

Creating the Paradigm of ‘New Nation’

Eugenic Thinking and the Culture of Racial-Hygiene in the Slovak State

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Abstract

Despite its official Catholic nature, Jozef Tiso's Slovak State apparatus adopted not only the teachings of the eugenic movement but also the racial-hygiene ideology of National Socialist Germany, which it gradually implemented into its political culture. This study presents how eugenic and racial-hygiene thinking was introduced into the structures of *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana* (HSĽS; Hlinka's Slovak People's Party), the self-governing party of independent Slovakia during the Second World War, against the backdrop of developmental trends in Europe. What is emphasized here is the gradual formation of the racial paradigm in the spirit of a eugenic and racial-hygiene framework, as well as the formation of a ‘pure Aryan Slovak nation’ cult, physically and mentally contrasting with racially-hygienically ‘unclean and degenerate’ Jews and Roma.

Keywords

Slovak Republic – Slovak State – fascism – eugenics – racism – biopolitics – *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana* (HSĽS – Hlinka's Slovak People's Party)

By approving Government Decree No. 198/41, known as the so-called *Jewish Codex*, the Hitler-allied Slovak Republic (Slovak State) became a *de jure* racist state on 9 September 1941. The codification of the Slovak transmutation of the Nuremberg racial laws¹ represented a legal systematization of persecution

1 For a full discussion, see: Cornelia Essner, *Die 'Nürnberger Gesetze' oder die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns 1933–1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002); Magnus Brechtken et al., *Die Nürn-*

legislation against one particular community. The acceptance of draconian anti-Jewish legislation had not been merely of 'juridical import' from National Socialist Germany. The newly introduced racial policy of the State reflected the mood among a significant part of Slovak society which had been evolving for decades.

Although the term 'race' is still the subject of scientific debate, and for which there is still no generally accepted definition, it is certainly not possible to narrow it down to a term categorizing human civilization into groups solely according to skin pigmentation or other anthropological features, or to a term defined by legislation, simultaneously ignoring its cultural perception whose semantics played a more fundamental role than the law in the definition of 'Aryanity' and 'purenness' of a 'new nation'.² In the fascist 'new Europe', 'race' in its broadest sense was elevated beyond the ethnic and political nation, gaining a new substantive dimension. Within the biopolitical framework of the ruling *Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana* [HSLs; Hlinka's Slovak People's Party], racial identity as a basic identification factor of the national community did not concern only the Jews, but all citizens of the state.³

Therefore, the aim of this present study is to indicate how, against the background of the European eugenic movement that sought to qualitatively elevate the human race, a new kalocagathic mantra of 'superior healthy race' was formed in Slovakia within the Slovak State (1939–1945) in which racial principles became a core element of the self-governing HSLs policy. Particular atten-

berger Gesetze—80 Jahre danach: Vorgeschichte, Entstehung, Auswirkungen (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017).

2 Milan Hrabovský, *RASA: Rasová klasifikácia ľudí* (Bratislava: VEDA, 2018), 52, 56–57.

3 Despite numerous publications on racism and the Holocaust in Slovakia, the issue of eugenic thinking and racial hygiene has so far been addressed only by Michal Schvarc, 'Nacistická eugenika a Nemci na Slovensku,' *História: Revue o dejinách spoločnosti* 7, no. 2 (2007): 14–17; see also: Michal Schvarc, "Fahndung nach deutschem Blut"? K otázke budúceho usporiadania slovenského priestoru v kontexte "Volkstumspolitik" ss,' in *V perimetri zameriavača: Kapitoly z dejín Slovenska v druhej svetovej vojne, venované k 70. narodeninám PaedDr. Jána Stanislava*, CSc, ed. Stanislav Mičev et al. (Banská Bystrica: Múzeum SNP, 2012), 176–197; Michal Schvarc, 'Nacionálno-socialistická "nová Európa" a Slovensko,' in *Slovenský štát 1939–1945: Predstavy a realita*, ed. Martina Fiamová et al. (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2014), 69–80. Selected problems of racial hygiene in Slovakia was also noted by Miloslav Szabó in his commentary: Miloslav Szabó, "Nový človek" a hygiena v slovenskom vojnovom štáte,' *Denník N*, April 9, 2020, <https://dennikn.sk/1848044/novy-clovek-a-hygiena-v-slovenskom-vojnovom-state/>. Schvarc's works are suitably complemented by the work of historical demographers, including Branislav Šprocha and Pavol Tišliar, and historian Eva Škorvanková (see the book series *Populačné štúdie Slovenska / Slovak Population Studies*). Against the background of women's issues, Škorvanková focused on the practical application of various eugenic ideas to social practice in the wartime Slovak State.

tion is paid to reflections of eugenic thinking in social practice and the creation of racial identity during the HSLS regime,⁴ which was influenced by the growth of eugenic culture in Europe as well as partially by the German racial-hygiene school, further radicalized after the NSDAP came to power in Germany.

Due to desperate lack of English literature on Slovak fascism (not to mention its specific aspects), the primary goal of this article is to outline the key features of eugenic thinking and racial-hygiene culture in Jozef Tiso's Slovakia set in the context of debates and influences in Europe and the Czechoslovak Republic (of which Slovakia was part from October 1918 until March 1939) and mainly their permutations after 14 March 1939 when Germany took full political control over the freshly established independent Slovak State. The article's intention is not to provide a thorough case study of Slovak eugenics and racial-hygiene policy, since this approach would go far beyond the limits of a journal contribution. Instead, it attempts to elucidate how these two aspects co-created the HSLS regime's paradigm of the 'new Slovak nation' and contributed to defining its new identity and ideal of purity in fascist Europe following the turbulent events of March 1939.

Biological 'Super-Nation' Construction Projects: European Inspirations for the Czechoslovak Milieu

The last third of the nineteenth century ushered in unprecedented economic and scientific progress for European civilization. The technocratic vision of the world, based on a fascination with the dynamics of new inventions and the possibility of modernizing existing technologies, impacted the field of applied biology with similar innovative sentiments. The adoption of social-Darwinian theories by certain sections of society and a concentrated, man-made effort to create a qualitatively more perfect population derived from a 'noble' gene pool laid the groundwork for a new, eugenic discourse at the turn of the century. Eugenics, defined by Francis Galton in 1883, as a follow-up event to the

4 The Hlinka Slovak People's Party came to power as consequence of the Munich conference for Czechoslovak government. Following the Munich events, on 6 October 1938, the HSLS took advantage of the weakening of the central government in Prague and declared autonomy of Slovakia for which the party had been struggling for twenty years (but still within the Czechoslovak Republic which was transformed to asymmetric federation). Shortly after, the HSLS devoured all right-wing political parties, banned the social democratic, Communist and Jewish parties, and introduced a de facto single political party system. This system persisted even after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of the Slovak State on 14 March 1939 and lasted up to April 1945.

pioneering work of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, represented a modernist project to improve the quality of the human gene pool through the scientifically-controlled reproduction of genetically superior individuals. In the context of the all-round modernization of European society, eugenic ideas had already been successfully implemented in many areas of social policy during the first decade of the twentieth century. It soon became a popular ideological pillar of innovation in science, legislation, criminology, migration policy, and healthcare,⁵ and only later became a new dimension of racial discourse.

