

Between return and sovietization: the struggle of the Berehove jewish community for the Great synagogue (1945–1969)

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Abstract.

*The aim of the article was to present, in chronological order and from a historical perspective, the Israelite religious community of Berehove, whose members constituted one third of the town's population up until the mid-twentieth century. Consequently, they made significant contributions to Berehove's economic, cultural, and public life. In this study, we explore the period from the end of the Second World War up to the loss of the community's Great Synagogue, examining the process on a historical plane. **The research methodology** is based on a combination of general scientific and specific historical methods. Given the limited scholarly coverage of the topic, we conducted primary source research, drawing on unpublished archival documents, the recollections of former Jewish residents of the town, as well as contemporary press reports used as control sources. **The scholarly novelty** of this work lies in the fact that this question – approached from this perspective and for this particular period – has not previously been examined in either domestic or international historiography. Therefore, we contend that our study fills an existing gap. **Conclusions.** It can be established that although more than six thousand Jewish inhabitants of Berehove were deported during the Second World War and the Holocaust, the Jewish community did not disappear from the town. This is evidenced by the registration of the Berehove Israelite Orthodox Community in the spring of 1945, in accordance with Soviet expectations, and by the efforts of returnees to reclaim their houses, apartments, and personal property. The new authorities, however, often looked upon the survivors returning from the death camps with distrust, seemingly uneasy about their presence, as families resettled from the Verkhovyna highlands had been placed in their formerly abandoned homes after 1944. Nevertheless, the Israelite community sought solutions, driven by the determination to rebuild their lives. Our research also reveals how the nearly two-thousand-strong Jewish community struggled to regain its religious buildings. Of particular significance is their admirable fight for the Great Synagogue located in the town centre, then the last cultic site in Transcarpathia still functioning according to its original religious purpose. Finally, we trace when and under what circumstances the Great Synagogue of Berehove came into the possession of the Soviet state, and what became of it after it lost its original function.*

Keywords: Berehove, Jews, Israelites, synagogue, Sovietization, Soviet regime, Holocaust survivors

Між поверненням і радянізацією: боротьба єврейської громади Берегова за Велику синагогу (1945–1969)

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Анотація.

Метою статті є в хронологічній послідовності крізь призму історичного контексту розкрити особливості життя єврейської релігійної громади Берегова, яка до середини ХХ століття складала третину населення міста. Відповідно члени цієї громади зробили багато корисного для Берегова як в економічному, так і в культурному та громадському плані. У статті досліджено історичний період від кінця Другої світової війни до втрати релігійною громадою великої синагоги. **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на поєднанні загальнонаукових та спеціально-історичних методів. З огляду на маловивченість теми нами проведено пошук першоджерел, які доповнено використанням раніше не опублікованих архівних документів, спогадів євреїв, які тоді проживали в місті, а також публікаціями в тогочасній пресі. **Наукова новизна** роботи полягає в тому, що досліджувана тема в такому аспекті не була предметом окремого наукового вивчення ні у вітчизняній, ні в закордонній історіографії. Тому вважаємо, що наше дослідження безумовно допоможе заповнити цю прогалину. **Висновки.** Встановлено, що хоча в період Другої світової війни і Голокосту з Берегова депортовано понад шість тисяч вірників юдаїзму, однак певна їх кількість у місті все ж таки залишилася. Підтвердженням цього є те, що навесні 1945 року відповідно до вимог радянської влади зареєстровано Берегівську іудейську ортодоксальну громаду, а ті, хто повернувся, хотіли отримати назад свої будинки, помешкання, рухоме майно. Проте нова влада часто з недовірою ставилася до тих, хто повернувся з концтаборів, наче відчувала себе незручно, адже після 1944 року заселила в порожні помешкання родини, що переселилися сюди з гірських районів. Однак юдеї шукали рішення, бо хотіли жити. У ході дослідження простежено й те, як майже двохтисячна єврейська громада боролася за свої культові споруди. З-поміж цього найбільше поваги викликає те, як громада боролася з радянської владою за велику синагогу, що знаходилася в самому центрі міста. У Закарпатській області це була остання культова споруда для євреїв, що використовувалася за призначенням, тобто з релігійною метою. Зрештою, нами розкрито, коли і за яких обставин радянська держава конфіскувала велику синагогу в Берегові, як склалася її доля після того, як будівля втратила свою первісну функцію.

