

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN BRATISLAVA DURING THE REIGN OF THE JAGELLONIAN DYNASTY

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Abstract

The free royal town of Bratislava was very important settlement in former Hungarian Kingdom during the Middle Age to 1526. The Jagellonian Kings Wladislaw the Second and his son Lewis the Second ruled the country from 1490 to 1526. It was the last Medieval monarch dynasty, which influenced the history of Hungary and the territory of present Slovakia as its integral part. The Jewish community lived in Bratislava from the 13th Century to 1526. They possessed the synagogue, school and had lived in their own municipal quarter within city walls. The Jews had been expelled from Bratislava after the battle near Mohács in 1526.

Key words: Jews, City, King, Kingdom, Hungary, Privilege, Slovakia.

This article is devoted to the analysis of the development of Jewish community in Bratislava, the free royal town during the reign of Wladyslaw II and his son Lewis II of Jagiellon dynasty in the years 1490-1526. The position of Jewish inhabitants in Hungarian Kingdom was anchored in King Bela's IV Privilege of 1251¹. According to this Privilege the Jews were serfs under royal jurisdiction. The Jews and Christians living in Bratislava, the free royal town from the year 1291, were made equal by the King Andrew III².

Mathias Corvinus, the predecessor of Jagiellons, established the institution of Jewish prefect as the top clerk responsible for religious minorities in Hungary. His Privilege – the Golden Bull of the year 1464 appointed Jews with various duties in defending the city, they were also given the right to repeal against the municipal council's decisions to the chancellor³. The magistrate and the municipal council were appointed the legal power over the Jews. 800-900 members of Bratislava Jewish community during the reign of Wladyslaw II Jagiellon in the years 1490-1516 were integrated into the social-economic structure of this free royal town. The king was involved in the solution of the problems which occurred among the citizens and the Jews⁴.

The Prefect of the Hungarian Jews was Jakub Mendel. He requested from the King Wladislaw II the confirmation of the Great Privilege of 1251, which was issued by the King Belo the Fourth. Also the

¹ MARSINA, Richard: Codex Diplomaticus et Epistolaris Slovaciae. Tomus II. Bratislava: Archív hl. mesta SSR Bratislavy, 1987, p. 263 – 265.

² LEHOTSKÁ, Darina: Stredoveké privilégia Bratislavy. Bratislava: Bratislavská Informačná a propagačná služba, 1990, p. 23.

³ HORVÁTH, Vladimír: Zlatá bula bratislavská. Bratislava: Obzor, 1991, p. 33.

⁴ ŠPIESZ, Anton: Bratislava v stredoveku. Bratislava: Perfekt, 1999, p. 135.

predecessors of Wladislaw Albrecht II of Habsburg, his son Ladislav the Fifth and Matthias Corvinus affirmed this document. Wladislaw the Second had confirmed that privilege in his charter of the 26th July 14935. The similar privilege was issued by Wladislaw II like the Bohemian King in the year 14976.

The monarch had constituted in 1499, that the tavernicus as the one of the highest representatives of the Hungarian Kingdom was responsible for solving in the financial disputes between Christians and Jews. He made the decisions in the legal and financial affairs of the free royal towns. The Mayor of Bratislava judged the legal claim of the Jewish creditor against his burgher's obliger, when he did not pay his debts and interests in accordance to the 6th Article of the Bratislava Book of the Municipal Law. The tavernicus acted as the appeal court in the financial transactions to the value over the three golden coins⁷. The main disputes between the Christians and Jewish creditors occurred when Jewish creditors claimed the unpaid loans and interests. The pre-paid loans were very often guaranteed by houses, fields and vineyards.

The Jewish inhabitants were subordinated directly to Hungarian king's jurisdiction. Jakub Mendel, the prefect of Buda members of Mosaic confession, was the highest representative of Jews in Hungarian Empire. He was responsible for keeping Jewish rights, the collection of Jewish taxes (50 golds) was under his control too, and the King authorized him to solve the problems and disputes among the Jews and Bratislava citizens. We do not know where the then Jewish cemetery was situated. We do not know how the then synagogue and Jewish school in Bratislava looked like, but we know that there were 25-27 Jewish houses. In one house there lived about thirty Jews⁸. We also know the names of some Jewish Bratislava inhabitants who were paying taxes for the community or offered various financial services to the municipal council: Prentl, Nastl, Carrl, Heindl, Lebl, Munschl, and Ysack. Their names were recorded in accountants' books of the municipal council and in some mandates of the King Wladyslaw II⁹. There is an interesting story of Zacharias, the doctor in Bratislava. He was exempted from the obligation to wear a hood when visiting patients in 1511. He was well-known for his medical expertise in treating not only the King, but also many representatives of Hungarian Empire¹⁰.

Jewish inhabitants and their position in Bratislava, the free royal town during the reign of Wladyslaw II, proved the constant decline of royal power in Hungary and increasing power of magnate oligarchy. This high nobility group included Zápoľský and Perényi families and the counts from Svätý Jur and Pezinok. These noblemen were in distinguished administrative posts, such as: a palatine, a regional judge, a chancellor, a royal chamberlain, Transylvanian duke and Croatian and Slavonian ban. They specified the development of the kingdom because they were aiming at the establishment of the monarchy of the Estates. This can be identified on the position of Jews in the country and namely in Bratislava where the letters addressed directly to municipal representatives from the offices of the above mentioned representatives of the kingdom replaced mandates which would have carried royal decisions. The reign of Wladyslaw's II son Lewis was influenced by strong regional representatives and therefore limiting the interference of king's authority into frequent disputes among citizens and Jews in Bratislava.

