doubt about the reply: the „final destination” of these Jewish orphans was also Auschwitz.<sup>23</sup>

Until 15 May the main concern — for the authorities — consisted of the feeding and the solution of health, especially epidemiological problems, of the Jews now herded together in large numbers. It was quite easy to herd together the obedient and frightened multitude. Guarding them was not difficult either; they did not try hard to escape. On the contrary, there were places where the Jews were guarding themselves. At least this is what we learn from the morning report for 19 April 1944 of the assistant commander of the collection camp at Ungvár. The report tells us that in this camp of 40.000 square meters, only 12 guards were on duty. They would have to keep an eye on 6.152 Jews. There was no fence or wall; it would not have been difficult to escape at night between the guards positioned at every 300 or 400 meters. The report speaks of the possibility of „mass escape, nay, breakout.” But „naturally,” nothing like that had happened. According to the report, „the mood of the detainees is generally satisfactory, reassuring. The delivery and reception of the detainees is progressing smoothly. There are no disturbances. To establish order within the camp, 100 Jewish police have been press (sic!) into service,” writes Károly Oszényi, Inspector of the Hungarian Royal Police, Assistant Commander of the Jewish collection camp at Ungvár.<sup>24</sup>

In the collection camps, „organized” in brick factories and lumber yards, the mayor concern was the solution of health/epidemic problems. On 18 April the military physician of Ungvár inspected the Jewish collection camp in Felszabadulás Street along with his colleagues. He stated in his report that in the collection camp planned for 20.000 people, one-and-a-half liters of drinking and cooking water and five liters of water needed for washing should be provided for each person per day. The camp's two latrines are insufficient even for the current population (appr. 4.000 people), concluded Dr. Károly Biringer, military physician, referring to the fact that the weight of per capita daily excrement is approximately 130 grams, and the volume of urine is 1.200 cm<sup>3</sup>. To prevent contagion, the epidemic of typhoid fever, Dr. Károly Biringer asked that 30.000 liters of drinking and 10.000 liters of washing water be secured daily, as well as 15.000 cm<sup>3</sup> of vaccine with the appropriate number of syringes be supplied.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 42. Telegram sent by the principal of the foster home in Munkács, dated 18 April, to the Government Commissioner of Kárpátalja in Ungvár.

<sup>24</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 86. Morning report of the Assistant Commander of the collection camp at Ungvár, for 19 April 1944, no. 169/11—1944 biz. sz., sent to police headquarters at Ungvár.

<sup>25</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, pp. 76—77. Report n. 217/lül 1944 of Dr. Károly Biringer, military physician, dated 18 April, to the Mayor of Ungvár.

„Naturally” these rational requests could be satisfied only in part by the Mayor. As we learn from his report to the Minister of the Interior, at Dr. László Megay’s instruction the city’s watermain was equipped with a 1.000 meter long pump suction pipe that allowed the supply of 300 liters of water per minute to the camp. However, the most serious problem was still not solved. Dr. László Megay wrote to Jaross:

„... the camp has no sewer system and the daily excreta of 20.000 people cannot be disposed of. There is no lime in the city, hence disinfection is impossible. Since the warm weather is here, the city’s Christian population is greatly disturbed that presently an epidemic might break out in the camp that could infect the entire city area and there would be no human power to prevent it from spreading.”

„I respectfully request that your Excellency take urgent steps so that the Jews, collected and now kept at Ungvár, be taken away as soon as possible.”<sup>26</sup>

It is unlikely that the conditions in the Ungvár ghetto were unusual; according to testimony from other sources and from recollections, they represented rather the average hell.

In the middle of April 1944, when they began to round up the Jews of Carpatho-Ruthenia, the German and Hungarian „appropriate authorities” did not exactly know when they would deport these people from the country. Dieter Wisliceny, Adolf Eichmann’s right hand man, who had already „distinguished himself” in 1943 in settling the Jewish question in Slovakia, at a meeting held at Ungvár on 15 April, was able to tell the Hungarians in charge only that „in all likelihood” the Jews in the brick factory in Felszabadulás Street will remain there for 30 to 45 days.<sup>27</sup>

The removal of the Jews was prevented not by the lack of the Germans’ „readiness to receive them,” but by the lack of available transportation. At the beginning of May the RSHA, i.e. the Reich Security Main Office, informed the German Foreign Ministry that on 4 and 5 May there would be a „timetable conference” in Vienna whose results would be conveyed to the Hungarian authorities as well. Organizing the „timetable” of trains transporting and deporting the Jews caused no small headache. A German Foreign Ministry report at the time calls attention to three serious problems: „For military reasons, use of the railway through Lemberg is limited; shipments cannot be sent on the Budapest—Vienna line because we want to avoid alarming the Jews of Budapest; the embassy in Bratislava considers transports via Slovakia to be risky.”<sup>28</sup>