Ключові слова: Берегове, євреї, ізраїльтяни, синагога, радянізація, радянський режим, виживці Голокосту.

Problem Statement. Prior to the Soviet occupation, reliable data on the town's religious and denominational composition is available from the 1941 Hungarian census. According to this census, Israelites constituted nearly one third (30.2 %) of the population of Berehove (1941 ÉVI, 1990, 242). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the town was one of the most significant centres of Jewish communities in Hungary. From the mid-twentieth century onward, due to the Second World War and the Holocaust, the number of Jewish inhabitants decreased drastically. Yet this Jewish community consistently provided active and constructive citizens to the town, both before and after the Second World War. Nevertheless, to this day, research on the past of this religious and ethnic community in Berehove has appeared only in fragmented form – an omission for which we, as present-day citizens, remain indebted.

Analysis of Sources and Previous Research. The antecedents of research on this topic are extremely modest, as barely any meaningful scholarly literature exists on the Jewry of Berehove. This holds true for Ukrainian historiography as well as for works in other regional or world languages. Only a limited number of academic publications deal specifically with the Israelite community of Berehove in the second half of the twentieth century. The available works are mostly general studies about the Jewish population of the Transcarpathian region. Such examples include the volume edited by Viktória Bányai, Csilla Fedinec, and Szonja Ráhel Komoróczy (Bányai–Fedinec–Komoróczy, 2010), the book by Pavlo-Robert Magocsi (Магочий, 2005), and the edited publication by A. Rejder (Рейдер, 2004). There also exists a work on another Transcarpathian town, namely the book by Yeshaayahu Jelinek (Елинек, 2010). As for Berehove itself, the memorial volume edited by Jehoshua Halevy provides relevant material, but it documents the Jewish population of Berehove only up to 1944 (Halevy, 1989).

Chronologically and geographically, the first work to include information about the Israelite community of Berehove is a study by György Dupka (Dupka, 2023), although it focuses primarily on Jewish landmarks in the town that remain visible in the twenty-first century. For our study, we therefore relied primarily on unpublished archival sources, including documents from three separate fonds of the State Archive of the Transcarpathian Region and materials from Fond 4648 of the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine. These were supplemented with contemporary newspaper articles. Virtually the only substantial assistance directly relevant to our topic was provided by the collection compiled and edited by Tamás Goldberger – who lived the first 35 years of his life in Berehove (Goldberger, 2021). This excellent volume presents the recollections and photographs of contemporary Jews who survived the Holocaust and later returned to the town after the Second World War.

Purpose of the Article. The purpose of this article is to reconstruct, on the basis of surviving archival documents, the recollections of former Berehove Jews who survived the Holocaust, and contemporary press reports, the revival of the Israelite community of Berehove following the Holocaust and the Second World War. In addition, we examine the fate of the Great Synagogue – which remained in the ownership of the community – between 1945 and its eventual expropriation by the Soviet authorities. Furthermore, we sought to trace, within a historical context, how the Soviet regime and the newly resettled inhabitants of the town related to the Jews returning from the death camps.

Presentation of the Main Material. As a result of the spring 1944 deportations – carried out on German initiative – Jewish citizens almost completely disappeared from the town. According to currently available documents, between 16 and 29 May 1944, more than six thousand Jews from Berehove were deported to German concentration camps (DAZO, Fond 67, op. 3, od.zb. 621, ark. 16). This radically altered not only the ethnic but also the economic, religious, and denominational composition of the town. Barely more than two weeks after the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau – the largest Nazi death camp – on 14 February 1945, Jewish men who had survived forced labour service and returned to Berehove registered the Berehove Israelite Orthodox Community with the territorially competent authority under number 102 (Goldberger, 2021, 178). Although the decree issued by the People's Council of Transcarpathian Ukraine on 20 April 1945 concerning church property deprived religious institutions of their legal ownership (transferring property rights to their congregants), on 15 May 1945 the Berehove City People's Committee (BCPC), under number 2865/145-IV, returned the following properties to the Berehove Israelite Orthodox Community and its Chevra Kadisha: commercial premises (at present-day Széchenyi Street 1); the plot and buildings (at present-day Széchenyi Street 2); the plot and buildings (at present-day Széchenyi Street 4); the plot and synagogue (at present-day Zrínyi Street 2); the plot and buildings (at present-day Zrínyi Street 5); the plot, synagogue, and buildings (at present-day Ivan Franko Street 14); the plot and buildings (at present-day Ivan Franko Street 15); the plot and buildings (at present-day Ivan Franko Street 39); the plot and building (at present-day Shevchenko Street 6); and the cemetery (on present-day Tamás Mihály, formerly Esze Tamás Street) and its associated structures (Goldberger, 2021, 179).

