

Abstract:

Although the Holocaust (a word for suffering of millions of individual people of vastness that stretches beyond our imagination) is a rather distressing topic I chose to carry out this research for two reasons, which prevailed. First, the experience shows that extreme situations reveal many latent features of human psyche – studying them is tempting. Second, the Holocaust is a morally and politically important and still topical theme because not forgetting evil is a manner of its prevention.

The purpose of my thesis is to analyse anti-Jewish law (and briefly also anti-Gypsies law) in Slovakia in the years 1938-45 and to present the idea that the tragedy of the Holocaust did not merely have causes, which can be described as political or economic or exclusively psychiatric (which is perhaps the most dangerous simplification), but that a significant part of what happened is explainable from the point of view of social psychology.

To integrate researches in the two aforementioned scientific disciplines (legal history and social psychology) in a coherent unit I chose to use the Czech penal law's concept of elements of crime. There are five elements of crime and my thesis consists of five chapters with according titles: Object of the Holocaust, Objective aspect of the Holocaust, Subject of the Holocaust and the Subjective Aspect of the Holocaust and Illegality – the Ground for Restitutions.

Chapter One, Object of the Holocaust, inter alia provides a long list of basic human rights, which were breached by the Holocaust or by actions in direct connection with it.

Chapter Two, titled Objective aspect of the Holocaust, is further divided into two subchapters. The First Subchapter briefly outlines the course of the anti-Jewish measures in the part of Europe under Nazi influence. The extensive Second Subchapter is one of two core parts of the entire thesis. It provides a detailed analysis of anti-Jewish law of the war Slovak state. The effect of the law is in many cases illustrated by citations from historical documents or by mentions of real events.

Chapter Three, Subject of the Holocaust, endeavours to introduce the complex bureaucratic system, which carried out the Holocaust. Its Subchapter One is focused on German apparatus, whereas Subchapter Two deals with Slovak authorities.

Chapter Four, Subjective aspect of the Holocaust, creates the second core part of the whole study. It is built up on ideas of some of the big thinkers of the 20th century and today (such as Erich Fromm, Hannah Arendt or Zygmunt Bauman) that are often referred to in social psychology – a discipline that studies how a specific situation affects man's thinking, acting and feeling. My added value rests in the summarising of some of the relevant works' ideas, such as the concept of the isolation of modern man or the problem of modern rational bureaucracy, finding links between ideas of different authors and illustrating ideas by real events.

In Chapter Five, Illegality – the Ground for Restitutions, I endeavour to propose an answer to the question of how the Slovak society approached the youngest and darkest episode of the history of its relationships with minorities. Predominantly, I will analyse the key restitution law and the analysis will be complemented by opinions on the course of adopting the restitution legislation and examples of the actual course of the restitutions.

There are several conclusions casting some light on the Holocaust that I managed to draw during my research. One of them is that the volume of anti-Jewish legislation in the war Slovak state reached gigantic dimensions as the willingness of certain persons within the responsible authorities to obey Nazi requests was almost unconditional. There were also other incentives, which contributed to the development, especially the amount of the Jewish assets. There is a great variety of social-psychological phenomena that have lead to the Holocaust – either directly to the killing or to the support of discriminatory regime. Conformity, authoritarianism, dehumanisation are some of them.