The final timetable for the deportation of the Jews of Carpatho-Ruthenia was given to the local Hungarian authorities in Munkács on 12 May by Gend.Lt.Col. László Ferenczy. In his capacity as Gendarmerie officer in charge of ensuring the cooperation of German and Hungarian authorities, particularly in the area of „settling” the Jewish

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<sup>26</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 79. The Mayor of Ungvár’s petition, n. 112. eln./1944, dated 24 April, to the Minister of the Interior.

<sup>27</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 14. Official Reminder of the conference held at the police headquarters of Ungvár on 15 April, 1944.

<sup>28</sup> Telegram of Ehrental von Thadden, sent to the German Embassy in Budapest on 5 May 1944. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, p. 841.)

question, László Ferenczy announced that the Jews, except for foreign citizens, were to be taken out of the country; the first transport was to leave on 14 May. One hundred ten trains were to take the Jews to Kassa where the German police would take them over. The markings on the trains were to read: DA-Umsiedler (resettlers): Removal of German laborers. One train (45 freightcars) was to carry 3.000 people, each freightcar on the average holding 70 people and their baggage. Severely ill Jews and their relatives were to go with the last group. The Mayor was to supply bread for two days, this meant 400 grams per person for the two days. Coffee or water was also to be provided. Gend. Captain Dr. László Uray, one of the participants at the conference, noted:

„...if necessary, 100 people may go in one car. They can be packed in like herrings, since the Germans need hardy people. those who can't take it will drop. There is no need for dandies in Germany.”<sup>29</sup>

Gend.Lt.Col. László Ferenczy failed in his attempt to exempt Jews of foreign nationality from deportation. As a contemporary German summary report wrote: „The local commanders of the Hungarian Gendarmerie... demonstrate such extreme zeal, that they consider this to be a question of honor; if at all possible, they wish to report no foreigners present.”<sup>30</sup>

Although it may seem strange at first glance, in the matter of foreigners even the Germans had failed to control the Hungarian authorities. On 3 May 1944 Prime Minister Sztójay informed the members of his government that in early April a high-ranking SS officer had visited the Ministry of the Interior and tried to convince the Hungarian authorities to treat foreigners, (Jews and non-Jews) as the Germans had. Special attention was called to the various ways of „handling” citizens of neutral countries and those of belligerent states, i.e. at war with the Axis powers. In Germany, for example, American and British women and children were not interned. Of course, this was true only of non-Jewish women and children. On the other hand, in Hungary, as we learn from the protests that were received at the Foreign Ministry, not only citizens of enemy countries, but — in the countryside and in the capital as well — citizens of neutral countries were detained, some in their homes, some at the KEOKH (Central National Office for the Supervision of Foreigners), and were sent to collection camps. As Döme Sztójay remarked: „In their protests, foreign embassies took particular exception to the removal of citizens of enemy countries to places (Csepel) where they would be in danger of being bombed.”<sup>31</sup> In this matter the Germans had one motivation: They asked, indeed demanded (in vain!) from the Hungarian authorities more sensitivity and caution regarding foreigners (Jews and non-Jews) because they feared retaliation against German citizens living abroad. Still, the Ministry of the Interior's order of 3 May calling for the separation of foreign and stateless

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<sup>29</sup> Minutes of a meeting held in Munkács on 12 May 1944, recorded by the Mayor of Nagybánya, no. i. 34/1944 eln. The complete text of the minutes was published in R. L. BRAHAM's *The Politics of Genocide*. New York, 1981., Vol. II, pp. 601—603.

<sup>30</sup> Thadden's 26 May 1944 report to the Foreign Ministry. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, p. 855.)

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of the Cabinet's session of 3 May 1944; for the portions dealing with Jews see: *Vádirat*, Vol. I, pp. 286—289.

Jews, was not heeded.<sup>32</sup> Adolf Hezinger, one of Edmund Veesenmayer's colleagues, on his random inspection tour of Jewish camps and ghettos in May 1944, found a large number of foreign Jews there.<sup>33</sup>

On 21 May Ferenczy reported from Munkács that 94.667 Jews had been taken away on 29 trains from the area of the VIIIth, IXth, and Xth Gendarmerie Districts (Felvidék, Kárpátalja (Carpatho-Ruthenia), and Észak-Erdély (North Transylvania) by that date.