All this must be evaluated against the fact that even at the end of 1945 the local party newspaper wrote that: "The streets of Berehove are lined with empty, abandoned houses. Some of the former owners were dragged away by the Germans and have not yet returned, and most likely never will, while others fled of their own accord. These ownerless houses, left without supervision, have been almost completely dismantled by the masses. Doors and windows have been carried off, floors and gutters removed, electrical wiring stripped, outhouses of wooden planks dismantled, as well as fences. Without gates or window frames, they stare blindly at the streets like sightless eyes, giving one a chill just to look at them." (VZ, 1945, 1).

This description was likely not an exaggeration, as very few of the Jewish residents – who had once constituted 30 % of the town's population – were able to return. A similar picture appears in the recollections of Judit Kaszab (later the world-famous Australian painter Judy Cassab), who returned from Budapest to Berehove in the spring of 1945. In a 2003 interview, she stated that although they found the town structurally intact, it was devoid of Jews. Her memory of the town corresponds closely with the account in „Vörös Zászló”: "My grandmother's and mother's house was standing empty, the doors torn out, the bathtub and the piano gone, the chandelier hanging from a tree in the garden. [...] My husband, who had previously been the director of the brewery near Munkács, immediately set about gathering money and organizing a Jewish communal kitchen for those returning from the camps." (Pécsi, 2003).

As for the number of Jews who returned to the town in 1945, only approximate data exist; to this day, no document providing precise figures has been located. At the 1 June 1945 meeting of the BCPC Presidium, several issues relating to the former and current Jewish population of the town were discussed. It is here that the first concrete figure appears: approximately 1,500 Jews from Berehove

returned from the camps. The town provided them with an one-time allowance of 500–1,000 pengő¹ per person, but it could offer no further or ongoing assistance (DAZO, Fond P-14, op. 1, od.zb. 73, ark. 12). This situation likely contributed to the indignation expressed by the Presidium's secretary, Jaroslav Bandurovych. According to him, the Jews returning to the town were evicting – or demanding the eviction of – families whom the local authorities had resettled in their homes while they were in forced labour service or concentration camps. Bandurovych proposed that it would be unjust to evict the new residents, who had already settled in. However, the Presidium adopted no position on the matter, and no decision was made. A few agenda items later, the city's communal department, without debate, approved the allocation of 20,000 pengő for the renovation and conversion of the expropriated former Jewish bathhouse into a public bath (DAZO, Fond P-14, op. 1, od.zb. 73, ark. 12 zv).

The issue of the Verhovyna settlers did not subside. On 6 June, at a meeting of the Berehove District People's Committee (BDPC), the matter resurfaced. Here, Andrejco (Андрейцо), a representative of one of the village committees, firmly demanded that returning Jews be prohibited from evicting the Verhovyna resettlers and that new, vacant housing be allocated to the Jews instead. The district prosecutor present at the meeting (surname Bohut) proposed rather to provide loans to the settlers so that they could find accommodation in the town on their own, since they were unable to coexist not only with Jews but also with local Hungarians – making shared housing unfeasible (DAZO, Fond P-14, op. 1, od.zb. 73, ark. 22).

The aforementioned figure of 1,500 Jews returning to Berehove represents only a mid-1945 estimate. In the reports of the regional representative of the Council for Religious Cult Affairs (CRCA) – the Soviet authority supervising religious institutions – no detailed settlement-level statistics have been found. Even one and a half years later, in his report of 18 December 1946, Serhii Lyamin-Agafonov wrote that he had not yet managed to determine the number of Israelite congregations (TsDAVOU, Fond 4648, op. 4, od.zb. 17, ark. 7). Closely connected to this is the fact that before the Czechoslovak border – previously open – was closed on 30 September 1945, many Jews left the region. During the subsequent eleven months, until the end of the option period at the end of August 1946, Jews from Berehove also migrated to neighbouring countries in significant numbers. Those who remained in Berehove, however, erected in 1946 the town's first memorial dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust, inscribed in Hebrew and Hungarian (Goldberger, 2021, 82).