Leonard Darwin, a British politician and chairman of the British Eugenics Society (1911–1928), who continued developing his father's theories, emphasized the positive dimension of eugenics in his work *What is Eugenics?* (1928). He understood eugenics as the social application of biological knowledge, which aims to prevent the degeneration of the human race.⁶ He claimed that there were many types of people who were not desirable for society—criminals, simpletons, the mentally disabled, and the physically disabled, including the deaf and/or the blind. At the same time, however, he realized that entrusting the government to a group of genetic 'superhumans' could lead to tyranny and, therefore, according to him, the state must make a concerted effort to improve the genetic quality of its entire population. The ideas of the eugenic movement became attractive throughout Europe, especially in the newly-created states after the First World War.⁷

5 Philippa Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

6 Leonard Darwin, *Co je to eugenika?* (Praha: Lékařské knihkupectví a nakladatelství, 1936), 25–26, 71.

7 There are countless works on the history of the eugenic movement. A basic selection of key scholarly literature on the topic (both general and specific national aspects) can be found in the bibliography provided in Marius Turda. *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 167–180 and *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900–1945: Sources and Commentaries*, ed. Marius Turda (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). A precise case study in English focusing on Czechoslovakia was published only recently. See: Victoria Shmidt, *The Politics of Disability in Interwar and Socialist Czechoslovakia: Segregating in the Name of the Nation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019). By now, Slovak aspects of eugenics have been analyzed on background of abortion discourses and evolution of women's position in the twentieth century Slovak society within monographs published in Slovak only: Miloslav Szabó, *Potraty: Dejiny slovenských kultúrnych vojen od Hlinku po Kuffu* (Bratislava: N Press, 2020); Eva Škorvanková, *Strážkyne rodinných kozubov? Ženy v ideológii a politike Slovenského štátu* (Bratislava: VEDA, 2020). Partial aspects are, from comparative perspective, examined by Slovak-born Israeli historian Yeshayahu A. Jelinek in his paper Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, 'On the Condition of Women in Wartime Slovakia and Croatia,' in *Labryrinth of Nationalism: Complexities of Diplomacy: Essays in Honor of Charles and Barbara Jelavich* (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1992), 190–213; and in research papers by Pavol

The eugenic movement acquired many followers in interwar Czechoslovakia.⁸ An institutionalized organization in the newly established republic in the form of the *Československý ústav pro národní eugeniku* [Czechoslovak Institute for National Eugenics] was directly connected to the *Česká eugenická společnost* [Czech Eugenics Society], founded on 2 May 1915 (however, the beginnings of the eugenics movement in the Czech lands date back to the first years of the twentieth century).⁹ The Institute was established in 1923 with open support from the Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education and the Charles University in Prague, which the eugenicists considered a great success for their movement and illustrative of the Czechoslovak State's interest in applying eugenic ideas on a national scale. However, these ideas were dispelled by parliament's rejection of eugenic legislation, such as the bill by Prof. Ladislav Haškovec calling for mandatory medical examinations before marriage, or an amendment to the Criminal Code, proposed by Prof. Vladislav Růžička, which recommended using eugenic indications as the determining criteria for abortion.¹⁰ Notwithstanding these failures, the Czech eugenic movement offered a structured eugenics program, summarized in Růžička's publication *Biologické základy eugeniky* [Biological Foundations of Eugenics] (1923) and *Péče o zdatnost potomstva* [Care for the Robustness of Progeny] (1923). The Czechoslovak eugenic program was based on Galton and Pearson's concept of eugenics, but rejected inspiration from the neighboring influential German environment institutionally represented by the periodical *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* and the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* [Association for Racial

Tišliar and his collaborators focusing on a complex analysis of population policy in Slovakia from the perspective of historical demography, e. g.: Pavol Tišliar, Branislav Šprocha and Eva Škorvanková, 'Trendy a smerovanie populačnej politiky na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1945,' *Historický časopis* 67, no. 1 (2019): 83–101; Pavol Tišliar, 'Smerovanie populačnej politiky na Slovensku po vzniku Československa do roku 1945,' in *Populačná a rodinná politika na Slovensku v 20. storočí* (Bratislava: Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, o. z. — Centrum pre historickú demografiu a populačný vývoj Slovenska FiF UK v Bratislave, 2019) 9–61.

- 8 It should be noted that Slovak eugenics in interwar Czechoslovakia cannot be considered a movement as it was reduced to several individuals. Therefore, the article differs between 'Czech eugenic movement' referring to a coherent group of eugenic scientists and activists concentrated in the historic Czech lands and 'Czechoslovak eugenic program' referring to state-wide eugenic politics.
- 9 See: Michal Šimůnek, 'Eugenics, Social Genetics and Racial Hygiene: Plans for the Scientific Regulation of Human Heredity in the Czech Lands 1900–1925,' in *Blood and Homeland*, ed. Marius Turda and Paul Weindling (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), 145–166.
- 10 Afterword in Leonard Darwin, *Co je to eugenika?* (Praha: Lékařské knihkupectví a nakladatelství, 1936), 73–74.

Hygiene].¹¹ The main priorities of the Czech eugenic movement were to increase the birth rate and protect marriage, with emphasis on state supervision over the quality of genetic reproduction, as well as the general promotion of collective genetic responsibility for the physical and mental fitness of society.¹² Eugenics had been presented to the public as a humanitarian, democratic, and socially beneficial social strategy that could positively strengthen the 'young,' 'healthy,' and 'plebeian' nation.¹³ To a certain extent, in promoting its program, it sought to create an image of modern, socially beneficial, applied science, essentially corresponding to the idea of a young vital state and its social doctrine ('eugenics as the most vital interest of the nation').

The social involvement of eugenicists in the Czechoslovak Republic primarily had two goals: to act as a professional support in applying measures to prevent the biological decline of future generations (so-called 'pathological inheritance') and at the same time to halt the permanently declining population curve not only in the Czech lands, but also in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia.¹⁴ The population curve in Czechoslovakia—especially with regard to the eugenically healthy population—was following the same trend as that of the Western European cultural circle, having a regressive tendency. This trend raised concerns similar to those of the German National Socialists: according to pessimistic estimates, the ratio of children in 'valuable' families relative to children in 'criminal' families was set to fall from 50:50 to only 6:94 over the next 120 years.¹⁵ However, the Czech eugenics proponents were aware of the ethical obstacles raised by the concept of so-called 'negative' eugenics. Some of them, ideologically close to the humanist circle of President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, rejected state intervention in the form of preventing 'inferior' persons from producing offspring.¹⁶ Despite this, however, after the adoption of the *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses* [Sterilization Act] in Germany on 14 July 1933, the discussion on state sterilization intensified in the Czechoslovak Republic and the Czechoslovak Institute for National Eugenics

11 Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1988), 26 and following. See also: Volker Roelcke, 'Deutsche Eugenik und Rassenhygiene zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik (ca. 1917/18–1945),' in *Wissenschaft in den böhmischen Ländern 1939–1945*, ed. Antonín Kostl (Praha: KLP, 2004), 164–177.

12 See: Vladislav Růžička, *Péče o zdatnost potomstva* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství, 1923), 32.

13 Šimůnek, 'Eugenics, Social Genetics and Racial Hygiene,' 154–155.

