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'Little' Slovaks, Jews and the 'Others' in Narratives of Sečovce

This paper follows the representations of the Holocaust as captured by diaries, oral testimonies, postcards and photographs of former and current inhabitants of Sečovce, a little town in Eastern Slovakia. While remaining within Slovak territory throughout the 20th century, borders around it shifted.

For centuries, Sečovce had thrived as a multiethnic town. Apart from those later categorized by the authorities as Slovaks, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Ruthenians, the town opened its borders to Jewish migrants from Galicia in 1758. From late 19th century, documents speak of a growing Roma community, living - geographically and socially - on the outskirts of the town, their history virtually whitewashed from the town's officially narrated past. The presence of Jews, Roma and sizable Slavic minorities gave the town a multireligious vibe, characterized by the presence of a Roman-Catholic, Calvin, a Greek-Catholic church and a synagogue. The war had a devastating effect especially on the local Jewish community, killing two thirds of the prewar population. As elsewhere in Central Europe, however, the Holocaust was closely linked with robbery in Sečovce. With the end of the Second World War, the loot from the state-sponsored and church-sanctioned Aryanization turned into evidence of widespread complicity.

While utilizing previously omitted sources, this paper investigates how the majority society has made sense of the past. Doing so, it explores the property-memory nexus; the role that looted property has on how past is remembered and retold, especially in small communities away from the center.