„The empty trains arriving from the Reich”, László Ferenczy noted, „are positioned on the departure tracks one day before leaving. As a result, loading follows the timetable; departures and the trips to the border have thus far passed without a hitch.”<sup>34</sup>

We also learn from Von Thadden's report, already mentioned above, that about one third of the Jews deported were capable of work. The clerk failed to mention that those considered unfit were gassed after their arrival in Auschwitz and that their bodies were burned in the crematoria.<sup>35</sup>

#### EPILOGUE I

On 13 June Edmund Veesenmayer sent his final report to Ribbentrop: „The transporting of Jews from Kárpátalja and Transylvania was completed on 7 June. All told we transported 289.357 Jews to their destination in 92 trains, each consisting of 45 cars. The original target number of approximately 310.000 could not be achieved since in the interim some of the Jews were called up by the Hungarians for defensive forced labor service.”<sup>36</sup>

Looking at the accounting, we can see that Ferenczy and Veesenmayer had every reason to be satisfied. Since 1938 nowhere had the Nazis and their cohorts ever managed to gather so many Jews within such a short period, rob them of their possessions and deport them. From Carpatho-Ruthenia and Transylvania, four trains, on the average, left daily for Auschwitz with deathly punctuality, with 69.8 persons in each freightcar. Of course some cars had more and some had less, but the goal was achieved: The majority of the Jews were annihilated in these parts of Hungary, too.

#### EPILOGUE II

The deportation of the Jews did not leave the non-Jewish population unconcerned. At the beginning of June 1944, the Investigation Section of Kassa reported that in and around Nagyszőlős rumors were circulating that after the Jews the Carpatho-Ruthenians would be deported. The Central Investigation Command of the Hungarian Royal

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<sup>32</sup> For the complete text of the Ministry of the Interior's decree, no. 7233/1944 VII.res., see: *Vádirat*, Vol. I, pp. 290—293.

<sup>33</sup> See Note n. 30.

<sup>34</sup> The originals of László Ferenczy's reports from 1944 are found in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior, attached to the records of Ferenczy's trial.

<sup>35</sup> See Note n. 30, pp. 855—856.

<sup>36</sup> Veesenmayer's telegram to Ribbentrop on 13 June 1944. (*Wilhelmstrasse*, p. 865.)

Gendarmerie suggested to the Head of the Public Safety Department of the Ministry of the Interior that he „put into effect some informational and counter-propaganda operations.”<sup>37</sup>

### EPILOGUE III

The Carpatho-Ruthenians' fear was baseless. For the Jews, however, there would have been much more reason for fleeing in panic. However, while daily thousands, tens of thousands, of their coreligionists were being deported, the Jews of the capital still believed that they were not in danger. According to Von Thadden, the Jewish Committee informed the Jews that „...the regulations concern only the Jews of the eastern territories who, as opposed to other, assimilated Jews, have kipt their Jewish characteristics...Be that as it may”, Von Thadden added, „whether because of this propaganda or some other reason, the Jews of other territories, despite the beginning of the deportations, have been calm.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> OL, KKBH.i. K 774—1944, p. 9. A report on the people's mood designated as n. 8950/B:kt. — 1944, recorded under 10. 173/1944. VII. res. sz.

<sup>38</sup> See Note n. 30, p. 854.

## Zsidó deportálások Kárpátalján 1944-ben

A tanulmány elsősorban eddig még szakemberek előtt is ismeretlen dokumentumok segítségével megkísérli összefoglalni a kárpátaljai zsidóság 1944-es deportálásának történetét. Az Országos Levéltárban található a Kárpátaljai Kormányzói Biztos Hivatalának (KKBH) iratai. Ezt az iratanyagot eddig még senki sem dolgozta föl szisztematikusan, annak ellenére, hogy rendkívül sok érdekes és új információt tartalmaz, többek között a magyar zsidó Holocaust történetével kapcsolatban is. A tanulmány vázolja a magyar zsidók helyzetét 1944 elején, a magyar és német hivatalos zsidópolitika általános kereteit, majd azt vizsgálja, hogy milyen körülmények között zajlott Kárpátalján 1944 áprilisában—májusában a zsidók megbélyegzése, kifosztása, gettókba, majd gyűjtőtáborokba terelése, végül deportálásuk. Bőven idéz a korabeli német diplomáciai iratok mellett az egykorú magyar csendőri, tisztiorvosi jelentésekből is. A dokumentumok elemzéséből világosan kiderül, hogy a magyar és német hatóságok harmonikusan együttműködtek a zsidókérdés „megoldásában”, maguk a zsidók pedig képtelenek voltak ellenállást tanúsítani.