14 Afterword in Darwin, *Co je to eugenika?*, 73–74.

15 Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, *Rasistický stát: Německo 1933–1945* [The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945] (Praha: Columbus, 2010), 173.

16 See: Jan Janko, 'K eugenickému hnutí v českých zemích,' *Dějiny věd a techniky* 30, no. 4 (1997): 237–249.

was commissioned to prepare documents for sterilization legislation. However, the legislative process did not go any further than theoretical preparations with the issuance of guidelines published in February 1937 for comments from professionals.

In addition to the concept of Czech eugenics (which entailed trying to apply to public life so-called 'positive' and carefully selected 'negative' eugenics), in the Czechoslovak Republic, especially in the ethnic German environment (concentrated mainly in Sudetenland), projects of 'community reclamation' (based on the tradition of the German racial-hygiene school, to which Czechoslovak eugenics was strongly opposed), began to be popularized. The understanding of how eugenics could serve as a tool for legitimizing the concept of a racist state was noticed in Czechoslovakia at that time by the young biologist and psychologist Josef Meisner. In his work *Rasismus hrozí kultuře* [Racism Threatens Culture] (1934), responding to the rise of biological racism in neighboring Germany, Meisner defined eugenics as a 'thought product' of modernism, which arose as result of the technologicalization of the world. Meisner critically pointed to the threat of National Socialism breeding a 'new racial aristocracy', but emphasized the fundamental difference between racial hygienists ('good-natured' eugenicists) and 'pure racists' such as Hans Günther,¹⁷ who, together with the author of the national-socialist doctrine *Blut und Boden* Richard Walther Darré, fundamentally influenced both Heinrich Himmler and Adolf Hitler.¹⁸ In his racial journalism, Günther, following the racial-hygiene movements from the imperial and Weimar periods, popularized racist culture in Germany by functionally adapting biological-anthropological theories about races to the NSDAP racist ideology to such an extent that he was dubbed the 'racial pope' (*Rassenpapa*). Günther's work (especially *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*) became the foundational texts for the racist categorization of European civilization by the NSDAP, and thus the theoretical basis (or rather a 'cultural manifesto') of the monstrous project of the so-called *Große Planung*, the planned modern *Drang nach Osten*, and the racial reprofiling of the National Socialist 'New Europe' intended by the Nazis. These stimuli, as Wolfgang F. Haug indicates, led Hitler shortly after his entry into politics to extend the generally formulated idea of purity to the idea of racial purity.¹⁹

17 Josef Meisner, *Rasismus hrozí kultuře: Rasové teorie a eugenika* (Praha: Volná myšlenka, 1934), 28.

18 Richard Breitman, *'Architekt konečného řešení': Himmler a vyvražďení evropských Židů* [The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution] (Praha: Argo, 2004), 47.

19 Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Die Faschisierung des bürgerlichen Subjekts: Die Ideologie der gesunden Normalität und die Ausrottungspolitik im deutschen Faschismus* (Hamburg: Argument-Verlag, 1987), 132–133.

Conflicts and Harmonies: Catholic Identity, Eugenic and Racial-Hygiene Ideology of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party's Regime

If we do not reduce the meta-ideology of negative eugenics only to science, or to a pseudo-scientific program of biological regeneration of the nation through state-regulated interventions regarding current and future generations, the root of the idea of the need to spiritually 'purify the nation', expressed in terms of repugnant collective qualities, dates back to the last two decades of the nineteenth century in the Slovak milieu. The stereotyping of the Jewish community as a kind of 'spiritual ulcer of society', developed for example in the journalism of the prominent Slovak nationalist Svetozár Hurban Vajanský,²⁰ was in principle very close to the later national-socialist adaptation of negative eugenics. The premise of this thesis – a healthy nation, which involved the marginalization of visible biological (physical and mental) and behavioral disorders as dangers to society – was linked directly by the National Socialists to hereditary 'impure blood' and manifest in a widely understood 'anti-sociality'.

Although the political discourse and practice of the HSLS eventually reached the stage of conspiratorial biologism in the early 1940s, positive eugenics, defined by national and Christian principles, comprised the initial focus of the eugenic agenda within Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. The basic idea of eugenics—national protection—had consistently appeared in HSLS manifesto documents ever since the breakaway from the statewide Hungarian People's Party (*Néppárt*) in December 1905. Although a deeper theoretical elaboration of eugenics was absent in its manifesto before 1918, the Catholic newspaper *Slovenské ľudové noviny*, affiliated to followers of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, was already engaging vociferously in discourse concerning the idea of the 'right of blood' of Slovaks before the regional elections in 1913,²¹ thus adopting a kind of proto-blood principle. In the requirement to establish sanatoriums intended for the treatment of incurable venereal and mental illnesses (declared in the program of the renewed Hlinka's Slovak People's Party immediately after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918²²), no eugenic motive was identified for isolating the sick from the healthy population. Rather, this was

20 Miloslav Szabó, *Od slov k činom: Slovenské národné hnutie a antisemitizmus (1875–1922)* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2014), 28–36.

21 Natália Rolková, 'Smerovanie Slovenskej ľudovej strany v rokoch 1905–1939 na podklade jej programových dokumentov,' in *Slovenská ľudová strana v dejinách 1905–1945*, eds. Róbert Letz, Peter Mulík and Alena Bartlová (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2006), 167.

22 Rolková, 'Smerovanie Slovenskej ľudovej strany v rokoch 1905–1939 na podklade jej programových dokumentov,' 169.

part of the social agenda of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, which, together with national and Christian pillars, formed the core of its political platform. Initial perceptions of eugenics as a social application of biological knowledge within Hlinka's Slovak People's Party was thus more or less limited to the provisions of the Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which called on politicians to govern the state so that 'it will grow healthy and powerful citizens, able to cultivate and, if necessary, defend the homeland.'²³

It was unquestionably critical for the HSĽS that Pope Pius XI did not explicitly reject eugenics in the encyclical *Casti connubii* (1930). It was true that Pius XI resolutely condemned eugenically determined abortions, and warned politicians before adopting abortion legislation, threatening them with 'God's wrath' for 'shedding the blood of unborn children' ('God is the judge avenger of the blood of the innocent who cry out for revenge on earth'). However, he also declared eugenic tools for the regulation of state population policy, which were in accordance with Catholic doctrine, to be admissible,²⁴ e. g. 'genetically premediated' marriages.

In the 1930s, this discourse, supported by the Holy See's authorities, was also adopted by several Slovak priests connected with HSĽS. Jozef Tiso, who after Hlinka's death became the new party leader and Prime Minister of autonomous Slovakia (October 1938–March 1939), proclaimed in a government declaration, that the Slovak government desired 'a healthy Slovak nation', and that, therefore, each couple should consider carefully before deciding on marriage that their love should also be beneficial in terms of the nation's long-term physical and mental health by ensuring the development of a genetically high-quality nation (this was expressed by the long-standing eugenic HSĽS slogan, 'With a healthy child in the family, healthy citizen in the village, healthy people in the nation—such a nation will not perish!').²⁵ Similarly, Catholic priest Karol Körper, a member of the Slovak parliament and the later spiritual administrator of the fascist semi-military organization *Hlinkova garda* [HG; Hlinka Guard], recommended that the supervision of the 'health of the nation' should be taken over by the State Health Institute, which would be tasked with isolating 'cripples, dullards, the incurable', who should no longer be a 'burden of nation'. Kör-

23 *Litterae Encyclicae 'Rerum novarum'*, available at http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

24 *Litterae Encyclicae 'Casti connubii'*, available at http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html.