The registration of the Berehove Israelite Orthodox Community had to be renewed on 20 July 1947 (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 8). Instead of the twenty members required by Soviet regulations, the community was represented by twenty-three individuals, and the application was signed on behalf of the community by its secretary, Nándor Weiss (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 4). At the same time, the Great Synagogue located at what was then 7 Stalin Street was also re-registered (the document explicitly notes that the building was "not" considered an architectural monument), and the full inventory list of the synagogue was handed over to the authorised representative of the Council for Religious Cult Affairs (CRCA) (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 15–16). The Chevra Kadisha, which had been operating since 1945, was likewise formally registered (references to its existence appear until 1970).

It is due to the extensive work of Tamás Goldberger – formerly a resident of Berehove – that a collection has been published concerning the Jewish citizens who once lived in the town. Although not a scholarly work, it contains a wealth of personal data relevant to our topic. His research shows that the elected head (rasekolja) of the Jewish community between 1946 and 1973 was Baruch Adler, born in Dombó (Dubove, Tiachiv District). He survived the war as a forced labourer, while his entire family – his wife and six children – perished in Auschwitz (Goldberger, 2021, 183). After 1945, the community's religious supervisor (mesgiach) was Mordechai Hirsch, while the precentors were Nándor Weiss and Hersu Berkovics. Archival sources support some of these statements, including the renewal in July 1947 of the licence of Adler Yechezkel, referred to as "rabbi" (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 12). He held this position in the community between 1945 and 1951, having survived the war as a forced labourer himself, while his wife and children were killed in Auschwitz. Among those who returned to Berehove was also Nándor Fried – referred to in the local press after 1945 by the name Ferdinand – who by 1947 became head of the district (raion) health department.

In the summer of 1948, there were twenty functioning Israelite congregations in Transcarpathia (TsDAVOU, Fond 4648, op. 4, od.zb. 42, ark. 191), but by that time only one – the Berehove community – possessed an official (state) permit to operate. This reflected the radically reduced number of Jews in the region (TsDAVOU, Fond 4648, op. 4, od.zb. 42, ark. 193). State authorities continuously monitored and documented the number of worshippers of all denominations. From these surviving records we know that the number of regularly attending Israelite worshippers fell from 6,998 at the beginning of 1946 to 4,000 by the end of 1948 (Goldberger, 2021, 185). This indicates that within three years nearly 3,000 synagogue-going Jews had disappeared.

¹ The name of the Hungarian money used at that time

According to a report submitted by the Berehove rabbi to the Regional Executive Committee in May 1950, 400–450 people attended prayers at the town’s Great Synagogue during the Jewish New Year (TsDAVOU, Fond 4648, op. 4, od.zb. 42, ark. 187). The report reveals that the state authorities were primarily interested in the number of attendees, as they had long wished to appropriate the prominently large building located in the centre of Berehove for state use. The same report brought to the foreground the figure of Adler Yechezkel, the “rabbi,” who was revealed not to be a trained rabbi but a “shochet” (ritual slaughterer) responsible for the halakhic slaughter of animals. For this reason – since Adler lacked the required formal qualification – the CRCA representative in Uzhhorod revoked his licence on 30 April 1951 (DAZO, Fond P-195, op. 6, od.zb. 33, ark. 95). This was one manifestation of the increasing pressure exerted on the town’s Jewish community to surrender their Great Synagogue.

After Adler’s licence was revoked, the CRCA assumed that the community would be unable to present another candidate who met the state’s requirements. Much to the astonishment of Mykhailo Rasputyko, however, the community’s president, Alex Schwartz, informed the Uzhhorod representative in a letter dated 1 July that the community had elected Zsigmond Markovics, a native of Berehove, as their new rabbi (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 22). Markovics received his licence on 15 July. While other towns’ Jewish communities faced difficulties using their ritual baths after these were transferred to municipal ownership – resulting in their practical unusability (TsDAVOU, Fond 4648, op. 4, od.zb. 83, ark. 172) – in Berehove, Weiss Herman, director of the municipal bath created from the former “mikveh”, succeeded in arranging a compromise enabling Jews to use the facility on Fridays.

