Undoubtedly, one of the most marked phenomena of the Slovak Jewish tragedy is the discontinuance of the mass deportations to the death camps instituted in March, 1942. Given this distinct halt (October, 1942-September, 1944) in the process of the “Final Solution”—unparalleled in other countries—“Slovakia occupies a special place on the map of Nazi genocide.”

It is outside my present purpose to describe the initial stages of persecution during the spring and summer of 1942 resulting in the expulsion of nearly 60,000 Jews from their native country to Auschwitz and the Lublin area. That chapter—including German-Slovak negotiations, legal and administrative measures as well as the technicalities such as railway transportation, timetables, etc.—has been recorded in minutiae.

A number of studies drawing heavily on internal documents and parliamentary proceedings have been published in the past decade; these examine the domestic scene in Slovakia and provide new insights on the subject. Our knowledge is further advanced by the series of documents on the victims of World War II published by the Vatican as well as by the hitherto only par-

4. “Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale,” espe-
tially exploited situation reports of the German Security Service, the so-called *Stimmungsberichte*, which contain valuable descriptions of the mood prevailing among the various strata of the local population.\(^5\) Particularly instructive are the comments on changing attitudes toward the Czechs, the Jews, and the Allied powers, reflecting the impact of political developments.

The question which inevitably poses itself is the forces acting behind the scenes that caused Slovak leadership to reconsider its policy on this crucial issue. In our view, three major factors combined jointly in generating this sequel of events: (1) the activities of the clandestine "Working Group" and its effective contacts with Jewish organizations in the free world, as well as with the Slovak ministers and high officials; (2) the intervention of the Vatican; (3) the shift in the local population's attitudes under the impact of the situation at the front. These three elements are discussed below in our assessment.

*The Activities of the Clandestine "Working Group" (Pracovná Skupina)*

This organization, also called the "shadow cabinet," was actually an offshoot of the official Ústredná Židov (ÚŽ),\(^6\) the Judenrat established by decree No. 234 of the Slovak Parliament in September, 1940, as the sole representative body of the Jews. Its task was to assist the various governmental institutions in carrying out the anti-Jewish measures and to organize the life of the community within the scheme of Nazi policy.

The Working Group came into existence in the summer of 1942 as a response to the mass deportations. Its members united in a combined effort to save the remnants in Slovakia and eventually in the Nazi-occupied countries of Europe.\(^7\) The active core comprised the former community leadership—Zionists, rabbis, and assimilated Jews—who at the same time acted as members of the ÚŽ: Gisi Fleischmann, Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, Rabbi Armin Frieder, Eng. Andrej Steiner, Dr. Tibor Kovács, and others. They had staked their hopes on receiving financial assistance from the Jewish organizations abroad (the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress) with whom they maintained correspondence.