25 Jozef Tiso (Miroslav Fabricius and Katarína Hradská, eds.), *Prejavy a články. Volume 11: 1938–1944* (Bratislava: AEP, 2007), 81; Katarína Bajcurová and Petra Hanáková and Bohunka Koklesová, eds., *Sen x skutočnosť: Umenie & propaganda 1939–1945* (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2017), 184.

per's proposal to separate these 'less desirable types' from the healthy majority also indirectly indicated that, after the international events of autumn of 1938, the HSLS (or at least part of it) had openly started to use a racial-hygiene topos in its discourse.²⁶

The HSLS' official line in the 1930s corresponded with Catholic teachings supported by the most reputable Slovak eugenic pediatrician Alojz Chura at that time. In his extensive work *Slovensko bez dorastu?* [Slovakia without Juveniles?], published in three volumes from 1936 to 1939, Chura criticized the birth rate decline which was—according to the conservatives' and nationalists' narrative—a consequence of social and cultural modernization associated with erosion of traditional family. Chura identified the causes of this phenomenon in growing welfare which he considered a product of liberal ideology and capitalism (both detested by the HSLS). Another achievement of modernism which Chura declared problematic was the emancipation of women leading to a rise in their independence and an escape from 'maternity duties', together with rising numbers of divorces, weakened authority of family and improper education of girls. As his discourse emphasized, this 'selfishness' resulted in 'great losses for the nation' and he saw the only solution to a threatening population crisis in mass support for positive eugenics. Chura as a leading Slovak eugenic theorist, therefore, did not promote elimination of the ill and handicapped from society but a state policy dedicated to supporting an increase in the birth rate. Along with that, he strongly rejected sterilizations, interruptions and euthanasia as a 'return to pagan and barbaric methods' but warned that the people should have avoided marrying a 'diagnosably defective' partner.²⁷

For these purposes, the government of autonomous Slovakia, dominated by the HSLS nominees, promised to establish 'eugenic advisories' on basis of Catholic ethics defined by *Casti connubii*. Enthusiastic promoter of positive eugenics Štefan Faith, a professor of Catholic theology in Bratislava, who followed encyclical and Alojz Chura's directions, promoted the opinion that the state had no right to issue acts contradictory to natural Christian laws and to kill the fetus in the mother's body due to eugenic reasons.²⁸ This perception

26 Miloslav Szabó, *Klérofašisti: Slovenskí kňazi a pokúšenie radikálnej politiky (1935–1945)* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2019), 47–49.

27 Szabó, *Potraty*, 40–43, 46–47; Škorvanková, *Strážkyne rodinných kozubov?*, 236. See also: Daniela Hrnčárová, "Slovensko bez dorastu?" od A. Churu a populačná politika na Slovensku na prelome 30. a 40. rokov 20. storočia, in *Populačné štúdie Slovenska 6* (Bratislava: Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, o. z., 2015), 7–32.

28 Szabó, *Potraty*, 47–48.

was fully adopted by the HSEs self-rule since its beginnings in autumn 1938 and accepted by both political elites and Catholic clergy, as well as included in Jozef Tiso's government statement announced on 21 February 1939 declaring the politics of married women's 'return to family's fireplace' to 'keep the rule in family where their genuine place is'.²⁹

The ideal conditions for the implementation of this new political culture arose after the establishment of the Slovak State on 14 March 1939, within which the HSEs operated as the only permitted Slovak political state party³⁰ forming the evolution of the Slovak State's dynamically developing regime.³¹

Protection of Life

Although a coherent eugenic movement under the auspices of scientific authorities (biologists) or a national eugenic institute had not been formed in wartime Slovakia, eugenic thinking stimulated by Alojz Chura's and Štefan Faith's works and the *Casti connubii* encyclical regulations penetrated the ideological foundations of the HSEs regime, as well as the biopolitics practised by the ruling party in the broadest sense.

So-called 'positive eugenics' became part of the official HSEs propaganda immediately after its seizure of power in Slovakia in October 1938. The eugenic framework was an important part of the campaign to build a 'new Slovakia' and a 'new nation', which was supposed to consist of 'fit and vital individuals

29 Tiso, *Prejavy a články. Volume II: 1938–1944*, document no. 48, 77.

30 Apart from the HSEs, only two minority parties were allowed in wartime Slovak State—the German Party in Slovakia (*Deutsche Partei in der Slowakei*) and the Hungarian Party in Slovakia (*Szlovenszkói Magyar Párt*). Despite the small 136,000 German minority (out of 2.6 million total inhabitants), Deutsche Partei's influence on Slovak policy was relatively large, mainly due to the submissive position of the Slovak State vis-à-vis the German Reich. The party representing the Hungarian minority of 53,000 was 'tolerated' as a counterweight to the Party of Slovak National Unity (*Strana slovenskej národnej jednoty*), which protected the collective rights of about 470,000 Slovaks in Horthy's Hungarian Kingdom.

31 Recently, the author of this article proposed a pioneer single-sentence definition of the HSEs regime as 'originally nationalist-authoritarian regime which, under the influence of domestic and international factors, transformed itself to a regime of national-socialist (fascist) type, and subsequently mutated into a hybrid regime without a clear political identity'. Anton Hruboň, 'Prečo slovenská historiografia a spoločnosť potrebujú novú paradigmu európskeho fašizmu? Poznámky (nielen) k monografii Jakuba Drábika Fašizmus', *Historický časopis* 68, no. 2 (2020): 347. This new definition, drawing on recent debates within comparative studies of fascism, is analyzed in detail in: Anton Hruboň, ed., *Fašizmus náš slovenský: Korene, podoby a reflexie fašizmu na Slovensku (1919–1945)* (Bratislava: Premedia, 2021).

not only mentally but physically too.³² The HSEs regime paid special attention to issues concerning the general health of Slovak society, the role of mothers and motherhood, abortions, and contraception, as well as general position of the state on population regulation.³³

Since the Catholic-profiled regime considered a family rooted in Christian morals with the fixed social roles of men (i.e. men/fathers being breadwinners and women being mothers, with their children representing the 'future of the nation')³⁴ as an essential feature of society, it also incorporated the importance of the family into Constitutional Act no. 189/39 of the *Slovenský zákonník* [Sl. z.; Slovak Code] of 21 July 1939, in which the institutions of marriage, family, and motherhood gained increased legal protection.³⁵

Protectionist ideology was also reflected in stricter legal controls. Through Act no. 66/41 Sl. z. of 29 March 1941, heavy penalties for abortion were imposed. The punishment threatened not only abortion executioners and those who assisted in any way, but also the aborters themselves, with terms of imprisonment ranging from two to fifteen years. Abortions could be legally performed only by special institutes of the Ministry of the Interior, which presided over the health care system, and only in exceptional cases where the pregnancy directly endangered the mother's life, and only if all other treatment options had been exhausted. The explanatory memorandum to the strict anti-abortion law referred to Act no. 189/39 Sl. z., which stated in its margin that 'it is in line with the Christian principles taken as the foundation for the creation of the Constitution of our state, and moreover for the effort to increase the population.'³⁶

The legal argument also favored penalties in the form of one to twelve months of imprisonment and financial fines of between 1,000 to 10,000 Slovak crowns for sellers of devices to prevent natural conception,³⁷ which were still being sold on the black market in the first months after the establishment

32 M. Smutný, 'Nové Slovensko a zdravie jeho obyvateľstva: Prečo utužiť telo? Ako vzniká nemoc?' *Gardista* 1, no. 4 (1939): 7.