The CRCA representative also noted with surprise in 1951 that no widespread labour-discipline violations were observed during Jewish religious holidays, despite the fact that the majority of believers did not work on those days. Rasputyko attributed this to the practice of commercial enterprises making Saturday a day of rest, with employees instead working on Sunday, when others had their day off. This arrangement benefited nearly everyone. In other workplaces, Jewish employees made up their Saturday absences by working on alternative days (DAZO, Fond P-195, op. 6, od.zb. 33, ark. 107).

This occurred despite the fact that, in Berehove as throughout Transcarpathia, the number of religiously observant Jews was steadily declining. A Soviet CRCA report offers concrete figures concerning synagogue attendance during the Jewish New Year between 1949 and 1951.

Table 1

Number of believers visiting synagogues in Transcarpathia during the Jewish New Year between 1949 and 1951 (DAZO, Fond P-195, op. 6, od.zb. 33, ark. 129)

Year	Number of people attending church (persons)
1949	2 700
1950	2 100
1951	1 200

The authorities kept highly precise records of regular synagogue attendees, noting even that 15–20 % of them were women. Continuous and systematic surveillance also demonstrated that by 1951 the number of synagogue-goers had declined markedly. The figures for those attending services during the Jewish New Year of 1951 in the settlements with the most populous Israelite communities in the region were as follows: the Uzhhorod synagogue – 250 persons; Mukachevo – 220; Berehove – 300; Khust – 180; Nelypyno – 50; and Il’nytsia – 45 persons (DAZO, Fond P-195, op. 6, od.zb. 33, ark. 129–130).

As the data show, Berehove registered the highest number of synagogue attendees; however, the 300 worshippers represented a decline of 100–150 compared to the previous year’s figures (see above). It remains unclear whether this decrease had any connection to what Alex Schwartz – the president of the Berehove Jewish community – allegedly told Rasputyko: “We have an elected rabbi, but our rabbi is a carter; he has no knowledge or abilities, and therefore the synagogue services are conducted by the members of the community council, one after the other” (DAZO, Fond P-195, op. 6, od.zb. 33, ark. 131). During the regular 1951 meeting, the CRCA representative posed a question to every community delegate regarding their views on Israel, the Jewish state. Rasputyko was reportedly taken aback by Schwartz’s response, who allegedly stated: “We believe that the State of Israel came into being thanks to our prayers; we received it from God and from our Jews, and we are ready, with joy, to set out for Israel even tomorrow” (DAZO, Fond P-195, op. 6, od.zb. 33, ark. 131).

The Fate of the Great Synagogue. To what extent this statement may have alarmed Soviet authorities remains unknown. Yet its significance is suggested by the fact that, after the Stalinist Soviet Union severed relations with Israel on 13 February 1953, Rasputyko renewed – in emphatic terms on

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25 February – his earlier proposal urging the Berehove community to surrender their Great Synagogue to the state voluntarily or exchange it for the building at 11 Khmelnytskyi Street. When Schwartz, in his petition of 26 February addressed to Skoljarkov, chairman of the Berehove District Executive Committee, firmly rejected the proposal (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 26), the CRCA concluded that another course of action was necessary.

Consequently, on 20 April 1953, the Berehove District Executive Committee adopted Resolution No. 315, requesting the city council to take over the Great Synagogue from the Israelite community by administrative means and, in exchange, to provide them with the small synagogue located at 11 October Revolution Street (now Zrínyi Street). However, in its decree of 12 May, the city council modified the resolution, proposing instead the building at No. 6 on the same street as the replacement (DAZO, Fond P-195, op. 6, od.zb. 33, ark. 32). The CRCA justified the “inevitability” of expropriating the Berehove Great Synagogue with specific figures: while in the late 1940s nearly 500 worshippers regularly attended services, by the early 1950s the number of active members had fallen to 130–150, and regular attendees scarcely exceeded fifty. Rasputyko also argued that the city lacked an appropriate cultural hall. Yet – surprising though it may seem from today’s perspective – the authorities neither could nor wished to seize the synagogue in the face of strong resistance from the Jewish community. In an attempt to break the stalemate, the authorities first offered the community a contract to formalise yet another proposed exchange, again specifying relocation to No. 6 Sztahanov (now Zrínyi) Street (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 33, 36). However, according to the recollections of eyewitnesses, not a single Jewish resident signed the prepared agreement, which was accompanied by vehement opposition from the local Israelite community.