The King Lewis the Second had ordered the mayor and the city council of Bratislava, that they had to respect the rights and privileges of the local Jewish community. This system of rights granted to them the

⁵ FRISS, Armin. *Monumenta Hungariae Judaica – Magyar Zsidó Okléveltár*. Tomus I. 1092 – 1539. Budapest: Az Izr. Irodalmi Társulat, 1903, s. 234-235, n. 188.

⁶ MACEK, Josef. *Jagelonský věk v českých zemích I. Hospodářská základna a královská moc (1471-1526)*. Praha: Academia, 1992, p. 192.

⁷ FRISS, ref. 5, p. 246 – 247, n. 198 and 199.

⁸ ŠPIESZ, ref. 4, p. 90.

⁹ Ministerstvo vnútra SR – Archív hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic - The Archives of the Capital of the Slovak Republic Bratislava), Magistrát mesta Bratislavy, Listiny, n. 4569. Also: HORVÁTH, Vladimír. *Archív mesta Bratislavy. Inventár listín a listov II (1501-1563)*. Bratislava: Slovenská archívna správa, 1966.

¹⁰ FRISS, ref. 5, p. 274, n. 223.

documents, which was issued by the Hungarian Kings. The mandate was dated on the 16th January 1516¹¹. Bratislava Jews were given some reductions in tax payments to royal chamber. Ignorance towards Jewish inhabitants could be identified in the municipal council's regulation according to which the Jews had to wear hoods to demonstrate their faith.

The King Lewis II amended the two paragraphs in the 12th Article of the Book of the Municipal Law valid in the Capital City of Buda of 1521, that the Jewish men and their families had to pay the tax one gold coin by a person. The poor and invalid Jewish inhabitants did not have to oblige the full tax¹².

Lower interests from the loans were a frequent problem among the Bratislava citizens and Jews. Such decisions, written in the mandates published by the king for quick and smooth solution of the problems, illustrated a weak ruler. There was constant rivalry among Ján Zápoľský's supporters and king's supporters Alex Turzo and Štefan Báthory. Last four years of Lewis's rule, dated between the years he married Mary Habsburg in 1522 and the defeat of royal troops at Mohach in 1526, were influenced by the fact that Bratislava municipal council tried to expel the Jews from the town. The King tried to resist the pressure because it was an offence against his authority over certain group of his serfs. Hungarian and Czech Queen Mary, Ferdinand's I sister, played an important role in the relation among Bratislava citizens and Bratislava Jews. Her escape from Buda [endangered by Turks] to Bratislava by ship up the Danube river made an end to Jewish community within then City walls and today's Nedbalova, Klobučnícka, Františkánska and Uršulínska streets. Jewish houses and rates from them were given to Bratislava citizens for the reconstructions of municipal fortifications¹³. The situation of expelled Jews from Bratislava and Soprona [the free royal town] did not changed during the reign of Ferdinand I Habsburg on the Hungarian throne.

The Jews had never returned to their former dwellings and Bratislava Jews were neither successful in claiming financial compensations for their lost property from 1526 to 1533. Soprona Jews had a longitudinal dispute with local municipal representatives because they did not respect King Ferdinand's I decisions and regulations. Trnava, the third West Hungarian town, lost its Jewish community by King Ferdinand's mandate from the year 1539.

Jews were living in several other free royal towns in Hungary. We can mention just a few: Budin, Esztergom, Belgrade, and others. In the year 1526 and during the following years of Habsburg dynasty, the Jews were either expelled or they left because of the Osman danger and because the citizens did their best to expel them from the internal parts of towns, i.e. from the inside of the walls. The documents used in this article belong to the Archives of Bratislava, the capital. They include royal mandates, one type of diplomatic documents known in the reign of Wladyslaw II and his son Lewis II. The accounts' books of Bratislava municipal council document the collection of Jewish taxes during the given period of time¹⁴.

The Jewish community played the important role as the part of Bratislava free royal town during the reign of Jagiellon dynasty on the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. The Jews had lived in the difficult period of time, when the internal conflicts disrupted the Hungarian kingdom and this process ended in the Mohach disaster in 1526. That event was followed immediately by the occupation of some Hungarian.

¹¹ Ministerstvo vnútra SR – Archív hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic - The Archives of the Capital of the Slovak Republic Bratislava), Archív hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy, Magistrát mesta Bratislavy, Listiny, inv. n. 4569. Also: HORVÁTH, Vladimír. Archív mesta Bratislavy. Inventár listín a listov II (1501-1563). Bratislava: Slovenská archívna správa, 1966. Bettelheim, Samuel. Akten und Urkunden zur Geschichte der Pressburger Juden (1092 – 1526). In: Gold, Hugo(ed.): Die Juden und die Judengemeinde in Bratislava in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Brno: Jüdischer Verlag, 1932, p. 164.

¹² FRISS, ref. 5, p. 313, n. 264.

¹³ ŠPIESZ, ref. 4, p. 135.

¹⁴ Ministerstvo vnútra SR - Archív hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic-The Archives of the Capital of the Slovak Republic Bratislava), Komorské knihy.