33 See: Tišliar, Šprocha and Škorvanková, 'Trendy a smerovanie populačnej politiky,' 96–99.

34 The ideological framing of the HSEs population policy is outlined in detail in Eva Škorvanková, 'Ideologické vplyvy v populačnej politike Slovenského štátu v rokoch 1939–1945,' in *Populačné štúdie Slovenska* 12, ed. Pavol Tišliar (Bratislava: Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, o. z., 2019), 47–61.

35 *Slovenský zákonník*, 1939, 383. Constitutional Act no. 189 / 39 of 21 July 1939 on the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

36 *Slovenský zákonník*, 1941, 291. Act no. 66/41 Sl. z., available at http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1939ssr/tisky/t0310_00.htm.

37 Ibid.

of the state. Prophylactics (condoms, pessaries, vaginal tablets, etc.), which in the period of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic were commonly available, quickly disappeared from the portfolio of companies producing medical and rubber products. Ironically, the government authorities had to re-authorize their limited distribution, which was kept secret from the public, in the specific environment of the Slovak field army on the Eastern Front. The rapid increase in sexually transmitted diseases among soldiers during 'Operation Barbarossa' (in the territory of the occupied Soviet Union) was accompanied by intimate contacts with local Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian women, which led to fears among officers not only for the health of soldiers but also for the health of the Slovak society as a whole. Head of the Health Administration of the Security Division, Major Vladimír Bernasovský, defended the intervention of the pharmaceutical administration of the *Ministerstvo národnej obrany* [MNO; Ministry of National Defense] in making exceptions to the legislation during the extraordinary war situation, despite Act no. 66/41 Sl. z., to provide soldiers with 'a reliable means of prophylactic if they want to protect themselves, the individual, and a large part of the nation from sexually transmitted diseases and their harmful consequences.'³⁸ In this long-distance battle between officers at the Eastern Front, the MNO and other ministries of the Slovak Republic, which were clearly ultra-conservative, the eugenic argument, supported by the opinion of the foremost dermatovenerologist Prof. Ján Tréger, was utilized. A key argument for the ultimate granting of permission to sell prophylactics in field canteens was geared towards keeping gout and syphilis out of Slovak society, which could otherwise become out of control, as hospitals would become overwhelmed by infected soldiers returning from the war.³⁹ The threat of the prospective spread of diseases was perceived not only as 'the flooding of society with infections,' but also as an essential threat to the quality of the Slovak gene pool.

Pro-life population policy, which rejected radical conceptions of negative eugenics and state intervention in citizens' bodies (from the impregnation of genetically defective persons, through abortion, to euthanasia), unified almost the entire political spectrum of HSEs, regardless of whether one belonged to the clerical conservatives or revolutionary National Socialists.⁴⁰

38 Vojenský historický archív (Military Historical Archives—VHA) Bratislava, fond (archival fund—f.) Ministerstvo národnej obrany (Ministry of National Defence—MNO) dôv. (confidential files), škatuľa (box—šk.) 290, no. 66043/dôv. V. Bernasovský's Report.

39 VHA Bratislava, f. MNO dôv., šk. 290. Š. Mráz's Report; VHA Bratislava, f. MNO dôv., šk. 290. P. Petrivaldský's Report.

40 Škorvanková, 'Ideologické vplyvy v populačnej politike Slovenského štátu v rokoch 1939–

The agenda, emphasizing the protection of the fetus from conception, represented only one end of the spectrum of the population politics paradigm in the Slovak State. At the other end lay the influence of German racial hygiene, which intensified with the increasing domination of the Slovak State by Hitler's Germany from the summer of 1940. Even though the Protection of the Fetus Act No. 66/1941 correlated with Catholic teachings, the racial-hygiene discourse introduced by Hlinka Guard revolutionary ultra-radicals stressed the supremacy of 'healthy Aryans' and a need to exorcise the 'dirty elements'—the Jews and Roma—from the 'national body' so that the 'purification process' and the making of the 'new nation' could be completed as quickly as possible.

Jews and Roma in the Eugenic Thinking and Racial-Hygiene Culture of the HSĽS

Racial biology experienced its *belle époque* in the Slovak State after the Salzburg negotiations at the end of July 1940, when Hitler forced Slovak President Jozef Tiso to appoint Alexander Mach as Minister of the Interior and his political guru Vojtech Tuka as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The occupation of these strategic ministries by ardent fascists was the starting point for uncritical copying of fascist rhetoric and policy from Nazi Germany, including racial-hygiene and openly racist propaganda.

Dating back to the period of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the Slovak nationalist press had already styled the Jewish people as a morally and mentally corrupt foreign 'race'. The most famous satirical periodical *Kocúr* [Tomcat], which was also published in the period of the Slovak State, stigmatized Jews, in addition to labeling 'non-Slovaks' as having attributes of impurity ('dirty', 'odorous', 'parasitic' entities). Such stereotyping affected not only the poorer Jews in eastern Slovakia, but also well-off middle and upper Jewish classes. Jews were portrayed as culturally backward, whose money would not help them reach the level of civilization of the Christian majority. *Kocúr's* cartoonists depicted members of the Jewish community as physically deformed individuals (with crooked bodies and legs) who not only had a ruined body but also a debauched soul. In the comics, the prototypical Jew was portrayed engaging in immoralities and intrigues, willing to do anything for financial gain.⁴¹ The HSĽS regime,

1945,' in *Populačné štúdie Slovenska 12*, ed. Pavol Tišliar (Bratislava: Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, o. z., 2019), 58.

41 Zuzana Panczová, 'Antisemitizmus na stránkach humoristickej tlače: Príklad časopisu

on the one hand, acknowledged Jewish dexterity and intelligence, and, on the other hand, fiercely criticized the Jews for 'collaborating with the enemy' in return for economic profit, making them 'subversive national organisms' and a new internal 'foe of the nation' (the so-called 'fifth column').