Actual expropriation occurred only on 17 January 1958, on the basis of Resolution No. 7 of the Berehove District Executive Committee. Between 1953 and 1958, Jewish artisans and professionals renovated the small synagogue at today’s 6 Zrínyi Street, transferring from the Great Synagogue the benches, the “bimah”, and the Torah ark (Goldberger, 2021, 192). Thus the last large, originally functioning 300-square-metre Great Synagogue in Transcarpathia came into Soviet state ownership. The small synagogue assigned to the community – considered by Soviet authorities capable of accommodating 300–350 persons – proved insufficient even six years later on major holidays. A report dated 15 November 1965, authored by the then community president, Mózes Gelbmann, noted that 450 persons appeared for the Passover celebration and could not fit inside the building (DAZO, Fond P-1490, op. 4d, szpr. 100, ark. 72).

Following expropriation, the Great Synagogue served merely as a warehouse for nine years. The district party newspaper reported on this as well, quoting a visitor to the town – one Skobelyev, associate professor at Voronezh State University – who stated: “The city has no well-equipped cinema, although in the centre stands the enormous building of the former synagogue, which has been converted into a warehouse” (VZ, 1965, 3). The appearance of the former synagogue was indeed peculiar: despite its unchanged exterior, city advertisements were affixed to the front fence, and a drugstore (bearing the sign “Парфюмерия”) was opened in the adjoining ritual house, as can clearly be seen in the photograph below.

Work on transforming the building finally began in the summer of 1966. During the first stage, however, the structure was merely fenced off, and it stood boarded up in the very heart of the town until the summer of 1967. The district party newspaper “Vörös Zászló” published the visual plan for the future “Berehove House of Culture,” noting that the investment amounted to 210,000 rubles (VZ, 1967, 2). Many were surprised to see that the design bore an uncanny resemblance to the Pesti Hungarian Theater (in Hungarian: Pesti Magyar Színház) in Hungary’s capital. The new district cultural centre was not completed in time for the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution; it was inaugurated only on 7 June 1969 during a large public celebration. On behalf of cultural workers, Ottó Schober expressed thanks for the opening of the institution, which had now been elevated to the status of a “Palace of Culture” (VZ, 1969, 4). The event was so grandiose that even a weekly newspaper of the friendly Hungarian People’s Republic devoted a report to it. From this brief article, we learn that the remodelled theatre now had 650 seats, a revolving stage, and a dedicated exhibition hall (Ravacska, 1969, 26).

The Great Synagogue in Berehove between 1958 and 1966 (Karpatalja.blog)



Conclusion. In summary, although more than six thousand Jewish residents of Berehove were deported during the Second World War and the Holocaust, the survivors – when circumstances allowed – returned to their native town. The registration of the Berehove Orthodox Israelite Community in the spring of 1945, in accordance with Soviet religious legislation, stands as clear evidence of this. The returnees also sought to reclaim their homes, apartments, and belongings. The “homo novus” of the new regime, however, looked upon those returning from the death camps with distrust, as though burdened by a troubled conscience for having settled families from the Verkhovyna mountains into the properties left vacant after 1944. Yet the Jewish survivors sought solutions to these challenges, driven by their desire to rebuild their lives. Our research has further revealed how the Jewish community – numbering nearly two thousand at its postwar height – fought for its religious buildings. Particularly noteworthy is their determined and admirable struggle with Soviet authorities for the Great Synagogue standing in the centre of Berehove. This synagogue was the last cultic site in Transcarpathia still functioning for its original purpose at that time. We have also clarified when and under what circumstances the Berehove Great Synagogue was transferred into Soviet state ownership, what became of it once it lost its original function, and where the local Jewish population relocated their sacred objects.

The topic is far from fully explored. As this study represents an initial stage of research, numerous questions that are closely intertwined with the subject could not be addressed here due to limitations of scope. Such further lines of inquiry include the situation of the Jewish population after the loss of the Great Synagogue, their role in the civic life of the town, and the process of emigration to Israel (“aliyah”).

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