The image of Jews portrayed in HSEs propaganda during the Slovak State was based on historical prejudices but was taken to a new racist level. Jews began to be openly presented as entities unworthy of living, as shown in the following example: in March 1940, the magazine *Kocúr* put on its front page a picture of a train moving rapidly, driven by Alexander Mach, rolling over and killing all the Jews standing by the railway line. This shocking cartoon was accompanied by a text in East Slovak dialect: 'Wait, you Jew, you will dig with a hoe, you will not eat a chicken, but a carcass.'⁴² At the same time, Jews were portrayed as 'destructors of the Aryan race' who, thanks to fraud and deceit, seduced naive Christian women,⁴³ which, from the point of view of national-socialist eugenics, threatened the purity of the Aryan gene pool. The Hlinka Guard's daily *Gardista* even presented the Jews as vampires—unclean demonic creatures from the underworld. The slogan 'The Jew is a vampire of the nation' (*Žid je upírom národa*) on the front page directly above the HG's eagle, with a bundle of fasces in its claws, was nothing but a faithful copy of a similar slogan 'Jews are our misfortune' (*Die Juden sind unser Unglück*), which lined the pages of every single issue of Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer*.⁴⁴

In such a racial-hygiene setting, the ultimate goal of the HSEs regime would have been only one thing: the complete extermination of a 'racially impure' community whose genetic quality had been reduced to the level of worms, insects, and bloodthirsty vampires. The visual expression of this eugenic degradation was caricatured in *Kocúr* in June 1942, depicting an employee of the Ethnographic Department of the Slovak National Museum with a Jew stored in a vat of ethyl alcohol, preserved as an exhibit for future generations of Slovaks to look back at these people as an ancient artifact.⁴⁵

The main reason why the regime wanted to 'whip the Jewish population out of the body of the nation' was not based on physiognomic features (many Jews were often indistinguishable from the majority in appearance), but rather

Kocúr (1919–1945),' in *Podoby antisemitizmu v Čechách a na Slovensku ve 20. a 21. Století*, ed. Monika Vrzgulová et al. (Praha: Karolinum, 2016), 33, 37, 49.

42 'Tudová poézia Zemplína,' *Kocúr* 18, no. 3 (1940): 1.

43 'Židovské rozpomienky na pekné zašlé časy,' *Kocúr* 18, no. 10 (1940): 88.

44 See: *Gardista* 2, no. 20 (1940): 1.

45 'Slovenské národné múzeum: Národopisné oddelenie,' *Kocúr* 20, no. 12 (1942): 134.

eugenic mental characteristics. The so-called 'Jewish worldview' and 'debauched spirit' were cited as key differences between Jews and 'Aryans', as noted by Ctibor Pokorný, author of the first racist pamphlet, *Židovstvo na Slovensku* [Jewry in Slovakia] (1940), published by the Propaganda Office. According to Pokorný, Jews could never cross the boundaries of the 'cultural swamp' because their identity was dominated by selfish materialism and perversity, which were manifest in decadent Jewish morality. Thus, if, in Pokorný's words, 'the *Talmud* not only allows but also recommends the abuse, deception, dismissal, and even the murder of the goyim,' the Aryans in their self-defense 'cannot have any moral obstacles to eliminating Jewry.'⁴⁶ It was a formula that quite explicitly authorized racial-hygiene biology and confronted the (even law-based) categorization of Jews as a religious group.

Ctibor Pokorný attributed to the Jews a set of negative characteristics, embodied in their so-called 'Jewish spirit'. These characteristics were, as Pokorný expressed it, *a priori* immoral from the Christian point of view and in their essence, antisocial in character (a character incompatible with the Christian perception of the world and the culture of Christian life).⁴⁷ In this eugenically-determined understanding of 'Jewish blood', their blood contained a 'poisonous gene pool', which in practice was manifest in the inclination of Jews toward lucrative professions and large-scale enterprise. According to Pokorný, this genetically elicited 'lust for capital' had caused the impoverishment and exploitation of Christian Slovaks in previous decades, with all Jewish entrepreneurial efforts 'serving the world domination plans of international Jewry.'⁴⁸ At the same time, through their influence over the economy, the Jews pursued a second goal: to control culture, and thus 'spiritual guidance over the Aryan nations.'⁴⁹ Pokorný stressed that the attribute of spiritual purity, or rather partial purification, from the 'sin of the exploitation of the Slovak nation' by the Jews could only be achieved under Aryan leadership, as indicated by the fabricated report of the German correspondent in Slovakia, Fritz Fiala,⁵⁰ from 'new settlements in the East.'⁵¹ In November 1942, when the first wave of deporta-

46 Ctibor Pokorný, *Židovstvo na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Úrad propagandy, 1940), 10, 12.

47 Pokorný, *Židovstvo na Slovensku*, 13–14.

48 Ibid., 25–26.

49 Ibid., 45.

50 More information on Fritz Fiala's life can be found in: Michal Schvarc, 'Fritz Fiala: Muž, ktorý poslúžil zlu,' in *Odhaľovanie šoa: Odpor a úsilie Židov informovať svet o genocide*, eds. Ján Hlavinka and Jana Kubátová (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2016), 49–69.

51 This was a euphemism of the wartime period. The 'new homeland' of Slovak Jews was in fact the extermination camps in occupied Poland. In two waves (March–October 1942 and September 1944–March 1945), approximately 70,000 people of Jewish origin were

tions from Slovakia had already been completed, Fiala published a text in the government dailies *Slovák*, *Gardista*, and *Slovenská politika* with staged photographs which documented how well Jews were being treated under German supervision. It is symptomatic that, while Fiala described the interiors of Jewish flats as disgusting places where basic hygiene habits were not observed, he described the 'autonomous cities', and the work processes in them, as show-cases of precise German management, which turned the genetically 'dirty' and 'lazy idlers' into 'clean and diligent Jews.'⁵²

The second socially marginalized ethnic community in wartime Slovakia was the Roma. Although HSĽS legislation did not apply such harsh measures to the Roma population as it did to Jews, state propaganda followed the same framework of 'alien race' and 'anti-social' in relation to the Roma, creating a perception of 'us versus them.'

Voices calling for the 'socialization of the Gypsies' and the need for their 'social correction' had existed before the establishment of the Slovak State. During the interwar period of the Czechoslovak Republic, state authorities, under the guise of their 'civilization mission', had launched a program that was geared towards the cultural adaptation and assimilation of Roma within the modern Czechoslovak nation (e. g. by establishing 'Gypsy schools' for the children of 'wandering Gypsies', etc.) to make them 'useful citizens'. Although some Czechoslovak anthropologists and criminologists considered the Roma to be a racially degenerate part of the Czechoslovak population, incompatible with the 'positive racial mixing' of nations and ethnic groups of the Czechoslovak Republic, which would give rise to a 'noble new nation' with a high-bred national gene pool,⁵³ anti-Roma policies did not form the core of their agenda.

The vulgarization of anti-Roma discourse in the Slovak milieu was conducted mainly under the aegis of national-socialist Hlinka Guard ultra-radicals from the end of 1942, almost in parallel with the temporary suspension of Jewish transportation. The Slovak Christian majority reflected the Roma in its collective memory as good musicians, blacksmiths, or farmers,⁵⁴ but also as a

forcibly deported from Slovakia, with only a few hundred ever returning home. Most (about 26,000) were murdered at the Nazi death camp Sobibor.

52 Fritz Fiala, 'Židia priznávajú: Už sme svoju úlohu dohrali,' *Slovák* 24, no. 256 (1942): 5.

53 See: Pavel Baloun, 'Československá civilizační mise: Asimilační praktiky vůči "cikánským" dětem v letech 1918–1942,' *Dějiny—teorie—kritika* 13, no. 2 (2018): 176–202; Pavel Baloun, 'Von der "Landplage" zur "Fremden Rasse": Die Repräsentation der "Zigeuner" in der Tschechoslowakistischen Kriminalistik (1918–1939),' *Bohemia: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Böhmisches Länder* 59, no. 1 (2019): 50–76.

54 Milena Hübschmannová, 'Slovensko v letech 1939–1945,' in *Po Židoch Cigáni: Svědectví Romů ze Slovenska 1939–1945. I. díl (1939—srpen 1944)* (Praha: Triáda, 2005), 58.

community incapable of social adaptation. While the HSĽS propaganda portrayed Jews as 'oppressors from above', the Roma embodied 'cultural mud',⁵⁵ which had no place in Adolf Hitler's 'new civilized Europe'. Ultra-radicals from the circle of the newly founded national-socialist revue *Náš boj* [Our Struggle] shifted the traditional prejudices against the Roma (perceived by the majority as an 'inferior,' simple, even mentally backward and the most primitive part of the population) to a new level—ranging from latent anti-Gypsyism to genetically determined racism. In only the fourth issue of *Náš boj*, an article by the leading HG ultra-radical Róbert Kubička was published entitled 'The origin of the Gypsies and their journey to us: The blood question.' Kubička, since June 1942 the district commander of the HG in a Central Slovak town of Zvolen and a supporter of the Otomar Kubala's ultra-radical wing within the HG (which also criticized the head commander of the HG, Alexander Mach, for his alleged 'softness'), now began to discuss the 'overlooked gypsy question' in his articles.

In the light of arguments stressing the Roma as the 'second parasites' after the Jews who threatened 'cultural devastation' of 'Aryans' and caused outrage with their 'animal behavior', Kubička made a clear recommendation to 'solve the Gypsy question in terms of blood' and resolutely rejected any attempt to adapt the Roma to a settled way of life. Roma had to be segregated from the majority so as not to 'poison the blood of [the Slovak] nation with this inferior human race.'⁵⁶ At the same time, he indirectly called on the state to use effective mechanisms to prevent the unregulated reproduction of the Roma population as soon as possible, which could grow to uncontrollable proportions, while proposing that the Roma question should be resolved radically from a 'racial and population-political point of view.'⁵⁷

Although the HSĽS regime did not launch a concentrated propaganda campaign against the Roma, occasional articles calling for the 'removing of Gypsies' continued to appear in the press. The eugenic and racial-hygiene discourse that stereotyped the Roma was ever present until the end of the war. While the HSĽS primarily concentrated its verbal attacks on the 'black flowers' who 'steal, cheat, deceive, conjure, and engage in all sorts of other misconceptions,' the party as well as the HG were relatively conciliatory towards socialized Roma (especially musicians) and criticized them only for the frequent use of Hungarian as a language of communication.⁵⁸

55 Miloslav Szabó, 'Po Židoch Cigáni,' *Denník N*, January 31, 2020, <https://dennikn.sk/1738991/po-zidoch-cigani/>.

56 Róbert Kubička, 'Pôvod Cigánov a ich cesty k nám,' *Náš boj* 1, no. 4 (1942): 117.

57 Ibid., 118–119.

58 'Židia a Cigáni na východnom Slovensku,' *Gardista* 5, no. 88 (1943): 3; 'Cigánska otázka volá po doriešení,' *Slovák* 26, no. 15 (1944): 6.

The HSĽS regime did not organize deportation of Roma to extermination camps, but by legal norms, as well as aggressive anti-Roma discourse, openly excluded them from Slovak society and created moral support for later anti-Roma reprisals organized by *Einsatzgruppe H* and domestic Hlinka Guard special commandos during the German occupation of Slovakia after the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising in August 1944. It is estimated that about one thousand Roma fell victim.

The Cult of a Racially Pure Body and Soul in the Slovak State

Following Kubička's pioneering anti-Roma articles, a series of more scientific articles on eugenics and racial hygiene was published in the pages of the *Náš boj* revue, which attempted to generate a more developed discussion of eugenics and racial hygiene in the Slovak milieu. *Náš boj* continued with a series of eugenic discussion contributions by the radicalized Catholic priest and publicist Viliam Ries on the founder of genetics, Johann Gregor Mendel. As one of the promoters of the symbiosis of Catholicism and National Socialism, Ries was enthusiastic that it was priest Mendel who had laid the foundations for 'new insights into the world of plants, animals and also a man', which in National Socialist Europe had become an opportunity to 'influence and guide the nation's health.' In Mendel's findings, he was particularly fascinated by the thesis of hereditary essence. Ries emphasized that only hereditary nature expresses the true genetic quality of man and is therefore the real denominator of his biological value. According to him, hereditary value and hereditary power played a key role in the overall quality of the national gene pool. Reading between the lines, he supported preventive premarital screening of the genetic health of young couples in order to exclude the degenerative features of their ancestors (similar to Tiso and other representatives of political Catholicism), and, at the same time urged them not to forget the racial profile when choosing a partner, since 'one may be the bearer of decay that the eyes cannot identify.'⁵⁹

Ries understood eugenics and its connection with racial politics not only biologically but also culturally, which corresponded exactly both to the national-socialist idea of Aryan national communities making together a 'cultural New Europe' and to the idea of primitive 'Russian-Asian' populations living their 'backward', dull lives. The contrast between the spiritually born 'Aryan West', to which the Slovaks, according to Ries, also belonged, and the animalis-

59 Viliam Ries-Javor, 'Ján Gregor Mendel,' *Náš boj* 1, no. 6 (1942): 129, 131–132.

tic, 'barbaric East' gained relatively wide currency in the political culture of the HSEs regime. The Slovak Press Office (*Slovenská tlačová kancelária*), the official press agency of the Slovak State, played a significant role in this as well. During a visit to the Eastern Front in July 1941, photojournalist Jozef Cincík took photographs of random Ukrainian farmers from various angles, typologically identical to the methodology of taking police photographs of criminals. He also immortalized a group of captured Soviet soldiers of mixed ethnic origin in a photograph called 'Tito chceli zachraňovať európsku kultúru' ['These men wanted to save European culture'], which was published in the pictorial magazine *Nový svet* [New World] with a distinctive rhetorical question: 'The face is a mirror of the soul . . . What is the soul of these Bolshevik prisoners?'⁶⁰ Cincík's set of photographs from the Soviet territory taken during Slovak Army's engagement in the 'Operation Barbarossa' primarily portray the impoverished state of human beings. Secondly, however, photographs of barefoot begging children in the mud (who had to make a living by selling harvested strawberries) or images of impoverished women in ragged clothes surrounded by cheerful, sleek, and uniformed Slovak soldiers evoke a clear eugenic undertone in the context of the use of the images as propaganda—they are a confrontation between the Aryan cultural West and the racially degenerate Asian East. The propaganda composition of these photographs and text on the one hand commiserates with civilians, beaten by the communist regime. On the other hand, it suggests to the reader that racially inferior 'Euro-Asian blood mixes' cannot emerge victorious from the struggle with 'cultural Aryans' because their physical and mental qualities, despite their 'innate animalism', are simply too weak.

Despite the discourse calling for reproductive responsibility and the cult of a healthy individual as the most valuable segment of the nation, the HSEs regime never considered the implementation of a Slovak version of *Aktion T4*—the so-called merciful death (*Gnadentod*) in the form of involuntary euthanasia, which had been secretly practised in Germany on physically or mentally handicapped people since 1938.⁶¹ With the exception of war invalids, exalted as heroes who laid their health on the 'altar of the homeland',⁶² Hlinka's Slovak People's Party regime tabooed the topic of handicapped people, even though

60 Bohunka Koklesová, *V tieni Tretej ríše: Oficiálne fotografie slovenského štátu* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2009), 190–191.

61 Burleigh and Wippermann, *Rasistický štát*, 139–184.

62 See, for example, an illustrated publication with an accompanying foreword: Gustáv Bežo and Emo Bohúň, *Hlinkova garda a slovenská revolúcia: Na trvalú pamäť hrdinskej epochy slovenskej histórie* (Bratislava: Slovenská grafia, 1940).

an appropriate social care for these communities had already been a real problem in Slovakia before 1938.⁶³

However, the 'eugenic mercy' of the Catholic-profiled HSEs regime no longer extended to Slovak citizens of German nationality, among whom 623 people were abducted to the Reich at the end of July 1942 (including the feeble-minded, mentally handicapped, people with antisocial personality disorder, alcoholics, socially deprived, and loners). Of these, fifty one mentally and physically handicapped ended up at the Mauer-Öhling Institute, one of the centers for euthanasia. By the autumn of 1942 (at the latest), ten inmates of the Mauer-Öhling Institute deported here from Slovakia were already dead. The leading figures of the *Deutsche Partei* (the only permitted party for the German minority in the Slovak State) requested that displaced Carpathian Germans,⁶⁴ considered as patients suffering from antisocial behavior, should be banned from returning to Slovakia and that an immediate sterilization for physically and mentally handicapped individuals should be applied.⁶⁵

Conclusion

The photographic weekly *Nový svet* was an example *par excellence* of the transformation of the eugenic paradigm within the HSEs (at the beginning determined mainly by papal encyclicals) into a cult of racial purity that the HSEs regime adopted with its advancing fascistization. *Nový svet* brought prototypes of Aryan aesthetics to readers with its headlines and cover stories. By default, they portrayed Slovak men as stout heroes, either preparing to fight or already fighting for their homeland on the Eastern Front. Moreover, the publication paid particular attention to the choice of physiognomically attractive, uniformed or partially exposed subjects, with symmetrical facial features, evoking bodily perfection and muscularity. In contrast to these representative types of

63 Anna Falisová, 'Medzivojnové Slovensko z pohľadu zdravotného a sociálneho,' in *Slovensko v Československu (1918–1939)*, eds. Milan Zemko and Valerián Bystrický (Bratislava: VEDA, 2004), 387.

64 The term Carpathian Germans (*Karpathendeutsche*) was used to refer to German ethnic groups inhabiting the territory of present-day Slovakia and a small part of western Ukraine (Subcarpathian Ruthenia).

65 Michal Schvarc, 'Vysídlenie tzv. asociálnych osôb nemeckej národnosti zo Slovenska koncom júla 1942 / Die Aussiedlung der sog. "Asozialen" deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit aus der Slowakei Ende Juli 1942,' in *Politické a kultúrne transfery medzi Francúzskom, Nemeckom a strednou Európou (1840–1945): prípad Slovenska*, eds. Bohumila Ferenčuhová and Jean-Louis Georget (Bratislava: VEDA, 2010), 338–365.

the new aesthetic model, after the outbreak of the anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising in August 1944, *Nový svet* published photographs of unshaved and dirty insurgents, which it satirized for their 'non-Aryan' appearance. The magazine portrayed Slovak women almost exclusively in folk costumes, often in harmony with Slovak landscapes or at work. In addition to motifs from the peasant environment, Slovak actresses in theatrical robes also appeared on the covers of *Nový svet*, who, with their physical beauty and charming, flawless smiles, demonstrated a racial perfection imitating those of published photographs of German actresses.

The transition to a cult of racial purity under the auspices of the HSEs was one of the paradoxes of the party's wartime policy within the Slovak State. As the latest research has already demonstrated, Heinrich Himmler's racial experts did not consider the existence of independent Slovakia as a state or Slovaks as a nation in Hitler's future 'New Europe'. The HG adviser Viktor Nageler commented in one of his reports to Berlin: 'The racial essence of Slovaks is quite similar to the German . . . All preconditions for assimilation are satisfied.'⁶⁶ The head of the *ss Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt* [ss Race and Settlement Main Office] Günther Pancke took similar impressions from his business trip to Slovakia in 1940. Based on Pancke's findings, German racial experts proposed the 'racial reclamation' of the Slovak territory, in which a racially appropriate part of the Slovak nation would be successfully mixed with ethnic Germans after the removal of Jews, Roma, and Hungarians through a targeted assimilation policy, which was also approved by Himmler.⁶⁷ The *Reichsleiter* of the ss and the architect of the national-socialist *Volkstumspolitik* spoke of Slovakia as a 'German core space' (*Kernraum*) and a 'national-political foreground'⁶⁸ for a new expansion into the European East (new wave of modern *Drang nach Osten*).

In light of these plans, which did not perceive the Slovaks as a fully-fledged part of the new Nordic continent, the cult of racial purity and the culture of racial hygiene under the auspices of the HSEs appear to be an opportunistic move to gain Germany's favor. However, neither the HSEs as a self-governing party in the Slovak State nor its most committed racial hygienists knew anything about Nazi intentions to assimilate and probably liquidate racially inappropriate Slovaks. The HSEs representatives generally trusted the German-emphasized concept of Slovakia as a model state, which, in return for loyalty

66 Bundesarchiv Berlin, NS19/2042/8–9. Berger's report to Himmler, February 19, 1943.

67 Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 458, 503.

68 Schvarc, "Fahndung nach deutschem Blut"? 177.

to the Reich, would receive full support for free national development. However, the public could not have overlooked the aggressiveness of Nazi biological racism. Despite the Slovak government's phrases promising a bright future in alliance with the Reich, people spread justified concerns regarding the fate of Slovaks in the event of a total German victory. Such sentiments were expressed by a cynical-satirical rhyme, spread at the time of the deportation of Jews from Slovakia: 'First the Jews will go, then the Lutherans will go, and when everything is screwed, then the Catholics will go, too' ('Najprv pôjdu židi páni, potom pôjdu luteráni a keď budú šetci v rici, potom pôjdu katolíci').⁶⁹

The eugenic and racially hygienic topos formed in Slovakia in the first half of the 1940s survived the Second World War. After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, it once again became part of the discourse of parties and movements that espoused the legacy of the HSEs and the legacy of Tiso's Slovak State. While the modern revival of the 'mentally corrupt Jew', who controls world capital and, through money, ZOG ('Zionist Occupied Governments'), did fail to gain traction in Slovakia, anti-Roma sentiment has contributed to the rise of the neo-fascist *Ludová strana Naše Slovensko* [People's Party Our Slovakia], which has been expressing admiration for Tiso and the HSEs. Calls by the party's leader Marian Kotleba to 'make an order with the anti-socials,' 'among parasites in settlements' or to protect 'people from escalating Gypsy terror' in the March 2016 parliamentary elections garnered the party 8.04 per cent of the vote. Five weeks before the parliamentary elections in February 2020, the People's Party Our Slovakia was ranked second in the polls (14 per cent) with virtually the same agenda. All this indicates that the political language of fascism and its essential racial-hygiene principles are still present, in modern mutations, in Slovak political culture.

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69 Martin Lacko, 'Slováci a židia, židia a Slováci: Rok 1942 (Zopár názorov na okraj problematiky)', *Historické rozhľady* 1 (2004): 272.